

# ***Hebrews***

## ***Be Faithful***

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# ***Goal of This Study***

- To enter the world of Hebrews and allow it to shape our hearts and minds
  - In other words, to enter Hebrews and allow it to transform our perspective and behavior
  - Teachers and preachers “have usually tried too hard to make the text 'relevant'” (Richard Hays)
    - Instead of “making God's Word relevant,” we should painstakingly investigate God's will so that God's world becomes our world
    - God does not need to make his will relevant to our lives—we need to make our lives relevant to his will

# *Author*

- The best answer to the authorship of Hebrews (and all of Scripture) is . . . God (2 Tim. 3:16)
- As to the human penman of Hebrews, the evidence available seems insufficient to determine with certainty the human author's name
  - The evidence seems to indicate clearly that Paul did not write the Book of Hebrews
    - Paul did not receive the gospel from any human (Gal. 1:12)
    - Both the writer and recipients of Hebrews had the gospel confirmed to them by “those who heard” the Lord (2:3)

# *Author*

- The evidence is conclusive that God made use of a male penman rather than a female
  - Adolf von Harnack proposed that Priscilla wrote Hebrews
  - Ruth Hoppin, *Priscilla's Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, tried to revive Harnack's proposal
  - The author describes himself with the masculine participle “tell” (11:32)

# *Author*

- A master of elegant Greek who incorporated the principles of rhetoric (persuasive speaking and writing) as taught in the ancient world
- Had a thorough knowledge of the OT and a clear understanding of how it should be interpreted in light of its fulfillment in Christ
- Well acquainted with the past history of the people to whom he was writing
  - 2:3-4; 6:9-10; 10:32-34; 13:22-25
- Deeply concerned lest they fail to persevere in their devotion to and public confession of Christ
  - 3:1, 6, 14; 4:14; 10:23

# *The Author*

- Warns the recipients against laxity or carelessness in their adherence to God's Son
  - 2:1-4; 3:12-13; 4:1, 11; 5:10-14; 6:1-3
- Warns the recipients against the attractions of the unbelieving world
  - 12:14-17
- Warns against yielding to the social pressure of the larger society that rejected Christ
  - 10:32-39; 12:1-13 (the discipline of suffering)

# *The Sermon*

- Verbal character
  - Not the standard introduction to a letter
  - Abundance of “we, us, our”
    - 2:1, 3, 5, 8-9; 4:1-2, 11, 14, 16; 1:3; 3:1, 14
  - Verbs of saying and hearing
    - 2:5; 5:11; 6:9; 8:1; 11:32
  - Announces themes in advance of more discussion
    - Christ's high priesthood (2:17-18 & 4:14-5:10)
    - Melchizedek (5:6, 10-11 & 6:20ff)

# *The Sermon*

- The verbal character of Hebrews can be compared with Hellenistic rhetoric (persuasive speaking and writing), as taught by Aristotle, Quintilian and Cicero and with “synagogue homily”
  - Indicators of the eloquent style:
    - Grandly constructed periodic sentences (A periodic sentence is often long and involved and the thought is not completed until the end)
      - 1:1-4 (in Gk. one sent.); 2:1-4 (vv. 2-4 one sent. in Gk.); 5:5-10 (in Gk. one sent.); 7:26-28 (vv. 26-27 one sent. in Gk.)
    - Alliteration (e.g., six “p” sounds from five words beginning with π in the Greek text of 1:1)

# *The Sermon*

- Internal rhyme
  - 5:8—“he learned” (ἔμαθεν) & “he suffered” (ἔπαθεν) and “the obedience” (τὴν ὑπακοήν)
  - 6:20—“Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς) & “high priest” (ἀρχιερεὺς) and “forerunner” (πρόδρομος) & “having become” (γενόμενος)
- Word plays
  - 7:9—“Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak” (NKJV)
  - “And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes” (NASB)

