

The New and Better (Part 2)
(A Review of Hebrew's Theology)
Reading: Hebrews 4:12-16

Bethany Baptist Church
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...pray...

Church consultants like to say every church has a *front door* and a *back door*... did I just hear you say, “*well duh!*”

But seriously, their point is that we want people to *enter* our church’s *front door*, join *God’s family*, and **never** *exit out* that *back door*!

Hebrews is all about guarding the church’s *back door* against *apostasy* - *desertion*.

Spec. *desertion* brought on by *persecution* by the **1st c.** Romans against Christians.

So Hebrew’s writer is *nailing shut* the exit by *pounding in* **two** important truths: ***new & better***. As in, the **NT** *delivers* what the **OT** only *previewed*. As in, *Jesus* is better than *angels* or *Moses* or *Aaron*. As in, the *gospel* is *better* than the *Law*. As in, *grace* is better than *works*.

Three weeks ago we finished our **vs by vs** *exposition* of Hebrews (SermonAudio), and this morning we are *wrapping up* our *review* of this imp’t **NT** *exhortation* by *revisiting*...

Four truths that *Hebrews* still teaches **Christians** in every age.

Last Sunday morning we considered the first two...

1. **The superiority of Jesus. 7:11-8:2.** Specifically, Jesus is the *new & better & ultimate & eternal* King & High Priest. *Exalted* and *established* at the right hand of throne of the Majesty on High! *Ruling* and *interceding*!
2. **The strength of the gospel. 10:11-18** Christ’s *once for all* sacrifice ratified the **New Cov**, and we can now have a *new heart* and *mind*. God made this *glorious* promise (Jer 31; Heb 8; Heb 10): *and their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more*.

This morning, we’ll consider two *more* key truths from Hebrews...

3. **The severity of drifting. 6:1-8**
4. **The sweetness of assurance. 6:9-12**

Hebrews has several warnings about *drifting* away from the truth (or, of letting the truth *drift* away from you!).

1. There are **five/six** *warning texts* scattered throughout Hebrews. **Pt.:** *You must take the gospel seriously!*
 - a. The warnings are for unbelievers in the church; the man or woman who *sits in the pew* but *won't get off the fence* and *come to Christ*. She still is **not** a Christian. He *listens* but hesitates to repent.
2. To begin, **vv.1-3** warn you that the *foundation* is not **the** completed *building*, the *start* is **not** the *finish*; you have to *leave* the start and *press on* to *complete* the task.
 - a. In fact, the writer says it *twice* so you won't ignore him: *leave...press on...* i.) **Leaving** (→ *divorce*) – the *elementary principles* (ABCs) *about the Christ (Messiah)*; ii.) **Press on** ... *to maturity (completion)*.
3. “But what can be so **bad** about the *elementary teaching about Jesus!?!*”
 - a. Remember that Hebrew's audience had a strong Jewish heritage. These *elementary teachings* (1) are **not** the *gospel* as we would understand it, but **OT predictions & symbols** of the coming Messiah.
 - i. They were *good & helpful*, but **not complete**. They are a *foundation*, but they **aren't** the *completed building*! They might serve as the *starting line*, but **not** the *finish line*!
4. **VV.1&2** list **six** *teachings* you can find in your **OT** that point towards Jesus. In the context of Hebrews they are **Old Covenant** teachings that *lay a foundation* for the **New Covenant Savior** (but not the *finished structure*).
 - i. **Repentance from dead works** (1) – this is a reference to *evil deeds* that lead to *spiritual death*. The **OT** warns you to **turn from them**. But the **NT** offers you a Savior to *turn to*.
 - ii. **Faith towards God** (1) – Yes, the **OT** teaches *faith*! But now the **Gospel** teaches you that *faith* in God **must** mean *faith* in Jesus, alone: *No man comes to the Father except by Me*.

iii. *Instructions about washings (2).* You might assume this means *believer's baptism*, but **not** so!

