

## ~ The Study of the Life of Paul~

**Hebrews Overview: Prison Epistle #1**

Today we begin looking at the life of Paul beyond the pages of the book of Acts. Last week we ended our study of that amazing book as Paul was in Rome, in his own rented house for two years waiting to stand trial before Caesar Nero. During these two years God was working mightily through the Apostle Paul as *he preached the kingdom of God and taught the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ*, Acts 28:30-31. Many of the Jews in Rome had rejected his message, Acts 28:24-28, but Paul had a very fruitful ministry among the Gentiles in Rome, specifically within the court of Caesar, Philippians 1:12-14; 4:22. Many people were coming to the faith and the church in Rome was flourishing as Paul shepherded this church from his own rented house.

But as always with Paul, he had a deep concern for the churches. Not only in Rome, but all the churches he had established previously throughout the world. So during these two years, Paul wrote five epistles to the churches to edify and strengthen them in the faith: Hebrews, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians. Over the next five weeks we will be looking at these five epistles and seeing the heart of Paul and his deep concern for the churches. Today we will start with the book of Hebrews.

It is my conjecture that the book of Hebrews is Paul's first prison epistle written from Rome in 61ad. There are some clues within this book that lead to this conclusion.

- This letter was written from Italy, 13:24
- Timothy hasn't arrived yet in Rome, 13:23
- It is before the destruction of the temple in 70ad
- The writer of Hebrews (Paul) is hoping to be restored to them soon, 13:19.
  - Seems that Paul was bound and wanted to be released. Similar to Philemon 22; Philippians 2:24- Pray that I might come shortly.
- Tells them to remember the prisoners in chains, 13:3; you had compassion on me in my chains, 10:34.

Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians living in the Judean area. There is no reference to Gentiles in this epistle, and it is replete with Jewish references and Old Testament Scriptures that Paul is assuming his readers know thoroughly. Within these thirteen chapters, Paul references 27 different Old Testament Scriptures in which all of them are quoted directly from the Septuagint, LXX. See chart at end of notes. This was Paul's style. Even though he was a Hebrew of Hebrews, Paul used the Greek Septuagint as his Bible. This Greek translation of the Old Testament became the Bible of the early Christian church.

**Who Wrote the Book of Hebrews?**

Of course, the answer is God, but it's not hard to guess that I believe the book of Hebrews is one of Paul's epistles. Some would disagree with me because his name is nowhere to be found in this epistle, but as I read this epistle, the fingerprints of Paul permeate every page of this book. In fact, Paul signed this epistle with his own signature at the end of this epistle saying, "*Grace be with you all, Amen.*" Hebrews 13:25. Paul tells us this is his signature of all his epistles in **2 Thess 3:17-18**. But some argue against Paul's authorship because the grammar and syntax is not Pauline. This is true, but the thoughts and themes are absolutely Paul. How do we reconcile this? A deep study into the grammar and syntax of the text shows that it is very similar to Luke and his writings as you compare this to the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Therefore, my conjecture is that both Paul and Luke co-authored this epistle while they were in Rome. Luke was a close friend and brother to Paul. They had traveled a lot together and now Luke is with Paul in Rome and they just finished writing trial documents volume II, the book of Acts for Theophilus. Now Luke is writing the book of Hebrews with Paul, and they are such close friends that Paul is dictating his thoughts and Luke is writing these thoughts in his own grammar and style inspired by the Holy Spirit.

## The Heart of the Letter

This epistle is Paul pouring out his heart to these Jewish Christians still living under the pressures of Judaism in Jerusalem. This is a word of exhortation to these Jewish Christians not to drift away from the Faith; to not get swept away by the deceptions and pressures of the Judaizers to follow the Law, **Hebrews 13:22**.

In Jerusalem, there was huge pressure for Jewish Christians to fall back under the Law. When Paul came to Jerusalem after his 3<sup>rd</sup> journey, remember his conversation with James? He was telling James of all the great things God had done among the Gentiles, but James focuses on the Jews in Jerusalem and says, “*You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.*” Acts 21:20. And even after the Jerusalem Council meeting, these Judaizers, men from James from Jerusalem, came up to the church of Antioch and began harassing the Jewish Christians for sitting and eating with Gentile Christians. To the point that even Peter and Barnabas were swept away in their hypocrisy, Gal 2:11-13. Paul was seeing this pressure the twelve days he was in Jerusalem, then for the next two years while he was in prison in Caesarea, these Jewish Christians were visiting him in prison and as a result their houses and goods were being plundered for identifying with Paul and Christianity, Heb 10:32-38. So now Paul is in Rome, under house arrest, thinking back to the oppression and the pressure in Judea and his heart goes out to these Christians to remain steadfast and to not be swept away by the pressure of the Judaizers.

