

Wednesday Night Hebrews Bible study facilitated by Pastor Steve Rhodes
Hebrews introduction
03.25.2020
Welcome

Prayer

Pray for the Corona outbreak

We need to pray and pray fervently.

Swindoll shares:

In my 80 plus years on earth—more than 50 of them in ministry—I have made a trade. It’s been a wonderful trade. I’ve traded youth for truth. And I wouldn’t be years younger if I could make it happen.

*I think more than **anything** else, it is the hardship, it is the difficulty, it is the dead-end street that shapes us. It is the trial that occurs that makes us into the individuals God wants us to be (if the attitude is right and the learning is still on a willing curve). It’s how we react, how we respond to the pains and the struggles.*

*For some, it’s the bankruptcies, the injustice committed against us, the disappointments, the criticisms, and sometimes even the divorce that just **rocked** us back on our heels, turns us around, gets our attention . . . and puts us into an orbit we would never have otherwise entered.*

My short thought this week: God didn’t always use the things I planned or the things I had hoped for in life, but He used the serendipities—the results of those surprises that leveled me—to turn my life in the direction He wanted it to go.

I wouldn’t trade how old I am or the experiences I’ve gone through or the heartaches and disappointments I’ve endured. Nor should you. Because all of it has worked together in God’s plan.

—Chuck¹

Another intro:

¹ https://pastors.ifblog.com/2020/03/sovereign-serendipities-2/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+ThePastorsSoulRoleAndHome+%28Blog+-+Pastor%27s+Blog%29

7 Truths to Hang on to During the COVID-19 Crisis

By Rick Warren

The last few weeks have been full of unprecedented changes in our lives and in our ministries. I know many pastors are trying to figure out how to minister in a period of social distancing, how to serve the most at-risk populations in our communities, and how to sustain ministries as tithes and offerings decline.

None of us have been trained to do this. We've never ministered through an epidemic like the COVID-19 before. Fear is everywhere. I'm sure you're wrestling with it, too.

At times like this, we need to hang on to truths that don't change. Pastor, you know these truths. You've probably even preached them multiple times before. But during times of crisis, it's really important to remember the fundamentals. The Bible emphasizes getting the facts before you take major actions in your life.

Here are seven facts to share with your congregation:

Not everything you hear is true. Not everyone with an opinion on the Internet, television, and social media knows what they're talking about. You need to be selective with who you listen to during this time. Many people in the coming days will have their own agendas—financial, political, etc.—for this crisis.

The Bible says in Proverbs 13:16, "*The prudent man always acts out of knowledge*" (NIV). In other words, act out of knowledge and not fear. Make it a priority to get your facts from people who are trustworthy.

Not everyone is at equal risk in this pandemic. The history of COVID-19 is very clear. People over the age of 60 and those who have preexisting conditions are most vulnerable. If you're in these categories, please be careful. I know, as a pastor, you want to be serving your congregation. You need to look for safe ways to do that. Be faithful but not foolish.

This will pass. The Bible tells us there will be trials. First Peter 4:12 says, "*Dear friends, don't be surprised or shocked that you are going through testing that is like walking through fire*" (CEV). These are tough times, but they won't last forever.

We need to do what the health professionals recommend. We need to take the common sense actions that will decrease the spread of this virus. We won't need to make these changes forever. Our churches will gather again.

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Focus on what's unchanging not what is changing. There will be many changes to your world, your community, and your ministry in the coming weeks. It's safe to say you don't even know all the changes this pandemic will have on you and your community. You'll do things to serve your community and your congregation you never dreamed of a year ago. Be flexible, but remember what hasn't changed.

The Bible says, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*" (Hebrews 13:8 NIV). In the midst of all this change, you can count on that truth. You can also know that God's love for you and your community has never changed. God's call on your life hasn't changed. Don't let all the changes make you lose sight of everything that is still the same.

God will go through it with you. This virus didn't surprise God. He will walk through every bit of it with us. You may feel alone at times. You may feel like no one understands the demands of ministry that are upon you right now. But we will never be alone.

I encourage you to remind yourself of Isaiah 43:2 during this time: "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze*" (NIV). Focus on that truth and not all the noise on the Internet right now. It will replace your worry with worship.

This is not the end of the story. The Bible says, "*In times of trouble, God is with us, and when we are knocked down, we get up again . . . because we know that God raised the Lord Jesus to life*" (2 Corinthians 4:8, 14 CEV). Easter reminds us that we win no matter what happens. Even if this virus takes our lives, we will go straight into the presence of God. On that day, all of our pain, sickness, and sorrow will be over. There won't be a COVID-19 virus in heaven.

