

# JESUS IS BETTER

An In-Depth Study of Hebrews

## Course Outline

<u>Week</u>	<u>Passage</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Hebrews 1:1-4	Introduction to Hebrews, God's Final Word in His Son
2	Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4	Jesus is Greater Than the Angels
3	Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6	Jesus' Sonship is Greater than Moses' Servanthood
4	Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13	Jesus' Rest is Better than Joshua's Rest
5	Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10	Jesus, Our Great Appointed High Priest
6	Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20	Exhortation to Persevere in Light of God's Promises
7	Hebrews 7:1-28	Jesus, The Greater Melchizedekian High Priest
8	Hebrews 8:1-13	Jesus, The Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
9	Hebrews 9:1-22	Jesus' Sacrifice at the Greater Tabernacle
10	Hebrews 9:23 - 10:39	Drawing Near to God Because of Jesus' Greater Sacrifice
11	Hebrews 11:1-40	The Faith of the Ancients in Action
<b>12</b>	<b>Hebrews 12:1-29</b>	<b>Running the Race with Perseverance</b>
13	Hebrews 13:1-25	Concluding Words

## Recap from Session 11

### Hebrews 11:1-40

- After stating that he believes his hearers are those who belong to those who have faith and are saved, the pastor goes on to tell us about the nature of this faith in Hebrews 11.
- Faith is confidence of what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. That's exactly what our forefathers commended for. He goes chronologically through the Old Testament storyline and lists out all the different characters and shows how they lived out their life in faith. He particularly focuses on Abraham, Moses, and ends with the rest of the OT figures. These are people of whom the world is not worthy.

- It is the climax of the pastor’s sermon, emphatically demonstrating to his hearers what this persevering faith looks like. The whole of chapter 11 is delivered with great rhetoric force, designed to encourage, inspire, and spur the hearers in their faith.

## Structure of Hebrews

- **Hebrews 1:1-4 – God has Spoken to Us in a Son Who is also High Priest**
- **Hebrews 1:5 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Greater Sonship**
  - Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4 – Jesus is Greater than the Angels
  - Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6 – Jesus’ Sonship is Greater than Moses’ Servanthood
  - Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Rest is Better than Joshua’s Rest
- ***Transition Passage - Hebrews 4:14-16 – Jesus, the Son of God who is also High Priest***
- **Hebrews 5:1 – 10:39 – Jesus’ Greater Priesthood**
  - Hebrews 5:1 – 6:20 – Exhortation to Persevere in light of Jesus’ Priesthood
  - Hebrews 7:1-28 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest in the order of Melchizedek
  - Hebrews 8:1-13 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
  - Hebrews 9:1-22 – Jesus’ Sacrifice at the Greater Tabernacle
  - Hebrews 9:23 – 10:18 – Jesus’ Greater Sacrifice in the True Tabernacle in the New Covenant
  - Hebrews 10:19-39 – Persevere in light of Jesus’ Sacrifice
- **Hebrews 11 – Perseverance by Faith of the Ancients**
- **Hebrews 12:1-3 – Fix our Eyes Upon Jesus**
  - Hebrews 12:4-17 – Endure God’s Discipline as Sons
  - Hebrews 12:18-29 – We Have Come to a Better Mountain
- **Hebrews 13:1-25 – Concluding Exhortations**

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## Running the Race with Perseverance

After providing the examples of the faith of their forefathers, the pastor turns his attention back to his hearers, urging them to persevere in their faith just like their forefathers. He calls them to endure God’s discipline and to make every effort to grow in their holiness. There is a stark difference between the reality that of his hearers compared to their forefathers in the Old Testament. This change of status and experience makes it all the more important that they persevere in their faith. If their forefathers could persevere in their faith, the pastor’s hearers have all the more advantage in Jesus Christ to do so.

Beginning from Hebrews 12 until the end of the sermon, we will see more imperatives from the pastor. He has spent time throughout the previous 11 chapters explaining that Jesus is greater than any and all of what we read in the Old Testament. Because of the greatness and self-sacrifice of Jesus, his hearers should now be able to persevere in their faith, and they would have no excuses if they fall away. After all, God has become their heavenly Father

## Hebrews 12:1-29

**12** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

<sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,  
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,  
<sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” <sup>r</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? <sup>8</sup> If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. <sup>9</sup> Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! <sup>10</sup> They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. <sup>11</sup> No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. <sup>13</sup> “Make level paths for your feet,” <sup>z</sup> so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

<sup>14</sup> Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. <sup>16</sup> See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. <sup>17</sup> Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.