1. Jewish tradition did much with *symbolic cleansing* (David, Psa 51: anguished over his *adultery* & wrote: **wash** me and I shall be whiter than snow).
2. The *whole truth* is that the **Gospel** promises you can be *truly & permanently washed* by the *blood* of Jesus *thru the washing and renewing by the Holy Spirit* (Titus 3).

iv. *Laying on of hands.*

1. The **OT** worshiper *laid his hands* on the annual sacrifice to signifying *identifying* with the sacrifice. And so the *lamb symbolically* carried his sins. *Over & over!*
2. But now, by faith, you *identify* with the *Lamb of God* and your sins are *placed* on Jesus. *Once & for all!*

v. *Resurrection from the dead.* The **OT** **hints** at the resurrection but the **NT** **shouts** resurrection – *all over* the place!

1. Jesus claimed (Jn 11:25): “**I am the resurrection & the life!** He who believes in Me will **live** even if he **dies.**”

vi. *Eternal judgment.* The **OT** indicates, of course, that God judges!

1. But the **details** of *future judgment* are **everywhere** in **NT!** We've read in **9:27** – *And inasmuch as it is appointed for man to die once and after this comes judgment.*

b. Yes, the **OT** points straight to a coming Messiah, and that's a *good start*, but its message is **not complete**.

- i. So Hebrews warns you to **press on to maturity**. To embrace a *full New Cov* understanding & acceptance of the gospel. To *turn to Jesus...*

5. This text reminds us of **two** theological truths that play into becoming a Christian: *your responsibility* and God's *sovereignty*. **Pressing on** (1) is *your responsibility*. Yet, ultimately, we must acknowledge God's *sovereignty* in every individual's salvation. (**read v.3**)
6. Now we come to the *heart* of this warning (4-6): if you *wait too long* there is **no second chance** (**2X**). Did **that** get your attention!?!)
7. The *warning isn't* actually articulated until **v.6**: ... *it is impossible to renew them again to repentance***pause...**
 - a. The word "*impossible*" here doesn't mean *difficult* or **really difficult**...it means **impossible**.
 - b. **I.e.**, there comes a point after which the *procrastinator won't repent* because they **can't repent**.
8. Is this warning for a *reprobate pagan* – the kind of guy who *brags* about **never darkening** the *door* of the church...? **No...** this word is for the *woman or man* who has been **hanging around** the church & even **hanging out with** the *saints* for a *long time*!
 - a. Our text gives **five identifying marks** of the *unsaved church-goer* who is in danger of *losing his opportunity* to be saved.
 - b. *Once enlightened* (4) – They have *heard* the gospel and they *understand* its *promise*, but they **won't accept** its *invitation*. The *light* has come, but they still prefer the *dark*.
 - c. *Tasted the heavenly gift* – The **NT** teaches that Jesus Christ is God's *indescribable gift*, and *salvation* thru faith in Him is *the gift of God*.
 - d. *Partakers of the Holy Spirit*. The **1st** century *procrastinator* had witnessed the *Holy Spirit* working *through* the apostles and in the lives of their genuinely Christian friends. But **not** in their own lives...
 - e. *Tasted the good word of God*. They had sat under *faithful gospel preaching* week after week.