We don't know what the future holds, but we do know who holds it.

God wants to use our churches to help others. I know your church is going through an incredible challenge right now. But God doesn't want to just take your church through this crisis. He doesn't just want your church to survive during this period. He wants it to thrive. This is the difference between how we deal with pain as believers and how the world does. The church sees every need in the world as an open door for ministry.

I'm praying your church will start many new ministries out of these difficult days. Today you don't even know the kinds of challenges your community will face, but God does. This will be an opportunity for churches to shine.

I'm praying for our churches. This virus didn't sneak up on God. It won't stop the church. Jesus himself reminds us that "*all the powers of hell will not conquer*" the church (Matthew 16:18 NIV).

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Rest in that truth.²

Thoughts on Hebrews

Hebrews gives is some very profound passages: let me go over a few:

Hebrews 10:11-13:

¹¹ Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹² but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.

What about Hebrews and the Scriptures?

Hebrews 4:12:

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

What about our great High Priest?

Hebrews 4:14-16:

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore 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.

What about remembering our good works?

Hebrews 6:10:

¹⁰ For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

² https://pastors.com/7-truths-to-hang-on-to-during-the-covid-19-crisis/?utm_source=Pastors.com&utm_campaign=c78f25ca51-PCOM+Toolbox+03.25.2020&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3a3ff6b713-c78f25ca51-46286677&mc_cid=c78f25ca51&mc_eid=f6638c6898

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Also, Hebrews 10:32-34

Intro to Hebrews

Introduction from the ESV Online study Bible. We will go over a few parts

Hebrews

Author, Audience, and Title

The author of Hebrews neither names himself nor clearly designates his audience. The traditional title “to the Hebrews” reflects the ancient assumption that the original recipients were Jewish Christians.

The author's identity has been a matter of significant conjecture throughout church history. In antiquity, authorship was attributed to figures such as Barnabas or especially Paul. However, several of the most astute church fathers recognized considerable differences in style and method of argument between this book and Paul's named writings. Scholars have suggested other possible authors, such as Clement, Luke, or Apollos. However, most today concede that this author remains anonymous. It seems that the judgment expressed by Origen (d. c. a.d. 254) remains correct: “Who actually wrote the epistle, only God knows” (cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.14).

The author clearly knew his recipients and longed to be reunited with them ([Heb. 13:19](#)). They had a mutual friend in Timothy ([13:23](#)), and probably this was the same Timothy who ministered alongside Paul. The author was presumably male, since he refers to himself using a masculine participle (see [11:32](#): “would fail me to tell”). Since “us” included the author in [2:3](#) (the salvation “attested to us by those who heard”; also [2:1](#)), it appears that he was not an eyewitness of Jesus. The author passed on the greetings of those “from Italy” ([13:24](#)). Scholars debate whether he was in Italy writing to the church elsewhere or was outside Italy (though accompanied by Italians) and writing back to an audience in Italy (possibly at Rome).

The audience's social situation can be inferred from commands to “remember those who are in prison” and who are “mistreated” ([13:3](#)). Timothy himself had just been set free ([13:23](#)). Indeed, the author of Hebrews commended his audience for their former endurance of persecution, for their compassion on those in prison, and for having “joyfully accepted the plundering of your property” ([10:32–34](#)).

The author warned against “strange teachings” in the church (13:9), and these teachings may have been related to the use of ritual foods (13:9–10). Moreover, he repeatedly called his audience to persevere in the faith and cautioned them about the danger of leaving the Christian communion, as he sought to show the superiority of Christ to Mosaic sacrifices and rituals (chs. 3–10). Hence the early church was likely correct to assert that Jewish Christians (as well as Gentiles who had previously been drawn to the Jewish religion) were the intended audience for this book (see “our fathers,” 1:1). Furthermore, such an audience would have well understood the book's many citations and allusions to the OT (and would have shared in the writer's frequent use of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT).

Date

Hebrews was almost certainly written in the first century and probably before a.d. 70. Reasons for asserting a first-century date include the mention of Timothy (13:23), who was known to be active in the first century, and the influence of Hebrews (and its way of thinking) on *1 Clement* (written c. a.d. 96).

