

“Putting the Pieces Back Together: The Message of Hebrews”^{**}

Main Idea: After spending months working our way through Hebrews verse by verse, it's time to put the pieces back together and take one final look at the message of Hebrews. In terms of the big picture, Hebrews teaches us about three vital subjects.

I. Hebrews teaches us about the superior identity of Christ (chs 1-7).

A. We see it in the titles.

1. He is the Son (1:2).
2. He is the Heir of all things (1:2).
3. He is the King (1:8).
4. He is the Lord (2:3).
5. He is the Author of salvation (2:10).
6. He is the High Priest (2:17; 4:14; 5:10).
7. He is the Apostle (3:1).
8. He is the Christ (3:14).
9. He is the Son of God (4:14).

B. We see it in the comparisons.

1. He's superior to angels (1:4ff.).
2. He's superior to Moses (3:3).
3. He's superior to human priests (4:14-7:28).

II. Hebrews teaches us about the superior accomplishments of Christ (chs 8-10).

A. He established a better covenant (ch 8).

B. He entered a better sanctuary (ch 9).

C. He offered a better sacrifice (ch 10).

1. He took away sins (10:12).
2. He made sinners holy (10:10, 14).
3. He opened the way for us to enter the presence of God (10:19-22).

III. Hebrews teaches us about the appropriate response to Christ (chs 11-13).

A. We're given warnings (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14-29).

B. We're given exhortations (4:1, 11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22, 23, 24, 25; 12:1, 2, 28;

13:13, 15).

C. We're given examples.

1. We must believe in Him (ch 11).
2. We must fix our eyes on Him (ch 12).
3. We must keep living in a way that pleases Him (ch 13).

Response: Is the supreme Christ supreme in my life?

Years ago I heard Warren Wiersbe give a helpful piece of advice on how to preach through a book in the Bible. He said to use the first message to tell the people where you're going. Then preach your way through the book. Then, take a final message to remind the people where you've been. I've found that excellent advice and I'd like to heed it today.

Back in December of 2007 we began a verse by verse journey through the book of Hebrews, and with a couple of breaks in the middle we've now reached our destination. We've devoted fifty sermons to dissect and investigate this amazing epistle line by line.[\[1\]](#) But now to conclude I'd like to devote one final message to put it all back together again. This morning I want us to see the message of Hebrews as a whole.

Yet to appreciate this wonderful book, to see the relevance of its message for us, we need to grasp the challenging situation faced by its first readers. That's a challenge because the book itself doesn't tell us who received this message. But based on the content, we can conjecture who these "Hebrews" were. Let me paint a potential scenario that may well sum up why Hebrews was written...

Your neighbors haven't spoken to you in months. You used to enjoy their company, but now they say you're crazy and avoid you like a plague. At the last family reunion you sat by yourself, shunned by your own flesh and blood. Even your own mother breaks eye contact with you from across the room. Just last week your boss threatened to fire you. It has nothing to do with job performance, he insists, for you've always demonstrated quality work in your twenty years with the business. He says he's fed up with the interpersonal strife you've brought to the workplace ever since the day you shared you'd become a follower of Jesus the Messiah.

And the cumulative effect is starting to wear on you. You were so excited five years ago when you heard about Jesus and shortly thereafter placed your faith in Him, but now you find yourself wondering whether it's worth the rejection and pain. Oh, you knew there would be a price to pay if you became a Jesus-follower, but you underestimated the hostility you'd encounter.

You can still hear your father's verbal assault reverberating in your mind from a conversation four years ago, "You are a fool! Our ancestors have been worshipping the Lord according to Torah for over fourteen hundred years. We have followed the laws of Moses and journeyed to the Holy Place with our sacrifices year after year. We have sought the blessing of the high priest as instructed in Leviticus. We have remained faithful to the covenant God established on Mount Sinai. But you have blasphemed the name of our God and disgraced our family! You no longer obey Moses. You no longer bring the prescribed sacrifices to Jerusalem. You no longer have a priest. You have disowned your God-given heritage, and I have no choice but to disown you. You are no longer my son."

