Jesus is Better
A Study Guide through Hebrews

Richland Creek Community Church
Fall 2014
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How to Use this Guide

These guides are scheduled to be read four times a week beginning September 2. If you stay faithful to these readings, you will read through the entire book of Hebrews during our three-month small group study.

As you can see by the dates assigned to the readings, there are guides for Monday through Thursday of each week (except for the first week, which begins on a Tuesday). Monday’s guide will always be a review of the lesson from Sunday morning, while Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday guides will help you study in preparation for the upcoming lesson.

Our prayer is that these study guides help you:

• understand the letter to the Hebrews even better than you normally would.

• engage Scripture more deeply in your small group meeting on Sunday.

• make a habit of the daily study of God’s Word.

We are praying “that the Word would dwell in you richly.”

— Creek Small Group Leaders
God Speaks (Sept. 2)

*Read Heb. 1:1-2*

*God speaks.* What an incredible thought, that almighty God, who “upholds the universe by the word of his power” has spoken to us, who by our very nature were his enemies. Yet our whole salvation depends on this, because the Bible is clear that if God had not spoken to us, then we would never have acknowledged him (Psalm 53).

In fact, God has been speaking, from the very beginning. He has been speaking “at many times and in many ways,” according to v. 1, and primarily through his obedient prophets. The Old Testament is filled with stories of faithful men who proclaimed the truth of God in the face of overwhelming circumstances, caring not for their own safety or comfort. All had this in common: They were the mouthpieces of a loving, gracious God who was trying to speak to his children about salvation.

But in v. 2 we see the culmination of God’s speech: His Son, Jesus Christ. How has God spoken by his Son? Because Jesus, in every way, showed us what God is like. He revealed the character of God, the goodness of God, the mercy of God, and above all, the plan of God, by dying on the cross for our sins. He who is “the heir of all things,” who “created the world,” was punished for our sins.

God has, indeed, spoken, and his message is clear: I love you.

*Questions to Consider*

- Have you thanked God recently for the simple fact that He has revealed Himself to you? If not, take time in prayer today to do just that.

- Jesus is the “heir of all things,” meaning that he has supremacy over all the earth. This is a key theme in Hebrews. Take time now to consider, have you surrendered everything to Christ?

- God has spoken through his Son, and by His grace has given us the Bible to show us authoritatively who Christ is. Are you staying close to Christ by staying in the Scripture?

*Written by Pastor Jason Hall*
What God is Really Like (Sept. 3)

Read Hebrews 1:3-4

The theme of the book of Hebrews can be expressed in three simple words: Jesus is better. Better than the angels, better than sacrifices and priests — better than anything that purports to get us to God. Why, exactly, is he better? Jesus is better because Jesus is God.

Verse 3 says that Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact imprint, or express image, of his nature. Jesus is God because of who he is. We don’t have to wonder what God would be like if he became a man — all we have to do is open the Bible and read Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. We know exactly what God is like because Jesus is God.

Further, we know that Jesus is God because of what he does. Verse 3 goes on to say that he upholds the universe by the word of His power. Words were God’s preferred instrument of creation, whereby he spoke all things into existence. This same power belongs to Jesus; nothing happens apart from him.

Majesty. Glory. Mind-boggling power. Jesus embodies all of these things, which is why the last half of verse 3 is incredible. This God-man “by himself purged our sins.” Instead of clinging to his glory, Jesus suffered and died for us because he wanted to obey the loving, merciful plan of his heavenly Father. In Matt. 20:28 Jesus says about himself, “the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Phil. 2:5-11 is a well-known poetic passage that reminds of Jesus’ remarkable humility, humility that led to his well-deserved exaltation.

In fact, it is exaltation that the author of Hebrews moves to in v. 4. Jesus took his seat on high, commanding the angels, because he was not just a son, but the Son of God. And how do we become sons (and daughters)? Through faith in him.

Questions to Consider

• Do you consider often enough the majesty and power of Jesus? Do you let it leave you in awe?

• Do you trust him to uphold all things, or are you trying to control all your life’s details on your own?

• Are you following Jesus’ example of service and humility? Or do you have a sense of entitlement?

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
The First and Greatest Son (Sept. 4)

Read Hebrews 1:5-14

As you read the Bible, you notice a few things about angels that may surprise you. They are never described as cute or cuddly, nor are they ever depicted as chubby little cupids with tiny wings. Angels are always bringing a message from God – they powerful, no-nonsense creatures who live only to serve. When human beings in the Bible encounter angels, you know what they do? They cower. One angel could, if given permission, destroy entire armies.

You can understand, then, why we might be tempted to think a lot of angels. They must be pretty important, right? Maybe they are God’s chosen rulers of the universe. But the author of Hebrews warns us against making too much of angels in these verses, as he delineates all the ways that Jesus is better than the angels.

Let’s note a few:

1. None of the angels are ever called God’s Son. Jesus, however, is explicitly referred to often in Scripture as the first and true Son of God, one which angels worship.

2. Angels are powerful, yes, but they are also servants. They obey orders. The Son, though, gives orders. He has the throne, the scepter, the authority; the angels do what he says.

3. The angels are created beings. The Son, though, is the eternal God, creator of all things. He never grows old, never wearies, and never fails.

Verse 14 sums up the difference: The angels are spirits, servants to minister to those who will inherit salvation (that’s us). The Son bought our salvation with his blood and therefore earned the place of honor, commanding the angels as the Son of God. Let’s remember that our relationship with God is not through angels, but through Jesus; He alone is our hope and our Lord.

Questions to Consider

- Angels were created to worship and serve God. So were you, though perhaps in a different way. Are you doing what you were created to do?

- In a world that is so transient, isn’t it comforting to know that Jesus never changes? Take time to thank him for his faithfulness.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
Who is Jesus? (Sept. 8, Review)

*Read Hebrews 1:1-4*

Every Monday in this study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in the opening verses of Hebrews is that Jesus is God and as God he is superior to every created being, even angels.

Jesus is God’s final, authoritative and complete revelation. He showed us exactly what God is like. Because he is God, he has authority over all creation, including you and me.

Because Jesus is the focus of divine revelation, all Scripture is a testimony to who he is and what he did. The whole Bible points to Jesus. As you consider that key doctrinal truth today, turn to and read Matthew 5:17, Luke 24:27 and John 5:39. You might have read those Scriptures aloud in small group yesterday. If so, look them up and read them again.

Have you been considering, as you review yesterday’s lesson, whether you have surrendered to Jesus’ authority in your life? There is nothing you can do about his greatness – the only question is, will you obey him or will you serve yourself?

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 1:1-2 to memory. It will help you to reflect on who Jesus is, his superiority to everyone and everything, and the graciousness of God in revealing to us who he is and how we can know him.

*Written by Pastor Jason Hall*
Pay Attention (Sept. 9)

*Read Hebrews 2:1–4*

In Heb. 2:1–4 the author issues one of four exhortation, or warning, passages in the book of Hebrews (Heb. 3:12; 6:1–10; 10:26–31). In this passage it seems the author is saying that since Jesus is superior to the angels—his point from Heb. 1:7–14—Christians need to obey Christ and to pursue their own personal sanctification (or Christ-likeness). A lack of a desire to pay attention to one’s own sanctification may, in fact, be a sign of a lack of salvation.

Note that “the word spoken through angels” (Heb. 2:2) is a reference to the Ten Commandments (cf. Acts 7:38, 53; Gal. 3:19). The author’s point, then, is that if disobedience to the moral law of God produced condemnation, then how much more will disobedience to the promises of God—that is, the gospel—result in personal ruin.

Indeed, one can be sure of the gospel, and confident in the promises of Christ, for the gospel has been confirmed by signs, wonders, miracles, and the bestowal of spiritual gifts. All believers have experienced these things, at least in part, via their own salvation. The more that the gospel is embraced and pervades one’s life, the more such signs and wonders become tangible in one’s life.

*Questions to Consider*

- Why do so many Christians never seem to bear any fruit for God? What does such a lack of following the Lord indicate about these Christians?

- What things have caused you personally to “drift away” (Heb. 2:1) from God? What brought you back to the Lord?

- How can we as believers encourage those in our midst who have backslidden or perhaps are just cultural Christians?

*Written by Dave Jones*
This Son of Man is Superior (Sept. 10)

*Read Hebrews 2:5-9*

The author makes it very clear that at no time did God intend for angels to have mastery over the earth. God gave that command to mankind at creation in Genesis 1:28-30. We are to subdue it and rule over the earth. The angels’ station is to be in heaven, where they were created, and to be God’s messengers and servants. Even though we were made a little lower than the angels, we were given the role as commanders of the earth.

There has been one angel who has tried to take over that role of Earth commander and has brought an army of evil angels with him to try and take it by force. Lucifer, now Satan, has tried to set himself up as not only commander over the earth and man, but also to be greater than God. However, mankind will still have dominion and rule over the earth and all of creation because of Jesus. Psalm 86 – quoted in the passage – expresses man’s smallness versus God’s greatness. But even Christ was made to be in the form of a man to identify with us. He became a man, and died on the cross in obedience to the Father. Because of this great act of obedience, He has had “all things” placed under Him (Psalm 8:5-6). In Matthew 28:18 Jesus says that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.” Hebrews 1 showed Christ’s divine glory to be greater than any angel, and now the author shows that by humbling Himself as a man, suffering and dying for us, Jesus has been “crowned with glory and honor” and is thus greater than angels in His humanity as well.

*Questions to Consider*

- Would you say that we have fulfilled our role as commanders of the Earth? Or, have we left that position unfulfilled?
- How then are we able to gain dominion over the earth?

