

Week 4 Hebrews Discipleship Series

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The letter to the Hebrews **concerns an invisible, eternal, spiritual reality** and realm **that humans can only know by revelation**. No unbelief, opinion, emotion, or false belief system of a carnal mind should be allowed to keep us from true faith and rob us of the truth.

The book of Hebrews **POINTS US UPWARD and to the FUTURE**: So much of contemporary focus and conversation is about THIS LIFE. Christian hope from Scripture is never about this temporal world. It is about walking through in this life to the reward in the next. We will do exploits, move in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and be the city set on a hill as a witness in the world, but we are always looking to a future. This is the realm of real faith in operation. Its purpose is to bring many sons to maturity in relation to the Father through the Son.

The goal of instruction in the letter is MATURITY. It takes patience and perseverance to come to maturity—perfection is the word Hebrews uses. We have one image – the Perfect Son. The goal is **perfection as disciplined heirs of the Father, revealed and undergirded by the person, life example, redemptive work, and priestly mediation of Jesus Christ.**

God is at work with us individually, chiseling us, bringing forth the image of the eternal, glorious, perfect Son in each one of us. It is happening now. That is sanctification. It is a process that requires patience, perseverance, discipline, and diligence to attain what God has for us. We need revelation knowledge of our inheritance that we would take full opportunity to lay hold of our full reward offered through our High Priest.

Themes addressed in Hebrews include priesthood, the community of the saints, and attaining our spiritual inheritance now for eternity. **As heirs of this treasure, there are particular ethics, modes of behavior, service, and sacrifice, expected by the Father in the heirs.**

Better Things:

Hebrews speaks of the “better things” of the New Covenant. Better implies much more serious, glorious, rewarding, accessible. But it also means more responsibility and much more serious penalty for neglecting the better things. This is quite the opposite of what contemporary Christianity often assumes regarding the New Covenant “under grace.” Every time Jesus encountered the keepers of the law and their challenges, we see that He not only kept the law that they accused Him of breaking, but He takes the law to a higher level of love, justice, truth, reality, and righteousness. This is the call of the Gospel, the responsibility of this “better” covenant.

We have now been given the gift of citizenship in the eternal kingdom of God. Citizenship brings with it rights, privileges, and responsibilities. People talk about rights. They talk about getting justice. But few talk of responsibilities of citizenship. We have drifted away from our foundations that recognize there is a true and just moral law, the God of the Bible. Man is setting his own measure of what is “just” more according to deciding for himself, without reference to God, what is “good” and what is “evil.” Among other things, through the lens of the High Priesthood Hebrews clarifies true justice.

Grace and Justice:

Hebrews addresses themes of grace and justice

Grace is that God has chosen man for Himself, in the man Jesus Christ, in the Incarnation. May we see the cosmic glory of the significance that God became flesh, that He was tempted and suffered in all ways without sin, and He received upon Himself the just penalty for wickedness when He was completely righteous, and took that penalty to death. This is grace that God chose us in Jesus Christ, judged us in Jesus Christ, released us from the penalty of death in Jesus Christ, and raised us with Him in the resurrection in Jesus Christ. And now we have a way opened to us to walk with the Father as Jesus did, hearing what He is saying, seeing what He is doing, God with us.

Grace does not mean doing what seems right in our own eyes, following our own passions, and desires. Earthly or natural wisdom is dangerous because it always descends from earthy wisdom (of human origin and reason), to sensual (emotionally centered and driven by human senses and passions), eventually becomes demonic (Jas 3:15). The Bible presents us with other wisdom – God’s wisdom, spiritual wisdom, heavenly wisdom – which rises from glory to glory, revelation to revelation, from faith to faith. The human heart is wicked and beyond finding out according to the Bible (Jer. 17:9). Purely on their own, human tendency of passion, desire, imagination, are not particularly those of the Son into whose image we are being conformed. A man’s conscience, like his mind, will, and emotions, must be properly formed. Our souls must be disciplined in the Refiner’s fire so that our hearts are aligned to the intention of the Father, conformed with His, reflecting Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writes in *The Cost of Discipleship*:

“Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession...Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

The free grace of God is costly, for God and for man

It is grace because it is God’s initiation and action.

It is grace because it is undeserved.

It is grace because it cannot be earned by any offering or acts of righteousness man can do.