## The Main Theme

The overarching theme is Jesus, namely the resurrection of Jesus. The title of this epistle could easily be “**JESUS IS BETTER.**” All through this epistle Paul constantly proves that Jesus is better and superior to everything: Better than angels, 1:4; Better than Moses 3:1-6; We have a better Hope in Jesus, 7:19; Jesus is a better High Priest, 7:15-16; Jesus has brought in a better covenant with better promises, 8:6; Jesus is a better sacrifice, 9:23; we have a better possession in Jesus, 10:34; we seek a better country, 11:16; and we have a better resurrection in Jesus, 11:35. Therefore, because Jesus is better, don’t turn away from Him. Throughout the epistle Paul warns these Jewish Christians not to fall away, but rather hold fast to Jesus and His promises. As a result, I see three main threads that Paul continually draws on throughout this epistle and these three go hand in hand in a progression... 1) Don’t be pressured to fall away from the Faith by being pressured to go back under the Law; Why?... 2) Because Jesus is superior and has given us a superior covenant with superior promises that are eternal; Therefore... 3) hold fast to Jesus and live out from the Faith. Seek Jesus and His promise of Everlasting Life through Him. I have given a full outline with references of these three themes in the back of your notes.

Today we will be taking a high-level overview of this epistle, going from chapter to chapter drawing out these three themes that are prevalent throughout the epistle.

## Chapter 1~ The Exaltation of the Resurrected Jesus Christ

7 Old Testament references in the first chapter alone.

- God the Father in this dispensation of Grace, on this side of the cross, is dealing with mankind through His Son, **1:1**
- Jesus is the Creator of all things, **1:2**
- Jesus is the express image of the Father, **1:3**
- If you have seen me you have seen the Father, John 14:9
- Jesus is our Savior who was resurrected and was given an Eternal Kingdom, **1:4-6**
  - Quotes this from Psalm 2:7 word for word from the LXX
  - Resurrection is the key point to this epistle. Connection to Paul, Acts 13:33-34.
- Jesus is God, **1:8**
- Jesus is superior to the angels, 1:5-14

## Chapter 2- We have a great Salvation through Jesus

Notice Paul starts chapter 2 with a warning, **2:1-3**. Do not drift away and neglect this great Salvation. Paul then goes on to explain this great salvation we have in Jesus Christ.

- Jesus humbled Himself and became a man, **2:5-8**
  - for the suffering of death for everyone, **2:9**
- Jesus was resurrected and became our Hero, τὸν ἀρχηγόν, principle leader to bring us out from death and into Life, **2:10**.
  - Jesus purchased our debt to sin as our Kinsman Redeemer by making propitiation with His blood because He is our faithful High Priest, **2:14-17**.
  - Jesus couldn't save us from our sins as God, He **had to be made like His brethren**
    - He had to become a Man to redeem us from our sin, **2:6**; 10:5, 12

## Chapter 3- Jesus is Better than Moses

After explaining our great Salvation through Jesus, Paul addresses those who have received this Salvation by faith... beginning with **verse 1**... *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling*.

- The holy brethren are those who have partaken of this calling by faith, **3:6, 14**.
  - This is the admonition to hold fast that we see all through this epistle.
- Paul begins showing Moses as a type of Jesus to come... foreshadowing, **3:3-4**
  - Example in the wilderness of entering His rest... must enter in by faith, **3:7-4:3**.

## Chapter 4- Enter His Rest by Faith

Notice another warning in verse 1, let us fear lest any of us have come short of His rest, 4:1

- Just as Moses was a type of our deliverance, so also was Joshua a type of one who would lead them into His rest, **4:8-11**.
- We don't enter in by our own efforts, but solely by trusting in the work of Jesus
  - By faith alone... matter of the heart not our deeds, **4:11-13**
  - Jesus is our place of rest. We rest in Him because He is our High Priest and our place of mercy.
  - Therefore, hold fast to Him and come boldly to the throne of Grace, **4:14-16**.

## Chapter 5- Jesus is a Better High Priest

Paul continues chapter 5 explaining the function of Jesus as our High Priest.

