CHRIST IS BETTER

An 8-Week Study of Hebrews

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The Preacher's Pen

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Introduction

Have you ever felt like you were running out of steam in your walk with God? The first readers of Hebrews knew that feeling. They were Christians. They had obeyed the gospel, they had suffered for it, and they had stood with others who were suffering. Now they were tired, discouraged, and being pulled back to the Old Law. The answer the Hebrews writer gave them is the same answer we need today: Christ is better.

The key word of this letter is "better." Christ is better than the prophets, better than the angels, better than Moses, and better than the priesthood of Aaron. He brought a better covenant built on better promises, and He offered a better sacrifice, His own blood, once for all. Christians are better because Christ is better. That is the whole point of the book, and it is the point of this study.

This study comes from my own Hebrews class notes, "Digging Deeper into the Superiority of Christ," and the slides from a Sunday morning class I taught on Hebrews that began in January 2021. It walks through the letter one or two chapters at a time over eight lessons:

1. **Better: Opening Up the Letter to the Hebrews.** The purpose, plan, and keys of the book, and how Christ is better than the prophets and the angels (Hebrews 1).
2. **So Great a Salvation, and a Faithful Son.** Why we must not drift, and why Christ is worthy of more honor than Moses (Hebrews 2-3).
3. **The Promised Rest and Our Great High Priest.** The rest that remains for the people of God, the living word, and the throne of grace (Hebrews 4-5).
4. **An Anchor for the Soul and a Priest Like Melchizedek.** Going on to maturity, the danger of falling away, and a better priesthood (Hebrews 6-7).
5. **A Better Covenant and a Better Sacrifice.** The new covenant God promised and the blood of Christ (Hebrews 8-9).
6. **Let Us Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Endure.** The one offering of Christ and how the sanctified live (Hebrews 10).
7. **By Faith: The Heroes of Hebrews 11.** What faith is and how the faithful lived, waited, and endured (Hebrews 11).
8. **Run the Race, Then What Shall We Do?** Running with endurance, looking unto Jesus, and living it out (Hebrews 12-13).

Keep the key verse in front of you the whole way: "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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

How to Use This Study

Every lesson has five parts. The Goal tells you what the lesson is after. The Teaching Reading walks through the text with the Scriptures behind each point. The Scripture Reading List gives you the passages to read for yourself. The Discussion Questions help you think it through, alone or with others. This Week gives you one practical step to take before the next lesson.

Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version. Please do not take my word for anything. Be like the Bereans, who "searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Keep your Bible open the whole way through, because Hebrews quotes the Old Testament over and over, and you will get a lot more out of it if you look those passages up.

On Your Own

Take one lesson a week. Read Hebrews with the lesson open beside it, and look up every verse, not just the ones that are printed out. Write your answers to the questions in a notebook. Then do the This Week step. That is where the study stops being information and starts changing the way you live.

In a Bible Class

The teacher can use the Teaching Reading as lesson notes and the headings as the outline for the board or the screen. A matching PowerPoint comes with each lesson. Read the key passages aloud as a class. You probably will not get to every question, so pick the ones that fit your class best. Close by reading the This Week step together and asking about it at the start of the next class.

In a Small Group

Ask everyone to read the chapters and the lesson before you meet, so your time together can go to the Scriptures and the questions. Begin and end with prayer. Give people room to talk, and give them room to pass. When you meet the next week, start by asking how the This Week step went.

My prayer is that by the end of these eight weeks you will see Jesus more clearly than ever, and that you will hold fast to Him and help someone else do the same.

Just some thoughts.

Leader and Small Group Guide

If you are leading a class or a group through Christ Is Better, thank you. Here are a few things that will help.

Before You Meet

Read the chapters of Hebrews for that lesson at least twice, then read the lesson and look up every passage. Hebrews leans heavily on the Old Testament, so take a few minutes with the background passages (Psalm 110, Genesis 14, Jeremiah 31, Exodus 25 through 30, Psalm 95). Pray for the people in your group by name.

Keep the Main Point the Main Point

It is easy to get lost in Melchizedek, the tabernacle, or the Greek. Those are good studies, but keep coming back to the big idea of every chapter: Christ is better, so do not drift away from Him. If a side question takes over, write it down and come back to it later.

Keep the Bible at the Center

When a question or a disagreement comes up, go back to the text and ask, “What does the passage say?” The goal is not to win an argument. The goal is for every person to hear what God says and respond to it.

Be Ready for the Hard Passages

Hebrews 6:4-8 and Hebrews 10:26-31 teach that a Christian can fall away. Hebrews 10:22 and the closing lesson talk about baptism and obeying the gospel. Some in your group may realize they have never obeyed the gospel. Others may realize they have drifted. Be ready to talk privately, open the Bible with them, and have a preacher or an elder available to help. Do not rush anyone, and do not leave anyone hanging.

Follow Up

Start each meeting by asking about last week’s This Week step. Check in with anyone who misses. Hebrews itself tells us how to do this: “let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

LESSON 1

Better: Opening Up the Letter to the Hebrews

Key Texts: *Hebrews 1; Hebrews 12:2; Mark 12:1-8; Psalm 110:1*

Teaching Reading

Goal: *Learn the purpose and plan of Hebrews, its keys and outline, and see how Christ is better than the prophets and better than the angels.*

Quick Review

- God sent His only Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but to save it (John 3:16-17).
- They treated Him with contempt and killed Him.
- Remember the parable of the vineyard in Mark 12:1-8.

Why Hebrews?

The letter to the Hebrews is an interesting letter for several reasons. We do not know who the author is. It compares Judaism to Christianity. It is a marvelous book contrasting the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.

Points of Great Remembrance

- The purpose of Hebrews is to prevent apostasy, or a falling away.
- Various Jewish teachers were bringing the Jewish Christians back into Judaism.
- The plan of the book is to show the superiority of Christ.

Keys to Hebrews

- Key word: Better (or superior)
- Key verse: Hebrews 12:2
- Key chapter: Hebrews 11

Hold on to that key verse all the way through this study: “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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

A Simple Outline

- A. Christ is better because of who He is (Hebrews 1:1-4:13).

- B. Christ is a better High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-8:13).
- C. Christ is better because of the sacrifice He provided (Hebrews 9:1-10:18).
- D. We need to stand fast in the faith that Christ is better (Hebrews 10:19-13:25). Christians are better because Christ is better.

Themes of Hebrews

9. **Christ is better.** He is better than the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-2), the angels (Hebrews 1:4-14), Moses (Hebrews 3:1-19), the priesthood of Aaron (Hebrews 5:1-14), the Old Covenant (Hebrews 8:1-13), and the Old Covenant sacrifices (Hebrews 9:1-28). Christ brought a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13; Jeremiah 31:31). This "new covenant" is the New Testament. Christ took the Old Covenant away with the cross (Colossians 2:14).

