

HEBREWS Introduction

It will be a pretty long series because the book / letter to the Hebrews is rather long. It can also be a bit complicated. I actually avoided teaching through this until a few years ago when I tackled it in a Sunday School class.

As a Review let's see the [Steps to Spiritual Drifting](#) that we find in this letter / sermon "to the Hebrews" These themes will be developed over the coming weeks.

1. Laziness -
2. Hardened Heart - 3:12-14 -
3. Self-Pity - 4:14-16 14
4. Restlessness - ch 3-
5. Lack of purpose - BOREDOM- 5:11-
6. Pride - 12:1-10 looking to self instead of looking to Christ.
7. Low tolerance for reproof - 12:5-11
8. Lack of contentment - Heb 13

Spiritual drifting leads to losing perspective as we put other things above Christ. It may not be intentional, but it means that we end up in a spiritual wasteland none the less.

The call of Hebrews is to "remember Jesus" who is superior to everything else.

Today will be more introductory remarks with some of the tips on how to read the book of Hebrews.

NOTE THAT The author is not afraid to use the word "better" when describing Jesus. You may or may not like the phrase "American exceptionalism" but the author of Hebrews is very clear about a Jesus exceptionalism.

That is not a popular thing today - to say that someone is "better" than someone else. In the sports world some have changed the label MVP to MOP. I guess some highly paid athletes were offended that only one person in the sport was the most "valuable". They are all valuable (especially when you look at their contracts). I don't see how "most outstanding" is any less "offensive" than "most valuable"
I guess the Holy Spirit inspired author of Hebrews is "old school" and is not too concerned about hurting the feelings of those who are clinging to the inferior things.

Jesus is definitely the MVP and the MOP.

As we saw in the video last week,
[Jesus is better than Angels and Torah 1-2](#)
[Jesus is better than Moses and the Promised Land 3-4](#)
[Jesus is better than Priests and Melchizedek 5-7](#)
[Jesus is better than Sacrifice and Covenant 8-10](#)

Jesus gives a better hope, he gives better promises, he is a better sacrifice, and he leads us into a better country. He is a better high priest.
What makes all of this better is that in Christ it's all eternal.

Jesus has secured for us an eternal salvation and eternal redemption and eternal inheritance and an eternal relationship with God.

With the coming of Christ we move from the “shadows” to the SUBSTANCE. ALL of those other trappings of religious expression were the shadows of what was to come. Jesus actually embodied all of the realities that were pictured by the shadows.

This next section may seem a bit wonky, but it will be helpful for those who are reading along in Hebrews during this series.

Reference [How to read the Bible Book by Book – Gordon Fee/ Douglas Stuart](#)

SPECIFIC ADVICE FOR READING HEBREWS Most contemporary Christians do not find Hebrews an easy read, for at least two reasons:

- (1) its structure of a single, sustained argument, interlaced with application and exhortations, and
- (2) the author’s basic ways of perceiving reality which is so foreign to ours.

The author is a first century writer with an extensive knowledge of OT practices and customs. We are 21st Century readers who find much of the OT really hard to understand.

Thus there are two keys to a good reading.

First, keep in sight the two foci that concern the author throughout:

- (1) the overwhelming majesty of Jesus, the Son of God, who stands at the beginning and the end of all things and whose suffering in his incarnation made him a perfect high priest on their behalf (he both dealt with sin finally and perfectly and is also a merciful and empathetic intercessor), and
- (2) all of this is spoken into the present despondency of the people to whom he writes, who have had a long siege of hardship (10:32–39) and who are beginning to wonder whether Jesus really is God’s final answer.

That second point may resonate with some of you today. In the midst of your long siege of hardship you may have started to wonder whether God has any answers for you.

One of the things I like about the bible is that it is real. It deals with real people who are facing real hardships and real doubts. The bible is not afraid to acknowledge the gritty side of life, and it doesn’t give easy pat answers.

Here’s a simple tip for reading the Bible in general. Try to put yourself in their shoes: Jews who had long ago put their trust in Christ, believing that at long last the fulfillment of their messianic hopes had come—only to have suffering (and sin) continue long after they had first believed.

Second, since everything for him (and them) hinges on his exposition of Scripture as pointing to Christ, it is especially important for you to have a sense of how the writer of Hebrews uses Scripture and what Scriptures he actually uses.