The crucial issue in dating the book concerns whether the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (a.d. 70) had already occurred. Hebrews speaks of the Jewish sacrificial system as if it were a still-present reality (Heb. 7:27–28; 8:3–5; 9:7–8, 25; 10:1–3; 13:10–11), which does not seem likely after the cessation of the Jerusalem temple sacrifices in a.d. 70. Admittedly, Hebrews focuses on the Mosaic tabernacle rather than the Solomonic (or the Herodian) temple.

Nonetheless, if the writer was attempting to convince his readers of the inferiority of the Mosaic system (and possibly dissuade church members from returning to Jewish practices), an obvious argument would have been to mention the cessation of the temple sacrifices, if they were in fact no longer taking place.

Theme

Christ is greater than any angel, priest, or old covenant institution; thus each reader, rather than leaving such a great salvation, is summoned to hold on by faith to the true rest found in Christ and to encourage others in the church to persevere.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

The genre of Hebrews is unusual. The book is without an introduction or other early indications that it is a letter. Yet the final verses do pass on greetings and blessings (13:23–25), and the author speaks of having “written to you” (13:22). However, the author also identifies his work as a “word of exhortation” (13:22). The careful rhetorical progression of the book, along with its frequent practical exhortations, has led many to consider it a single sermon. Perhaps Hebrews is best understood as a sermonic letter.

Hebrews frequently encourages the audience to endure and warns against leaving Christ ([2:1–4](#); [3:7–4:13](#); [5:11–6:12](#); [10:19–39](#); [12:1–29](#)). These warning passages are interspersed throughout the book (see [chart](#)) and have noticeable structural similarities (esp. in terms of exhortation and threatened consequence). Around these passages the argument of the book progresses carefully. Moreover, these specific exhortations themselves flow out of the surrounding material. Thus the book is unified in both structure and intent.

The warning passages exhort church participants to remain faithful. The more expository sections of the epistle show the superiority of Christ and his new covenant work to angels, Moses, the tabernacle priesthood, and the sacrificial system. The implication is that these are so inferior to Christ that it is futile to return to them (or to go anywhere else). Thus the book encourages the church to hold fast to its faith, because that faith is grounded in the most superior revelation.

The background of such exhortations must have been the audience's need to continue enduring through persecution and the trials of life (e.g., [ch. 12](#)). They appear to have grown less attentive to Christian instruction ([5:11–14](#)); and some apparently have ceased regular attendance at their meetings ([10:25](#)). Nonetheless, the author reminds them of their past faithfulness and communal love in the midst of persecution ([10:32–34](#)). He encourages their faithfulness by careful exposition of the OT in light of the revelation in Jesus Christ.

The soteriology (salvation teaching) of Hebrews is rooted in its Christology—the Son of God became the heavenly high priest, who offered himself as a sacrifice once for all. Christ obtained salvation for all who approach in faith ([6:1](#); [11:6](#); cf. [4:2](#)), and such faith perseveres until it receives the promised eternal reward ([6:12](#); [10:22](#), [38–39](#)).

Key Themes

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Jesus is fully God and fully man. | 1:1–14 ; 2:5–18 |
| 2. Jesus as Son of God reveals God the Father, is the agent of creation, and sustains all creation. | 1:1–14 |
| 3. Jesus serves as the eternal high priest, who as a man sympathizes with human weaknesses, and yet who offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin. | 1:3 ; 2:10–18 ; 4:15–16 ; 9:11–10:19 |
| 4. Jesus is superior to angels, to Moses and the Mosaic covenant, and to the earthly tabernacle and its priesthood. | 1:4–2:18 ; 3:1–6 ; 5:1–10 ; 7:1–10:18 ; 8:1–13 |
| 5. All humanity faces eternal judgment for sin. | 4:12–13 ; 9:27–28 ; 10:26–31 |
| 6. Faith is necessary to please God and to participate in his eternal salvation promises. Faith requires conviction about the unseen realities of God and his promises. Such faith produces perseverance. | 4:2–3 ; 6:1, 12 ; 10:22, 38–39 ; 11:1–40 |

7. Perseverance is necessary in the Christian life, and thus church participants are warned against a lack of endurance.

[2:1–4](#); [3:7–4:13](#);
[5:11–6:12](#); [10:19–39](#); [12:1–29](#)

8. God's promises are trustworthy, including his promise of eternal salvation.

[6:13–20](#)