- The sacrifice for our sins and the administration of the effects of this sacrifice is so important, Paul spends the next four chapters speaking of this.
- Paul reminds us that Jesus became the Eternal High Priest because He was risen from the dead, **5:5-10**.
  - Priest not according to the Law, but before the Law, from Melchizedek, Genesis 14:18
  - Didn't learn by suffering... bad translation... He learned what it was to be a Son, from which He suffered the obedience. *καίπερ ὢν υἱὸς, ἔμαθεν ἀφ' ὧν ἔπαθε τὴν ὑπακοήν*
  - Jesus was "perfected," v.9, when He was raised from the dead, Luke 13:32
- Another rebuke... you have become dull of hearing, v. 11

## Chapter 6- Harsh Exhortation to lay hold of the Hope

Continues this harsh rebuke from chapter 5:11-14.

- Warning them not to fall away from the Faith, **6:4-6**.
  - These are Christians who have rejected the sacrifice of Jesus and are trusting in their own merits for Salvation...
    - Put Jesus to an open shame, 6:6

- A person can never lose their salvation, but they can reject it, Heb 10:26-29
- Don't be sluggish, but have a diligence of hope until the end, **6:11-12**.
  - Abraham as an example of faithfulness to the end, 6:13-18
  - Jesus is the anchor for our soul. Our hope beyond the veil, **6:19-20**.

### Chapter 7- Jesus is a Better High Priest (con't)

Jesus as our Eternal High Priest gives us a better hope, a better, covenant with better promises

- Continuing with Abraham as the example of faith before the Law, so also Melchizedek was a priest before the Law
- With the changing of the priesthood, there is also a changing of the Law, **7:12**.
  - The Law was weak in that it made nothing perfect, 7:18-19.
  - The New Covenant brings the hope of Everlasting Life because Jesus offered the eternal perfect sacrifice, 7:19-28.

### Chapter 8- Jesus a Better High Priest with a Better Ministry

Jesus is ministering from the True Tabernacle in heaven, 8:2.

- Paul is showing these Jewish Christians that everything in the Law was a foreshadow of Jesus' sacrifice
  - The tabernacle of Moses was a type of who Jesus is to us, **8:4-6**
    - Only one way into the Holy of Holies; the Alter of Sacrifice; the basin to cleanse; the menorah Light; the shewbread; the veil, the mercy seat. All point to Jesus.
- Jesus is the mediator of the better and New Covenant that Jeremiah prophesied of, 8:7-12.
- There was a slow transition from the Old to the New Covenant.
  - Paul's letter is trying to awaken these Jews to see the fulfillment of the Old and press toward the New, **8:13**.

### Chapters 9-10:18- Jesus is a Better Sacrifice

The elements of the Law were only a shadow of the True Sacrifice to come, namely Jesus Christ.

- The blood of bulls and goats did nothing to take away sin... it only looked forward to the blood of Jesus, **9:11-15**.
  - Jesus fulfilled the payment that the first covenant demanded by means of death, so that He could administer the eternal inheritance of the New Covenant to those who receive the promise by faith.
- Jesus as our High Priest offered His own sacrifice to put away sin, **9:23-28**.
  - Notice another admonition to persevere for Jesus, 9:28
- Chapter 10 continues proving Jesus as the better sacrifice that was prophesied to come, **10:5-7**
  - This has been the plan of God since the beginning.
  - God didn't establish the first covenant to make men righteous. It was established for Jesus to fulfill and then administer the Righteousness of the Law through His High Priestly ministry to those who believe, **10:11-18**.

### Chapter 10:19-Chapter 13- Admonitions to the Believer to Live by Faith

Verse 19 begins the next section of the epistle.

- For ten chapters, Paul has been systematically proving Jesus as the Christ who came to fulfill God's promise of Salvation.
  - Now from 10:19 through the end of the epistle, Paul begins exhorting these believers to live according to this fulfillment; to live in the full assurance of faith, **10:19-25**.
- This exhortation comes with a harsh warning just as we saw earlier in chapter 6, 10:26-31.

- A warning to not trample the Son of God and count the blood of the covenant as a common thing.
- There is no sacrifice for sins for a person in this state because this one does not have faith in Jesus, who Paul just told us is the only sacrifice for sins.
  - If a person rejects or turns away from the only thing that can save, they cannot be saved.
- Paul encourages them with reminding these Christians of their former conduct to give them endurance to stand against the pressures of the Judaizers, **10:32-39**.
  - Within this statement, Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4, “The just shall live by faith.” More exactly, ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται, “The just shall live out from faith.”
    - Paul quotes this same statement in two of his other letters, Galatians 3:11; Rom 1:17
    - It is living out from Jesus and His faith and His redemptive work on the cross
  - And notice the focus of our faith... verse 37, “*He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*”
- This is the entire focus of the next chapter, our coming King and our future with Him.