*Written by Larry Lee*
Jesus is One of Us (Sept. 11)

*Read Hebrews 2:10-13*

The author of Hebrews is convinced that Christ demonstrates his superiority in the atonement. In chapter 2, he goes about explaining to us the extent of that superiority.

The purpose of the atonement is accomplished through the incarnation (v.10). We learn that Jesus will “bring many sons to glory.” His work will be completed (perfected) through suffering. It is clearly understood by Jesus that the salvation (v. 10) and sanctification (v. 11) of people will be accomplished through suffering. “Many sons” is in sharp contrast to the one provider. One man, resolved to complete the mission of God, will bring many under that mission.

In this process of redemption, Christ will be the author (Gk. *archegos*) of the salvation. This word is found four times in the New Testament, and each time it refers to Jesus. The description brings to mind “source” or “origin.” We are to understand that Jesus designs and provides our salvation. In other ancient literature *archegos* is used of the first person in a series, especially a series that is meant to be continued or repeated. This idea is similar to Jesus being the “firstborn among many brothers” (Romans 8.29)

We are given a glimpse into the perfect union of God and man in this explanation of our deliverance. Jesus defines the method of atonement in his divinity and makes it come to reality in his humanity.

**Questions to Consider**

- What can we conclude from the fact that Jesus will “bring many sons to glory?”
- Why is it necessary for Jesus to suffer to bring about salvation and sanctification?
- How is your life showing resolve for the mission of God?

*Written by Beegee Brown*
The Most Important Message (Sept. 15, Review)

*Read Hebrews 2:1-4*

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in the opening verses of Hebrews 2 is that the message of salvation through Christ is worth our attention and obedience — it is the most important message ever delivered!

Angels delivered the message of salvation by God’s grace. Jesus proclaimed this message as he went about teaching and preaching. The disciples, who walked with Jesus, testified to the importance of this message. And through many miracles and healings God proved that the message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus is indeed God’s only plan for saving sinners.

One key doctrinal point we considered yesterday was the importance of evangelism. Are you faithful with your witness? As you study this morning, take a look at Matthew 5:14-16, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, and 1 Peter 2:2.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 2:1 to memory. It will help you remember the importance of diligence in your walk with Christ – don’t we all need reminders? Of course we do! And God has been faithful to provide reminders in his Word.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
Read Hebrews 2:14-18

It can be confusing to try to understand why God must become man in order to restore man to a relationship with God. But, that is precisely what happened in the incarnation. The explanation of the necessity of incarnation is presented in these verses from Hebrews.

Verses 14 and 15 are one sentence and explain that Jesus has every characteristic of mankind. He is the same as us, to the extent of being “flesh and blood.” There is no denying His humanity in the mind of the author of Hebrews. As simple as this statement seems, it is of utmost importance for the rest of the explanation of the work of Jesus. Jesus’ victory over death takes away the devil’s favorite tool - we are no longer trapped by sin and crippled by our fear of death.

Because Jesus was like us in every way, He can transform us through His resurrection. He is the high priest that is guiding our spiritual pilgrimage. With death defeated and our greatest fear eliminated, we are capable of successful living. Christ has satisfied every demand against us. The devil is forced to release us from slavery and the wrath of God has been set aside.

The humanity, propitiation, and resurrection of Christ complete our journey from darkness into light. Freed from the bondage of sin and fear of death; we find ourselves ready to live a life fulfilling our purpose.

Questions to Consider

- Can you explain the necessity of an atoning sacrifice?
- Why is it mandatory that Jesus be fully “flesh and blood?”
- What do you intend to do this week to fulfill your kingdom purpose?

Written by Beegee Brown
The Apostle and High Priest We Confess (Sept. 17)

*Read Hebrews 3:1-2*

These verses come out and tell us to “fix our thoughts” on this Jesus, the apostle and high priest and that we are to furthermore, confess Him. On which of the other apostles, high priests, or even prophets in all of Scripture have we been told to fix our thoughts? To confess? The answer, of course, is none. Only Jesus.

In fact, all of the great men of God in the Bible would be greatly appalled at the idea us confessing them. Paul and Barnabas were shocked in Acts 14:14-18 when the people of Lystra wanted to worship them as gods. However, we are told to do so with Jesus. Jesus is here called an apostle and a high priest.

The previous chapters have already shown His superiority in his divinity, as Son of God, then as Man, as the promised Messiah. Now, the author makes the case of His superiority as apostle and high priest. What is an apostle? An apostle is a messenger, or delegate. God the Father sent Jesus in this manner. Jesus says many times over that He was sent by the Father, He speaks for the Father, and His earthly mission was given to him by the Father.

How about high priest? A high priest is a leader among other priests. Accepted as High Priest by the Father, Jesus entered the Holy of Holies and offered the sacrifice of Himself, which is how we may be saved. Jesus alone saves us and fulfills all the offices, roles and prophecies of God’s chosen servant.

*Questions to Consider*

- Have you confessed Jesus by sharing the Gospel with someone, maybe sharing your salvation testimony? Will you do that today?
- In what other ways might we confess Him?

*Written by Larry Lee*
A Son and His House (Sept. 18)

Read Hebrews 3:3-6

If we see a beautiful building or house, do we normally comment on how wonderful the steel is, or how the concrete fits together? No, we reserve our highest compliments for the architect. He’s the one who designed the building, who brought the vision into reality.

In these verses, the word “house” is used as a metaphor, a word picture, of God’s plan from eternity to glorify himself through saving sinners. Moses, and by extension the law of the Old Testament, was a part of that building plan. It’s a wonderful plan, filled with God’s faithfulness. Moses, as a part of the plan, was faithful to play his part.

But Moses doesn’t get the glory. Why? Because he’s not the architect. Jesus is the architect of this house, he’s the builder, and he gets the glory. It was God’s plan to send his law through Moses, and it was God’s plan to send his Son to save sinners.

Where do we fit into this picture? We are a part of the house as well, just like Moses. We are a part of God’s plan, of God’s grand design. We aren’t alone in our faith, but the latest in a lineage of faith that stretches into the Old Testament.

Questions to Consider

• Have you thought about how God chose you to be a part of his plan, his “house”? Have you thanked him for making you part of this plan?

• Have you considered what part God wants you to play in the further building of his house? Who can you reach, as a servant of God? Who can you encourage?

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
Why One of Us? (Sept. 22, Review)

Review Hebrews 2:14-18

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 2:14-18 is that Christ took on our humanity so that, in being able to die, he might choose to die for our salvation.

Christ became flesh that he might conquer Satan and deliver believers from the fear of death. He did not just come in the appearance of a man, but became human in every respect that he might satisfy the wrath of God against our sins. His full humanity also allowed him to know temptation so that he might overcome temptation and help us when we are tempted.

One key doctrinal point we considered yesterday was the importance of justification. By God’s grace, we are justified – fully acquitted because of Christ’s righteousness – by faith in Christ. As you study this today, take a look at Exodus 34:6-7; Jeremiah 31:33-34; Romans 3:21-24; Galatians 2:16; and Ephesians 2:8-9. Praise be to God for his indescribable grace!

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 2:18 to memory. It will help you remember that Christ is able to rescue you when temptation comes. We were never meant to handle temptation apart from God’s power in our lives. Turn to him and he will provide a way of escape!

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
Faith Leads to Life (Sept. 23)

*Read Hebrews 3:7–11*

This passage occurs in the midst of a chapter in which the author is encouraging his readers to be faithful to Christ. One way that we can be faithful to Christ is to believe and obey the revealed Word of God. Here in Heb. 3:7–11 the author appeals to this principle as he quotes a passage from the Word of God in the Old Testament, Ps. 95:7b–11.

This Psalm was written by David; however, wanting to emphasize the divine nature of the Bible, the author writes, “As the Holy Spirit says” (Heb. 3:7). Note that this Psalm was likely composed to be used during the Feast of Tabernacles, a celebration designed to remind the people of God’s provision for them during their wilderness wanderings, and his eventual deliverance of Israel into the Promised Land. Indeed, this Psalm was meant to spur the Jews on to covenant faithfulness in light of the numerous heartaches that their forefathers experienced because of their unbelief.

Historically speaking, Israel had grumbled during the exodus event (cf. Ex. 17:1–17; Num. 13:26; 20:1–13). This lack of faith resulted in the death of every adult over the age of twenty (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb) during forty years of wandering in the Sinai Peninsula (cf. Num. 14:29–30). The message, then, in this passage is clear: to have faith in God and his revelation results in life; to dis-believe in God and his Word results in death.

*Questions to Consider*

- Why do we not believe in God, despite his goodness and faithful to us? Has unbelief in God’s promised ever produced positive results in your life?

- What is the difference between God’s discipline of believers and God’s punishment of unbelievers?

- What can we learn from our spiritual forefathers? How has knowledge of church history aided in your own sanctification?

*Written by Dave Jones*
Promised Rest (Sept. 24)

Read Hebrews 3:12–4:10

After warning his readers about Israel’s disobedience in Heb. 3:12–19, the author begins chapter four with the declaration that “a promise remains of entering His rest” (Heb. 4:1). In other words, he is saying that the gospel invitation is still open to all—Jews and Gentiles—who will believe. Therefore, he admonishes his readers, “Let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it” (Heb. 4:1).

The only sure-fire way to make sure that one will eventually obtain the promised rest of salvation that comes by faith alone is to measure one’s obedience, which is a barometer of one’s faith in God. Lifelong disobedience is a sign of a lack of faith, while true faith will result in a trajectory of obedience. Indeed, again appealing to the exodus event, the author notes that “the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith” (Heb. 4:2).