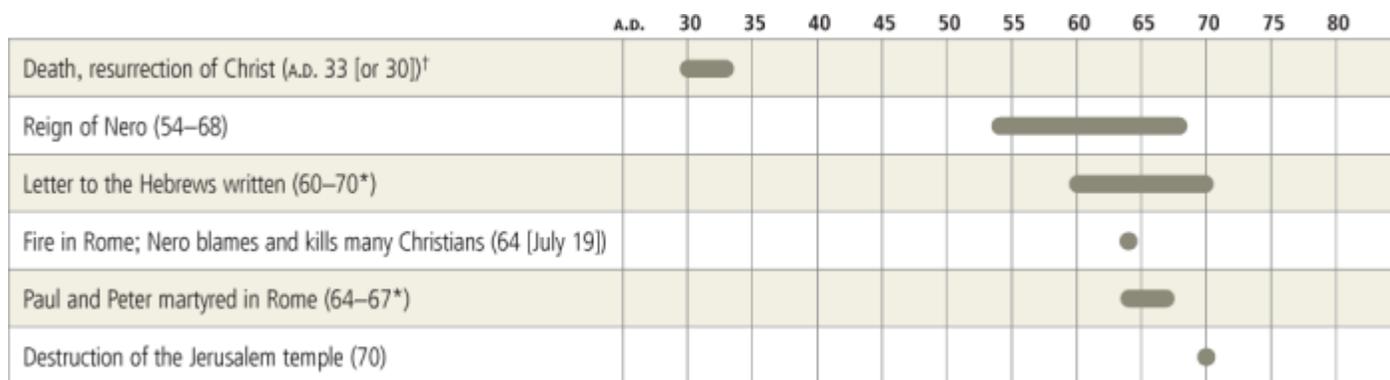
9. With the advent of Jesus Christ, the last days have begun, though they await consummation at his return.

[1:2](#); [2:5](#); [4:9–11](#);
[9:9–28](#); [12:22–29](#)

History of Salvation Summary

Christ has accomplished final salvation, has brought the final word of God, and has become the final priest and the one atoning sacrifice to which the OT pointed. (For an explanation of the “History of Salvation,” see the [Overview of the Bible](#).)

Timeline



* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

Literary Features

As noted above (see [Purpose, Occasion, and Background](#)), the book of Hebrews has affinities with the genres of both the epistle and the sermon. The [first 12 chapters](#) conduct a sustained theological argument about the superiority of Christ over a number of rivals and about the need to persevere in following this vastly superior Messiah. While following many ancient customs of rhetorical argumentation, these chapters can remind the modern reader of an essay with a thesis, a series of subordinate generalizations, and supporting proof consisting of data and commentary on that data.

The book of Hebrews is one of the most stylistically polished books in the NT. The writer is a master of imagery and metaphor, allusions to the OT, comparison and analogy, contrast, and long, flowing sentences that build to a climax and often use parallel construction of clauses.

The rhetoric of the book is partly argumentative, as the author conducts a sustained theological exposition such as modern readers might expect in a debate or in a theology book. The persuasive strategy adheres to one of the classical ways of arguing a thesis, which is to repeat the main idea often and from a variety of angles. In addition to the rhetoric of argument and debate, readers will find in the book of Hebrews a persuasive rhetoric of exhortation in which the writer appeals to his readers not to abandon their faith.

The central motif of the book is the formula “better,” with the cluster of words “better,” “more,” and “greater” appearing a combined total of 25 times. The comparative motif, in which one thing is declared superior to another thing, is the main rhetorical strategy of the book. A common rhetorical form by which the comparison is conducted is analogy, with something in the OT being declared similar to the person and work of Christ. But the analogies are not between two equal things; rather, the author argues from the lesser to the greater.

Outline

1. Jesus Is Superior to Angelic Beings ([1:1–2:18](#))
 1. The supremacy of God's Son ([1:1–14](#))
 1. Introduction: summary of the Son's person and work ([1:1–4](#))
 2. Evidence of his status as Son ([1:5–14](#))
 2. Warning against neglecting salvation ([2:1–4](#))
 3. The founder of salvation ([2:5–18](#))
2. Jesus Is Superior to the Mosaic Law ([3:1–10:18](#))
 1. Jesus is greater than Moses ([3:1–6](#))
 2. Warning: a rest for the people of God ([3:7–4:13](#))
 1. The failure of the exodus generation ([3:7–19](#))
 2. Entering God's rest ([4:1–13](#))
 3. The high priesthood of Jesus ([4:14–10:18](#))
 1. Jesus the great high priest ([4:14–5:10](#))
 2. Pause in the argument: warning against apostasy ([5:11–6:12](#))
 3. The certainty of God's promise ([6:13–20](#))
 4. Return to main argument: the priestly order of Melchizedek ([7:1–10](#))
 5. Jesus compared to Melchizedek ([7:11–28](#))
 6. Jesus, high priest of a better covenant ([8:1–13](#))
 7. The earthly holy place ([9:1–10](#))
 8. Redemption through the blood of Christ ([9:11–28](#))
 9. Christ's sacrifice once for all ([10:1–18](#))
3. Call to Faith and Endurance ([10:19–12:29](#))
 1. The full assurance of faith ([10:19–39](#))
 1. Exhortation to draw near ([10:19–25](#))
 2. Warnings against shrinking back ([10:26–39](#))
 3. By faith ([11:1–40](#))
 2. Endurance until the kingdom fully comes ([12:1–29](#))
 1. Jesus, founder and perfecter of faith ([12:1–2](#))