# *The Sermon*

- Chiastic structure (the first and last elements of a passage balance one another)
  - 2:18—“Because he has suffered, himself having been tested, he is able to help those being tested”
  - 3:4 (Note also: the conjunction “For” and “having built/having established” also in v. 3)
- Anaphora (the repetition of a term such as “by faith” of ch. 11)
- Metaphors (used to make comparisons)
  - Teaching/education (5:11-14; 12:4-11)
  - Legal (6:13, 16-17)
  - Athletic (12:1-4, 12-13)

# *The Sermon*

- The language of logic, appropriateness and necessity common in persuasive argument
  - “to be appropriate” (2:10; 7:26), “main point” (8:1), “necessary” (8:3), “impossible” (6:4; 10:4; 11:6) and “word of exhortation” (13:22)
- Comparing the one extolled with the great of the past (1:1-14; 3:1-6; 4:14–5:10; 7:1–10:18)
- Impressing the hearers with appropriate examples from history (6:13-20; 11:1-38)
- Like the eloquent speech prized by the ancient world, Hebrews was written to influence the hearers by reinforcing their perspective and values and by urging them to pursue the proper path

# *The Sermon*

- Hebrews is best understood as an example of the kind of sermon typical of the synagogue and the kind used in worship among Christians
  - These kinds of sermons appear to have been characterized by both OT exposition (explanation) and exhortation
  - The purpose of a sermon was to interpret an inspired and authoritative text, show its relevance for the present and urge obedience
  - Hebrews joins exposition and exhortation to form a unified appeal (13:22; see Acts 13:14-15)

# ***NT Sermons***

- Peter—Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36, 38-40)
- Peter—Solomon's porch (Acts 3:12-26)
- Stephen (Acts 7:2-53)
- Paul in the synagogue (Acts 13:16-41)
- Paul to the Athenians (Acts 17:22-31)
- Paul at Jerusalem (Acts 22:1, 3-21)
- Paul to Agrippa (Acts 26:2-23, 25-27, 29)

# ***Structure of a NT Sermon***

- Not all sermons adhere rigidly to the structure
- Introduction
  - “Men,” “Brothers,” “Listen,” “Give ear”
- Narration of the facts
  - Containing information such as scriptural quotations, OT examples and explanation
- Proposition/statement to be proved
- Proof of the proposition/statement
- Conclusion

# *Acts 2*

- Introduction: “Men of Judea . . . give ear” (v. 14)
- Narration of the facts (vv. 15-21)
- Proposition to be proved (vv. 22-24)
- Proof of the proposition (vv. 25-35)
- Conclusion (vv. 36)

# Acts 3

- The structure is unusual (*The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, 359) but expected (v. 12)
- Introduction (v. 12)
- Proposition to be proved (v. 13a)
  - God has glorified his child Jesus
- Proof of the proposition (vv. 13b-16)
- Conclusion (vv. 17-21)
- Additional proposition to be proved (vv. 20b-21)
- Proof of the proposition (vv. 22-24)
- Conclusion (vv. 25-26)

# *Acts 7*

- Introduction: “Brothers and fathers, listen” (v. 2a)
- Narration of the facts (vv. 2-50)
- Proposition to be proved (v. 51)
- Proof of the proposition (v. 52a)
  - “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One”
- Conclusion (vv. 52b-53) [similar to Acts 2:36]
  - “of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it”

# *Acts 13*

- Introduction: “Men, Israelites . . . listen” (v. 16)
- Narration of the facts (vv. 17-25)
  - Review of Israelite history leading up to Jesus
- Proposition to be proved (v. 26)
  - The message of salvation has been sent out
- Proof of the proposition (vv. 27-37)
  - God vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead; therefore salvation can be preached to Israel
- Conclusion (vv. 38-41)
  - Urging acceptance of salvation

