

## Hebrews

Hebrews 1:3 - "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" Jesus is God. This is one of the very most important doctrines of our faith. His death would have been meaningless, and His resurrection impossible if it were not so. Being the God who cannot sin, His condescended life on earth was sinless, and He was therefore worthy to be the sacrifice for our sin. As death is the wage of the unrighteous alone, His divinity made impotent its power to hold Him. Rising from the dead He made full proof of His true identity and set for Himself the place of honor at His father's side. He is even now there pleading the case of those He replaced on the cross. This magnificent truth sets the scene for the book of Hebrews. Praise God for the timely reminder!

Hebrews 2:9 - "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." More doctrine is found in this second chapter of Hebrews. The thought expressed here, when viewed in light of scripture as a whole, clarifies one of the more debated issues in Christianity. For whom did Christ die? The evangelical world has been divided into two chief camps; one that insists He died for the saved alone, and another that claims He died for the world. The language of this verse gives one side some trouble, does it not? Their belief is invested in the theories of a man instead of the Bible. If we used it as our guide, we would come to the conclusion that the substitutionary death of Christ was unlimited in its potential, and limited only in its application. Christ died, as this passage indicates, for all men. The distinction is important, as it determines much of the way we will go about our witnessing. Other passages of note include I John 2:1-2, I Timothy 4:10 and II Corinthians 5:14-21.

Hebrews 3:3-4 - "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God." The Hebrews had a very high view of Moses, yet the author makes it clear in this passage that Christ is tremendously more important. Moses was found faithful by God in his generation, but Jesus Christ is the very author of faithfulness. It is important for us to recognize that our heroes of faith are not on par with Jesus. While Moses, or others from our day may be greatly used by God, we must understand that Jesus is God. There can be no comparison between men and deity, only the measurement of our deeds against the divine writings of scripture. While Moses acted in perfect accord with God's will on many occasions, we also read of his rebellion. Sinful men may serve as our example in a given situation; Christ must be our Lord and Master for the whole of life. Read the stories of scripture with a desire to please Christ, the creator of all men.

Hebrews 4:15 - "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Our Savior has personal experience with the weakness of our mortal bodies. In the scripture we read of His encounter with the enemy in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), being tempted as we are with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. I believe we would be mistaken to assume this was the only temptation He endured, because He was just as fully human as He was fully God. We do understand that Christ had no sin nature, for He was not a son of Adam, yet His body (by His own will) endured the stress of mortal limits. He brought Himself to a place of identification with us by freely assuming our humanity. Praise God He lacked the ability to give in, for our substitutionary Lamb must have been spotless! Let us therefore realize we are not alone when coming to Him with a request for strength to endure Satan's schemes.

Hebrews 5:1-2 - "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Many Pastors of today should read this passage often. While contemporary servants of God offer neither gifts nor sacrifice for sin, we are charged at pointing lost souls to the the substitution which atoned for all sin. Men of God in these days need reminding that our station is no higher than our parishioners. The primary downfall of many is the draw of disciples to themselves. Churches through many ages have been led astray by men who forsake the memory of their own sinful condition. Rather than setting ourselves up as gods before men, we should rather be mindful of our infirmities, and point them to the only High Priest that has none. Christ makes it possible for us to be worthy of service for Him, what a disservice we would do Him to take one ounce of His glory or position upon ourselves.

Hebrews 5:14 - "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." I wonder how many Christians of many years are still only capable of digesting milk? Mature believers are able to handle meat not simply because they have been saved longer, but because they have exercised their senses with God's word. Here we read that they have grown in their knowledge "by reason of use". They are consistently using scripture for its intended purpose, which is to nourish the believer by revealing God's character. No one may expect to become a better Christian if they are not regularly studying the Bible. Unfortunately the church of today does

not see this as a high priority. They spend much of their time striving to be "relevant" by using methods of the world, when the only truly effective ministry comes from a sounding out of the scripture. If you struggle with growth, get out your Bible today and make a commitment to wear it out over the next year.

Hebrews 6:18 - "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:" I don't make it a policy to extract one thought from its greater context in scripture, yet today's reading pushed to the forefront of my mind a single phrase that I could not ignore. The affirmation that God cannot lie gave me some great deal of comfort that I cannot describe. My thoughts immediately focused on lies I have been told and the disappointment they brought, and lies I have told to others and the grief they must have brought God. In this sinful world, the reality of falsehood is all too common. Is it not a wonderful thing to know that God is high above it all? The dishonesty of men can bring some of our greatest hurts in life, while in contrast the honesty of God brings eternal blessing. When the Lord promises He will save us and take us to heaven, He is not lying. If we know the Savior, there will be no let down when we cross the plain of death. Praise God who cannot tell a lie!

