

# Confidence in Christ – Is Anyone Listening

Goldstone Church – 04-Sep-16 10:30am

Hebrews 1:1-3

## Introduction

We're starting a series looking at the book of Hebrews; going through the first 6 chapters. Some people have avoided the book of Hebrews because they think it is "too difficult". It is true that there are some profound truths in Hebrews, and some of these passages may remain clouded in uncertainty. But there are also some big themes that will help to us all.

## Context

The book of Hebrews was written by a Christian to Christians; around the 1st century A.D. The book was written at a difficult time: to Christians who were facing persecution. No one had been martyred yet, but a number had been jailed or had their property confiscated because of their faith.

Most of the Christians had converted from Judaism, but because of the growing persecution, they were being pressurised into returning to Judaism. One of the messages that Hebrews emphasises is: *no faith is complete without Jesus. Jesus is the very heart of what it means to be a Christian.*

Some characteristics of the Letter to the Hebrews.

### 1. A book of **EVALUATION**

Three words are repeated in the book:

- a) **Better** (used 13 times). The writer is emphasising that salvation that comes through Jesus Christ is far superior than any other religion.
- b) **Perfect** (used 14 times). The writer emphasises a Christians perfect standing before God – a perfection that cannot be achieved through animal sacrifices or anything else.
- c) **Eternal**. Salvation that comes through Jesus Christ is forever and ever. There is no time limit on Jesus' love.

The life that Jesus gives us is better, because the benefits are eternal, giving us a perfect standing before God.

Because of the persecutions, the readers were in danger of straying away and forgetting the truth. The writer asks them to Evaluate: Consider carefully what you have in Jesus Christ, and compare it against whatever else is on offer. What you will find is that Jesus Christ is better than anything else you had under the Law of Moses.

Today, let us consider carefully what we have in Jesus Christ. The answer is unchanged: the life that Jesus gives us is *better*, because the benefits are *eternal*, giving us a *perfect* standing before God.

## 2. A book of **EXHORTATION**

The book of Hebrews was *not* written to frighten people, but to encourage and comfort the readers. The readers are not showered with lame clichés and generalisation, but blunt, down-to-earth encouragements. Sometimes, some of the wording may seem negative, but underneath, it is an encouragement.

Some people describe various passages in Hebrews as “terrible warnings”, but these should be looked at as a single, coherent and practical message of encouragement.

The so-called warning of....

- a) **Drifting from the Bible** (Hebrews 2:1-4) should be looked at as an encouragement to hear and listen to God’s Word. Should we drift away from God’s Word, we start...
- b) **Doubting the Bible** (Hebrews 3:7-4:13). This passage is an encouragement to grow in faith; faith grows through hearing the Word of God. Otherwise, doubting the Bible leads to...
- c) **Dullness towards the Bible** (Hebrews 5:11-6:20). Don’t be dull or lazy listeners, but be active and alert to God’s Word. Being a lethargic listener leads to...
- d) **Despising the Bible** (Hebrews 10:26-39). These verses are an encouragement to admire and respect the Bible. Otherwise, this will lead to disobeying God and...
- e) **Defying the Bible** (Hebrews 12:14-29). Having a defiant attitude toward God’s Word, results in a downward spiral of selfishness and sin.

The book of Hebrews is a book of encouragement, urging Christians to hear and listen to what God has to say through His Word. Some of the wording may be direct, but God is calling us today to be strong, to press on and continually growing as followers of Jesus Christ.

## 3. A book of **EXAMINATION**

The book of Hebrews was written at a significant time in history: the temple in Jerusalem was still standing and the priests were still offering the animal sacrifices. But soon, both the city and the temple would be destroyed, and the Jewish nation would be scattered. Uncertainty was on the horizon, and God wanted His people to have their feet planted firmly on the solid foundation of faith in Jesus Christ.

The book of Hebrews asks: *Are you depending on passing material things, or is your confidence entirely in Jesus Christ?*

Today, let us examine and ensure that the focus of our faith is only on Jesus Christ. It is through faith in what Jesus has done on the cross at Calvary, that our hope is strong and secure.

## 4. A book of **EXPECTATION**

The book of Hebrews looks forward to a time and an age to come.

“He is no fool, to give up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.” (Jim Elliot, martyred missionary).

As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been promised a future reward. Our decisions today should be motivated by the expectation of what will be rewarded later.

The emphasis of the book of Hebrews is: *Don't live for what the world will promise you today. Live for what God has promised you in the future!*

As Christians today, we need to decide where our allegiance lies. Is our loyalty and appetite absorbed with what happens in our lives today, or do we have a proactive expectation of what will happen in the age to come?

The great men and women of faith in the book of Hebrews lived in the future tense; they were able to overcome the challenges and temptations of the world.

## 5. A book of **EXALTATION** (Hebrews 1:1-3)

The first 3 verses of Hebrews set the theme for the rest of the book. These verses exalt and promote Jesus Christ; they prove that Jesus is superior to the Old Testament prophets. This was a big issue to the Jews reading this letter, because they held the prophets in the highest honour and esteem.

These verses provide 7 great descriptive statements about Jesus.

- 1) **Appointed heir of all things** (v.2). The human baby born in the manger in Bethlehem has been raised to the position of first-born of God. Jesus has inherited every part of God's estate.
- 2) **Through whom he made the universe** (v.2). Jesus created everything; He has superiority over everything. The Creator is over the creation.
- 3) **Radiance of God's glory** (v.3). Just as it is impossible to separate the rays from the sun, so it is also impossible to separate Christ's glory from the nature of God. The two are inseparable.
- 4) **Exact representation of his being** (v.3). Jesus is not just a mirror image or a reflection of God. Jesus *is* God.
- 5) **Sustaining all things** (v.3). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, dynamically and actively holds together all that has been created by Him and through Him.
- 6) **Provided purification for sins** (v.3). Through His death on the cross, Jesus redeemed us, He bought us back, by paying the penalty that our sins and wrong-doings deserved.
- 7) **Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven** (v.3). Being seated at God's right hand means two things:
  - a. The job is fully completed.
  - b. Jesus Christ is actively ruling from His throne in heaven, as Lord over all.

These statements provide a glimpse of Jesus' greatness, His superiority, His Godliness, and His daily involvement in our world. He is awesome!

## **CONCLUSION**

This series in the book of Hebrews will include challenging words, but the focus will always be on encouragement. The person that we worship – Jesus Christ is awesome!

The Goldstone church vision statement has been condensed down to 6 words: "*Growing Up, Growing Out, Growing Together*".

Through what we will see in the book of Hebrews, God is calling us afresh to:

- Keep growing and deepening our personal relationship with Jesus. (Growing Up)
- To share with others what it means to have a vibrant, personal relationship with Jesus. (Growing Out)
- And to encourage one another in our relationship with Jesus. (Growing Together)

Let us be ready to hear and listen for God's Word, so that we can Grow Up, Grow Out and Grow Together in our love for Jesus.

**AMEN**