2. The need for spiritual maturity (Hebrews 5:11-14). We must understand the fundamentals to understand many truths. Once we understand the fundamentals, we must not stay there. We should grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).

3. The necessity of faith: understanding it, living it, and remembering it (Hebrews 11:1, 6; 12:2).

The Spoken Word (Hebrews 1:1-2)

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

- God spoke through the prophets in various ways and at various times: Nathan the prophet (2 Samuel 12), Ezekiel the prophet (Ezekiel 37), Elijah the prophet (1 Kings 18).
- The prophets even spoke of Christ (1 Peter 1:10-12).
- Remember that the prophets and the Bible writers wrote by inspiration (2 Peter 1:21).
- "These last days" is the Christian dispensation. Think of the three ages of Bible history: Patriarchal, Mosaical, and Christian. Christ "was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:20).

The Superiority of Christ: The Beginning (Hebrews 1:2-4)

- **Christ, the heir of all things** (Hebrews 1:2). The Son has been given all authority (Matthew 28:18). Christians are joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).
- **Christ, the Creator** (Hebrews 1:2). See John 1:1-3; 17:5 and "Let Us make man in Our image" (Genesis 1:26). "He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17).
- **Christ, the brightness of God's glory** (Hebrews 1:3). Christ was raised by the glory of the Father (Romans 6:4). Christ prayed that He might glorify the Father (John 17:1-5). Christ will come in the glory of the Father (Luke 9:26). We beheld "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14).

- **Christ, the express image of God** (Hebrews 1:3). "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). He "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (Colossians 1:15). "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).
- **Christ, the upholder of all things** (Hebrews 1:3). God's power is shown through Christ (Luke 11:20). Even Nicodemus saw it (John 3:2).
- **Christ, the purger of sins** (Hebrews 1:3). "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). He "gave Himself for our sins" (Galatians 1:4). He "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). Read Isaiah 53.
- **Christ, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high** (Hebrews 1:3; Psalm 110:1; Ephesians 1:20). This shows the authority that was given to Christ (Matthew 28:18).

Why Talk About Angels? (Hebrews 1:4-14)

Why angels? There were some who worshiped angels, and there are some who still do. Many had respect for angels because of the message that angels brought (Hebrews 2:2). The word angel means messenger. The Hebrews writer shows that Christ is far superior to the angels in three ways.

Superiority of name (Hebrews 1:4-6a). "For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You'?" (Hebrews 1:5; see Psalm 2:7 and Acts 13:33). Christ is called the "firstborn" (Hebrews 1:6; Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15, 18; Revelation 1:5). Some of these passages call Christ the firstborn from the dead, pointing to His resurrection (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5). The firstborn refers to one of superiority. Think of the firstborn child's benefits in the Old Testament. Notice the difference between the word "Son" used for Christ and the word "spirits" used for angels (Hebrews 1:7, 14).

Superiority in worship (Hebrews 1:6b). "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Who is to be worshiped, the angels or the Son? Remember what the angel told John: do not worship me, "Worship God" (Revelation 22:8-9). Also note Deuteronomy 32:43.

Superiority in power and authority (Hebrews 1:8-14). The writer mentions Christ ruling on the throne with a scepter of righteousness (Hebrews 1:8-9; Psalm 45:6-7). God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all love righteousness. The Son "laid the foundation of the earth" (Hebrews 1:10; John 1:1-3). Verse 12 reminds us of Psalm 102:25-27. Verse 13 quotes Psalm 110:1: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." The angels? They are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14; see Luke 16:22; Acts 12:7-11; 27:23).

Scripture Reading List

- Hebrews 1:1-2
- Hebrews 1:2-4
- Hebrews 1:4-14

- Mark 12:1-8, Psalm 110:1

Discussion Questions

1. What is the purpose of the book of Hebrews? What is its plan?
2. What are the key word, key verse and key chapter of Hebrews?
3. God spoke in times past through whom? God has spoken to you through whom? (Hebrews 1:1-2)
4. Who is Christ according to Hebrews 1:2-3? Which description means the most to you this week?
5. Is Christ the image of God? Where is Christ seated? (Hebrews 1:3)
6. Why angels? Why would the writer spend a whole chapter comparing Christ to angels?
7. Has God ever called an angel "Son"? Who is to be worshiped, the angels or the Son? (Hebrews 1:5-6)

This Week

> Write the key word, key verse and key chapter on a card and keep it in your Bible for all eight weeks. Then read Hebrews 2 and 3.

LESSON 2

So Great a Salvation, and a Faithful Son

Key Texts: *Hebrews 2-3; Psalm 8:4-6; Psalm 95:7-11; Revelation 2:10*

Teaching Reading

Goal: *Learn why we must not neglect so great a salvation, why Christ was made lower than the angels, how Christ is better than Moses, and why our own faithfulness must continue to the end.*

Quick Review

- Christ is superior because of His name (Hebrews 1:5-6).
- Christ is superior in worship (Hebrews 1:6).
- Christ is superior in power and authority (Hebrews 1:8-14).

The Great Salvation (Hebrews 2:1-4)

"Therefore." When you see the word therefore, remember what it is there for. The writer is bringing a great point out of the verses before. "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away" (Hebrews 2:1).

If the message which angels brought was true and reliable, then how can we neglect the message spoken by the Lord? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:3)? The word was spoken by the Lord, confirmed by those who heard Him, and God bore witness with signs and wonders (Hebrews 2:3-4). The Hebrews writer wants to show the superiority of Christ so the readers will not abandon their faith. Are we neglecting salvation?

Superior, Yet Lower (Hebrews 2:5-8)

Notice that the world to come is not in subjection to angels (Hebrews 2:5). Christ was made a little lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:7, 9; cross reference Psalm 8:4-6). Lower, yet crowned. All things are in subjection to Christ (Hebrews 2:8).

Where Is Your Focus? (Hebrews 2:9-18)

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9). Jesus tasted death for everyone. Remember this verse for the lessons ahead (1 John 2:2; Hebrews 2:17).