# *Acts 17*

- Introduction: “Men of Athens” (v. 22)
- Narration of the facts (v. 23a)
  - Giving background
- Proposition to be proved (v. 23b)
  - I will tell you about what you worship as unknown (neut., not masc.; refers to “the divine,” v. 29)
- Proof of the proposition (vv. 24-29)
  - God as incomparably greater than idols
- Conclusion (vv. 30-31)

# *Acts 22*

- Introduction: “Men, brothers and fathers, listen” (v. 1)
- Narration of the facts (vv. 3-21)
  - Giving background
  - Interrupted (v. 22)
- Proposition to be proved (n/a)
- Proof of the proposition (n/a)
- Conclusion (n/a)

# ***Acts 26—Part 1***

- Introduction: “I consider myself blessed . . . I beg you to listen to me patiently” (vv. 2-3)
- Narration of the facts (vv. 4-18)
  - Giving background
- Proposition to be proved (v. 19)
- Proof of the proposition (vv. 20-21)
- Conclusion (vv. 22-23)

# ***Acts 26—Part 2***

- Introduction: “Most excellent Festus” (v. 25)
- Narration of the facts: “I am not insane” (v. 25)
- Proposition to be proved: “I am speaking true and reasonable words” (v. 25)
- Proof of the proposition: “For the king knows about these matters . . .” (v. 26)
- Conclusion (v. 27)

# ***Hebrews 1:1-2:4***

- Narration of the facts (1:1)
- Proposition to be proved (1:2-4)
- Proof of the proposition (1:5-14)
- Conclusion (2:1-4)

# ***The Written Sermon***

- Begins without standard introduction to a letter
- Verbal character of the material
- Sustained exposition (explanation) of Scripture
- Repeated concern with and weaving together of exposition and exhortation
- Structured to persuade the hearers
- Great concern for them to be aware and alert
- Letter ending clarifies it is to be read to the assembled congregation (13:22-25)

# *The Congregation*

- Could appreciate the elegance of the sermon
  - The vocabulary of the Greek text implies they knew Koine Greek very well
- The greetings of those from Italy (13:24) indicate that the author and the recipients had connections with people outside Palestine
  - Addresses a specific group of people
  - Does not specifically identify them or the city
  - Perhaps a “house church” rather than all the believers of a particular area (13:24; 10:25)

# ***The Congregation***

- Lack of interest and a tendency to neglect the gospel, endangering their salvation (2:1-4)
- Lost the spiritual enthusiasm they once had; Result: slow to grasp the full significance of Christ's work and of such a great salvation (5:11-6:8)
  - Spiritual immaturity (to regress) is completely inappropriate for experienced believers
  - Inactivity, neglect and regression lead to apostasy from Christ (6:1-8; 10:26-31)

# ***The Congregation***

- Many in this congregation appear to have been intimidated by the disdain and shame they suffered as a result of their loyalty to Christ (10:32-34; 12:1-11)
  - The persecution they suffered included public harassment, imprisonment and the confiscation of property but not martyrdom
  - In their state of discouragement they are tempted to shrink back from their commitment to Christ due to present shame and fear that more persecution may come (10:36-39; 13:6)

# *The Congregation*

- Some were “abandoning the gathering together”—neglecting to attend the community's times of worship (10:24-25; cf. 3:13-14)
  - The circumstances: subjection to shame, anticipated persecution and possibly impending martyrdom along with failure to focus on Christ
  - Given these circumstances, some would be attracted to the privileges and respect that would be theirs by abandoning their commitment to Christ and identifying with the unbelieving world
    - Don't sell your birthright as Esau did—neglect (2:3) for Esau became disregard for God and attraction to the world (12:14-17)

# *Honor & Shame*

- In order to understand the context of the recipients' situation more fully, we need to grasp the role of honor and shame in the first-century Hellenistic world
  - Honor: given public recognition that their conduct conformed to what was socially expected
  - Shame: public rejection due to lack of conformity
  - A person shared the honor—or shame—of one's social group
    - It was honorable to act in such a way that protected the honor and public approval of a group to which a person belonged