### Chapter 11- Faith in the Promise to Come

This Hall of Faith chapter has been so abused by people thinking they can use their faith to get whatever they want. But when you read these examples its about faithful people trusting God in the promise to come, namely the promise of Everlasting Life.

- In chapter 11 Paul gives these Jewish Christians examples of faithful people in the Old Testament who have trusted God for His promises.
  - None of these people are having faith to get materialistic things, new house, car, job. God will provide those things and bless those who are faithful, but the point of chapter 11 is to encourage us to keep our focus on Jesus and His promise.
- Verse 1- Faith is the foundation, ὑπόστασις, the under-stance, of matters hoped for, the convincing proof of those matters not yet being seen.
  - The hope that Paul always taught was the hope of the Resurrection, Acts 23:6; 24:15; 26:6-8, 22-23, the Hope of Glory, Col 1:27; our Blessed Hope to be with Jesus forever, Titus 2:13. From the Jews perspective this was the Hope of Israel, Acts 28:20, the promise of the Messiah to come.
  - This is what every example in chapter 11 speaks of, **11:8-10, 13, 16, 24-26, 35-38**. Notice the last two verses in chapter **11:39-40** God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.
    - This word “perfect” τελειώω, is the same word Paul used in 5:9 describing the resurrection of Jesus. Paul is speaking of the point in time when we will all be caught up together and receive our glorified bodies. This is our Blessed Hope.

### Chapter 12: Press toward Jesus even among persecution and hostility

Chapter 12 begins with another “therefore,” connecting the examples of the heroes of the faith along with everything we have learned in this epistle... Therefore, having this understanding of our great Savior who has freely given us so great a salvation. And having these faithful examples who have run the race well... let us run our race with endurance. And we do this by looking to Jesus, **12:1-2**.

Chapter 12 is Paul’s heartfelt admonition to endure the hostility of these Judaizers and press toward Jesus. This has been Paul’s plea this entire letter, **12:3-4**

- In verse 1, Paul tells them to lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us.
  - This is the sin of rebellion and carrying the weight and burdens of the Law.



τὸν → [τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν] ← Ἰησοῦν  
**JESUS IS THE HERO, THE PRINCIPAL LEADER AND PERFECTER, τελειωτής, OF THE FAITH**  
 from same word as in 11:40, τελειόω.  
 The One who will lead us into glory, 2:10.

*Shed the burdens of the law and run with endurance, looking unto Jesus  
 because He is the One who has freed you*

Paul then continues chapter 12 describing how they/we must be running this race... receive exhortation, correction and instruction, **12:5-11**.

- In these seven verses, Paul uses the word παιδεία, eight times in both the verb and noun form. The NKJV translates this as chastening, but this is a bad translation in my opinion, because it seems to give the idea that God is hurting us to teach us a lesson.
  - But rather this word means, the loving correction, instruction, and training that a father gives his son, Eph 6:4; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:16; Titus 2:12.
  - Paul always uses this word in his other letters with a sense of instruction, correction and training. Not physical abuse.
  - In fact, that is what this letter to the Hebrews is... a letter of exhortation and correction, **13:22**.
- Paul then takes the remainder of chapter 12 to admonish them to:
  - Receive correction, 12:3-11; Strengthen yourself, 12:12-13; Pursue peace and holiness, 12:14; Look carefully lest you fall short of the grace of God, 12:15; Do not refuse Him or turn away from Him, 12:25

### Chapter 13: Christian Behavior

Paul concludes this letter, as he does in many of his other letters, with how to practically apply this to our daily lives, 13:1-17

- Continue in brotherly love, v.1; Remember the prisoners, v.3. Paul is one of these prisoners, as well as Aristarchus and Timothy; Do not be covetous, v.5; Respect and honor faithful elders, v.7, 17; Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines specifically the traditions of the Judaizers and the bondage of the Law, v.9-16
- Paul takes one more opportunity to remind them that food and sacrifices have no profit, v.9, because Jesus is our final sacrifice
  - The only sacrifice we offer now is the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, v.15-16
- Paul asks the brethren to pray for him that he might be released from prison soon, 13:18-19, similar to Philemon 22 and Philippians 2:24.
- Paul ends with maybe the best ending salutation of all his letters, **13:20-21**.
- Finally, Paul urges Timothy to come meet him in Rome, 13:23-24.
  - Timothy seems to have been in prison because Paul tells them that he has been set free, ἀπολύω
  - For two years these Jewish Christians were visiting Paul in the Caesarea prison, and if Timothy was arrested as well, they would have been visiting him too.