In Heb. 4:3–10 the author makes the point that it is foolish to not believe in God’s promises, for God’s promised rest of salvation is an event “finished from the foundation of the world” (Heb. 4:3; cf. Matt. 25:35; John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). It is finished. Salvation is freely available to all. Said differently, the picture of God resting from his work during the creation week (cf. Gen. 2:1–4) ought to be a reminder to us that we have ceased from our strivings and now rest in Christ through salvation.

Questions to Consider

• Have you ever doubted your salvation because of your lack of obedience toward God? What ought believers to do when they struggle with assurance of salvation?

• Do you think that most people who attend church have saving faith? How could you appropriately confront someone whose faith does not seem authentic?

• What can you do to encourage fellow believers whose lives are more characterized by anxiety than by the promised rest they have in Christ?

Written by Dave Jones
Work Hard to Rest (Sept. 25)

*Read Hebrews 4:11-13*

Hebrews 4:11 begins with an oxymoron: “Let us therefore strive to enter that rest.” Strive to rest? Work hard to not work? Is that what the author means? Actually, yes. This verse is a reminder that it goes against human nature to rest in Christ’s finished work on the cross. Our natural, sinful instinct is to work for salvation. We must, therefore, stop ourselves on a daily basis from this tendency. We need to work hard - train ourselves - to rest and trust, to abide in Christ (John 15:5).

Hebrews 4:12-13 transitions to a reason why we must strive to enter this rest, this faith in Christ’s finished work. Why? Because God knows our hearts, our motives. We cannot hide from God or His Word. The illustration used is of a sword that pierces straight to the heart, exposing everything that is inside. This sounds like a painful process, and often discovering the truth of God’s Word is painful. We see who God is: His purity and holiness. And then we see who we are: sinful, unholy, undeserving, unclean. Isaiah 6 is a great example of this truth. Isaiah saw God exalted on His throne and in misery exclaimed, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips…”

But thankfully God does not leave us there - pierced, exposed, unclean, naked, poor. As with Isaiah, He cleanses us and gives us hope and a purpose. And rest. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

*Questions to Consider*

- Do you show any symptoms of someone who is not resting in Christ each day (worry, anxiety, pride, fear, impatience, self-reliance)? Strive to enter His rest!

- Do you try to hide your sins from others or God? You can’t hide from God (Genesis 3, Psalm 139). Instead, confess your sins (1 John 1:9). Repent and obey in faith.

*Written by Robin Hall*
Watch Out! (Sept. 29, Review)

Review Hebrews 3:7-15

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 3:7-15 is that believers must encourage each other daily to stand firm in Christ.

The first generation of Israelites to be rescued from Egypt was a hard-headed, and hard-hearted, bunch. Despite all they had seen God do, they remained aloof from him and unbelieving of all the He said He could do. They brought on themselves the punishment of wandering around in the deserts just north of Egypt for 40 years.

Do we have the same kind of heart? By God’s grace, the answer can be no! God has offered us a new heart because of Christ, and we must turn from the deceitfulness of sin to accept his offer. The encouragement of other believers helps us stand firm in this grace.

One key doctrinal point we considered yesterday was the relationship between believers and sin. Christians still struggle with a sin nature, but we do not have to be slaves to that sin and can overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit. Take time now to read John 10:27-29; 2 Timothy 1:12; and Romans 6:1-19.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 3:13 to memory. It will be a reminder to you to stay away from sin, but also to use every available opportunity to encourage other Christians.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
A Great High Priest (Sept. 30)

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

In Hebrews 4:12-13, we saw one example of why we should enter into God’s rest through faith in Christ - because God’s word exposes the motives of our heart. We cannot hide from Him. In verses 14-16 we see another reason. Why should we enter that rest and hold fast our confession? Because we have a great high priest, Jesus, who has triumphed over sin on our behalf. He understands our weaknesses and temptations, yet He is without sin. Because of the power of His indestructible life (7:16), the grave could not hold Him. He conquered sin and death and is now seated in heaven making intercession for us (Rom. 8:34) as our high priest.

What an impetus for faith! The God who exposes our weaknesses has overcome those same weaknesses by His own righteous life. He met the requirements of the law that we could not. “He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). In Christ, we are the righteousness of God. Because of this, we can come to God’s throne to receive mercy and to find grace. This is the same throne that Isaiah saw and lost all courage. Yet in Christ, we can come with confidence, knowing we are now at peace with God. “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

Questions to Consider

• Does it strengthen your faith to know that Jesus understands your weaknesses? Read Phil. 2:5-11 to see to what extent He emptied Himself to walk in your shoes.

• When you are faced with doubts, remember that Jesus is praying for you! He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows what you need and is able to supply all your needs. What needs can you bring before Him today? Go before His throne confident that you will find help.

Written by Robin Hall
Learning Obedience Through Suffering (Oct. 1)

Hebrews 5:1-10

The opening verses of chapter 5 continue to teach us about Jesus as our high priest before God. He is an advocate for us before the throne of God, dealing with us gently because he can sympathize with our weaknesses.

But v. 4 teaches us something else about all high priests, even the Aaronic priests who ministered in the Old Testament: They’re all chosen by God. Nobody elects himself to be a high priest. The same, it seems, was true of Jesus. Jesus was chosen, in the eternal plan of God, to be our high priest forever.

Not only that, but he showed himself worthy of God’s plan in his humanity. In vs. 7-8 we note a few things about Jesus: he came before God with his pain, he obeyed in the midst of difficulty, and his suffering taught him how to obey.

Unlike Jesus, we have not always perfectly learned these lessons. But Jesus is nevertheless an example for us. Have you cried out to God in your pain? Have you taken your suffering and turned it into obedience? Just like God had a plan for Jesus, he has a plan for you that includes suffering.

Take heart – through God’s grace in Christ, we will learn obedience as well.

Questions to Consider

• In what ways are you wallowing in your despair, rather than taking it to God in prayer?
• Have you considered what God is trying to teach you right now through the trials in your life? Are you open to his plan?

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
You Were Made to Grow (Oct. 2)

*Read Hebrews 5:11-14*

Imagine if no one ever grew up; everyone remained a baby. Just crying, sleeping, wiggling, going nowhere, never changing. Imagine a sanctuary full of infants. Fortunately, that’s not how life works. When my wife and I started having children we made a commitment to feed them. Soon they began to grow. Today they are passing us in physical size and eating us out of house and home.

Why should we expect anything different in our walk with Christ? Hearing the gospel message and responding in faith is the new birth. Birth implies a beginning. We are called to grow and as we grow spiritually we will need more than milk to grow in the image of Christ; we will need solid food, the meat and potatoes of God’s word.

In verse 11 the author describes those who are trying to make it on milk only. Both the ESV and NASB use the words “dull of hearing”. I like the NIV and HCSB translation: “no longer tries to understand” or has “become too lazy to understand.” It is hard to imagine an infant or a teenager becoming too lazy to eat. How can we, as one chosen by God, the recipient of His grace and mercy, justified by God through the work of Jesus, just lose interest and become lazy about growing up?

Clearly, Scripture calls us to grow in the image of Christ (as you will remember this process is called sanctification). This process lasts our entire lives and we will need the solid food of God’s word both as we read it during our quiet times and as it is fed to us by our pastors and teachers. Specific to this text in Hebrews, the deep truths of the priesthood of Jesus are only available to those who have been saved and are feeding on the solid truths of Scripture. Much like an athlete trains for his sport, we are trained by the word to righteousness (2 Tim 3:16-17).

**Questions to Consider**

- Examine your spiritual life. Are you just a babe in Christ or are you feasting on God’s word?
- Are you merely going through the motions or are you training your spiritual (mental) muscles to glorify your Savior?
- Develop a daily habit of feasting on God’s word!

*Written by Bryan King*
Secured with Confidence (Oct. 6, Review)

Review Hebrews 4:14-5:6

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 4:14-5:6 is that Jesus, through the sacrifice of himself on the cross, secured our salvation and is our great high priest.

The priest’s job, in the Old Testament, was to stand before God as a representative of the people. But none of the human priests could do this job perfectly, since they were sinners themselves. Jesus is wholly different than those priests. He is totally without sin, and therefore able to stand before God as our great high priest, qualified to stand for us.

Because we have this great high priest, we can know beyond a shade of doubt that God hears our prayers and answers them. We do not have to come before the throne with shame, but with rejoicing. We have an advocate!

One key doctrinal point we considered yesterday was Jesus’ sinless life. Jesus took upon himself human nature, but in identifying himself with man did not commit any sin. Take a look at 2 Cor. 5:21.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 4:16 to memory. When you are tempted to despair and think that God has forgotten you, remember that Jesus is always there to help and give strength.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
Grow Up! (Oct. 7)

*Read Hebrews 6:1-12*

The opening verses of Hebrews 6 have been known to frighten believers if they are misunderstood, but it need not be so. The author’s purpose, in what will be an encouragement and a challenge, is clear: I want you to be mature!

With that in mind, we’ll notice a few concerns the author has for his readers. The first is that he doesn’t want them to stay stuck in their faith, but continue learning and growing in their understanding of Christ and his teachings. The basic things he describes as foundational (repentance and faith, baptism, resurrection and judgment) are indeed vital. But we don’t stop with these key doctrines; we should have a desire to know all that God has for us in his word.

The next few verses have caused disagreement for many years, even among those who love the Bible and teach it as true. Despite the difficulty of the passage, God wants us to learn from the Scriptures. We should note that the hearing of the Gospel, and salvation itself, is a privilege, not a right, and we should be eternally grateful for the mercy we have received. Those who claim to have received the truth of the Gospel, yet act as if it means nothing, have probably not understood it to begin with.