And with that he turned his back to you and walked away. Maybe he'll soften, you assured yourself. But that was four years ago and the silent treatment only intensified.

To top it off, you know you could remove the tension at home and in the community, and you could have job security again, and you wouldn't even have to stop believing in Jesus. Oh, you'd have to tone

down the Jesus-talk, sure, but you could have your good, old life back again if only you would do what you used to do and start bringing your sacrifices back to the high priest in the temple and start keeping the old covenant guidelines like you used to do.

To go back or *not to go back*, that is the question. What will you do?

It was to a group of Jewish Christians facing that very decision that the book we call Hebrews was penned. The writer doesn't name himself. Who he is isn't important, but what he had to say was. To friends of his who were considering turning from Jesus and going back to their old beliefs and practices he wrote this Holy Spirit-inspired "word of exhortation" (13:22). It's basically a fifty minute sermon, and it has three main points with a host of sub-points and applications along the way.

The preacher's message is quite mind-stretching, but his aim is motivational, not merely informational, as we'll see when we get to point number three. Hebrews is a word of *exhortation*. That's the purpose of a good sermon, not simply to learn a bunch of facts and information, but to challenge us to do something with and for the person of Jesus Christ, no matter what the cost. Now let's ponder the message of Hebrews...

I. Hebrews teaches us about the superior identity of Christ (chs 1-7).

Notice how the message begins in Hebrews 1:1-2, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..." Let that sink in. *God has spoken to us by His Son*. That's an incredible statement and it ought to raise some questions for us, like...

One, who is the Son? Two, what did God say to us by his Son? And three, how should we respond to the Son and His message? The answers to these three questions provide the structure of the book of Hebrews. We find out who the Son is in chapters 1-7, what God said through the actions of His Son in chapters 8-10, and how we should respond to the Son in chapters 11-13.

In the beginning of the message, the writer/preacher highlights the superior identity of Christ, and he does it in two ways.

A. We see it in the titles. Let's take a look at the different titles the writer uses to refer to Christ in this section. I'll point out nine, but there are probably more.

1. *He is the Son (1:2)*. We hear the term in reference to Christ more than a dozen times in the book. 1:2—"God has spoken to us by his Son." 1:3—"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." 1:5—"For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son?'" 3:6—"But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house." 5:8—"Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered." So Christ is the Son. It follows then, secondly, that...

2. *He is the Heir of all things (1:2)*. Hebrews 1:2 says that God "appointed" Him to be "heir of all things." It all belongs to Him for He made it all.

3. *He is the King (1:8)*. Notice 1:8, "But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.'" That's a quotation from Psalm 45:6, one of some seven Old Testament quotations in chapter one alone.

As you've probably noticed in our series, the writer of Hebrews quotes from the Old Testament continually, more than three dozen quotations (you can't tell it in English, but he almost always quotes from the LXX). Interestingly, nearly all of his quotes come from the Pentateuch and the Psalms.^[2] And why does he keep quoting from the Old Testament? For this reason, as Leon Morris observes, "The author sees Scripture as pointing to Jesus...This means more than that specific prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus. Rather

the thrust of the whole OT is such that it leads inescapably to him. The author writes of Christianity as the final religion, not because he regards the faith of the OT as mistaken, but because he sees it as God's way of pointing men to Jesus. Judaism is not so much abrogated by Christianity as brought to its climax."^[3]

Who is Christ? He is the Son. He is the Heir of all things. He is the King whose throne will last forever. What's more...

4. *He is the Lord (2:3)*. That's the title used in 2:3. The salvation we enjoy "was first announced by the Lord," by the *kurios*, the Master Himself.

5. *He is the Author of salvation (2:10)*. That's what He is called in 2:10 when the preacher says that God made "the author of their salvation perfect through suffering." Christ is writing a story, the story of salvation. You can't save yourself from your sins. Only He can do that. Simply put, if you're in the book, it's because He put you there.