# *Patron/Client*

- A culture of honor and shame was carried out within a patron/client relationship
  - Patrons were those who were socially superior and who controlled the benefits of life through wealth and the ability to bestow position and influence
  - Clients were socially inferior and looked to a patron for the necessary benefits of life
  - The system of honor was for the patron to generously grant these benefits and for the client to be loyal to the patron by supporting them in various endeavors but most of all by praising them publicly and acknowledging their generosity

# ***Patron/Client—Honor-Shame***

- It was the greatest shamefulfulness for the patron to withhold generosity or for the client to be slack in public praise or to fail in supporting the patron in public matters
- The relationship between patron and client was intended to be permanent
- Also, some people served as brokers mediating between clients and patrons—enabling clients to receive patronage and patrons, praise
- The past suffering, present shame and possible future persecution of the congregation caused a great loss of honor and source of shame before the larger community

# ***Patron/Client—Honor-Shame***

- Heb. 11:37-38 is the perfect example of disgrace through total exclusion of the faithful from human society
  - This very shame suffered at the hands of the unbelieving world is a mark of great honor before God, their ultimate Patron
  - God has given them the greatest gift of eternal salvation through Jesus their Patron and mediator (“broker” within the patron/client concept)
    - 8:6; 9:15; 12:24
- Jesus has provided these benefits through suffering the vilest of shame (12:2b)

# ***Patron/Client—Honor-Shame***

- They honor Father and Son through faithful loyalty and by their perpetual offer of praise and gratitude for the benefits they receive (12:28; 13:15)
  - Moses, by taking his place with the suffering and dishonored people of God (11:25-26), became an example for them to follow
  - What did it require for the Son to give them the benefits of “such a great salvation” (2:3)?
    - Taking upon himself the shame of God's people (2:5-18)

# *Key Words & Phrases*

- **Faith/Faithful** (*pistis*—32 times); *pistos*—5 times)
- **Sin** (25 times)
  - 1:3; 2:17; 3:13; 4:15
- **Son/sons** (24 times)
- **Blood** (22 times)
  - 2:14; 9:7, 12-14, 18-22, 25; 10:4, 19, 29; 11:28; 12:4, 24; 13:11-12, 20
- **Covenant** (*diathēkē*—18 times)
  - 7:22; 8:6, (7), 8-10, (13); 9:4, 15-17, 20; 10:16, 29; 12:24; 13:20

# *Key Words & Phrases*

- **High Priest** (*archiereus*—17 times)
  - 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:1, 5, 10; 6:20; 7:26-28; 8:1, 3; 9: 7, 11, 25; 13:11
- **Priest** (14 times)
  - 5:6; 7:1, 3, 11; 7:14-15, 17, 20-21, 23; 8:4; 9:6; 10:11, 21
- **Better/Superior/Greater** (*kreittōn*—13 times)
  - 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24

# *Chiastic Structure Review*

- Chiastic structure (the first and last elements of a passage balance one another)
  - 2:18—“Because he has suffered, himself having been tested, he is able to help those being tested”
  - 3:4—“For every house is built by someone, but he who built all things is God”
- [The following two outlines are from Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, 79-80, 614.]

# ***Chiastic Structure Outline***

- (A) God Has Spoken through His Son (1:1-4)
- (A<sup>1</sup>) God “Will Speak” Once More at the Final Judgment (12:25-29)
- (B) The Incomparable Majesty of the Eternal, Exalted Son (1:5-14)
- (B<sup>1</sup>) God’s Firstborn Enter His Presence through the Exalted Jesus (12:18-24)
- (C) The Urgency of Attending to God’s Son-Mediated Revelation (2:1-4)
- (C<sup>1</sup>) Don’t Sell Your Birthright, as Esau Did (12:14-17)