We also should note from this warning that we never know when the end will come, so no one should take for granted that there will be another chance to believe in Christ for salvation.

Does this passage teach that unless we always obey perfectly, that we will lose our salvation? I don’t think so. I believe the author has in mind those people who have heard the truth, and by their proximity to the Gospel and to believers have seen how wonderful God’s salvation is. The people in view in these verses may have even claimed to be believers, but have now shown, by their words and actions, that they are not truly in Christ.

But that is not where the readers find themselves, according to v. 9, and I pray it is not where this verse finds you. If you find yourself in fear after reading these words, I encourage you to read some other passages like Romans 5, Romans 8:29-30, and John 6:39-40, 44. These reassuring words should comfort those who are truly in Christ.

But if you examine your heart and find that you do not really believe the Gospel, that you have been “playing church” but unwilling to commit your life to Christ, then I encourage you to take the author’s words seriously. It is never too late to repent, and God loves to save sinners.

*Written by Pastor Jason Hall*
The Power of Hope (Oct. 8)

Read Hebrews 6:13-20

We sometimes find ourselves in situations where we must trust someone’s word. Sometimes it is something simple. We are lost. They are helping us with directions. A little voice inside says *I'm not sure these directions are correct.* Other times, the word we must trust is more serious. The spouse who has been unfaithful has returned, vowing never to wander again. Now the voice is screaming, *Can I ever trust my spouse again?*

The author of Hebrews helps us understand how we can trust God. He says that when humans confirm their word, they swear on something greater than themselves. *I swear on my mother's grave.* If so, on what does God swear? He must swear on himself. He is the only being who can ultimately substantiate his own word.

When God affirmed His word to Abraham in Genesis 22, He said, *By myself have I sworn.* Indeed, what else could God swear on such that we could believe Him more?

The assurance we have in God’s word creates in us hope. Hope is part of the triad that Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 13: faith, hope, and love. These three terms relate to the Christian’s view of things. Faith looks backwards on the finished work of Christ. Love is always present tense. We love our brother now. Hope, however, is always in the future. We hope in things to come. Hope is to the future what faith is to the past. Just as our faith is sure, based on past events, our hope is sure, based on the security of future events. How do we know that these things are secure? God told us so. And God never lies.

Questions to Consider

- Do you trust in God? Do you believe that what he says is true? Will you commit to trusting in God’s word?
- In order to trust what God says, we must first know what he says. Will you commit to reading faithfully in God’s word, with the goal of knowing what God has promised you?
- Trusting in God’s word is one aspect of the Christian life, but it is one that spills over into other areas as well. Will you commit to allowing your trust in God to help you live victoriously in the present? Will you allow God’s promises to you to help you love others more deeply?

Written by Todd Borger
A Priest like Melchizedek (Oct. 9)

Read Hebrews 7:1-10

What kind of priest is Jesus? The Jews knew about their Levitical priests, who performed all the functions of the temple service. They knew of the high priest, who alone could enter into the Most Holy place and make atonement for God’s people.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is a different kind of priest. Jesus is like Melchizedek. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness” and his title, “king of Salem,” means “king of peace.” Surely these two descriptions fit our Lord.

Second, Melchizedek has no genealogy and no birth or death, “like the Son of God.” The writer did not say “like the son of David” or “like the son of Mary.” Jesus had a genealogy that traced back to David, Abraham, and even Adam. That, however, was his human genealogy as the son of David. Jesus also had a divine genealogy that traced directly to God. He was the Son of God. Christ’s divinity is seen in the comparison with Melchizedek, not in the sense that Melchizedek was divine, but that Melchizedek was different than other biblical figures in that he had no record of his birth or death and no genealogy.

Finally, Jesus is like Melchizedek in that Jesus stands outside of the people of God. Jesus as the son of David stood squarely within the people of God, but Jesus as the son of God was entering from outside. He is not one of us. So Jesus differs from the Levitical priests since they were all members of Abraham’s children. The service they rendered was in part for their own benefit. Jesus comes to us from outside, however, and the service he renders is solely for our aid. He is not the beneficiary of his own sacrifice the way the Levites were.

We need such a priest as that—like Melchizedek and like Jesus—who stands apart from us and who stands above us to act as our true intercessor and who can make us right with God.

Questions to Consider

• How do the titles “king of righteousness” and “king of peace” help you to understand the character of Jesus?

• Why is it important for Jesus, our high priest, to be the son of God and not just the son of David?

• Since we are being formed each day into the likeness of Jesus, what do you see in Jesus’ character from the passage that you need to emulate?

Written by Todd Borger
Don’t Walk Away (Oct. 13, Review)

Review Hebrews 6:1-8

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 6:1-8 is that God wants us to grow, and gives us warnings in the Scripture that remind us about the uselessness of life away from God.

Have you ever been to a landfill, or maybe a junkyard? It is so sad to see people’s old stuff – cars, bicycles, washing machines, and so forth – just rusting and rotting away. It seems so pointless. But stuff falls apart, and it falls apart quickly if its not taken care of.

Our Christian life does not have to be this way. God wants us to grow mature in our faith and bear fruit for his glory. God does not want people to play around the edges of faith in Christ. He wants all men to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth!

One key doctrinal point we considered yesterday was security in Christ. Those who truly believe endure to the end, and one of God’s means for encouraging them are warnings like these in Hebrews.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 6:10 to memory. Let it remind you that God is faithful to produce in us the good works that glorify his name.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
The Perfect Priest and King (Oct. 14)

*Read Hebrews 7:11-14*

When our oldest son was about 5 years we took a trip to an amusement park. We parked in a large concrete lot and boarded a monorail (a train that rode about 10-12 feet in the air) and it meandered through the edge of the parking lot, along the trees and maybe over a pond or two. When the ride ended in about 5 minutes my son was excited about the ride and wanted to do it again. He believed that we took a long trip on vacation to ride the monorail and it (the monorail) was the amusement park. He could not believe there was more, something better, and a new promise of excitement ahead.

Many Jews were convinced that the priesthood through the line of Aaron (tribe of Levi) and the law given through Moses was the best there could be. However, the author of Hebrews has built a case that perfection could not be accomplished through the Levitical priesthood but would be made perfect through another in the order of Melchizedek. God spoke through David in Psalms 110 of a Priest that would be both King and Priest (the order of Melchizedek). Jesus is that fulfillment; He is both King and Priest making man acceptable to God, through His work as the perfect sacrifice.

The law and the priesthood were not two separate things that happen to be going on at the same time in history, but they were part of the same plan. The law could not operate without the priesthood. Verse 12 confirms this fact that when the priesthood is changed fundamentally: “there takes place a change of law also.” Jesus is more than another Aaron; He is better (perfect) and different. He is “descended from Judah” (King) and also the perfect Priest. What the law could not accomplish, Jesus accomplished. Jesus speaks in Matthew 5:7: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”

**Questions to Consider**

- When we consider what a great Priest we have that has provided access to God the Father through His perfect sacrifice, what is our appropriate response?

- Peter tells us that we “are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5) What sacrifice are you offering?

- Peter also tells us that because we are a “royal priesthood.” We are to “proclaim the excellences of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9). Are you proclaiming the truth of the gospel to those around you?

*Written by Bryan King*
Permanent Priest (Oct. 15)

Hebrews 7:15-22

How can we describe anything as permanent in an age when the pace of change is accelerating, and astonishing developments in technology constantly render old ways of doing things obsolete? Even when we use the word permanent, as in a “permanent job position” or a “permanent marker” we are using the word loosely to mean something that we expect to stay the same for a fairly long time, not something that will remain completely unchanged forever.

Yet this passage zeroes in on one thing that is truly permanent – the priesthood of Jesus Christ. In Israel priests were selected to their role of represent the people to God based solely on who their parents were. Jesus claimed the right to be a priest because of His own identity, and the power of His permanent, indestructible life that conquered death. Israel’s priests offered sacrifices that served as partial and temporary coverings for sin, but as vs. 18-19 tell us, they were not able to make anything perfect, or righteous in God’s sight, because they could not remove sin.

The priesthood of Jesus Christ is of a different kind, pointed to by the mysterious king-priest Melchizedek who lived in the time of Abraham. Psalm 110:1-4 is quoted in this passage because it states that the promised Messiah would be a priest forever – a permanent priest whose work will never be outsourced or rendered obsolete. God never promised that the priesthood of Aaron would last forever, but God certified that the priesthood of the Messiah – Jesus – would never end.

Not only is the priesthood of Jesus permanent, it is also offers a better hope (v. 19) and a better covenant (v. 22), allowing us to draw near to God. That’s reason to celebrate the permanent priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Questions to Consider

- How are you taking advantage of this invitation to draw near to the God of the universe? Is your life currently moving in a direction of becoming more God-centered?
- Are there any areas of life where you are keeping God at a distance instead of drawing near to Him?
- Do you ever find yourself thinking that your sin makes you unworthy and undesirable to God? How does the ongoing, permanent priestly ministry of Jesus address this concern?

Written by Dave Taber
Living Intercessor (Oct. 16)

Hebrews 7:23-28

At the time that Hebrews was written, the priesthood of Israel was likely still in full operation in the magnificent temple complex, and during the main feasts each year the city of Jerusalem was packed to the rafters with those who journeyed to participate in the sacrificial system. The challenge for the original readers of Hebrews (and for us) is to see the priesthood of Jesus, which is invisible to human eyes, as it really is and orient our lives around that invisible reality.