6. *He is the High Priest (2:17; 4:14; 5:10)*. One of the charges the critics were throwing at the Hebrew Christians was this one. "Since you've left Judaism, you don't have a priest, and you can't approach a holy God without a priest!" But one of the main points in section one of the book is that we *do* have a priest. The writer explains in 2:17, "For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God..." Why did the Son of God become a man? Here's one reason, so we'd have a high priest!

Where is our high priest? You won't find Him in some earthly temple. Where then? The preacher tells us in 4:14 that "we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." That's significant. No, we don't have a priest on earth, that's true. We do have one who was on earth and according to 4:15 "was tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin." But He's not on earth now. So what difference does it make if you have a high priest in heaven? It makes possible this invitation in 4:16, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

7. *He is the Apostle (3:1)*. In fact, the writer combines a couple of titles in 3:1, "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess." Christ is "the sent one." That's what "apostle" means. He is *the Apostle*, the One the Father sent into the world to rescue sinners.

8. *He is the Christ (3:14)*. "We have come to share in Christ," says the writer in 3:14, in the *Messiah*, for that's what the title Christ means. We haven't denied our Jewish heritage. We affirm it fully. We believe that the Messiah promised in the Hebrew Scriptures has come, and we have come to share in Him. We are not renegade Jews, says the writer. We are completed Jews for we've given our allegiance to the Anointed One, the Christ.

9. *He is the Son of God (4:14)*. That's what the preacher calls Jesus in 4:14, not just "the Son" as he had earlier in the letter, but "Jesus the Son of God." If it wasn't true, those words would be blasphemous. But it is true, and to deny it is to deny reality. That's what Jesus Himself told the religious Jews in a claim that infuriated them and resulted ultimately in His crucifixion. Listen to Jesus in John 8:54-59:

"If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." "You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds."

My friend, is this the Jesus in whom you have believed? The Son, the Heir of all things, the King, the Lord, the Author of salvation, the High Priest, the Apostle, the Christ, and the Son of God? If it is, then it's unthinkable to turn back and leave Him. But it's also unthinkable to marginalize Him, to give Sunday lip-

service to Him, to tack Him on to a cluttered, self-absorbed life. He who is superior deserves to be superior in our lives.

There's a second way the writer calls attention to the superior identity of Christ. We see it in His titles, then we see it in something in the flow of the text...

B. We see it in the comparisons. That's the thrust of the first segment of the message of Hebrews. One of the key words the writer uses in the book of Hebrews is the word "better" (used eleven times), and he uses it to show that Christ is *better* than the supposed advantages of going back to Judaism. We find three comparisons in chapters 1-7, and in each Christ is superior. First, from 1:5 to 2:18 the writer makes the point that...

1. *He's superior to angels (1:4ff.).* Judaism had angels. In fact, there were angels present when God delivered the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. We certainly believe in angels, too, but we believe in One who is greater than angels!

The writer asks an interesting question in 1:13, "To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'?" The answer is, *none*. No angel has ever heard those instructions from Almighty God. But Christ has. Christ has heard His Father say, "Sit on your throne at my right hand. Sit there until I make all your enemies a footstool for your feet."

Again, as the writer reemphasizes in 2:5, "It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking." Angels are not going to rule the world. But Christ will. That's what we're told in 2:8-9, "In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor..."

Anybody eat pork this week? Anybody do any work on Saturday? Those are violations of Mosaic laws, so how do you justify your disobedience? That was a huge issue for a first century Jewish Christian, as it is today if you believe the Old Testament is God-inspired. It's the objection the writer addresses head-on with a second comparison beginning in 3:1 through 4:13. Not only is Christ superior to angels, but secondly...

2. *He's superior to Moses (3:3).* The Jews revered Moses, and rightly so. He led two million Jews out of bondage in Egypt. He received the Torah on Mount Sinai and penned the Pentateuch. He took the nation of Israel to outskirts of the promised land.

"You've turned your back on Moses!" the critics accused the first century Christians. No we haven't, says the writer of Hebrews. We esteem Moses. Notice 3:5, "Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future." Yes, thank God for Moses, for he was a wonderful servant. "But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house," says 3:5. "And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast."