# ***Chiastic Structure Outline***

(D) The Crucial Importance of the Incarnate, Suffering Son (2:5-18)

(D<sup>1</sup>) God's True Sons and Daughters Endure the Discipline of Suffering (12:4-13)

(E) Consider Jesus, a Son over the House of God (3:1-6)

(E<sup>1</sup>) Keep Your Eyes on Jesus, Seated at God's Right Hand (12:1-3)

(F) Avoid the Company of the Faithless Generation (3:7-19)

(F<sup>1</sup>) Join the Company of the Faithful of Old (11:1-40)

# ***Chiastic Structure Outline***

- (G) Pursue the Blessing Lost by the Faithless Generation (4:1-11)
- (G<sup>1</sup>) Pursue the Blessing Promised the Faithful (10:32-39)
- (H) You Are Accountable before God's Word (4:12-13)
- (H<sup>1</sup>) You Are More Accountable Because of This High Priest (10:26-31)
  - (I) Embrace This Great High Priest (4:14-16)
  - (I<sup>1</sup>) Avail Yourself of This Great Priest (10:19-25)
- (J) *Christ's All-Sufficient High Priesthood (5:1-10:18)*

# ***Christ's All-Sufficient High Priesthood (5:1-10:18)***

- The New High Priest and the Old (5:1-10)
- Don't Be Unresponsive But Grasp What Christ Has Provided (5:11-6:20)
  - Reverse Your Unnatural Regression (5:11-6:3)
  - Avoid the Danger of Apostasy (6:4-8)
  - Shun Apostasy and Embrace the Community of the Faithful (6:9-12)
  - Trust God's Promise Verified by God's Oath (6:13-20) [Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 15:1-21; 22:16-18]

# ***Christ's All-Sufficient High Priesthood (5:1-10:18)***

- Our High Priest's Legitimacy and Eternity (7:1-28)
  - Melchizedek Is Greater Than Levi (7:1-10)
  - The Priest in “the Likeness of Melchizedek” Displaces Aaron (7:11-25)
  - This Priest Is Exactly the Kind of Priest We Need (7:26-28)
- Our High Priest's All-Sufficient Sacrifice (8:1-10:18)
  - The New Promised (8:1-13)
  - The Old Antiquated; the New Foreshadowed (9:1-22)
  - The New Explained (9:23-10:18)

# ***Outline of Hebrews***

***(Daniel Wallace, Bible.org)***

- The Theological Basis for Christ's Superiority (1:1–10:18)
  - Christ is Superior to the Prophets (1:1-4)
    - God's Revelation to the Prophets (1:1)
    - God's Revelation in "Son" (1:2-4)
  - Christ is Superior to the Angels (1:5–2:18)
    - Demonstrated from the Old Testament (1:5-14)
    - [First Warning] Don't Drift (2:1-4)
    - Demonstrated by His Humanity (2:5-18)
      - Positive: Exaltation above the Angels (2:5-9)

# ***Outline of Hebrews***

- Negative: Suffering Necessary for Superiority (2:10-18)
  - To Identify with Humanity (2:10-13)
  - To Destroy the Devil and Deliver Saints (2:14-16)
  - To Become a Merciful and Faithful High Priest (2:17-18)
- Christ is Superior to Moses (3:1–4:13)
  - Both were Faithful (3:1-2)
  - Builder Vs. Building (3:3-4)
  - Servant Vs. Son (3:5-6a)

# ***Outline of Hebrews***

[Second Warning] Don't Defect (3:6b–4:13)

- Israel in the Wilderness (3:6b-11)
- Warning against Unbelief (3:12–4:2)
- Warning against not Entering God's Rest (4:3-13)
  - The Necessity of Faith (4:3-11)
  - The Penetration of God's Word (4:12-13)
- Christ is Superior to Aaron (4:14–7:28)
  - Our Compassionate High Priest (4:14-16)
  - The Priesthood of Aaron (5:1-5)
  - The Priesthood of Christ (5:6-10)