- Jesus is the captain, the author, of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10).
- Christ brings reconciliation (Hebrews 2:11; see Ephesians 2:11-18). He is the sanctifier (Hebrews 2:11; 13:12).
- Christ destroyed death (Hebrews 2:14). Christ became flesh and lived on earth (John 1:14). Christ suffered as people do (Hebrews 4:15). Christ died as people do, was buried as people are, but He rose again as people do not (Matthew 27:45-28:6; John 19:28-20:10). In dying, being buried and rising again, Christ conquered death (1 Corinthians 15).
- Those who obey Christ are not slaves of fear (Hebrews 2:15; Romans 8:15).
- Christ gives aid to the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16; Genesis 15:5).
- Christ is our High Priest (Hebrews 2:17-18). Being our High Priest, He can sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15). "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

Writing With Knowledge (Hebrews 3:1)

Notice the "therefore" again (Hebrews 3:1). The writer calls his readers "holy brethren." Remember, he is writing to Christians (1 Peter 2:9). He calls them "partakers of the heavenly calling" (see 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

The Faithfulness of Jesus (Hebrews 3:1-6)

- Jesus is "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (Hebrews 3:1). Jesus was sent from God (John 3:16; Isaiah 53). He is called High Priest because the writer is going to show the superiority of Christ above all high priests. More on that in the weeks ahead.
- Christ was faithful to the Father in all things (Hebrews 3:2; see John 4:34; 14:31; 15:10; 17:1-4; 19:30). Moses was faithful too (Hebrews 3:2), however…
- Christ is worthy of more honor than Moses because He is the builder (Hebrews 3:3-4). The architect of the house is more respected than the structure itself.
- Moses was a servant, not a Son (Hebrews 3:5-6). Moses spoke of Christ (Acts 3:22-26; Deuteronomy 18:15-19; see Luke 24:44).
- Moses was faithful "as a servant," 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 to the end" (Hebrews 3:5-6). Notice the condition. The writer puts an "if" on the words "whose house we are."

Your Faithfulness (Hebrews 3:7-19)

The writer reminds the readers how their fathers rejected God in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:7-11; Psalm 95:7-11). Those people chose not to follow God because of unbelief. The writer encourages Christians to believe and not depart from the living God (Hebrews 3:12).

"But exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). Building one another up helps us avoid the deceitfulness of

sin. Encouragement is a divine command, and it combats discouragement and the hardening of hearts.

The same condition of Hebrews 3:6 shows up again in Hebrews 3:14: “For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.” Steadfastness must continue. “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

Remember the forty years? Who rebelled? Who was God angry with? Who died in the wilderness? Who did not enter the rest? “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19).

Scripture Reading List

- Hebrews 2:1-4
- Hebrews 2:5-8
- Hebrews 2:9-18
- Hebrews 3:1
- Hebrews 3:1-6
- Hebrews 3:7-19
- Psalm 8:4-6, Psalm 95:7-11, Revelation 2:10

Discussion Questions

1. What is the “therefore” in Hebrews 2:1 there for?
2. How was the message of salvation confirmed? (Hebrews 2:3-4) In what ways do people neglect salvation today?
3. “But we see _____.” (Hebrews 2:9) Why was Jesus crowned with glory and honor?
4. What is Christ’s relationship to salvation? To whom does Christ give aid? Is Christ a High Priest? (Hebrews 2:10-18)
5. What characteristics of Christ are found in Hebrews 3:1? Is Christ worthy of more honor than Moses? Why?
6. How often are we to encourage each other? (Hebrews 3:13) Who will you exhort this week?
7. Why could the fathers not enter the rest? (Hebrews 3:19)

This Week

> Hebrews 3:13 says “daily.” Send a word of encouragement to one Christian every day this week. Then read Hebrews 4 and 5.

LESSON 3

The Promised Rest and Our Great High Priest

Key Texts: *Hebrews 4-5; Mark 4:1-20; Psalm 139:1-12; Hosea 4:6; 2 Peter 1:5-11*

Teaching Reading

Goal: *Learn what the promised rest is and who will enter it, what the word of God is like, why we can come boldly to the throne of grace, how Christ is a better High Priest, and why spiritual knowledge and growth matter.*

Quick Review

- Christ is better than the fathers and the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-2).
- Christ is better than the angels (Hebrews 1:4-2:9).
- Christ is better than Moses (Hebrews 3:1-6).

The Promised Rest (Hebrews 4:1-11)

Notice the "therefore" again, building on Hebrews 3:12-19. "Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it" (Hebrews 4:1). The promised rest still remains to those who will obey (Hebrews 4:1-10).

"For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (Hebrews 4:2). The good news proclaimed to the Israelites was the promise of Canaan. The good news proclaimed to us is the blessings we have in Christ.

Why did the word not profit those who heard? Remember the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-20). The word of God is powerful (Hebrews 4:12), but you must do your part in accepting it with faith. The word of God will produce faith (Romans 10:17) in a good and noble heart (Luke 8:15; Acts 17:11).

- Christians are promised rest as God rested (Hebrews 4:4, 10).
- Disobedience kept those who first heard from entering the rest (Hebrews 4:6).
- Joshua did not give the people rest (Hebrews 4:8).
- "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). This rest is greater than the rest of Canaan.
- The rest is different; it is not a Sabbath rest, for the Old Law was done away with (Ephesians 2:14-15; Colossians 2:14).

- It is a rest Christians can fall short of (Hebrews 4:1, 11).

What should our attitude be toward entering the rest?

- Fear coming short (Hebrews 4:1; see Matthew 10:28).
- Obey the word of God, hearing mixed with faith (Hebrews 4:2).
- Diligently work. “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:11).

The Piercing Word of God (Hebrews 4:12-13)

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

- It is living (John 6:63; 1 Peter 1:22-25).
- It is powerful (Romans 1:16-17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- It is sharper than any two-edged sword (Jeremiah 23:29; Ephesians 6:17).
- It pierces. Notice the places this sword can reach.
- It discerns (Acts 2:36-37).

God is omniscient, all-knowing (Hebrews 4:13; Psalm 139:1-12; Proverbs 15:3). The word He has spoken will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

Our Wonderful High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16)

The writer calls Jesus our High Priest, and he will say much more about that in Hebrews 5 through 8. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Christians have a Savior who overcame the troubles, turmoil, problems and temptations of this life.

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). The throne of grace is the throne of God (Psalm 89:14). Coming boldly simply means coming with confidence. That is made possible by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19-22).

- Christians need mercy to have their sins forgiven (1 John 1:8-10).
- Christians need the grace of God for strength (Philippians 4:13) and protection (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- Christians approach the throne of God through prayer.

The High Priest (Hebrews 5:1-4)

- The high priest was chosen from among men (Hebrews 5:1).
- He offered sacrifices for the people, and for his own sins as well (Hebrews 5:1-3).
- Being chosen from among the people allowed the high priest to have compassion on the people (Hebrews 5:2). “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Christ, a Priest After the Order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:5-10)

"Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest" (Hebrews 5:5). Did Christ come to bring glory to Himself? Were His actions selfish, for His own benefit? No (John 8:54). He is "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:6). We will meet Melchizedek in Week 4.

Look at the character of Christ (Hebrews 5:7-9):

- Christ offered up prayers to God (Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; John 17:1-26).
- Christ brought supplications to God, with vehement cries and tears (Matthew 26:36-44; Luke 22:40-46).
- Those prayers were heard because of His godly fear (Hebrews 5:7).
- "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). Christ was obedient to the Father, even to death (see Hebrews 2:10).

The Importance of Knowledge (Hebrews 5:11-14)

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). There were things Jesus waited to tell the apostles because they could not bear them yet (John 16:12).