It is grace because it is God’s and He gives it to us.

Just as God in His eternal nature exists as one triunity, no believer can truly exist as Christian outside of recognition and participation in Christ’s body of other believers. God is building us into a many-membered body. That body is holy and is to be recognized and related to as such. We are baptized into His body. There is no individuality in which you can be fully Christian in a biblical way and

separated from the local, worshiping, community connected to the Head (Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:27).

As the Head Christ Himself gives gifts as persons to His body: apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, evangelists – to have oversight and provide direction, care, and correction for the community. Every member has responsibility to come and to find their place, fitting into the context of the Church God is building. Coming to the communion table includes the recognition of sin as a real problem in our lives. Sin has no categories. It is missing the mark of the perfection of Jesus Christ. Communion sanctifies us and offers us the opportunity for transformation into that image. Cheap grace takes all this for granted, not recognizing the costliness of God's grace.

Various analogies are made to the disciple-life including building a building, running a race, a boat that either drifts away or is anchored securely.

The High Priesthood:

Hebrews centers on the High Priesthood of Christ. Modern, Western civilization has very little concept that man needs a mediator between him and God. Hebrews shows that we come to God not just any old way at any old time. We need a Priest. Through the pattern in the Old Testament and the Temple priesthood, Hebrews shows that those ministrations were showing us a reality of better things we have now in the New Covenant through the intercession and ministry of Jesus Christ, our High Priest. Additionally, we see that we are under Him, an ordered, royal priesthood. The royal priesthood in the Old Covenant was very disciplined, each man having a very specific responsibility, work, and area of representation. Likewise, we are under our High Priest in an ordered priesthood. Let us not fall short. Let us look to Jesus, our example.

Most Christians are ignorant of the fact that man cannot just approach God in any manner, saying "Here, God, here's what I choose to bring You." Man's religion does not reach God, but God has provided a way. Cain and Abel each brought sacrifices and offerings. One was accepted – a life given. The other was rejected – the fruit of

man's best work. Beginning with Cain's offering and continuing down through the Law of Moses, God shows clearly that He is holy, He is "other." Man must have the Priest of God's choosing to mediate for him. That Priest has been ordained and given in Jesus Christ. He fulfilled and fulfills His perfect Priesthood for all believers. He is the sacrifice for righteousness. We offer our gifts and service to God through Him.

Hebrews often reiterates and confirms its own message indicating a need to reemphasize certain truths. For instance three times it says the duties of priests is to "offer gifts and sacrifices." A priest would take gifts from the people and give them to God. The priest would make sacrifices to God on behalf of himself and the people. Everything we offer to God has to pass through our High Priest Jesus Christ. We have one example that we cannot escape for a disciplined life – Jesus – **the disciple life a true Christian life is going to be a life of sacrifice.**

What do we offer? A life laid down, a heart without idols, a humble mind open to instruction and meek like Moses, our service above and beyond, going the second mile, giving our cloak, etc. These are the offerings that are appropriate to bring to the glorious Son of Man and through Him to the Father.

Hebrews emphasis is showing us that when Christ came He did some very significant things in the eternal realm – stripping the powers of darkness, death, Satan, and perhaps even the necessity of entering the sanctuary of heaven with His blood that it would be undefiled from the iniquity that took place there in the rebellion by Lucifer and a third of the angels.

We see in the book of Job, that there was a day that the accuser, Satan, could come into heaven and accuse man before God. But Jesus Christ came to be tested, to live as a mortal man, to be the Last Adam, the Second Man, and expel the accuser of Jesus' brothers from before the face of the Righteous Judge.

THEREFORE:

Each of the 2nd, 3rd, & 4th successive chapter divisions in Hebrews begins with a “therefore.” The message of the chapter is predicated on what has been shown us in the preceding chapter. **The book is laid out as though one is building a house. The foundation is Jesus revealed in Chapter 1 as Supreme over all.**

Chapter one introduces us to Jesus as the SON and His *absolute supremacy* over everything and everyone in temporal, eternal, visible, and invisible realms.

(Note: The writer is translating from Septuagint (Hebrew to Greek) OT translation so some of the author’s quotes differ somewhat from your version of the OT which is generally from the Masoretic (original Hebrew)).