Despite the impressive structures and outward displays of the priests in the temple, notice how the limitations and shortcomings of the sacrificial system are pointed out in v. 23 and vs. 27-28. The priests of the covenant God established through Moses were temporary (because they would eventually die) and weak (because they were sinners too and had to repeatedly offer sacrifices for their own sins as well as for those of others). By contrast, the priesthood of Jesus endures forever and consists of only one sacrifice. Jesus offered Himself as a perfect, once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of everyone. That sacrifice was sufficient payment for all sin for all time and never needs to be repeated.

But v. 25 also describes an ongoing priestly ministry that Jesus carries out, as “He always lives to make intercession.” Intercession for who? For us! He is able to “save to the uttermost”, that we might be eternally and completely acceptable to God because we drew near to God through faith in the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest.

Questions to Consider

• Have you ever felt like running away and hiding from God because of guilt over sin? How can thinking about the continuing priestly ministry of Jesus Christ give you confidence to approach God and confess your sin?

• The things of this world surround our senses continually and can sometimes cause us to lose focus on the reality of who we are in Christ and what our purpose and destiny is. Are there any areas in your life where the priorities and values of this world have caused you to pursue things which are temporary and fleeting at the expense of following Jesus with your whole heart?

Written by Dave Taber
Only Jesus Saves (Oct. 20, Review)

Review Hebrews 7:23-28

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 7:23-28 is that Jesus is the only one qualified and able to make atonement for our sins and save us.

Jesus is better because he lives forever. This point may seem obvious to many believers, but we must not dismiss such a profound and practical truth. Jesus is interceding for us, as our high priest, even now, right this moment. He alone is the sinless Son of God, worthy of all our worship.

One key doctrinal point we considered yesterday was the substitutionary nature of Jesus’ death. Jesus took the punishment we deserve for our sin. He is not only our priest; he is also our sacrifice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 7:25 to memory. Remember that you are only saved through Christ, and he is worthy of glory.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
What Makes a True High Priest? (Oct. 21)

Read Hebrews 8:1-5

Sometimes reading is difficult. Perhaps the writer has used words we don’t understand. Sometimes writers do not organize their thoughts well, or make things too complicated. On the other hand, writers can help us out by making things simple. They explain to us clearly what their main points are. For example, we have the writer of Hebrews: “Now the main point of what we are saying is this” (8:1). At this juncture, every serious reader should have a pencil or highlighter ready for making notes. What is the main point?

His point here is really threefold. First, we have a high priest like the author has been describing at the end of Hebrews 7. This high priest “lives forever”, “saves forever”, and “always lives to intercede.” This high priest is the perfect and eternal high priest, able to do what no human high priest could achieve.

Second, this high priest has been seated at the right hand of the throne of majesty in heaven. He has royal authority. His authority is not that of a human king, but rather he has royal authority from the eternal heavenly king.

Third, this high priest is serving in the true tabernacle set up by God himself. The tabernacle that Israel built and carried through the wilderness was good, but it was only a rough copy of something perfect. The tabernacle is God’s dwelling place, and God’s true dwelling place was made by God himself. In God’s true dwelling place, God’s own Son serves eternally as the true high priest, making intercession eternally on behalf of his people.

These things were done on your behalf, people of God, so that you would enjoy the presence of our Father forever.

Questions to Consider

• What good things do you see or experience from God? List them.

• Consider for each of these things, in what way is this a copy or shadow of something better that God has stored up for you?

• How might this realization help you to use things on earth in the right way and help you to keep your hope fastened on our eternal hope found in Jesus?

Written by Todd Borger
**Same Law, New Heart (Oct. 22)**

*Read Hebrews 8:6-13*

In this passage we see a better covenant, with a better mediator, enacted on better promises. It is not better in the sense that Plan B (Jesus) corrects what was wrong about Plan A (the law). Rather, it is better in the sense that the law is fulfilled in Christ. In fact, this fulfillment is anticipated from the very beginning (Deut. 30:6).

The story line of Scripture makes clear that on our own we cannot satisfy the demands of God’s covenant. If we could satisfy the covenant demands on our own, then as verse 7 says, “there would have been no occasion to look for a second.”

What makes the new covenant better is not that we receive new laws, but that we are given new hearts. The fault with the first covenant was not the laws, or that the laws led to legalism, or that the laws lacked grace. The problem was old, hard, sinful hearts. Verse 8 explains that the fault in the old covenant was “them” and verse 9 reveals that “them” refers to the fathers of Israel and Judah: “For they did not continue in my covenant.”

The bad news in this passage is that we too have bad hearts. Apart from Christ, the fault in the fathers of Israel and Judah is found to be alive and well in us – we are not covenant keepers, but covenant breakers. Indeed, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Apart from divine intervention we are doomed.

But God gives us new hearts! Verse 10 says, “I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people.” And verse 11 anticipates even more than that: “And they shall not teach each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

God made this promise to the house of Israel and Judah, extends it to all who would believe, has established it through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and is fulfilling it as the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work of writing law not on stone, but on our hearts. It will ultimately be fulfilled when Christ returns.

Concerning believers, God has not told us to try harder; rather, he has caused us to be born again and has given us a new heart! Concerning the lost, Jesus promises that those receive him by faith will be shown mercy and their sins will be remembered no more!

**Questions to Consider**

- How does the new covenant help passages like Psalm 1:2-3 and Psalm 119:9-16 become a reality in our lives?
• What role does the Holy Spirit play in writing the law on our hearts?

• We are already saved, but we are not yet perfect in Christ. How does this tension relate to the new covenant?

Written by Pastor Alan Bryan
No Going Back (Oct. 23)

Read Hebrews 9:1-10

God’s design of the tabernacle, implementation of the sacrificial system and the high priesthood not only pointed toward a future plan (v. 1-7), they also revealed a present condition that transcended generations – God is holy and mankind is separated from Him because of sin. God’s initiation of the old covenant revealed that He desires a relationship with sinners, and that desire led to something better – a new covenant!

Verses 8-9 explain that the existence of the Holy Place (separated from the Most Holy Place by a curtain) was symbolic for “this present age” referring to the time of the old covenant. Though arrangements had been made for a relationship through gifts and sacrifices, a barrier remained between God and his people. Instead of perfecting the conscience concerning sin, the regulations for worship under the old covenant (gracious as they were) actually highlighted the guilt of the people and their inability to satisfy the demands of God.

But sin would not have the final word. Verse 10 mentions a new order, a time of reformation. This time of reformation would involve the person and work of Christ, on our behalf, in our place, bringing about a better sacrifice and a better priesthood. Atonement for sins would no longer be offered once a year, but once for all. The separation is removed, and “Jesus as high priest would take every believer with him through the curtain into the very presence of God”! (Arnold)

There is no going back to the rituals and regulations of the old covenant. A reformation has come. A new order has been established under which we receive a new mind, a new heart, and a truly perfected conscience in unhindered relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Questions to Consider

• Verse 9 says that the gifts and sacrifices of the old covenant could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper. What does it mean to “perfect the conscience?”

• What is the difference between having trying to have your conscience feel clear and actually having a perfected (mature, complete) conscience? Is a distinction important?

• What rituals do you cling to in hopes of perfecting your conscience (church attendance, Christian radio, good deeds, asceticism)?

• How is the conscience of the worshiper truly perfected under the new covenant? How has Jesus’ shed blood made this possible?

Written by Pastor Alan Bryan
Only Jesus Transforms (Oct. 27, Review)

Review Hebrews 8:1-13

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 8:1-13 is that Jesus has established a new covenant that God promised would last forever.

Just how much more excellent is the new covenant? Abundantly, immeasurably better! Why? Because Jesus is abundantly, immeasurably better than everything that came before him. The author of Hebrews here does not mean to denigrate the law of the Old Testament, but to point out that all of God’s promises were leading to Jesus and the covenant that was established upon his righteousness.

The key doctrinal point we considered yesterday was the superiority of the new covenant, in particular because under the new covenant God has written his commands on our hearts through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He has enabled us to obey him and walk in his Word.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 8:6 to memory. Remember that God always keeps his promises.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
Redeemed to Serve the Living God (Oct. 28)

*Read Hebrews 9:11-14*

What defiles our consciences? In Mark 7:14-23 Jesus explains that it is not what you touch or eat that defiles you and interrupts fellowship with God, but what is already within. Out of our hearts come evil, immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, pride, foolishness and so forth. He said, “All these evil things come from within.”

Dead works come from dead hearts. If we are to enjoy heart-communion with God, we need inward and spiritual purification. As we saw in Heb 9:9-10, this is the “perfection” which the old covenant regulations were unable to achieve (F. F. Bruce).

“But when Christ appeared…” Can you picture that? Not appeared like a baby from a Christmas play, but an after-Easter, conquering King! The scene he has entered is not the tent made by human hands, but heaven itself, for the purpose of appearing in the presence of God on our behalf. He has entered into heaven once, for all of us!

In contrast to the high priest in the old covenant, Jesus entered into the presence of God not by the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood. Paul says, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). By his own blood he inaugurated the new covenant and secured an eternal redemption for us. To be redeemed means to be freed. Those who believe have been freed not from the oppression of circumstances, society, or things that hinder our personal improvement, but from the very bondage of sin that haunts and condemns our consciences. Redemption is forever!

The goal of this accomplishment is found in the last five words of verse 14. We must not stop with only a mental understanding of what God has accomplished for us. How should we now live? “To serve the living God.” Paul echoes this by saying, “He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Corinthians 5:15). This is our motivation for obedience!