Hebrews 7:27 - "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." This book makes a constant comparison of the old covenant and the new. It notes that the law revealed our sin, while Christ, who fulfilled the law, washed it away. Here we see the means by which He accomplished this washing of sin. He acts as our high priest being like no other in history. He came to the altar free from sin, only to freely accept the mantle of every sin, and be put to death, shedding His own blood to make atonement. What an astounding concept, that all sins could be made sacrifice for in one act. The spotless son of God needed make no repeat act of offering as the sons of Levi. His life and death satisfy with unchangeable completeness the debt owed to God. Let us view this dichotomy of dispensations with great thankfulness and joy.

Hebrews 8:10 - "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:" Perhaps the most monumental difference between our covenant, and the covenant of old is the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself promised followers an indwelling Comforter just exactly like Himself (John 14:15-20). This person would come and dwell within those who put their faith in Christ, leading them into all truth (John 16:13-14). People of the old covenant observed a law written on tables of stone, while our obedience comes from prompting within. While God's working within Old Testament saints cannot be discounted, we may certainly affirm a more personal covenant today. The written word is alive in our hearts, being enlightened by God's own Spirit. Let us praise God today for an internal working of God which operates in conjunction with our minds and hearts!

Hebrews 9:22 - "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Things have not changed. After the first sin, God brought Adam and Eve animal skins to cover their nakedness. God has always required the shedding of blood, first as a covering, and now (through the blood of Christ) as a cleanser for sin. We can't explain why blood is God's chosen tool for atonement, yet we know that it is. I see it as a representation of the taking of innocent life. During the Old Testament sacrifice, an animal died for the sins of another, not its own. Jesus Christ died for the sins of all men, even though He knew no sin himself. God never simply wiped away sin, He only transferred the penalty to another. His holiness requires a judgment; praise God our judgment was laid upon Jesus, who overcame it for all eternity! If you have not embraced your replacement, do so today.

Hebrews 10:1 - "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." The Old Testament system was not "just as good" as this age of grace. Sacrifices given in those days were a mere example of things to come. We are privileged to live in an exciting day, when things foretold have come to pass. When we read Old Testament scripture, which points us forward to the Savior, we must realize that the writer lived with only hope for the future, while we rest in the peace of the present. Read Isaiah some time, and imagine you had no knowledge of the New Testament. Certainly all of what Christ did is revealed there, but without the whole of the story you are left with more expectancy than satisfaction. We can see a glimpse of their hope today when we think about heaven. Christ's return, and our communion with Him forever are the most anticipated prophecies of our day. What a joy to understand the blessing of prophecy fulfilled, and the longing for things to come.

Hebrews 10:25 - "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Since many other Bible teachers insist on giving us their own paraphrase of a verse, I will follow their example for emphasis alone. "Not intentionally skipping church, as some people do, instead show up and exhort each other, because time is short". While this is not a perfect Greek translation, I believe it

says what God wants us to hear. Many today want us to believe the Bible says nothing about church attendance. They are wrong. God wants us to attend church, and we should trust no teacher that rejects this truth. They are not spiritually mature. Choose to be at church every time the doors are open, and admit there is a difference between "can't go" and "won't go". Don't decide whether or not to go Sunday morning; God has already made the choice for you.

Hebrews 11:1 - "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This is an oft quoted, but rarely examined verse of scripture. I see it as the Bible's best definition of faith. The main thing I want us to see is that faith is real; faith is substance or (as it is defined) that which has actual existence. Faith is not a feeling, or an emotion, though its presence may manifest itself by one of these avenues. It is something God gives us, and something we choose to embrace. The very fact that it exists is evidence that God is real. While some would mock Christianity by pointing out its basis in faith rather than fact, their recognition of faith succeeds in lending more credence to its veracity. Faith is the very evidence of things that cannot be seen or felt. It gives us the clues that lead us to the facts. Don't shrink from admitting your belief in the Bible is faith-based. It is your faith that bears witness of its truth.

Hebrews 12:1 - "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us," Why is it so difficult to overcome some sins that set us on the wrong path? We can identify with this verse in the knowledge that sin always weighs us down in the Christian race, yet we are often content to limp along with the burden. Perhaps it is because we are not intent on winning the race. A constant, daily commitment to living our lives for God's glory will prevent involvement in this burdensome sin. It is only this day to day work that can bring success in the race, and we must therefore make that kind of living a priority. Perhaps if we could internalize the true effect of sin on our walk with God? We could start by thinking of an action that has beset us in the past, tracing the problems it caused all the way through to resolution. How can we do better in the future? This examination may help in making us the runners we ought to be.