- Some of the readers should have been teachers by now (Hebrews 5:12).
- They could not teach because of their lack of growth. They needed someone to teach them the first principles again (Hebrews 5:12).
- They needed milk (1 Corinthians 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:1-2). Those who live on milk are unskilled in the word (Hebrews 5:13).
- Solid food belongs to the mature, "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).
- The mature keep on growing (2 Peter 1:5-11; 3:18).

Think about it this way. What should a Christian know by the time he leaves the "elementary school" of faith? By "high school"? By "college"? The Hebrews writer was telling his readers, "By then, you should know."

Scripture Reading List

- Hebrews 4:1-11
- Hebrews 4:12-13
- Hebrews 4:14-16
- Hebrews 5:1-4
- Hebrews 5:5-10
- Hebrews 5:11-14
- Mark 4:1-20, Psalm 139:1-12, Hosea 4:6, 2 Peter 1:5-11

Discussion Questions

1. Who will receive the promised rest? Did Joshua give the people rest? (Hebrews 4:1-9)
2. Why did the word not profit those who heard it? (Hebrews 4:2; Mark 4:1-20)
3. What should our attitude be toward entering the rest? (Hebrews 4:1, 2, 11)
4. What are the characteristics of God's word according to Hebrews 4:12?
5. Who is our High Priest? Can Jesus feel our pain? (Hebrews 4:14-15)
6. Did Christ glorify Himself to become High Priest? Christ is a priest forever according to the order of whom? (Hebrews 5:5-6)
7. Is spiritual knowledge important? Some of the readers should have been what? Solid food belongs to whom? (Hebrews 5:12-14)

This Week

> Bring your prayer list to the throne of grace every day this week, boldly. Then read Hebrews 6 and 7.

LESSON 4

An Anchor for the Soul and a Priest Like Melchizedek

Key Texts: *Hebrews 6-7; Genesis 14:17-20; Psalm 110:4; Galatians 5:4; 2 Peter 2:20-22*

Teaching Reading

Goal: *Learn what it means to go on to maturity, why a Christian can fall away, how God's promise is an anchor for the soul, who Melchizedek was, and why Christ's priesthood is better than the Levitical priesthood.*

Quick Review

- Christ is better because He can sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15).
- Christ is better than the priesthood of Aaron (Hebrews 5:1-4).
- Spiritual knowledge is important, and the mature keep growing (Hebrews 5:11-14).

Moving to Maturity (Hebrews 6:1-3)

Notice the "therefore" that builds on Hebrews 5:12-14. "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection" (Hebrews 6:1). For a person to grow in spiritual maturity, he must be established in the elementary principles, and then the movement will happen. The writer is moving on from the elementary principles: repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:1-2). He finishes with, "this we will do if God permits" (Hebrews 6:3).

Crucifying Christ Again (Hebrews 6:4-8)

There has been much discussion over these verses. The first key is to remember who is being discussed. Those who were once enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, became partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come (Hebrews 6:4-5). Those are Christians.

Notice the term "if" (Hebrews 6:6). It is a conditional statement that shows it is possible to fall away from God (Galatians 5:4; 2 Peter 2:20-22). Digging deeper into the Greek, the language is a present tense participle. The writer is saying they are continuing to crucify the Son of God and continually putting Him to an open shame. As long as they keep doing that, it is impossible to renew them to repentance. The earth that drinks in the rain and bears useful herbs receives a

blessing from God, but the ground that bears thorns and briers is rejected and its end is to be burned (Hebrews 6:7-8).

Spiritual Security (Hebrews 6:9-12)

Note verse 9: "But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you." The writer brings encouragement by reflecting on God's justice. "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love" (Hebrews 6:10). Notice their activity was ongoing. They had ministered and they did minister.

The same diligence a person shows at the beginning of the road to heaven needs to be shown all the way (Hebrews 6:11; see Hebrews 3:6, 14 and 2 Peter 1:5-11). The thirst for the word of God must continue (Matthew 5:6). Do not become lazy, but look to faithful examples (Hebrews 11). The writer says, "we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:11-12).

How do you respond to spiritual laziness? First, make it personal. Take to heart the verses about being a living and active child of God (Romans 12:1-2; James 1:22; Hebrews 5:12-6:12). Second, make active Christian living a priority (Matthew 6:33). Third, keep pressing on (Philippians 3:12-14; Galatians 6:9). Fourth, grow with your spiritual family (Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:1-16).

God Is Our Assurance (Hebrews 6:13-20)

- God made a promise to Abraham (Hebrews 6:13-14).
- God swore by Himself, because there was no one greater than Him (Hebrews 6:13).
- The promise and the oath give a double assurance, two things in which it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:17-18; Titus 1:2).
- Abraham had to patiently endure to obtain the promise (Hebrews 6:15).
- God promises you rest if you will obey Him.
- "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Hebrews 6:19).
- Jesus has entered the Presence behind the veil for you, "having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:20).

Who Was Melchizedek? (Hebrews 7:1-3; Genesis 14:17-20)

- He was the king of Salem (Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 7:1).
- He was a priest of God Most High (Genesis 14:18).
- Abram was returning from rescuing Lot (Genesis 14). Two things happened: Melchizedek blessed Abram (Genesis 14:19), and Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20).
- The Bible gives no record of his father, mother or genealogy, or of the beginning of his days or the end of his life (Hebrews 7:3).
- He appears in Genesis 14, again in Psalm 110, and again in Hebrews 5 through 7, where he is connected to Jesus.

The Significance (Hebrews 7:4-10)

- Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham (Hebrews 7:4-6a).
- Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and the lesser is blessed by the better (Hebrews 7:6-7).
- Melchizedek is spoken of as one who lives on (Hebrews 7:8).
- Even Levi, in a sense, paid tithes through Abraham (Hebrews 7:9-10).
- So Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, and greater than Levi. If Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, then Christ is greater than them all.

"The LORD has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Psalm 110:4).

Did a Change Occur? (Hebrews 7:11-19)

- The Levitical priesthood did not bring perfection (Hebrews 7:11).
- Jesus came from outside the Levitical priesthood. He came from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:13-14).
- A change must have occurred. "For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law" (Hebrews 7:12).
- The change came with power, "the power of an endless life" (Hebrews 7:16). It is a priesthood forever (Hebrews 7:17).
- The former commandment was set aside because of its weakness and unprofitableness, "for the law made nothing perfect" (Hebrews 7:18-19).
- Future thoughts to connect: Hebrews 8:7-13; Matthew 5:17-18; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14-16.

Our Exalted High Priest (Hebrews 7:20-28)

- Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22).
- He is a permanent priest, no longer subject to death (Hebrews 7:23-24).
- "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).
- He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).
- He offered one sacrifice for sins, once for all, when He offered up Himself (Hebrews 7:27).
- The law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but Christ is the Son who has been perfected forever (Hebrews 7:28).

