

Our verse by verse study of the book of Hebrews has come to an end. But I have reserved one final message for parting reflection. Just as a good flavor lingering on the taste buds reminds of a delightful experience, or a good adventure replaying in the mind builds positive memories, so I think a lingering over this monumental Biblical gem to reflect on its salient points of impact is well worth a final appreciative consideration.

I have chosen to direct our reflections in two directions:

1. A reminder of the book’s 3 key “P” themes: PREEMINANCE, PRIESTHOOD and PERSEVERANCE to help us retain the key doctrinal truths of Hebrews, and
2. A revisiting of 5 practical truths to aid our day-to-day spiritual walk.

I. PREEMINANCE, PRIESTHOOD and PERSEVERANCE

1. The PREEMINANCE of Jesus Christ is taught throughout the Bible, but in Hebrews it is a key theme comparing the greatness of Jesus to the lesser importance of angels, Moses, Joshua, Abraham and Aaron. He is not only better, but best – He is God in the flesh.
2. The PRIESTHOOD of Jesus Christ is taught in Hebrews at great length, particularly as He is the “bridge” (same root word as “priest”) between God and man. This ministry of His occurs post-ascension, as He enters the heavenly tabernacle as our Advocate. This ministry of priest is little mentioned in the other New Testament letters. Thus, Hebrews is a “graduate study” of our faith, taking us to higher and greater relationship with our God.
3. The PERSEVERANCE of the saints – that all believers should and will persevere - is taught throughout Hebrews. Truly, the doctrine is better stated as “the perseverance of God” in bringing His children to glory. Not only is this doctrine taught - more, we are encouraged to persevere by numerous challenges as to how to do so. We will see 5 of these in our final reflection today.

I believe the following visual will help us on our reflection of these 3 key themes:

PREEMINANCE	PRIESTHOOD	PERSEVERANCE
<u>Access to God</u>	<u>Relationship to God</u>	<u>Confidence before God</u>
<u>Jesus</u> – the new and better deliverer	<u>Calvary</u> – the new and better covenant	<u>Faith</u> – the new and better principle
<i>“better”</i>	<i>“perfect”</i>	<i>“let us”</i>
<u>Chapters 1-7</u>	<u>Chapters 8-10</u>	<u>Chapters 11-13</u>
1,2-better than <u>angels</u>	8– the better/perfect <u>covenant</u>	11- faith in following <u>the saints</u>
3, better than <u>Moses</u>	9– the better/perfect <u>sanctuary</u>	12- faith in running <u>our race</u>
4-better than <u>Joshua</u>	10- the better/perfect <u>sacrifice</u>	13- faith in loving <u>God & others</u>
6-better than <u>Abraham</u>		
5,7-better than <u>Aaron</u>		

PREEMINANCE Keynote verse:

3:1 *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle*

and High Priest of our confession.

PRIESTHOOD Keynote verse:

10:14 *For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are [being] sanctified.*

PERSEVERANCE Keynote verse:

10:39 *But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*

II. 5 FINAL PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

This is the fifty-second, and final lesson in our study through the book of Hebrews. I tend to speak about 40 minutes on each lesson, so I estimate that I have given roughly 35 hours of teaching on this monumental book from God's Holy Word. Now, as only a few moments remain in our deliberations, let me leave you with what I consider to be the practical distillation of all that has been said. I could leave you with doctrinal considerations, but we have taught on these at length, and I trust you have hidden the doctrinal truths of Hebrews deep in your soul.

Rather, I want in these final moments to reflect on 5 critical practical issues from the book of Hebrews, which I hope will linger in your mind and heart long after my teaching has concluded. And may each of you faithfully put them into practice and find the victory they promise.

1. The DANGER of DRIFTING

Hebrews 2:1 ... *We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.*

What does it take to spiritually drift? – doing nothing! – for if we are lax, the current of this world will surely pull us away from God. This is our serious warning that we must actively pursue God in worship, prayer, study of His Word, church involvement, ministry and evangelism in order to stay close to Him. If I ever find that God seems far off, it is I who has moved, not Him.

Whatever your present level of Christian involvement, hear these words of God to you: “pay much closer attention.” However close you feel to God, get closer. Danger lies lurking in the opposite direction!

2. The URGENCY of ENCOURAGEMENT

Hebrews 3:13 *Encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

Oh how I need encouragement. And so do you. There are never enough words of “well done” and “I’m proud of you.” There are never enough hugs and shoulders to cry on, or rejoicings in my victories. I can always use more. It’s not that you and I are so needy – it’s just that we are ever targets of the enemy for pulling us down and reminding us that we are not worthy to be loved.

And the need for encouragement is urgent – “today,” says the Lord. Don’t put it off. Be a Barnabas always. Hold me accountable, yes, but lift me up, don’t pull me down. And don’t wait for next time to encourage – right now would be just fine, thank you. And remember, this is not my petty ranting and need for attention. It is God’s sacred command to be an encourager – always.

3. The CONFIDENCE of DRAWING NEAR

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

We have been taught that one of the languages of love is proximity, or closeness. I can relate to

that one. I love being close to the ones I love. And likewise, God tells us here that He loves being close to those he loves – His children. There are many things that might keep us from feeling comfortable in drawing near to God. Sin would be one – but we are forgiven and there is now no condemnation (Rom. 8:1). Not knowing what to say might be one – but He bids us ask, seek and knock (Matt. 7:7) and tells us that He will even pray for us by His Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27).

We are called to draw near with confidence – confidence in His forgiveness, love, acceptance and wanting of relationship. And who among us is not in need of mercy and grace or help in trouble – and yet that is exactly what our God offers if I will just draw near to Him. So draw near in prayer, in personal worship, in church worship, in reading His Word, in meditation on His person and provision. Believe it or not, He loves to have you close, and calls you to His side in intimate relationship.

4. The ESSENTIALNESS of FAITH

Hebrews 11:6 *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 seek Him.*

Essentially, faith is believing that God is in, and working in every situation. It is trust in His unfailing and unconditional love, whatever the circumstance. It is conviction that He has a purpose and plan in every difficulty, challenge and obstacle. And without this faith, we are told that God is not pleased.

If you lack faith, we are taught that it comes from hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). We are also taught that we don't have to strive to manufacture faith – it is a gift, which God gives freely (Eph. 2:8-9), so we can ask for it. And this verse in Hebrews teaches that faith grows out of a conviction that God exists and wants to reward those who seek Him. So read the Bible, ask for faith, and be convinced of God's wanting to bless you. Then faith will come and grow, and you will please God, as you trust Him. Faith is essential!

5. The STRENGTH of FIXATION

Hebrews 12:2-3 *Fix [your] eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. ... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

May your life grow to be all about Jesus, with Him as the focal point of every endeavor. May you ever fix your eyes on Him and Him alone, finding that in doing so, you navigate through the storms of life with relative ease. May you find yourself, as it were, "walking on water" – amazed at the miracle of being buoyed by His strength flowing through you.

God knows we are ever in danger of growing weary and losing heart, but He has given you Jesus to be your example and strength for every challenge. May your fixation on Him never be a "crutch" or a "placebo," but rather that which you rely on to be your true spiritual strength to "rise up on wings, like eagles" (Is. 40:31) and "do all things" (Phil. 4:13). Keep your eyes ever fixed on Jesus!

So, (1) keep yourself from drifting, (2) be an encourager, (3) draw near to God, (4) exercise your faith and (5) be fixated on Jesus.

Thank you, dear God, for your book of Hebrews. It's been wonderful!