**Questions to Consider**

- How does knowing that Jesus is presently functioning as our high priest, interceding on our behalf in the presence of God, change the way you pray, give, go, deal with sin, etc.?
- How could Is 42:1 help explain what is meant by “through the eternal Spirit” in Heb 9:14?
- How does Jesus’ blood secure eternal redemption for those who believe?

*Written by Pastor Alan Bryan*
Thank God for the Blood (Oct. 29)

*Read Hebrews 9:15-22*

We have been learning a lot recently about the new covenant is better than the old covenant, and one way that we will concentrate on today is better blood.

The notion of shedding blood is not very popular in our sterilized, politically correct world. The idea that wrongdoing is heinous and evil enough to require bloodshed seems very old-fashioned, to say the least. Sin, though, is serious. Deadly serious.

To be a covenant partner with God, you have to be perfect, or you will receive the condemnation that goes along with breaking that covenant. God, in his mercy, knew that human beings would never live up to our expectations as covenant partners, so he built in a way for the covenant to work in spite of our disobedience. That way is sacrifice (see v. 18). Under the Old Covenant, the blood of the bulls and goats paid the penalty for the broken covenant. The animals died, so the Hebrews didn’t have to.

Jesus’ blood, through his sacrifice, is better. He shed his blood so that the forgiveness of sins would last, not just for one year, but forever. His death also made possible our redemption, paying our sin debt and giving us access to an inheritance through him (see verses 15-17).

Jesus’ death was better. His blood is better. And because he was a perfect covenant partner, those who believe in him will never taste the death of separation from God.

**Questions to Consider**

- Have you considered the seriousness of your sin, any sin? Do you understand that any sin requires the shedding of blood for forgiveness?
- Are you grateful to live under the New Covenant, when the sacrifice by Christ was sufficient for all time? Have you thanked Christ for his sacrifice today?

*Written by Pastor Jason Hall*
Once and For All (Oct. 30)

*Read Hebrews 9:23-28*

Everything that we have been studying the past week or so about the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old finds its culmination in the last few verses of chapter 9, where we learn one of the reasons Jesus is truly better.

All of the elements of the Old Covenant – the temple, sacrifices, priests and so forth – were just placeholders, “copies” as the author here calls them, of the greater reality. In other words, they were meant to point to something beyond themselves. The old system was never meant to put away sin.

But Jesus is the fulfillment of all of it. He is the greater temple, the greater priest, and the greater sacrifice. How is he greater? In every way, but in one particularly important way for us, spelled out in v. 26: His one sacrifice was sufficient to put away all of our sin, forever.

No shame. No guilt. No punishment. Because Jesus died once and for all, my sins have been judged, once and for all. We can walk in confidence before God because all our sins – past, present and future – are forgiven in Christ.

Not only that, but the promise is here given that Jesus will one day come again not to judge our sin, but to rescue us from a fallen and sinful world.

Dear friend, don’t forget to walk in joy today. You are loved, you are forgiven, and nothing can change that. It is finished.

*Question to Consider*

- Are you struggling with guilt or shame for your sin? If so, remember that God has forgiven you, and your debt was paid on the cross. Rise up in forgiveness and faith!

*Written by Pastor Jason Hall*
The Perfect Offering (Nov. 3, Review)

Review Hebrews 9:11-15

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 9:11-15 is that Jesus has redeemed us, by his blood, to serve him and love him forever.

Jesus is perfect. We serve a Lord who from eternity past planned our redemption from death, sin and shame to a life of freedom and joy in him. In the Old Testament, the blood sacrifices in the temple served to sanctify God’s people for temporarily, but not finally and certainly not eternally.

But Jesus’ blood is of so much more value that it secures our eternal freedom from sin. And what are we redeemed to? We are redeemed to serve the living God – to walk in Him, to obey and glorify him, to enjoy his fellowship and company forever.

The Father sent, the Spirit fulfilled, and the Son obeyed, all for our redemption.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 9:15 to memory. God’s new covenant means we have an inheritance that is unfading, kept for us by God’s power.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
Christ our Ultimate Sacrifice (Nov. 4)

Read Hebrews 10:1-14

In today’s passage we will examine the supremacy of Christ’s blood being our ultimate sacrifice for sin. The writer of Hebrews begins the passage by referencing the law not being able to make a person sinless. While the blood sacrifices offered by the priests in the Old Testament did atone for one’s sin, it didn’t provide a long term solution to the problem. The law merely points to our need for a Savior. In v. 3-4 we are reminded that it is impossible for the blood of animal sacrifices to ultimately and finally take away sin. When we speak of the final payment for sin, what we are describing is the atonement of Christ. In verses 5-7 we see Christ’s reference to Ps. 40:6-8, where we learn that it was God’s purpose for the atonement of sin to be found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Christ came to do the will of the Father. It was the Son’s desire to glorify the Father by being obedient to His plan.

Christ came to fulfill the law, and his blood sacrifice on the cross does away with the need to continue with previous blood sacrifices (v.9). In verse 10 we see that our sanctification comes through the offering of Christ once for all. Christ died once for all sin. He died for your sins in the past, present, and future. Every sin you commit has already been forgiven – nothing falls outside of God’s grace.

As our passage closes we see the writer of Hebrews display Christ as our ultimate High Priest (v. 11-14). We as believers are “those who are being sanctified.” We are becoming more like Christ as we submit to the Word and the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Let us today rejoice in the ultimate sacrifice of Christ.

Questions to Consider

• Have you stopped today to rejoice in Christ’s atoning sacrifice for your sin?
• Christ’s atonement for all sin demonstrates his sovereignty and at the same time displays his obedience to the Father’s plan. In what ways today can you surrender to the Father’s plan for your life and walk in greater obedience?

Written by Cameron Wagner
Living in Light of Christ’s Sacrifice (Nov. 5)

Read Hebrews 10:15-39

Because of Christ’s sacrifice, you don’t need to work for your righteousness. In verses 15-18 we see the writer reference Jeremiah 31:33. Since Christ himself has established that new covenant through his blood, the Lord will remember our sins no longer. Our sins no longer separate us from God. What a glorious truth!

In this passage verses 19-39 describe the life of a believer in light of Christ’s atoning sacrifice that was explained in Hebrews 10:1-15. We have confidence to enter into worship before our holy God. Because we are new in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) we can have assurance in Christ’s finished work and know with certainty that God sees us as completely clean because He sees Christ’s blood covering all of our sin. Since we know we are totally clean, the writer encourages us to be steadfast in our faith and to grow in godliness with other believers. Growing in Christ-likeness should be done within a local church body (v. 24-25).

We are warned in v. 26-31 of those who have knowledge of the truth of Scripture yet continue to live in consistent, unrepentant sin. The question for us today is, “have you fully accepted the grace given to you in Christ or are you bowing down to the idol of self?” You cannot have both. There is a difference between a believer who struggles with sin yet repents, and a person who willingly sins knowing it is wrong. Paul reminds us of this in Romans 6:1, “How can we who have died to sin still live in it?” It is by the Spirit that we are putting to death sinful flesh as we rest in the grace of Christ.

Questions to Consider

- Have you embraced the grace given to you in Christ for the forgiveness and reconciliation of sin?

- Is there any sin which you have not fully surrendered to God? If so, why continue living in that sinful way and bring judgment on yourself. Repent today and walk in the grace of Christ.

- How does living in community with other believers within the body of Richland Creek help you grow in Christ-likeness? If you are not plugged into a small group, let me encourage you today to get involved and participate in the encouragement of one another (Heb. 10:25).

Written by Cameron Wagner
Impossible – Without Faith (Nov. 6)

Read Hebrew 11:1-7

As we enter into Chapter 11, a quick review is worth mentioning. The author has just spent the last 10 chapters explaining that Jesus is indeed trustworthy for our salvation. The Jewish faith was saturated in OT law and sacrifices in order to obtain right relationship with God. It is no small game changer when Jesus comes and fulfills all the law and becomes the last necessary sacrifice. This is a radical departure from everything Jews know. A Jew in this day could be tempted to reject Christ and go along with what is politically and culturally acceptable – the law, not faith in Christ.

We leave chapter 10 with encouraging words: “draw near with a true heart in full assurance, hold fast to the confession of hope...” We come to chapter 11, commonly known as the “hall of faith” or the “faith hall of fame.” The goal here is to show how the faith of 16 Old Testament men and women endured over the span of their life. How did they “hold fast to their confession of hope”? They all lived by faith, not by sight. In verse 1 faith is defined – assurance (confidence) of things hoped for and conviction (proof) of things not seen. They believed God is real, that He is who He says He is and He can do all that He promises.

The first three characters in this chapter are then introduced – Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Abel offers, Enoch is taken away, and Noah builds. All of this is accomplished because they “believe (God) exists and rewards those who seek Him.” They believe, and cling to that belief throughout their whole lives regardless of problems or persecution. The writer points out “without this (faith), it is impossible to please God.” The author does not use the word hard or difficult. He uses impossible. These men themselves are not praised but their faith.

Questions to Consider

- Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. Are you living your life by faith in the unseen God or by sight in the world around you?

- By faith Abel, Enoch and Noah modeled in whom was their trust. Do you model faith to your family, friends, and co-workers?

- Without faith it is impossible to please God. Is your life pleasing to God because of the faith you have regardless of your circumstances?

Written by Claudine Snyder
Faith Defined (Nov. 10, Review)

Review Hebrews 11:1-7

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 11:1-7 is that faith, particularly faith in Jesus, is the foundation of a relationship with God.

We can’t always draw a picture of God’s promises. You can’t smell assurance. In fact, much of our Christian life at first seems intangible, and this week we learned that faith means believing things we can’t see. But we also saw that Hebrews 11 describes faith in action. Faith itself may not be seen, but the results of faith certainly can be.