Scripture Reading List

- Hebrews 6:1-3
- Hebrews 6:4-8
- Hebrews 6:9-12

- Hebrews 6:13-20
- Hebrews 7:1-3; Genesis 14:17-20
- Hebrews 7:4-10
- Hebrews 7:11-19
- Hebrews 7:20-28
- Genesis 14:17-20, Psalm 110:4, Galatians 5:4, 2 Peter 2:20-22

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the elementary principles the writer will move on from? (Hebrews 6:1-2) Do we consider those elementary today? Why or why not?
2. Who is being described in Hebrews 6:4-5? What does the word "if" in Hebrews 6:6 teach about falling away?
3. Are Christians to show the same diligence they showed at the beginning of their salvation? The writer does not want them to become what? (Hebrews 6:11-12)
4. Who did God make a promise to? Did God fulfill His promise? What do we have as an anchor? (Hebrews 6:13-19)
5. Melchizedek was the king of what? Who paid tithes to Melchizedek? (Hebrews 7:1-4)
6. Was perfection in the Levitical priesthood? Since the priesthood changed, what else changed? What tribe was Jesus from? (Hebrews 7:11-14)
7. Jesus is the surety of a better what? Why can He save to the uttermost? (Hebrews 7:22-25)

This Week

> Pick one area where you have grown sluggish and name one thing you will do about it this week. Then read Hebrews 8 and 9.

LESSON 5

A Better Covenant and a Better Sacrifice

Key Texts: *Hebrews 8-9; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 110:1; Acts 8:36-38; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10*

Teaching Reading

Goal: *Learn where our High Priest serves, why the first covenant was replaced, what God promised in the new covenant, and why the blood of Christ is the better sacrifice.*

Points of Great Remembrance

- The book of Hebrews was written to prevent apostasy. Various Jewish teachers were bringing the Jewish Christians back into Judaism.
- The plan of the book is to show the superiority of Christ. Christ is better than the fathers, the prophets, the angels, Moses, Abraham, and even Melchizedek.
- Christ is the only High Priest who was tempted in all points as we are, yet did not sin (Hebrews 4:15).
- Christ is the new and eternal High Priest for all time, and He brought a better covenant.

The Main Point (Hebrews 8:1-6)

The writer tells us what the main point is: "We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1).

- David prophesied that Jesus would be at the right hand (Psalm 110:1). Jesus said that He would be at the right hand (Mark 14:60-62).
- He is a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, "which the Lord erected, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2). The true tabernacle is heaven itself (Hebrews 9:11-12, 23-24).
- Christ has something to offer (Hebrews 8:3). What that "something" is will be shown in Hebrews 9:12.
- The earthly priests served "the copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5).
- "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises" (Hebrews 8:6). By His death, Christ became the Mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 9:15; 12:24).

What Did God Tell Them? (Hebrews 8:7-13)

Was the first covenant faultless? No. The Levitical priesthood could not bring perfection (Hebrews 7:11), and the law made nothing perfect (Hebrews 7:18-19). The people under the first

covenant were at fault too (Hebrews 8:8-9). They did not continue in God's covenant (Jeremiah 11:7-10).

God promised a new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34. It would not be like the covenant He made with their fathers (Hebrews 8:9). Here is what God promised it would be like (Hebrews 8:10-12):

- **Inward and spiritual.** "I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10). God's word must be in our hearts (James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:22-23).
- **A closer relationship with Him.** "I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Hebrews 8:10; see 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 1 Peter 2:9-10).
- **People who know Him** (Hebrews 8:11). People enter the covenant relationship through baptism (Acts 8:36-38).
- **Forgiveness of sins.** "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

"In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:13).

The Earthly Tabernacle (Hebrews 9:1-10)

The writer brings to memory the tabernacle and the service of the priests. The first covenant had ordinances of divine service and an earthly sanctuary (Hebrews 9:1). The first part of the tabernacle held the lampstand, the table and the showbread (Hebrews 9:2). Behind the second veil was the Holiest of All, with the golden censer and the ark of the covenant. In the ark were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant, with the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat (Hebrews 9:3-5).

- The priests went into the first part of the tabernacle always, performing the services (Hebrews 9:6).
- Only the high priest went into the second part, once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance (Hebrews 9:7).
- The tabernacle was "symbolic for the present time" (Hebrews 9:9). It was a copy and shadow of things to come (Hebrews 8:4-5).
- Those services could not make the one who performed them perfect in regard to the conscience (Hebrews 9:9-10).

Christ, the Greatest High Priest and the Greatest Sacrifice (Hebrews 9:11-15)

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the writer turns the focus to the greatest High Priest and the greatest sacrifice: Christ. He is the High Priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle (Hebrews 9:11).

- Christ provides eternal redemption, and His own blood provides it, finally. "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12).

- Christ offered Himself without spot to God (Hebrews 9:14). “How much more shall the blood of Christ… cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”
- Christ’s death was for all people of all time (Hebrews 9:15).

Sacrifice Required (Hebrews 9:16-28)

The bringing of a new covenant required a death. “For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator” (Hebrews 9:16). When does a will become active? It does not take force until the testator is dead (Hebrews 9:17).

- The first covenant was dedicated with blood, the blood of calves and goats (Hebrews 9:18-21).
- “Without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22).
- The heavenly things are purified with better sacrifices (Hebrews 9:23).
- Christ entered heaven itself, “now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24).
- Christ did not have to offer Himself often, as the high priest did every year (Hebrews 9:25-26).
- It is “appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).
- Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, and “to those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28; see 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

Scripture Reading List

- Hebrews 8:1-6
- Hebrews 8:7-13
- Hebrews 9:1-10
- Hebrews 9:11-15
- Hebrews 9:16-28
- Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm 110:1, Acts 8:36-38, 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

Discussion Questions

1. What is the main point the writer makes in Hebrews 8:1? Where is our High Priest seated?
2. What is the true tabernacle? Who erected it? (Hebrews 8:2; 9:24)
3. Was the first covenant faultless? Who was at fault? (Hebrews 8:7-9)
4. What four things did God promise about the new covenant? (Hebrews 8:10-12) How does a person enter that covenant relationship?
5. What items were in the tabernacle and in the ark of the covenant? Who could enter the Holiest of All, and how often? (Hebrews 9:2-7)

6. Why could the blood of animals not cleanse the conscience? What did Christ's blood obtain? (Hebrews 9:9-14)
7. How many times is it appointed for men to die? When will Christ appear the second time, and for whom? (Hebrews 9:27-28)

This Week

> Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 next to Hebrews 8:8-12 and underline every "I will." Then read Hebrews 10.

LESSON 6

Let Us Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Endure

Key Texts: *Hebrews 10; Matthew 5:17; Colossians 2:14; James 1:6-8; Matthew 6:19-20; Philippians 3:7-8*

Teaching Reading

Goal: *Learn why the law could never take away sins, how the one offering of Christ perfects the sanctified, what the new attitude of the sanctified looks like, the danger of falling back, and how to keep enduring.*

Quick Review

- Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6).
- Christ entered the Most Holy Place once for all with His own blood (Hebrews 9:12).
- Without shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22).