Think about that analogy. Moses was a servant in the house. What's the role of a servant? He does the bidding of his master, right? You don't serve a servant. You serve the master. And who's the master? Christ is the master. He's the son over the house. Consequently, as the writer explains in 3:3, "Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself."

So Christ is superior to Moses. If that's true, there ought to be evidence of it, and there is. At the end of chapter three and in chapter four, the preacher presents something that Christ did that Moses never did. Christ obtained *Sabbath-rest* for His people. Moses, of course, led his people out of Egypt (3:16), but since their hearts were hard, in time they disobeyed God and perished in the wilderness (3:18-19). Moses couldn't give his people the assurance that all was well with them and God. He couldn't give them *rest*. Sure, he gave them the Law, but he couldn't make them obey it. He laid God's standard before them, but he couldn't bring them up to God's standard. He talked about Sabbath-rest, but in the end, even Moses himself sinned, died, and failed to give his people lasting rest.

What about Joshua? Did he do it? No. Joshua followed Moses, and while Joshua took the people into the land of promise, Joshua couldn't give them rest either.

So where do you go to find rest for your soul? The writer tells us in 4:8-10, "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his." If you want rest, if you want the assurance that all is well with God, you don't go to Moses for he can't give it to you. You must go to One greater than Moses, to the One who kept the righteous demands of the Law that Moses gave us. If you want God's rest, you must rest from your own work and go to Him who alone can give you rest, to Jesus Christ.

You say, "This sounds so complicated." Alright, let me simplify it. I was eleven years old when I realized that I lacked what I desperately needed and wanted. I wanted to be right with God, but I knew I fell short. I can remember lying on my bed at night in fear knowing that I was not right with God. Where could I find rest for my soul? And then God opened my ears to hear the joyful sound, *Jesus saves! Jesus saves!* By God's grace, I put my trust in Jesus Christ, and do you know what He did? He did for me what Moses could never do. He gave me rest for my soul!

"Okay," says the critic. "So Jesus gave you rest. But how are you going to keep it? What are you going to do the next time you sin? When you left Judaism, you forfeited the provision that God made for sinners at Sinai. You've turned your back on the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system. You don't have a priest to take you to God."

Ah, but we do! In fact, that's the very issue the preacher addresses next in this word of exhortation. From the middle of chapter four through chapter seven, he shows that we do have a priest, and...

3. *He's superior to human priests (4:14-7:28)*. What makes our priest superior? For starters, He has access to the very throne of God in heaven, as we saw in 4:14. But it's not just His transcendence that makes Him great. It's also His immanence. He's near, but not just near. He truly understands. Yes, we have a priest who once experienced what we are now experiencing, for "he was tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin (4:15)." Listen to what our priest went through for us, as the writer explains in Hebrews 5:7-10, "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek."

Yes, my friend, not only do we have a priest, but we have a priest who is in a class all by Himself, "a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (6:20). According to 7:25, "He is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

The fact is, my friend, if you don't know Jesus, then *you* don't have a legitimate priest. But if you know Jesus, then this is what you have. Bottom line, as the writer sums it up in 7:26, "Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens."

There's point one. Hebrews teaches us about the superior identity of Christ. Remember the reason for this teaching. Some folks were thinking about reneging on their promise to follow Christ. How could you even consider such a move? How could you ever turn away from superior Son of God and go back to Judaism, especially since God established Judaism to point us to Christ in the first place? Most of us aren't struggling with the temptation to leave Christ and go back to Judaism. But every day we face the same temptation dressed up in different clothing.

Last week I received my monthly issue of *Voice of the Martyrs* in which I read the following words of Wilbur Rees. It captures the far too common perspective of Jesus in contemporary American Christianity: "I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please - not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of him to make me love a foreigner or pick beets with a migrant worker. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth

of a womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack. I'd like to buy \$3 worth of God, please."

That's our temptation, brothers and sisters. It's not to leave Jesus and go back to Judaism. It's to leave the true Jesus and settle for a trite Jesus. In the American church, we don't abandon Jesus. We just put Him in our hip pocket. If that's what you've been doing, take heed to the message of Hebrews and affirm today the superior identity of Christ!