Paul then ends with his personal signature as he does in all his letters...

Ἡ χάρις μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν. ἀμήν  
*Grace be with you all, Amen*

27~ LXX Scripture references used in the Book of Hebrews

Hebrews	Septuagint LXX	Hebrews	Septuagint LXX
1:5	Psalms 2:7	8:8-12	Jeremiah 31:31-34
1:5	2 Samuel 7:14	9:20	Exodus 24:8
1:6	Deut 32:43	10:5-7	Psalms 40:6-8
1:7	Psalms 104:4	10:30	Deut 32:35
1:8-9	Psalms 45:6-7	10:37-38	Habakkuk 2:3-4
1:10-12	Psalms 102:25-27	11:5	Genesis 5:24
1:13	Psalms 110:1	11:18	Genesis 21:12
2:6-8	Psalms 8:4-6	12:5-6	Proverbs 3:11-12
2:12	Psalms 22:22	12:20	Exodus 19:12-13
2:13	Isaiah 8:17-18	12:21	Deut 9:19
3:7-11	Psalms 95:7-11	12:26	Habakkuk 2:6
5:6	Psalms 110:4	13:5	Deut 31:6
6:14	Genesis 22:17	13:6	Psalms 118:6
8:5	Exodus 25:40		

## Three Main Threads through the Book of Hebrews

**JESUS IS BETTER** and superior to everything:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better than angels, 1:4;</li> <li>• Better than Moses 3:1-6;</li> <li>• Better Hope, 7:19;</li> <li>• Better High Priest, 7:15-16;</li> <li>• Better covenant with better promises, 8:6</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better Tabernacle, 8:3-5;</li> <li>• Better sacrifice, 9:23;</li> <li>• Better possession in Jesus, 10:34;</li> <li>• Better country, 11:16;</li> <li>• Better resurrection, 11:35</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

Therefore, Paul warns these Jewish Christians... **DO NOT FALL AWAY FROM THE FAITH...**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't drift away from the things you have heard, 2:1;</li> <li>• Don't neglect so great a Salvation, 2:3</li> <li>• Don't harden your hear with unbelief in departing from God, 3:12</li> <li>• Don't come short of entering His rest, 4:1</li> <li>• Don't fall back under the weakness of the Law, 6:6;</li> <li>• Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together, 10:25</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't trample the Son of God underfoot and count the blood of the covenant a common thing, 10:29;</li> <li>• Don't draw back to destruction, 10:38;</li> <li>• Don't despise correction, 12:5</li> <li>• Don't fall short of the grace of God, 12:15</li> <li>• Don't refuse and turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, 12:25;</li> <li>• Don't be carried about with various and strange doctrines, 13:9</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

But rather **HOLD FAST TO JESUS** and His promises...

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold fast firm to the end, 3:6</li> <li>• Be steadfast to the end, 3:14</li> <li>• Be diligent to enter His rest, 4:11</li> <li>• Hold fast our confession, 4:14</li> <li>• Hold fast hope till the end, 6:11</li> <li>• Patiently endure, 6:15</li> <li>• Hold fast to Jesus our anchor, 6:19</li> <li>• Eagerly wait for Him, 9:28</li> <li>• Draw near with full assurance of faith, 10:22</li> <li>• Hold fast the confession of hope without wavering, 10:23</li> <li>• Endure with great struggle, 10:32</li> <li>• Need of endurance, 10:35</li> <li>• Live out from the Faith, 10:38</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diligently seek Him by faith, 11:6</li> <li>• Hold on to the promises of God by faith... Hall of Faith chapter 11 Embrace the promises by faith, 11:13-16</li> <li>• Look to the reward, 11:26</li> <li>• Run with endurance looking to Jesus, 12:1-2</li> <li>• Endure hostility, strive against sin, 12:3-4</li> <li>• Strengthen your weary hands and feet, 12:12-13</li> <li>• Pursue peace and holiness, 12:14</li> <li>• Looking carefully to Jesus, 12:15</li> <li>• Continue in love, 13:1</li> <li>• Follow faithful men, 13:7</li> <li>• Bear with these words of exhortation, 13:22</li> </ul> |
|--|--|