Four things are important about his use of Scripture:

- (1) His and their only Bible was the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

- (2) He regularly uses a very common rabbinic way of arguing, namely, “from the lesser to the greater” (= if something is true of a”A” how much more so of “Z”).

(3) He reads the entire Old Testament through the lens of Christ, understanding well that the royal psalms point to David's greater son, the Messiah.

(4) His form of scriptural argument is to cite his text and then show how other texts and the events of Christ supporting his reading of these texts.

This is an especially important document in the biblical story in that it shows both the continuity of the new with the old (Christ has fulfilled the old, thus completing its purpose) and the nature of discontinuity (the people of God are now newly constituted...

Thus ends the wonky part. Now let us move toward diving into some key takeaways from this sermon/letter.

Since we often begin a meal with the salad it would be appropriate to begin this meal with the "let us" salad. Over the course of the series we will see how these things are explained.

The reason for doing this is to point out that even though it's a lengthy and complicated book it has some valuable implications for our lives. I don't want you to zone out during the series thinking that it's just old testament theology being tied into the New testament. Those in the pews, rows, and pulpit want to know the answer to the question "SO WHAT?"

I'M GOING to front load the "so what?" so that you will stay engaged with the text as you read the letter on your own.

A New and Living Way Hebrews 10

19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Those exhortations are a "let us" salad. There are five heads of "let us" in this salad.

EACH WEEK I will seek to TO CONNECT THE PASSAGE WITH ONE OF THESE EXHORTATIONS.

They will serve as guideposts as we go through the study of the book.
They are the fruit of the ministry of Christ in our lives as a community.
They are in the plural form ie let US.

If you are here today and you don't consider yourself as a Christian, or Jesus follower then this "let us" salad is not for you, YET. But it can be one day.

No matter where you are in your spiritual journey, these five applications probably resonate with your heart and soul

Let us draw near to God.

Who doesn't want to have a community of friends who will help you draw near to God? Remember that these exhortations are IN THE PLURAL.

If you're not a Jesus follower today, but you are here there is a good chance that deep down you want the whole "God thing" to be true. Why wouldn't you want Jesus to be who the Bible says he is?

As believers (most of us) we also need to remember that drawing near to God takes place in community.

A SHEEP WHO GETS SEPERATED = Dinner for the wolf

Let us hold fast to our Hope.

Who doesn't want a hope to hold fast to? If you are not a believer and you are consistent with the naturalist secular worldview, then you should be honest and admit that it is a worldview that offers no hope to hold on to.

If we arrived on this planet by some sort of cosmic accident, and we simply become dust, ashes, and worm food when we die, then it is ultimately dishonest to claim some sort of grand purpose or hope during the years we have on this earth.

You can pretend that life has meaning, but remember that it's only make believe.

A world without hope →→→→ N.Y. abortion laws where human life is devalued even after birth.

Let us spur one another on to love and Good deeds.

Who doesn't need others to spur us on to being better people?

Positive change doesn't happen in isolation.

One of the three crucial decisions we have to make in life is to admit that you can't change yourself by yourself.

THAT IS TRUE FOR BELIEVERS and non-believers.

Let us not forsake meeting together with others.

Who doesn't need a supportive community? We may not want to admit it, but it's true. Sadly men can be pretty bad with this. That's a whole other sermon.

The LAS VEGAS SHOOTER - <https://worldandeverything.org/2019/02/culture-friday-bowling-alone/> The attacker's brother said, quoting here, "No affiliation. No religion. No politics. He never cared about any of that stuff."

EX: movie - ALL IS LOST - why was he out there alone? (Putnam's book "Bowling Alone")

Let us encourage one another

I think we all understand the power of encouragement, because we had it or because we didn't have it. WE all want it and need it.

In the middle of the word encouragement is "courage".

We need others to give us courage when we are desperate because of the long siege of hardship in our lives.

If you don't have someone you could call tomorrow if hardship comes, then you are missing something vital in your life.

I'll go out on a limb here and say that if you are over 30 and don't have someone, then it is probably your fault. You may want to blame others - don't.

Please note that this Let Us salad begins with DRAW NEAR TO God.

HOW?? That's what Hebrews is all about - by fixing our eyes on Jesus.

No one was there to speak courage to His heart. He was even abandoned by the Father, SO THAT WE WON'T HAVE TO BE.

THAT is now possible because of He came to fulfill what had been promised from long ago.
We are called to keep our eyes on Him because He is superior to everything else.

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