2. Do not grow weary ([12:3–17](#))
3. A kingdom that cannot be shaken ([12:18–29](#))
4. Concluding Exhortations and Remarks ([13:1–25](#))
 1. Sacrifices pleasing to God ([13:1–19](#))
 2. Benediction ([13:20–21](#))
 3. Final greetings ([13:22–25](#))

The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary:

The New Bible Dictionary:

HEBREWS, EPISTLE TO THE.

I. OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

The doctrinal theme: the superiority of Christ. 1:1–10:18

a. The Person of Christ, 1:1–4:13

(i) *Christ is superior to the Prophets* (1:1–4). The Prophets are here representative of OT revelation generally.

(ii) *Christ is superior to angels* (1:5–2:18). This is demonstrated by an appeal to various Scriptures, and Christ's apparent inferiority through suffering is then explained.

(iii) *Parenthesis* (2:1–4). Solemn warnings are given to those who neglect God's revelation.

(iv) *Christ is superior to Moses* (3:1–19). Since Moses was no more than a servant, Christ's Sonship establishes his superiority over the great lawgiver. This superiority is also seen by the fact that Moses, unlike Christ, could not lead his people into rest.

(v) *Christ is superior to Joshua* (4:1–13). Although Joshua led the Israelites into their inheritance, a better rest, still future, remains for God's people.

b. The work of Christ, 4:14–10:18

This is particularly exemplified in his office as Priest.

(i) *His priesthood is divinely appointed* (4:14–5:10). In this section the sympathy of Christ as an essential qualification for the high-priestly office is emphasized.

(ii) *His priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek* (5:11–7:28). This section begins with a long digression consisting of rebuke, solemn warning and exhortation (5:11–6:8). Then the order of Melchizedek is explained. His priesthood is perpetual (7:1–3); it is anterior to, and therefore greater than, the levitical (7:4–10); it shows the imperfections of the levitical priesthood (7:11–19). Christ's priesthood is seen to be the perfect fulfilment of the order of Melchizedek because it was established by oath, is unaffected by death and unmarred by sin (7:20–28).

(iii) *His work is within the new covenant* (8:1–9:10). Every aspect of the old order has its counterpart in the new. There is a new sanctuary in which the Mediator of a new covenant has entered to minister.

OT Old Testament

(iv) *His work is centred in a perfect atonement* (9:11–10:18). Our High Priest offered a unique sacrifice (himself), and because this offering was made ‘through the eternal Spirit’ it is superior to the levitical offerings (9:11–15). The necessity of Christ’s death is demonstrated by an illustration from a legal testament (9:16–22). His perfect sacrifice shows up the blemishes of the levitical system (10:1–10). His ministry, unlike the Aaronic, is complete and effective (10:11–18).

The practical application of the doctrinal theme. 10:19–13:25

a. Exhortations to hold fast, 10:19–25

b. Parenthesis, 10:26–37

(i) A serious warning against apostasy (10:26–31).

(ii) Encouragement based on the readers’ former experiences (10:32–37).

c. Examples from the past, 11:1–40

The writer appeals to the heroes of faith in order to inspire his readers into heroic action.

d. Advice concerning present sufferings, 12:1–29

(i) Present trials to be regarded as chastisements (12:1–13).

(ii) Warnings based on the story of Esau (12:14–17).

(iii) A final contrast between the old and the greater glory of the new (12:18–29).

e. Christian responsibilities, 13:1–25

(i) Various exhortations affecting the social and personal life of the believer (13:1–8).

(ii) A concluding warning to the readers to go forth from the camp (of Judaism) and some final personal references (13:9–25).