- f. *Tasted the powers of the age to come.* The term “powers” here suggests *miracles*, and “the age to come” is Christ’s *Coming Kingdom*.
 - g. Yet despite coming “*this close*” to the Kingdom, some *still refused to come all the way in!* After all, *Judas Iscariot* experienced everything *Peter* and *John* did, yet he still *snuck off* to the Jews....
9. But how does this man or woman **crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame?**
- a. The man or woman, young or old, who **hears the gospel**, and **witnesses** its power in their *church* and *family* and *friends*, and yet **still refuses to turn to Jesus** is **judging Jesus** and finding Him *wanting*.
 - b. That woman or man is *standing* in that mob and *calling* for Pilate to “*crucify Him!*” He is calling for Christ to be *nailed* again on Golgotha’s cross and *mocked* by His enemies.
10. I’ve said that this is a warning that the *procrastinator* can put off Christ for so long that *repentance* is no long possible. His *heart* becomes *too hard*.
11. But let’s be very clear about what **v.6** **does not** mean. ... This serious warning does **not** teach that a genuine Christian can **lose** her salvation.
- a. The Bible promises (1 Pt 1:5) that a true Christ is *protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*. **Jude** promises that God *keeps you from stumbling*.
12. The warning here is that to **refuse** to decide **for** Christ is to decide **against** Him – to *stand in judgment* of Him.
- a. Especially after you’ve enjoyed all these *advantages!*
 - b. If you refuse *too often* for *too long*, you will *lose* your opportunity to *turn to Him ...ever*.

13. This sobering *warning* ends with a simple *illustration*. Every *crop* needs rain, but *rain alone* is not enough – the *rain* is not the *harvest* (**read vv.7-8**).

14. What kind of *ground* are you...? This looks like a *streamlined version* of Jesus' "*Parable of the Soils*." Jesus' alluded to it as one of His most important parables. ... "*The sower went out to sow...*"

- a. The *seed* of the gospel was sown on **four** types of *soils*.
 - b. The *sower* was the same, the *seed* was the same, the *plan* was the same, the *goal* was the same.
 - c. For the most part, the *beginning* looked the same.
 - d. But in the end, the *harvest* **wasn't** the same...
 - e. The difference was the *soil*.
 - f. Here Hebrews makes the same point....
2. The *ground* of **v.7** gets *repeated rain*, *drinks* it in, and yields *fruit for God*. In return, God *blesses it*.
 3. The *ground* of **v.8** **also** gets *repeated rain*, *drinks* it in, and yields...only *thorns & thistles*. The *harvest* of the *Fall* & the *Curse* (Gen3).
 - a. And, in fact, this ground experiences the *ultimate outcome* of the Fall. **The curse of eternal death.**
 - b. So sir (ma'am) – *get on with it!*

This is a warning, and here it is: To *stand* at the starting line, to *listen* to the starter's instructions, to *hear* the call of his pistol, and to *just stand there* while the pack pulls away, will never get you to the finish line! And you may never get another chance to get in the race to the Celestial City.

If the *warning* is troubling, the *assurance* is sweet! Read 6:9-12

- 1.) It's hard to miss that Hebrew's most *severe warning* is immediately followed by one its most *comforting assurances*. *Assurance* is a big deal in Hebrews! When you *belong* to Jesus, He wants you to *know* it!
 - a. But did that *warning* (1-8) make you *squirm*...? Maybe it makes you *squirm* because you need to *get off* the fence, *leave behind* the elementary things, and *run to* Christ! I.e. *maybe you're not saved!*
 - b. Or maybe you *are* already a Christian. But that *warning* rattles you, *esp.* if you are having *one of those days* when *temptations* seem strong and your *soul* seems weak! (“*How could a Christian think what I just thought!?!*”)
 - c. Our writer *knows* that! So he immediately stops to *comfort* shaken Christians and *re-energize* their assurance.

- 2.) If you *read carefully* it is clear that he's now *turned his attention* to the true Christians. They are (9) *his beloved ... & God's beloved*. This is the *only* place our writer uses “*beloved*” in his entire letter, but it appears elsewhere in the **NT**, and is a common term of endearment for *Christians!*
 - a. And Hebrews is *very clear* of what is *true* of those who are *truly Christians: better things & salvation things*.
 - i. ? *Better* than *what things ... !?! Better* than all the grim issues that betray the *spiritually immature & the procrastinator* (1-8): They are...
 1. *Perpetually content* w/ the insufficient **ABCs** of **OT**, *hearing & witnessing* the power of the Holy Spirit thru the Gospel yet never committing to Christ, therefore *judging & rejecting & condemning* Christ by their refusal to follow to Him, *growing spiritually harder, bearing a harvest* of thorns & thistles (Fall & Curse!), therefore *living under the constant threat of God's judgment!*
 2. But that's *not you, beloved...*for you, it's so much *better*:

- ii. *Your life is a life of salvation things! Your soil is the fruitful soil of v.7, and the Holy Spirit's showers of blessing have yielded a gospel harvest, & you live under God's blessing!*
- iii. Our writer is **convinced!** → His *grammar* ("convinced") is a Gr. *perfect & passive* verb (past/continue). These *saints'* faithful lives have *convinced* Him over the *long haul* that they are *saved, being sanctified, & on the narrow way to the Cel. City.*

PAUSE

- b. Then (10) he *drills down a little* into his *convinced assurance*. We have *assurance of salvation* based *first* on God's **character** & then on *our fruit*.
- c. **Read v.10.** Your *assurance* is grounded in God. The Bible praises *all* God's glorious *character & works* from the first page to the last, but our text draws on these **two** attributes: His **justice & knowledge**.
 - i. *Justice* – God always does what is *right!* He is never *capricious* or *inconsistent* or *unjust*. He always fulfills His *promises!*
 - ii. And God *knows* everything about you. His understanding of you & your life is **omniscient** – "**all knowing.**" Of course, He knows everything about the **unbeliever**, but also everything about His *beloved...* and His *knowledge* is expressed in *love*.
- d. Which means, Christian, that God *hasn't forgotten* your **work** (*fruit*):
 - i. He hasn't forgotten your **horizontal fruit** (☺) – your ministry to the *saints*. The "*saints,*" of course, are all your fellow Christians, these **NT** "*one anothers*" that you are sharing the pews w/ this morning.
 - 1. And, beloved, read **v.10** carefully, if you are *ministering to the saints*, you are *ministering to God!*
 - a. Jesus said, "*The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'*" And He won't forget. ...

ii. But admit it – even *saints* can be hard to *love*, and some days of ministry seem awful *long*, ...where do you get the *fuel* for that?

1. Your *fuel* is your *love* for God (10). Your *love* for God's *name* (= *glory, holy reputation*). That *love* is the **vertical fruit** (10) God hasn't *forgotten*.

a. If you are *Christian* then you *love* God – the *God of the Bible!* Everything begins with that *love*.

i. Including your *daily, persevering ministry* to the *saints*. **1 Jn 4:10,11** – *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

3.) Then as we come to **vv.11&12**, it seems Hebrews is now speaking to the entire congregation. **Not** just the *procrastinators* (1-8) and **not** just the *shaken saints* (9-10)... now it's to "***each one of you.***"

a. He points *everyone* to the *same diligence* (11) & the *faith & perseverance* (12) of God's *beloved*. That's what he wants to see in *everyone*.

4.) He offers a *simple plan* to make sure you are one of God's *beloved*.

a. *First*, notice that his words are **urgent**. He speaks of his own *desire*...

i. There is the idea of "*diligence*," which speaks of **getting w/ it!**

ii. And warning about spiritual *sluggishness*.

1. In **3:7** we read a similar caution: **Today** if you hear His voice **do not** harden your heart!

2. **2 Cor 6:2** (Paul) – *Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation!* Paul's point was: *not tomorrow!*