How can I show that I believe He is superior? There's lots of ways. I do it by worshipping Him on Sunday mornings, like you are doing, but what about the other 166 hours during the week? If I believe He is superior, won't I be looking for ways to show it then too? Yes! I'll give Him the first part of my paycheck. I'll give Him the first part of my day to read His Word and pray. I'll give Him first place in every decision, whether it's choosing a job or a mate or a way to spend an evening. I'll be on the constant lookout for ways to get to know Him better and help others know Him too, so every church service will become important to me, including the Sunday School hour, the Sunday evening church family service, and the Wednesday evening prayer and Bible study service. If I believe He is superior, it will show!

But it's not just His identity that's superior. In the second part of the message...

II. Hebrews teaches us about the superior accomplishments of Christ (chs 8-10).

Perhaps this would be a good place to mention something Warren Wiersbe pointed out, "This letter is not a diet for 'spiritual babes' who want to be spoon-fed and coddled (Heb. 5:11-14). In this letter you will find 'strong meat' that demands some 'spiritual molars' for chewing and enjoying."^[4] That's certainly the case in the second part of Hebrews. The writer identifies three superior accomplishments of Christ.

A. He established a better covenant (ch 8). The writer explains in 8:6, "But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises." Christ established a new covenant, and by doing so "he has made the first one obsolete" (8:13).

B. He entered a better sanctuary (ch 9). He didn't go into the earthly sanctuary of the tabernacle, which the writer describes at the beginning of chapter nine. Instead, as the writer explains in 9:11, "He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation." As 9:24 explains, "For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence."

C. He offered a better sacrifice (ch 10). The writer has already made reference to Christ's sacrifice in the first part of the letter. There we learned that Christ provided purification for sins (1:3). He died in the place of sinners (2:9). He died to destroy the devil (2:14). He sacrificed Himself for the sins of His people (7:27). But now in chapter ten, the preacher puts the spotlight on Christ's atoning work. What makes Christ's sacrifice better than any other sacrifice? As they say, the proof is in the pudding. Three results. I wish we could take time to develop each point in detail, but for time's sake I'll just mention them and the appropriate textual support.

1. *He took away sins (10:12).* "But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." He made a sacrifice *for sins*, and then sat down at God's right hand, indicating His work was sufficient and complete.

2. *He made sinners holy (10:10, 14).* Verse 10 says, "We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." And verse 14 elaborates, "Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

3. *He opened the way for us to enter the presence of God (10:19-22).* That's what we're told in 10:19, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus..."

That's what Christ accomplished, beloved. By sacrificing Himself on the cross, He took away sins, made sinners holy, and opened the way for us to enter God's presence in heaven. How can you improve on that? You can't. Christ established a better covenant, by entering a better sanctuary, and offering a better sacrifice. His person is superior. His accomplishments are superior. Those are the undeniable facts. The question is, *now what?*

Remember, the first readers of this letter had already embraced Christ (6:1). They'd received the light (10:32). They'd been baptized in His name (6:2) and had lived for Him for some time. According to the end of chapter ten, they'd suffered for Jesus and stood side by side with others who were being persecuted for Him. They'd even joyfully accepted the confiscation of their property for His sake. That was a fitting response to Christ's superiority, but *now what?* The reality is that some of the readers were beginning to waver. They'd professed Christ but now, with the pressure mounting, they were thinking about going back to their old ways.

Can you relate? Do you ever get weary of living for Christ in a world that hates Him? Some of you come to church all by yourself week after week while your family members insist they're just fine without it. Do you ever have second thoughts? Some of you hear the snickering of your peers when you bow your head in the lunchroom at school or work. Have you ever wondered if it's worth it?

That's why we need the book of Hebrews. Most of us in this room have made a profession of faith in Jesus. The question is, *now what?* That brings us to point three.