# ***Outline of Hebrews***

[Third Warning] Don't Degenerate (5:11–6:8)

- The Rebuke for Immaturity (5:11-14)
- The Encouragement toward Maturity (6:1-3)
- The Warning against Apostasy (6:4-8)
- Reminder of the Promises of God (6:9-20)
- The Priesthood of Melchizedek (7:1-28)
  - The Greatness of Melchizedek in Relation to Abraham (7:1-10)
  - The Greatness of Melchizedek's Order in Relation to the Levitical Priesthood (7:11-28)

# ***Outline of Hebrews***

- Christ's Ministry is Superior to the Old Covenant Ministry (8:1–10:18)
  - Introduction (8:1-6)
  - A Better Covenant (8:7-13)
    - The Inadequacy of the Old Covenant (8:7-9)
    - The Adequacy of the New Covenant (8:10-13)
  - A Better Sanctuary (9:1-12)
    - The Imperfection of the Earthly Sanctuary (9:1-10)
    - The Perfection of the Heavenly Sanctuary (9:11-12)

# ***Outline of Hebrews***

- A Better Sacrifice (9:13–10:18)
  - The Necessity of Shed Blood (9:13-22)
  - The Purification of the Heavenly Sanctuary (9:23-28)
  - The Permanence of the Sacrifice (10:1-18)
    - The Inadequacy of the Levitical Sacrifices (10:1-9)
    - The Adequacy of Christ's Sacrifice (10:10-18)
- The Practical Outworking of Christ's Superiority (10:19–13:17)
  - Exhortation to Enter the New Sanctuary (10:19-31)

# ***Outline of Hebrews***

- Draw Near in Faith (10:19-22)
- Hold Fast in Hope (10:23)
- Stir Up One Another in Love (10:24-25)
- [Fourth Warning] Don't Despise (10:26-31)
- Exhortation to Endure Persecution (10:32-39)
- Examples of Faith (11:1-40)
  - Introduction (11:1-3)
  - Faith from Abel to Noah (11:4-7)
  - The Faith of the Patriarchs (11:8-22)
  - The Faith of Moses (11:23-29)
  - Faith in Israel after Moses (11:30-40)

# ***Outline of Hebrews***

- Exhortation to Endure Chastening (12:1-29)
  - The Supreme Example of Christ (12:1-4)
  - Chastening as Evidence of Sonship (12:5-11)
  - Chastening Necessary for Sanctification (12:12-17)
- [Fifth Warning] Don't Deny (12:18-29)
  - Mount Sinai Vs. Mount Zion (12:18-24)
  - The Awesome Holiness of the God of Heaven (12:25-29)
- Exhortation for Living as a Christian (13:1-17)
  - Love for Believers (13:1-6)
  - Respect for Leaders (13:7-17)

# ***Outline of Hebrews***

- Imitate their Faith (13:7-8)
- Resist the Heretics' Doctrine (13:9-15)
- Provide for Leaders (13:16)
- Submit to Leaders (13:17)
- Concluding Instructions (13:18-25)
  - Request for Prayer (13:18-19)
  - Prayer for Readers (13:20-21)
  - Final Exhortation (13:22)
  - Timothy's Release (13:23)
  - Final Greetings and Benediction (13:24-25)

# ***Basic Message***

- Be faithful to God's Word so that when you have done God's will, you may receive the promise through our faithful High Priest
  - 4:1; 6:12; 9:15; 10:36

# ***Memory Verse Review*** ***(2 Thessalonians—Philemon)***

- 2 Thess. 3:1—“Finally, brothers...”
- 1 Tim. 3:14-15—“These things...”
- 2 Tim. 2:15—“Do your best...”
- Titus 2:11-12—“For the grace...”
- Philemon 20—“Yes, brother...”

# ***Memory Verse for Hebrews***

**3:12**

**“Beware, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God”**