Regarding the Law (Hebrews 10:1-7)

- The law had a shadow of the good things to come (Hebrews 10:1). Some of those good things: the sacrifice of God's Son leading to eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12), and the sacrifice of Christ that can make one complete (Hebrews 10:14).
- The law could not make anyone perfect (Hebrews 10:1). "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4).
- In those sacrifices there was a reminder of sins every year (Hebrews 10:3).
- Christ came to do the will of God and establish a better covenant (Hebrews 10:5-7; 8:6-13).

The Perfection of the Sanctified (Hebrews 10:8-18)

Christ took away the first to establish the second (Hebrews 10:9). Remember that Christ fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17) and nailed it to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

The sacrifice of the body of Christ:

- **Sanctifies.** "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).
- **Was a one time offering** (Hebrews 10:10, 12). It was not like the priests who offered the same sacrifices again and again (Hebrews 10:11).
- **Was a sacrifice for sins** (Hebrews 10:12). The sacrifice of Christ was to take away sins for all who believe (John 3:16).

- **Allowed Christ to sit down at the right hand of God**, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool (Hebrews 10:12-13).
- **Perfected forever those who are being sanctified.** "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

The forgiveness of sins was promised by the Father along with the new covenant (Hebrews 10:15-18). The Holy Spirit witnesses to it (Hebrews 10:15; 2 Peter 1:21). Where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin (Hebrews 10:18). So, therefore… (Hebrews 10:19).

The New Attitude of the Sanctified (Hebrews 10:19-25)

Those sanctified have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19). That boldness comes by thankfulness in Christ Jesus, by the new and living way He consecrated for us, and by the entrance through the veil, that is, His flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20).

Look at the three "Let us" statements: **Let us draw near. Let us hold fast. Let us consider.**

Let us draw near (Hebrews 10:22). Things you need to draw near: "a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

Let us hold fast (Hebrews 10:23). "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." You must not waver (James 1:6-8). Remember that He who promised is faithful (1 Corinthians 1:9). It is impossible for God to lie (Titus 1:2).

Let us consider (Hebrews 10:24-25). This is the Christian's relation to others: "let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Consider and stir each other up by not forsaking the assembly. Encouragement motivates us to good works and perseverance.

The Tragedy of Falling Back (Hebrews 10:26-27)

Consider the danger of willful sin. "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26; see 1 John 1:5-7). What is left is a fearful expectation of judgment (Hebrews 10:27). Remember the judgment occurs after death (Hebrews 9:27). At the judgment, the books are opened (Revelation 20:11-15). Christ brought hope to the judgment (1 Corinthians 15).

In the Hands of the Living God (Hebrews 10:28-31)

The writer recalls what the Hebrew Christians knew about the one who rejected the law of Moses: he died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses (Hebrews 10:28). Then he asks, "Of how much worse punishment" will a person be thought worthy who has (Hebrews 10:29):

- Trampled the Son of God underfoot,
- Counted the blood of the covenant a common thing,
- Insulted the Spirit of grace.

Possibly the scariest verse in the Bible: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord (Hebrews 10:30). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

Endurance, Attitude and Encouragement (Hebrews 10:32-39)

- **Remember the struggle** (Hebrews 10:32-33). After they obeyed, they endured a great struggle. They were made a spectacle, and they stood with others in the same condition.
- **The attitude of endurance** (Hebrews 10:34). They had compassion, and they joyfully accepted the loss of their goods, knowing they had a better and an enduring possession in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20; Philippians 3:7-8).
- **Encouragement for the future** (Hebrews 10:35-39). "Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35-36). Notice they must do the will of God to receive the promise.
- Part of the encouragement is the coming of Christ (Hebrews 10:37). "Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38).
- Do not go back, but go forward to the saving of souls. "But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:39).

Here is the reality. Hebrews was written to believers who were tired and discouraged, and faith had become costly and ordinary. Enduring faith is not sustained by emotional highs, but by confidence in God's character and daily commitment to His ways. When faith becomes routine, the danger is not rebellion; it is drifting (Hebrews 2:1). God does not ask you to be impressive. He asks you to be faithful. Nothing done in faith is wasted, because God sees it all (Hebrews 6:10).

Scripture Reading List

- Hebrews 10:1-7
- Hebrews 10:8-18
- Hebrews 10:19-25
- Hebrews 10:26-27
- Hebrews 10:28-31

- Hebrews 10:32-39
- Matthew 5:17, Colossians 2:14, James 1:6-8, Matthew 6:19-20, Philippians 3:7-8

Discussion Questions

1. The law was a _____ of good things to come. Why could the law not make anyone perfect? (Hebrews 10:1-4)
2. What does the sacrifice of the body of Christ do, according to Hebrews 10:10-14?
3. What three things do you need to draw near? (Hebrews 10:22) How does this connect to baptism?
4. Why can we hold fast without wavering? (Hebrews 10:23)
5. What does Hebrews 10:24-25 teach about the assembly? How can you stir up love and good works in your congregation?
6. What remains for those who sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth? (Hebrews 10:26-31)
7. The just shall live by _____. Where does drifting show up in your own walk, and what will you do about it? (Hebrews 10:35-39)

This Week

> Choose one "Let us" from Hebrews 10:22-25 and put it into practice every day this week. Then read Hebrews 11.

LESSON 7

By Faith: The Heroes of Hebrews 11

Key Texts: *Hebrews 11; Genesis 4-22; Exodus 2; Joshua 2, 6; Romans 4:16-21; James 2:21*

Teaching Reading

Goal: *Learn what faith is, why it is impossible to please God without it, and how the heroes of faith lived, waited and endured, so that you can live by faith too.*

Quick Review

- Let us draw near, let us hold fast, let us consider (Hebrews 10:22-25).
- You have need of endurance (Hebrews 10:36).
- The just shall live by faith (Hebrews 10:38).

What Is Faith? (Hebrews 11:1-3)

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

- It is substance. Some translations say realization.
- It is evidence. Some translations say conviction.
- Our understanding comes through faith (Hebrews 11:3). We understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, and that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

The Heroes of Faith

This chapter is a small list of the many faithful people in the Bible. The writer even says, "time would fail me to tell" of them all (Hebrews 11:32).

Abel (Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:3-5). He offered a more excellent sacrifice, and he was commended as righteous. Even though Abel is physically no more, he still speaks (see Hebrews 12:24).

Enoch (Hebrews 11:5; Genesis 5:21-24). Enoch was translated. Translated means to move from one form to another form (see 1 Corinthians 15:35-54). He pleased God.

Faith and pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6). "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." When you come to God, believe that He is, and believe that He is a rewarder. How does a person diligently seek God?