<sup>18</sup> You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; <sup>19</sup> to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, <sup>20</sup> because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.” <sup>n</sup> <sup>21</sup> The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.” <sup>o</sup>

<sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, <sup>23</sup> to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

<sup>25</sup> See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? <sup>26</sup> At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” <sup>f</sup> <sup>27</sup> The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

<sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, <sup>29</sup> for our “God is a consuming fire.” <sup>j</sup>

## Running with Perseverance

12:1-3 – “...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...”

v1 – “...since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses...”

“...throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.”

v2 – “...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”

In these verses the pastor brings to fruition what he first set in motion long ago in 3:1-6. In that passage he clearly established the unity of contemporary believers with those Moses led out of Egypt, and, by implication, with all the people of God who lived before Christ. All are part of the one “household” of God over which Christ is “Son.” This enabled the pastor to urge his hearers to persevere, and thus avoid the fate of the wilderness generation he was about to describe in 3:7-19. This unity of the people of God throughout time is the basis upon which he now urges them to run the race set before them in response to the faithful cloud of witnesses just described in 11:1-40.<sup>2</sup>

**Discuss:** What are some things in our world that easily entangles us to distract us from running the race?

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<sup>1</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 12.

<sup>2</sup> Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 2012), 601.

## Enduring Discipline as Sons and Daughters

12:4-17 – “...God is treating you as his children.”

v4-6 – “...do not lose heart when he rebukes you.”

“do not make light of the Lord’s discipline”

“do not lose heart when he rebukes you”

“the Lord disciplines the one he loves”

“he chastens everyone he accepts as his son”

Our relationship to God

v7-11 – “Endure hardship as discipline...”

“how much more...”

v12-13 – “...strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees...”

v14-17 – “...without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

Your inheritance rights

**Discuss:** Which of the commands listed in v14-17 do you struggle with the most? How can you grow in obedience in that area?

The pastor began this discussion of the present suffering of God’s people by urging his hearers to “run the race set before them” (12:1). He ends by exhorting them to “make straight paths with their feet” (12:13) to the heavenly City. In order to run this race with endurance, they must resist opposition and discouragement by straightening their drooping hands and crumpling knees (12:12). After all, the opposition they have faced does not compare with what Jesus endured (12:3, 4). Furthermore, the suffering they are enduring for their faithfulness is God’s fatherly discipline, demonstrating their filial relation to him and reinforcing their obedience in preparation for life in the heavenly City. The examples of the past (11:1-40) only reinforce the fact that running this race with endurance is to be the consuming concern of God’s people in the present.<sup>3</sup>

## A Different Mountain

12:18-29 – “But you have come to Mount Zion...”

**Discuss:** Compare and contrast the two “mountains”. What impressions does each give to the readers?

12:18-21	12:22-24

v18-21 (cf. Ex. 19)

v22-24

v25-29 – “...let us be thankful...” (cf. Heb 1:1-4)

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<sup>3</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 631.

## Running with Perseverance

After the pastor's strong rhetorical force in laying out what it means to live by faith, he turns his attention back to his readers, urging them to run their race with perseverance. We will face struggles and hardships in our race, and some of it will be God's discipline in our lives. While no discipline is pleasant, it is done by God to help us develop our holiness for our good.

Unlike the Old Testament saints, those of us blessed enough to know of the work of Christ at the cross have come to a completely different "mountain" to the Israelites. It is no longer doom and gloom, but one of glory, joy, and gladness. Therefore, let us not refuse God who continues to speak to us in Christ (Heb 1:1-2).

God will once again come and shake heaven and earth, and only those that cannot be shaken will remain (v27). This is referring to Jesus' second coming, where he will come in judgement and wipe away all sin from all of creation. It is only those that cannot be shaken will remain at the end of it – and praise God that as those who trust in Christ are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken! Therefore, we should be thankful. In our thankfulness, we worship God with reverence and awe.

## Bibliography

Cockerill, Gareth Lee. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Eerdmans, 2012.