We talked in our small groups this past Sunday about the call, through Richland Creek’s God First campaign, to step out in faith. Faith expressed through generosity. Faith expressed through service. Faith expressed through sacrifice.

As you hold onto your God First pledge card over the next couple of weeks, please pray that God would help you step out in faith in your commitment to serve him, with your money, time and ability.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 11:6 to memory. Remember that faith brings with it God’s promise to act and reward.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
As we continue to look at some characters from the Old Testament it is important to be reminded of v. 2...“for by it (faith) the people of old received their commendation.” Their faith earns them a mention in chapter 11, not their works.

In. v 11, Sarah “considered Him faithful who had promised...” Abraham considered God in v.19 “able to raise someone from the dead.” God is seen as faithful and able. This “assurance of things hoped for and conviction of things not seen” (v. 1) bore fruit - obedience. Because of their faith, Abraham was obedient and v. 8 “went out not knowing where he was going”, v. 17 “offered up Isaac” and Sarah v. 11 “received power to conceive.”

Furthermore, the characters of chapter 11 had “bi-focal vision” - they could see the promises of eternity while living in the present. For example, in v. 10 Abraham “...was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose architect and builder was God.” Yet, surprisingly in v. 13 (and again in v. 39) we are told, “all of these died in faith not having received the things promised...” However, Scripture teaches us to look beyond the limits of our brief life. V.13 reads, “...but having seen them and greeted them from afar....” The biblical characters were assured of God’s promises “having seen them from afar.”

Moses had this “bi-focal” vision too. In v. 23 – 25 Moses’ accomplishments are noted but in v. 26, “He considered the reproach (disapproval) of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt...” This means Moses dare not risk disapproval from God for mere earthly treasures and rewards. Why? He could see the promises of eternity while living in the present. V. 26 “...for he was looking to the reward.”

As we read through chapter 11 the lineup of faithful people continues. Their triumphs are quite impressive - “conquered kingdoms, shut the mouths of lions, mighty in war, quenched fire.” But faith gets all the credit. Faith bore fruit; that is, obedience. Even in difficult and dangerous circumstances.

Questions to Consider

• Moses considered the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures of Egypt. Do you consider the reproach (disapproval) of Christ greater than the treasures of this world?

• Can you see the promises of eternity while living in the present? Ask God to help you live now in preparation for later.
• Is faith producing spiritual fruit in your life? Are you obedient to God because your faith is assured of things hoped for and convicted of things not seen?

Written by Claudine Snyder
Running the Race of Life (Nov. 12)

Read Hebrews 12:1-2

Chapter 12 opens by referencing all those great examples in chapter 11 – there is a “cloud of witnesses” around us! Reading about believers such as Moses, Abraham, Enoch and Rahab (11:4-38) should provide hope for believers today. If these people can follow God by faith then so can we.

But it’s not easy. In fact, life is a bit like a race. This race is not about finishing first, but about endurance. When we placed our faith in Christ we started a journey that includes fighting against sin and pursuing righteousness. It is a long and treacherous race, because of our ongoing battle with sin. The author uses the illustration of running to help the reader see the problem of sin. He compares sin to a weight around a person who is running a race. Have you ever seen LeBron James dunk a basketball? He makes it look effortless. Imagine if LeBron James had to dunk with a belt that had a chain connected to a Ford Fusion. The weight of the car would obviously prevent him from jumping and probably even moving. How can you run this race of becoming more like Jesus if you are attached to weights like lust, greed, covetousness and pride?

Suppose that during this race someone came to you and claimed they had the secret to finishing the race. They claimed that despite the problem of weights holding you back, that if you will follow this secret then you can finish this race. Wouldn’t you want to know such information? The author of Hebrews give us this secret in v. 2: Jesus. Jesus created the race and intentionally put you in it. Christ is the prize and trophy. Some outside the church may ask, “Why would I want to run such a treacherous race to simply know this guy named Jesus?” The simple answer is found in the second part of verse 2. You cannot run this race alone. You must wake up every morning and boldly claim, “Jesus, today I am nothing if you don’t help me!”

Questions to Consider

• Do you hate sin the way God hates it?
• When was the last time you had a moment of confession and repentance?
• Are you currently hiding sin from your loved ones and church family?

Written by Daniel Helms
Discipline is Hard, but Good (Nov. 13)

Read Hebrews 12:3-17

The majority of today’s text focuses on the topic of discipline from our heavenly Father. Discipline, sometimes in the form of trials and difficulties, is sent by a loving Father to his children. But discipline is not punishment. We are not punished for our sins, because those sins have already been punished in Christ, on the cross, once and for all. God will not punish us again for sins already atoned for by Jesus!

In other words, to properly understand verses 5-11 one cannot see discipline as punishment. You must see discipline from God as education or training. When a son disobeys a father, does the father discipline the son because he wants to hurt and bring shame to his son? Of course not! Rather the father disciplines the son because he wants to train and educate him to be a godly man.

Discipline is a good thing from a Good God. The author quotes Proverbs 3:11-12 to encourage the listeners to see discipline as God created it to be. They should not despise it or forget about it. For discipline from God is a display of his love for his children. When God disciplines his believers they should embrace it and find joy in it for it will help them become more like Jesus Christ.

Only God’s children receive discipline. Verse 8 says that if you don’t experience discipline then you are “illegitimate children and not sons” (ESV). In other words, God only offers training to those that have put their faith in the Gospel. How can God shape a person into the image of Christ through discipline, if they are an unbeliever and an enemy of God (Eph. 2:1-4)?

In his book Shepherd ing a Child’s Heart Tedd Tripp offers this illustration: Imagine a large bubble surrounds a child. Inside the bubble is blessing and peace; however, outside the bubble is death, shame, and destruction. A parent’s responsibility is to help the child understand how important it is to stay in the bubble, for when a child rebels against God’s Word and ventures outside the bubble, discipline helps return the child to the safety of the bubble. God’s discipline acts like the discipline in a young child’s life. It is a tool to keep us in a healthy, intimate relationship with Him.

The author reiterates this truth in verses 12-17: “lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees.” The recipients of his letter were growing tired of running the race. But Christians must never forget that we are children of God through Christ, and we have been adopted by Him!
Questions to Consider

• Do you view hardships and suffering as discipline (training and teaching) or punishment?

• When was the last time you realized God was disciplining you? How did you react?

• Can a Christian find joy in discipline? How?

Written by Daniel Helms
The Discipline of Suffering (Nov. 17, Review)

*Review Hebrews 12:1-13*

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 12:1-13 is that Christ’s perfect sacrifice calls for his followers to make the sacrifices necessary to follow him.

Sacrifice isn’t a popular concept in our society. We live in a “me first” culture, surrounded by marketing and slogans that push us to cater to ourselves first and foremost. The idea of going without something we want in order to give to someone, or something, else, is simply out of style.

But sacrifice is a watchword of the kingdom of God. Jesus endured, and so we must endure. He set an example, and we follow.

Yesterday, as a church family we presented our God First pledge cards as a symbol of our commitment to faithful generosity over the next two years. We are called to sacrifice, and we will do so with endurance and joy, putting God First in everything.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 12:1 to memory. Let those who came before be an example and encouragement to us as we run the race of faith.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
Don’t Look Back (Nov. 18)

*Read Hebrews 12:18-24*

In verses 18-21, the writer describes Mount Sinai as a place of terror and judgment for the people of Israel. The LORD had instructed Moses to lead the people to meet with him at Mount Sinai; there the LORD would give them the Law (Exod. 19-20). Israel stood terrified before a holy God who was unapproachable by sinful man or beast (12:20). Even Moses was so terrified that he said, “I am full of fear and trembling” (12:21).

In verse 22 the writer moves from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion. Mount Sinai represents the Old Covenant of Law, and Mount Zion represents the New Covenant of Grace in Jesus Christ (see Gal. 4:19-31). The heavenly city is God’s Mount Zion (see Ps. 2; 110:1-4). The Patriarchs were looking for this city by faith (Heb. 11:10, 14-17). The heavenly city will be inhabited by multitudes of angels, the church of the firstborn, and of course God the Judge of all, and the spirits of the righteous made perfect by Jesus Christ the Mediator of a New Covenant. Someday, as members of the New Covenant, all believers will “come to” to Mount Zion and be part of “the general assembly.”

The word “better” is used throughout the book of Hebrews to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus Christ. Christ is “better than the angels” (1:4). He brought “a better hope” (7:19); He is the Mediator of a “better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises” (8:6). His atoning blood “speaks better than the blood of Abel” (12:24).

Abel’s blood cried out for justice (Gen. 4:10), while Christ’s blood announces mercy for sinners. The blood of Christ frees us from guilt and opens the way for us to enter into the presence of God. Were it not for the blood of the New Covenant, we could not enter into the heavenly city.

**Questions to Consider**

- In what ways does the author contrast Mount Sinai with Mount Zion?
- Where is Mount Zion located? Who lives there?
- Who do “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” refer to?
- How does Christ’s blood speak better than the blood of Abel?
- How do these verses encourage us, as members of the New Covenant, not to look back but to move forward in our faith?

*Written by Jamie O’Brien*
Listen Up - God is Speaking (Nov. 19)

*Read Hebrews 12:25-27*

In the opening verses of Hebrews we learn that God’s final Word is in His Son. God had spoken long ago to “the fathers in the prophets” but “in these last days He has spoken to us in His Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). The closing verses of chapter 12 contrasts God’s revelation at Mount Sinai with His revelation of His Son Jesus Christ. The choice between the Old Covenant of Law and the New Covenant of Grace could not be clearer. Mount Zion is light, grace, peace, rest, forgiveness of sin, access to God, and eternal life. Mount Sinai is fear, death, and judgment.