Noah (Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6-8). He was divinely warned of things not yet seen. He was moved with godly fear. He prepared the ark according to God's specifications. He condemned the world, and he became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Abraham and Sarah (Hebrews 11:8-12; Genesis 12-22). He obeyed when he was called, and he went out not knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11:8). He trusted God to lead him. How much do Christians trust in God (Romans 8:28)? Through faith, Sarah received strength to conceive, because she judged Him faithful who had promised (Hebrews 11:11). Knowing the promise of God, they depended on God (Romans 4:16-21).

A Special Note: A Better Country (Hebrews 11:13-16)

- They saw the promises afar off, were assured of them, and embraced them (Hebrews 11:13).
- They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Hebrews 11:13).
- They were seeking a homeland (Hebrews 11:14; see 13:14).
- They desired a better, that is, a heavenly country (Hebrews 11:16).
- "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them" (Hebrews 11:16). The reward of a city awaits: the city of heaven.

Passing Down Genuine Faith (Hebrews 11:17-22)

Is there a difference between genuine faith and inherited faith? See 2 Timothy 1:5 and Deuteronomy 6:7.

- **Abraham** (Hebrews 11:17-19). The offering of Isaac was a test of faith. Abraham knew God had a way. He concluded "that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Hebrews 11:19; see James 2:21).
- **Isaac** (Hebrews 11:20). He blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come (Genesis 27:26-40).
- **Jacob** (Hebrews 11:21). He blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped even though he was weak, leaning on the top of his staff (Genesis 47:31; 48:1-20).
- **Joseph** (Hebrews 11:22). He made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

From Pharaoh's Grandson to Pharaoh's Adversary (Hebrews 11:23-28)

- Moses was hidden three months by his parents (Hebrews 11:23). Why did they hide the child? What was the king's command (Exodus 1:16)?
- When he became of age, Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Hebrews 11:24).
- He chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25).
- He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he looked to the reward (Hebrews 11:26).

- Was Moses committed to his decision? He forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, "for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27).

The Others (Hebrews 11:29-38)

- **The nation of Israel** (Hebrews 11:29-30). They walked through the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-22). They conquered Jericho by following God, marching around the city seven days (Joshua 6:1-20).
- **Rahab** (Hebrews 11:31). She hid the spies (Joshua 2:1-14), and as a result she did not perish with Jericho (Joshua 6:22-25).
- **"Time would fail me to tell…"** (Hebrews 11:32). Gideon (Judges 6-8), Barak (Judges 4), Samson (Judges 13-16), Jephthah (Judges 11-12), David (1 Samuel 17 through 2 Samuel 24), Samuel (1 Samuel 1-7), and the prophets.

Look at the achievements and actions of faith (Hebrews 11:33-38):

- Subdued kingdoms (2 Samuel 5:4-25; 8:1-14)
- Worked righteousness (the judges)
- Obtained promises (the nation received the promised land, Joshua 21-23)
- Stopped the mouths of lions (Daniel 6:21-22; Judges 14:6)
- Quenched the violence of fire (Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, Daniel 3:23-25)
- Escaped the edge of the sword (David fled the wrath of Saul, 1 Samuel 23:19-29)
- Turned to flight the armies of the aliens (David, 1 Samuel 17:50)
- Women received their dead raised to life again (the Shunammite woman, 2 Kings 4:8-37)
- Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection
- Others had trials of mockings and scourgings, chains and imprisonment (Micaiah, 1 Kings 22:24-28; Jeremiah 37-38)
- They were stoned (Zechariah, 2 Chronicles 24:20-22), sawn in two, tempted, and slain with the sword (Uriah the prophet, Jeremiah 26:20-23)
- They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented (see Elijah, 2 Kings 1:8)

A Worthiness the World Could Not Measure (Hebrews 11:38-40)

- They were people "of whom the world was not worthy" (Hebrews 11:38).
- They all obtained a good testimony through faith (Hebrews 11:2, 39).
- They did not receive the promise in their lifetime. They were not alive when Christ came to the earth.
- The law could make nothing perfect (Hebrews 9:9-10; 10:1-4), but Christ can make them perfect (Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:11-14).

- What they did not receive in their earthly lifetime, they received with the coming of Christ, for Christ came to redeem all (Hebrews 9:15). They were made perfect, just as we are made perfect (Hebrews 11:40; 10:14).

Scripture Reading List

- Hebrews 11:1-3
- Hebrews 11:13-16
- Hebrews 11:17-22
- Hebrews 11:23-28
- Hebrews 11:29-38
- Hebrews 11:38-40
- Genesis 4-22, Exodus 2, Joshua 2, 6, Romans 4:16-21, James 2:21

Discussion Questions

1. What is faith according to Hebrews 11:1? What do we understand by faith? (Hebrews 11:3)
2. What did Abel, Enoch and Noah each do by faith? (Hebrews 11:4-7)
3. Without faith it is impossible to do what? What must the one who comes to God believe? (Hebrews 11:6)
4. Abraham went out not knowing where he was going. How much do you trust God to lead you? (Hebrews 11:8; Romans 8:28)
5. What were the faithful seeking? What kind of country did they desire? (Hebrews 11:13-16)
6. Is there a difference between genuine faith and inherited faith? How do we pass genuine faith down? (2 Timothy 1:5; Deuteronomy 6:7)
7. What did Moses choose, and what did he refuse? What "passing pleasures" do people hold onto today? (Hebrews 11:24-26)

This Week

> Write your own "by faith" line: one thing you will do this week only because God said it. Then read Hebrews 12 and 13.

LESSON 8

Run the Race, Then What Shall We Do?

Key Texts: *Hebrews 12-13; Isaiah 40:31; Exodus 19:12-15; Acts 20:17-28; 1 Peter 5:1-3*

Teaching Reading

Goal: *Learn how to run the race with endurance while looking unto Jesus, why the Lord disciplines His children, what the better kingdom is, and what Hebrews 13 tells us to do. Then respond to the better Savior.*

Quick Review

- Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).
- Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).
- The faithful desired a better, heavenly country (Hebrews 11:16).

The Race Set Before Us (Hebrews 12:1-3)

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2). There is our key verse again.

- **The cloud of witnesses.** Who are these witnesses? Look back at Hebrews 11. They are not spectators; they are testifiers.
- **Lay aside every weight.** Put it away, remove it. What are the weights? See the Ephesian example (Ephesians 2:1-3; Acts 19:18-20) and Colossians 3:1-11.
- **The sin which so easily ensnares us.** Could this be the sin of unbelief? (Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:26-39)
- **Run with endurance.** Let us keep on running. The Christian life is not a sprint! Endurance is taught (Matthew 10:22; 2 Timothy 2:3). Look at examples of endurance (2 Timothy 2:10; 3:11; Hebrews 10:32-33) and the reward of endurance (James 1:12).
- **Looking unto Jesus.** Where is the focus? He is the author, the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 1:8, 11), who has entered the heavenly sanctuary for us (Hebrews 6:19-20). He is the finisher, who opened a new and living way (Hebrews 10:20) and finished the work the Father gave Him (John 17:4; 19:30).