III. Hebrews teaches us about the appropriate response to Christ (chs 11-13).

Like any good sermon, Hebrews ends with a call to respond in chapters 11-13. But the writer of Hebrews didn't put all his eggs in one basket. He's been calling for a response throughout his message. For instance...

A. We're given warnings (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14-29). Five warning texts to be precise, each tucked away at the end of a teaching section...

Be careful that you don't drift away, he warned them in 2:1. *If you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts*, was his warning in 3:7. And in one of the strongest warnings in the book he offered this sobering assessment in 6:4-6, *"It is impossible...for those who have tasted the word of God...if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again."*

That's a stern warning, isn't it? Here are two more. We're told in 10:26-27, *"If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."* And finally in 12:25, *"See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?"*

If Christ is superior, and He certainly is, then these five warnings remind us that it's a serious thing to say you believe in Him and then fail to follow Him wholeheartedly to the end. There's something else we find tucked away throughout the book of Hebrews...

B. We're given exhortations (4:1, 11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22, 23, 24, 25; 12:1, 2, 28; 13:13, 15). Thirteen first person plural commands, to be precise. Again and again the author lays before us a "let us" command, such as...

4:1 "Let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it."

4:11 "Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest."

4:14 "Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess."

4:16 "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence."

6:1 "Let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity."

10:22 "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith."

10:23 "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess."

And in what is perhaps the climax verse of the book, we read this charge in 13:13, "Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore." Christ bore disgrace for us, so let's do the same for Him, if necessary. Let's go to Him outside the security of the camp of Judaism, or outside any other camp that might bring us temporary protection yet turn us from finding our joy in Him.

But here's what I love about the author of Hebrews. He doesn't just tell us what we shouldn't do (in the warnings) and what we should do (in the exhortations). He gives us a power boost in chapter eleven.

C. We're given examples. There's something inspirational about reading Hebrews 11. Look at the list of names. By faith Abel... By faith Enoch... By faith Noah... Abraham... Isaac... Jacob... Moses... And so on. What did those folks all have in common? This. They trusted in the person of God and acted on the promises of God, regardless how they felt. That's what faith is. And that's what God desires from us.

What's the appropriate response to Christ? Here it is...

1. *We must believe in Him.* That's chapter eleven.

2. *We must fix our eyes on Him.* That's chapter twelve, particularly 12:2.

3. *We must keep living in a way that pleases Him.* That's chapter thirteen. That's what the superior Christ deserves from us, our faith, our focus, and our following.

There's a poem that comes to my mind as we finish this journey through Hebrews. Isaac Watts wrote it three hundred years ago. In it he portrays the wonderful blessings we have in Christ as a plush banquet table spread by Christ for His people. And the thought that overwhelms Watts is this. Why was I given the undeserved privilege to enjoy this banquet? That's a good question for us to ponder as we close the book of Hebrews. Why were we given the undeserved privilege to dine with Christ in Hebrews?

*How sweet and awful is the place
With Christ within the doors,
While everlasting love displays
The choicest of her stores!*

*Here every bowel of our God
With soft compassion rolls;
Here peace and pardon bought with blood
Is food for dying souls.*

*While all our hearts and all our songs
Join to admire the feast,
Each of us cry, with thankful tongues,
"Lord, why was I a guest?"*

*"Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"*

*'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly drew us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.*

*Pity the nations, O our God!
Constrain the earth to come;
Send Thy victorious Word abroad,
And bring the strangers home.*

*We long to see Thy churches full,
That all the chosen race
May with one voice, and heart and soul,
Sing Thy redeeming grace.*

One final question as we conclude...*Is the supreme Christ supreme in my life?*

******Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] We worked our way through Hebrews 1-6 with 19 messages preached from December 2007 through May 2008, then examined Hebrews 7-13 from September 2008 through July 2009 with 31 sermons.

[2] Westcott finds him quoting from the Pentateuch twelve times and alluding to it without direct quotation thirty-nine times; with eleven quotations from the Psalms and two allusions. See Leon Morris, p. 7.

[3] Leon Morris, p. 7.

[4] Warren Wiersbe, p. 279.