The LORD audibly spoke to Israel at Mount Sinai; now He speaks to us through His Word from heaven. The author warns, “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking” (12:25). If Israel did not escape judgment when they refused to obey God when He spoke to them at Mount Sinai, how can we expect to escape if we reject “Him who warns from heaven?” Greater is our responsibility to God’s message in Christ (2:2).

When God spoke to Israel at Mount Sinai His voice shook the earth. This was symbolic of a great shaking in the future when He will “shake not only the earth, but also the heaven” (26). This verse quotes Haggai 2:6 and refers to a time when Christ will return and fill His house with glory. The “things which can be shaken” refer to temporal created things. Those things which “cannot be shaken” are the eternal blessings of the New Covenant in Christ Jesus. The author is speaking of the ultimate remaking of heavens and the earth which will follow Christ’s return (Heb. 1:10-12). What remains after this awesome event will be eternal.

**Questions to Consider**

- How does God speak to us today? What’s the best way to receive a message from God?
- Why do you think God is going to “shake” heaven and earth? What are the things that will remain when He is done shaking things up?
- Are there any “things which can be shaken” in your life that need to be removed? If so, what are they? What are the things “which cannot be shaken” in your life? Does this give you the confidence to stand firm in your faith?

*Written by Jamie O’Brien*
Hold on to Grace (Nov. 20)

Read Hebrews 12:28-29

Earthly, material things are the things that can be “shaken” and will not last; but God’s kingdom is unshakable and eternal. Here the writer uses this contrast to exhort the reader to right conduct. Since God has provided grace, salvation in Christ, and future blessings in His eternal kingdom, the persecuted Jews to whom the book of Hebrews was written should never even consider returning to Judaism. Instead they should serve God with thanksgiving and worship Him in reverence and awe.

12:28 is an application of his entire warning: “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe” (NASB). The term “let us show gratitude” can also be rendered “let us hold on to grace” (HCSB); it is only through the inexhaustible grace of God that we are able to “serve God acceptably” (HCSB).

Chapter 12 ends with a solemn warning: “For our God is a consuming fire” (see also Deut. 4:24). Here the writer emphasizes that God’s grace should never be taken for granted because He is also a God of judgment. The punishment for disobeying God’s Law given at Mount Sinai was severe; but the punishment is far worse for those who reject God’s offer of salvation through His Son.

God is shaking things today. As events draw nearer to the time of Christ’s return, we will see more “shaking” in this world; but do not allow the tumult to distract you from serving the Lord. If you are in Christ you can stand firm because you are part of His “unshakable kingdom.” So what shall we do as we live in a “shaking” world that seems out of control? Listen to God speak through His Word and obey Him. Keep running the race with endurance. Keep looking to Jesus Christ and remember that God loves you; and when you draw on God’s enabling grace, no matter what happens, you will be able to stand firm in Christ.

Questions to Consider

• According to verse 28, we have received from God a “kingdom that cannot be shaken.” What should our response be?

• Apart from gratitude what else is required to “serve God acceptably?” What is acceptable service to God?

• What does it mean to offer God acceptable service with “reverence and awe?”

Written by Jamie O’Brien
A New Kind of Community (Nov. 24, Review)

Review Hebrews 12:18-24

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 12:18-24 is that the church’s fellowship with Christ and one another is only possible because of the blood of Jesus.

Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross and resurrection triumph over death did not just accomplish, our individual, personal salvation. There is not an assembly of righteous saints, also known as the church, who have been made perfect through him. The church was born from the blood of Christ.

As we have looked over the past few weeks as a church at the importance of putting God First, we must remember that putting God First means serving his church. Let us worship with fellow believers, in “reverence and awe,” because we serve a great God.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 12:28 to memory. Let it remind you of what you have received so that you can be motivated to obey and worship Christ.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
Faithfully Finding Biblical Fellowship (Nov. 25)

*Read Hebrews 13:1-6*

In these verses the author visits several subjects – hospitality, marriage, generosity – but all of them are traits that should belong to those who walk with Christ. Let’s think about a few of these subjects in turn.

Brotherly love is the basis for biblical fellowship. The deepest kind of that fellowship is based on the spiritual life we have in Christ. If it’s based on anything else, it will not last.

All the people of God, not just those with the spiritual gift, should be “given to hospitality.” Abraham showed generous hospitality to Jesus Christ and two of His angels unawares. You and I may not entertain angels in a literal sense, but any stranger could turn out to be a messenger of spiritual blessing to us. Concern for others is also an expression of love. Many believers suffer for their faith. Ministering to a Christian prisoner in the name of Christ is to minister to Christ.

Maintaining loyalty and purity in Christian marriage is essential. Sex outside of marriage is sinful and destructive. David was forgiven for his sexual sin, but he suffered the consequences of his adultery for years to come in the hardest way: through his own children.

If we love God and others as we should, then we will have a right relationship with material things. Being content does not depend upon abundance, for things (money) can never satisfy the heart – only God can do that. Luke 12:15 says, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” When we have God, we have all that we need. The material things of life can decay or be stolen, but God “will never leave us or forsake us; so, do not fear or be dismayed.”

Hebrews 13:6 was as big a source of great peace to the early Christians, as it is for us today. We, too, can know that no man could do anything to us apart from God’s will. The important thing to learn here is that we have the right relationship to Jesus Christ, and that we not put our trust in material things.

**Questions to Consider**

- Can you think of a time that someone has shown you hospitality without expecting anything in return?
- Can you share about ministering to someone’s needs in Christ’s name, and the spiritual blessing you received?
- Do you have your priorities straight?

*Written by Bill Lewis*
Spiritual Submission and Sacrifice (Nov. 26)

Read Hebrews 13:7-18

Wherever Paul went, he founded local churches and ordained qualified believers to lead them. “Saints … bishops [elders], and deacons” summarize the leadership of Christian churches. While we do not worship leaders or give them the glory, it is certainly right to honor them for their faithful work. At that time, only a very few Christians had copies of the Scriptures, so you can see the importance of these leaders’ personal ministry of the Word.

It seems from verse 9 that some recipients of this letter were considering going back to Jewish laws that governed foods. Keeping the dietary laws impressed people as being spiritual, but they were only shadows of the reality that we have in Christ. Our altar is Jesus Christ; for it is through Him that we offer our “spiritual sacrifices” to God. Because Christ’s sacrifice has already been made once and for all, the gifts that we bring to God are acceptable. That is not because of any earthly altar, but because of the heavenly altar, Jesus Christ. The writer is saying, in effect, to get out of the Jewish religious system and identify with the Savior who died for you. The same applies to man’s “religiosity” today.

The first spiritual sacrifice is continual praise to God (v. 15). The words of heartfelt praise from our lips are like beautiful fruit laid on the altar.

The second spiritual sacrifice is good works of sharing (v. 16). “Doing good” can cover a multitude of ministries: sharing food with the needy; transporting people to and from church or other places; sharing money; perhaps just helping a neighbor in need.

One day, every leader will have to give an account of his ministry to the Lord. He should be able to do it with joy. Sometimes it’s hard for a leader to “watch out for souls”. However, when a shepherd is faithful to watch out for souls, it is important that the sheep respect his authority.

Questions to Consider

• Who “spoke the Word” to you?
• At which altar do you worship?
• Are you “watching out for souls”?

Written by Bill Lewis
Whatever You Need (Nov. 27)

Read Hebrews 13:19-25

As the author closes his letter to the Hebrews, his prayer is one we should note. He has spent his letter teaching, pleading and warning, and in closing his prayer for his readers focuses on what God will do in them.

As believers we must remember that the power to do anything for the glory of God comes from God himself. We cannot muster the strength to count for the kingdom on our own. That’s why the many apostles who wrote letters – Paul, Peter and John among them – concentrated their prayers on what God can and will do.

First, the author asks God to equip these believers with “everything good” (ESV) so that they may do God’s will. Want to obey? Ask God for the power to do it, or you’re doomed. But once God gives me to the desire to obey, it’s up to me, right? Not so fast.

The author also asks God to work in them that which is pleasing in his sight. Once God gives us to the desire, he also gives us both the will and ability to obey. He does this through Jesus Christ, his Son, who indwells us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God the Father, empowering us to obey through the Son, who further accomplishes his will in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. No wonder the author of Hebrews wants to give God glory. He deserves it!

Questions to Consider

• Are you obeying God’s voice like one of his sheep, or are you chafing at his commands? Humbly submit to God’s will.

• Do you believe that God will give you what you need to obey? Re-read these verses, and take note of what God is doing. Trust him to do it in your heart.

Written by Pastor Jason Hall
Live Out the Faith (Dec. 1, Review)

Review Hebrews 13:1-8

In today’s study guide we will pause to review the key points from yesterday’s lesson in the Scriptures. The key point established in Hebrews 13:1-8 is that believers are called to work out their faith in numerous ways as a reflection of God’s free gift of salvation.

We saw that there is not one single way that our faith should be practiced, but that Christian love and service should be seen across our whole lives. We must be hospitable and kind, remember the downtrodden and sick, live in exemplary marriages, and be content with whatever possessions God gives us.

Do we really believer the Lord is our helper? As you have committed to sacrificial giving in the God First campaign, are you counting on the Lord’s help? These are questions we should be asking we reflect on what we have learned in our study through Hebrews.

As you review, consider committing Hebrews 13:8 to memory. Jesus never changes, despite our sometimes faithlessness. He is our rock and our fortress, our deliverer.

Tomorrow begins our study in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.