- **The joy set before Him.** What was the joy that was set before Him? Could it be the joy of sitting at the right hand (Psalm 16:9-11; Acts 2:25-31; Hebrews 1:3)? He endured the cross and despised the shame (Isaiah 53).
- **Consider Him** (Hebrews 12:3). He endured the hostility of sinners against Himself (Luke 4:28-29; 11:15-16). Our motivation is Christ: "those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31).

The Lord's Discipline (Hebrews 12:4-11)

The readers had not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin (Hebrews 12:4). The writer reminds them of the exhortation that speaks to them as sons (Hebrews 12:5). "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6).

- Who does the Lord discipline? Those He loves (Hebrews 12:6).
- Why does God discipline? He deals with you as with sons (Hebrews 12:7).
- What does discipline show? That you are His children (Hebrews 12:8).
- If we respected our earthly fathers who corrected us, how much more should we be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live (Hebrews 12:9)?
- He disciplines "for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).
- "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11).

Now, After Discipline (Hebrews 12:12-17)

- Lift up and get up: strengthen the hands which hang down and the feeble knees (Hebrews 12:12).
- Move in the right direction: make straight paths for your feet (Hebrews 12:13).
- "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).
- See that no one falls short of the grace of God, and that no root of bitterness springs up (Hebrews 12:15).
- Do not become like Esau, who sold his birthright for one morsel of food. Remember how quickly the promise was overlooked. Afterward he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears (Hebrews 12:16-17).

The Better Kingdom (Hebrews 12:18-29)

In verses 18-21 the writer describes Mount Sinai: the fire, the darkness, the trumpet and the voice (see Exodus 19:12-15). Even Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling" (Hebrews 12:21; see Deuteronomy 9:19).

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are

registered in heaven" (Hebrews 12:22-23). You have come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 12:24).

"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks" (Hebrews 12:25). Those who refused Him who spoke on earth did not escape. Now God will shake not only the earth, but also heaven, so that the things which cannot be shaken may remain (Hebrews 12:26-27). "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28-29).

What Shall We Do? (Hebrews 13:1-14)

Remember what came before. Hebrews 12:1 begins with "Therefore." Look at all they have received. So what shall we do?

- "Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1).
- Show hospitality. "Do not forget to entertain strangers" (Hebrews 13:2).
- Remember those in prison, as if chained with them (Hebrews 13:3).
- Keep marriage moral. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).
- Depend on God, and be content. "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5-6).
- Remember your leaders, those who have spoken the word of God to you, and follow their faith (Hebrews 13:7).
- "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).
- "Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines" (Hebrews 13:9). Why does the writer mention foods? Is this a part of their Jewish background?
- Jesus suffered outside the gate, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood. "Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:12-13). "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come" (Hebrews 13:14).

Continuing Requests (Hebrews 13:15-19)

- **Offer continual praise to God** (Hebrews 13:15). Notice this praise is a sacrifice, a sacrifice of praise, "the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."
- **The sacrifice of doing good and sharing** (Hebrews 13:16). "Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (see Galatians 6:10; Acts 4:32-35). Could these be a sweet smelling aroma (Philippians 4:18)?
- **Obey those who rule over you** (Hebrews 13:17). The writer has already written of leaders (Hebrews 13:7). These leaders are most likely the elders of the local congregation. Elders are given the oversight of the local congregation (Acts 20:17-28; 1 Peter 5:1-2), and they will one day give an account for the souls of the flock (Hebrews 13:17). When the flock obeys and submits, the elders can do their work with joy, and that is profitable for the whole congregation.

- **Pray! Pray! Pray!** (Hebrews 13:18-19). The writer is confident they have a good conscience, and he asks them to pray that he may be restored to them sooner.

Closing Thoughts (Hebrews 13:20-25)

How is Jesus described in verses 20 and 21? He is "our Lord Jesus," brought up from the dead, "that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." The writer prays that God will "make you complete in every good work to do His will" (Hebrews 13:20-21). His appeal: "bear with the word of exhortation" (Hebrews 13:22). He tells them Timothy has been set free, sends greetings to all the leaders and the saints, and passes along greetings from those from Italy (Hebrews 13:23-24). "Grace be with you all. Amen" (Hebrews 13:25).

Christ Is Better. What Will You Do?

For eight weeks we have seen it over and over. Christ is better than the prophets, the angels, Moses, the priesthood of Aaron, the Old Covenant and its sacrifices. Christians are better because Christ is better. A better Savior deserves a full response. Here is what the Lord asks of you:

- **Hear** the word of God (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 2:1).
- **Believe** that Jesus is the Son of God, for without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24).
- **Repent** of your sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30).
- **Confess** Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9-10; Hebrews 10:23).
- **Be baptized** for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16), having your body washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22).
- **Remain faithful** until death (Revelation 2:10), holding fast your confidence firm to the end (Hebrews 3:6, 14).

Are you in the race? If you have never obeyed the gospel, do not wait. If you have drifted, come home today. The throne of grace is open, and we have a High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Closing Prayer

Our Father in heaven, thank You for speaking to us by Your Son. Thank You for Jesus, who is better than the prophets, better than the angels, better than Moses, and our faithful High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses. Thank You for His blood, shed once for all, and for the better covenant built on better promises. Help us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and help us run with endurance, looking unto Jesus. Keep us from drifting. Help us draw near, hold fast, and consider one another. Make us complete in every good work to do Your will. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Scripture Reading List

- Hebrews 12:1-3
- Hebrews 12:4-11
- Hebrews 12:12-17
- Hebrews 12:18-29
- Hebrews 13:1-14
- Hebrews 13:15-19
- Hebrews 13:20-25
- Isaiah 40:31, Exodus 19:12-15, Acts 20:17-28, 1 Peter 5:1-3

Discussion Questions

1. Who is the cloud of witnesses? What weights and sins do you need to lay aside? (Hebrews 12:1)
2. What does it mean that the Christian life is not a sprint? Where is your focus as you run? (Hebrews 12:1-3)
3. Who does the Lord discipline, and why? What does discipline produce? (Hebrews 12:5-11)
4. What happened to Esau? What does his example warn us about? (Hebrews 12:16-17)
5. What have Christians come to, according to Hebrews 12:22-24? What kind of kingdom are we receiving? (Hebrews 12:28)
6. Which instruction in Hebrews 13:1-9 do you most need to work on? Why?
7. Why should we obey those who rule over us? What sacrifices please God? (Hebrews 13:15-17)

This Week

> Pick one item from “What Shall We Do?” and act on it this week. If you have never obeyed the gospel, talk with a faithful Christian or contact us at The Preacher’s Pen today.