- b. His *urgency* just adds weight to his *simple plan: imitation*. *Imitate* the lives of God's *beloved*, as seen in **vv.9&10**.
- i. He urges them to “*demonstrate the same diligence.*” **I.e.**, the *diligence* (10) in *loving* God & God's *glory* & God's *people*.
 - ii. **Not sluggish** about **your** life but instead *eagerly imitating* **their** lives. And what is **true** of the *true Christian*? Our text highlights **two** things to *imitate*: *faith & long suffering*.
 1. **Faith**. Not “*faith in faith.*” Not just *faith* in some fuzzy idea of a god. We are talking about the *God of the Bible*...
 - a. ...and His only *condition* for your *salvation* is **faith** in Jesus Christ:
 - i. Jesus is God's *only begotten Son*.
 - ii. He **died on the cross**, *in your place*, **for your sins**.
 - iii. He was **raised** from the grave on the **3rd** day. (As promised!)
 - iv. Jesus Christ is now *the way, the truth, the life*, **no one** comes to the *Father* except by *Him*.
 - v. And Jesus is *alive*, right now, *at the right hand of the Majesty on high*, and He will return to *rescue, & conquer, & judge*.
 - vi. **That's** the *gospel* – **that's** the plan God demands that you put your *entire trust* in.
 - vii. *Salvation* means you *rest your soul completely & only* on Jesus' *death & resurrection* **in your place**, **for your sins**.

2. And to your *faith* add ***long-suffering***. My NASB says *patience* (12) but better translations would be *endurance* or, even better, *long-suffering*.

a. *Long suffering* is a big deal in this letter to Hebrews Christians. *Times were tough... Long-suffering* is an important virtue for *believers* that face the threat of *persecution*....

b. Like *these 1st century Christians*. And for many **21st century Christians**. Perhaps soon, for *us*....

5.) But to everyone who *believes & endures*, God offers this: *full assurance* and *inheriting the promises*.

a. **V.11** - The NT desires ***full assurance of hope until the end***, because you ***believe until the end***, because God ***sustains*** you & ***keeps*** you from ***stumbling... until the end***.

i. This *assurance* is possible ***now*** because you *trust* yourself to Jesus, ***now***.

b. And those who believe & endure ***inherit the promises*** (v.12b).

i. Who *inherits* a father's *estate*? His *children!* ...

ii. When you place your *faith* in God's Son, you are *born again* & ***adopted*** as God's child.

1. **Eph 1:5** – *In love [God] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.*

2. And so we read *also* in **Rom 8:16 & 17** – *The Spirit Himself testifies with our Spirit that we are **children** of God, and if **children, heirs** also, **heirs** of God and **fellow heirs** with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

- c. *Beloved*, if your *trust* is in Jesus, and your *soil* is bearing fruit, the Father's *inheritance* is yours! Because He is *just*. You can *take it to the bank*...!

The *Book of Hebrews* is so uniquely rich that I almost want to *turn around and go through it* again! But for now we'll leave it at this: **Jesus is *new & better*.**

1. **Jesus is *better***. Jesus is the *new & better & ultimate & eternal* King & High Priest. *Exalted* and *established* at the right hand of throne of the Majesty on High! *Ruling* and *interceding*! And that keeps us *secure*.
2. **Jesus' *gospel* is *better***. Christ made a "*once for all*" sacrifice in our place so that *all* of our sins are *forgiven*. By God's grace, we can now have a *new heart* and *mind* and *spirit*.
3. **But there is a *warning label* attached to the *Letter to the Hebrews*: *leave and press on*. *Get off the fence and run to Jesus*. Or *else*...**
4. ***Assurance* is *better***. Better than *fear*...better than *doubt*! I speak with people who say, "*I think I'm saved*"; "*I hope I'm going to heaven*."
 - a. The Bible promises that you can be *confident* right now you are *headed heaven* when you die!
 - i. We've just read in **Heb. 6** – *we are **convinced** of better things & things that accompany **salvation**!*
 - ii. Elsewhere, the **Apostle John** wrote – *these things I have written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may **know that you have eternal life**!*
 - iii. We also read in **Romans 10**: *He who believes in Him will **not** be disappointed!*
 - b. If you have *turned from* your sins & unbelief, & *trusted* in Christ's *death & resurrection* to pay for all you *sins*, & your life is *bearing the fruit* of the Holy Spirit's presence in you, you can be *confident* that you are *saved*.

...pray...