The revelation of the Son in Hebrews Ch 1 cross references with Colossians Ch 1 which contains a 7-fold presentation of Lord Jesus:

Colossians lists 5 aspects of His eternal divine nature:

1. He’s the image of the invisible God.
2. He’s the firstborn before all creation.
3. All things were created by or in Him.
4. He is eternally existent.
5. All things hold together in Him.

And 2 aspects of His redemptive work:

6. He is the head of the body, the Church
7. He’s the beginning, the firstborn from the dead

Solemn Warnings:

Hebrews contains 5 solemn warnings against serious dangers Christians face. These solemn warnings are coming to us that we might not miss our inheritance.

For contemporary Christians living in the West this book is extremely relevant particularly because of the free access and long history we have of the availability and exposure to the word of the gospel. We now resemble those Jews to whom this book is addressed and as referenced in Romans 9:4-5: “The people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law,

the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”

Derek Prince Translation directly from Greek of Hebrews 2:1-12

For this reason we ought to give the more serious attention to the things that we have heard lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels became firm and every transgression and disobedience received a just and appropriate reward of punishment how shall we escape if we have neglected so great a salvation which at its inception was spoken through the Lord Himself and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing them witness with signs and wonders and various miracles and divisions of the Holy Spirit according to His will. For it was not to angels that He subjected the world order to come concerning which we are speaking. For somebody testified somewhere saying “What is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you visit him You made him for a little while lower than angels you crowned him with glory and honor and have set him over the works of your hands. You put all things in subjection under his feet” for in subjecting all things to him he left nothing that is not subject to him but now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels namely Jesus because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was appropriate for him for whom (are) all things and through whom (are) all things in bringing many sons to glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both the One who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all from One. For which reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying I will proclaim your name to My brothers, in the midst of the church I will sing praise to you.

Hebrews 2:1-4 The first solemn warning: don’t neglect the message concerns paying close attention to the message of the gospel we have been given. The writer gives a word picture of our soul being likened to a boat or ship that can be anchored and that can be detached from its anchor and therefore drift off course. (Heb. 6, anchor for our soul). **Drift occurs gradually and imperceptibly by something a person DOES NOT do.** A goal of this study is to make sure we don’t drift away.

Hebrews 2:2 If there is **just reward of punishment** for the message of the Old Covenant spoken by angels, then how shall we escape the message spoken through the Lord Himself? **Transgression means to step across a known line or boundary. Disobedience speaks of mishearing.** (Deut. 28, “If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God “if you will obey the voice of the Lord your God”). In the Old Testament “hearing” “hearkening” “listening” was one and the same with obedience. The second goal of this letter is that we avoid transgressing the “known” lines of God’s revelation: that we don’t “mishear” what He has said to us.

Justice demands equally rewarding righteousness and punishing wickedness. Disobedience received a just reward of punishment. Contemporary ideas of “justice” are nearly always misapplied in our day.

Hebrews 2:3-4 emphasizes 3 reasons this message is so important and carries true justice with it:

1. It is spoken by the Lord Himself.
2. It is confirmed to us by firsthand testimony of actual witnesses.
3. God bears supernatural witness to it with miracles, signs, and wonders.

Hebrews 2:5 says, “For it was not to angels that He subjected the world order.” The writer is not speaking of the civilized inhabited world we know, but of the one of the age to come. A “better” age. This age has already begun for us who have received the gospel and the Holy Spirit.

The emphasis on angels refers to the hierarchy of authorities and powers in the eternal invisible realm that rule this present age. It speaks of the cosmic work of Christ having displaced and replaced those powers. Behind the scenes this reference would indicate the complete undoing of all that was handed over to Satan and his angels in the fall of the human race.

Hebrews 2:10 Jesus is called the Captain and Author of our salvation. He is not the captain that urges us to advance, standing on the sidelines. He is the One who went ahead of us. He advances, goes forward, and then says, “Follow Me.”

Immanuel – through the work finished in cross and resurrection – the Spirit has been poured out and He is with us and in us by His Spirit. Finished with “According to His will.”

Hebrews 2:12 highlights the relationship of the Father to the Son and sons, and will draw us deeper into this relationship. **He calls us brothers, members of His family in the Father. And thus God’s praise is declared in the midst of His Church**, the communal, localized, visible, community, under the Head, Christ, His feet under which all things are being subjected are touching earth in the church.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer on grace:

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him. Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God."