

THE Epistle of Paul the Apostle to TITUS

Introduction:

Titus was a Gentile convert of Paul (Acts 27:7-9; Galatians 2:1-3). Titus was the young pastor of the church in Crete. Crete is a large island off the north coast of Africa. The Cretians were descendants of Ham (Ezekiel 25:16; Zephaniah 2:5; Amos 9:7). Paul gave Titus similar instructions that he gave Timothy because both were young men were soldiers of Jesus Christ as pastors. This brief letter to Titus could serve as a field manual for the infantryman of the Lord God.

The letter continues the chronology of the Epistles of Paul as an outline of growth in grace of the believer. Romans reveals the new birth and 1 Corinthians was written to babies in the Lord Jesus Christ. The seven stages of growth are:

1. Baby
2. Little child
3. Child
4. Young man
5. Father
6. Elder
7. Aged

The letter to Titus progresses to the aged man and woman in the church and the letter to Philemon was written by the aged Paul. The letters to Timothy reveal the soldier and student of the Lord, but the letter to Titus begins with the servant of God. This transition hints at the highest calling for the saint as a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Author:

The same arguments used for the other pastoral epistles apply here to prove Paul was the author. His identification (1:1), the content, the circumstances and the familiar companions (3:12-13) all point to Paul. Church tradition is consistent with this conclusion.

The Date and Place:

The date and place of origin assigned to this letter depend on whatever course of travel is conjectured for Paul after his release from the first Roman imprisonment. It was

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probably written after his trip to Spain and shortly before 2 Timothy, thus about A.D. 66. Both Asia Minor and Corinth have been suggested as the place of writing.

The Destination:

Paul writes to Titus (1:4), who is in Crete (1:5). Though unmentioned in Acts, Titus merits thirteen references in Paul's epistles which show he was a close and trusted companion. Titus was a Gentile (Gal. 2:3) converted by Paul (1:4). Nothing is said of him until he accompanies Paul on the third missionary journey. Then Paul used him as a messenger and letter-bearer to Corinth (2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5-7,13-15; 8:6,16-24).

Again, there is silence until Paul indicates that he left Titus in Crete (1:5) after his release from prison. Titus proved faithful to Paul to the end, having visited him during his second imprisonment in Rome (2 Tim. 4:10). Tradition says he lived out his life in Crete.

Crete was an island in the Mediterranean about one hundred and fifty-six miles long and thirty miles wide at the widest place. A reputation for immorality and untruthfulness characterized its inhabitants (1:12-13). The church may have started from the witness of the Cretans who were in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:11).

It appears Paul did not start the church, since his stay there was brief on his first journey to Rome (Acts 27:7-13). Paul had his most extensive ministry there with Titus after his release from prison (1:5).

The Occasion:

Though Paul had ministered in Crete, the work was unfinished, so he left Titus there to give the church leadership by appointing elders and instructing in proper doctrine and conduct. In his absence, Paul felt the need to give Titus the authorization and instructions needed to lead the church.

Also, the immoral atmosphere of the island evidently threatened to influence the church, so Paul is moved to write to them in order to prevent damage by encouraging proper conduct based on sound doctrine. Furthermore, a threat from false teachers, some Jewish (1:10), had to be stopped because it was leading people astray (1:11). Paul takes the opportunity of Zenas and Apollos' trip through Crete to pen his instructions and encouragement to his associate.

The Purpose:

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Paul's first purpose is to provide Titus with apostolic authorization to finish the work of the church. This would be needed to deal with the opposition there (1:11; 2:15) and to carry out the instructions about his work in the church. A second purpose is to instruct Titus concerning his actual work in the church.

He gives him instructions about choosing elders (1:6-9) and about teaching sound doctrine and proper Christian conduct (2:1-10; 3:1-3). There may be a coincidental purpose of informing Titus of his winter plans (3:12) and commending Zenas and Apollos (3:13).

Argument:

Paul clarifies his authority as an apostle in the introduction of the letter (1:1-4). This adds apostolic weight to his instructions to Titus and gives him the authorization to carry out the directives. Paul's first instructions concern Titus' task of appointing elders (1:5-16).

He reminds Titus of this duty (1:5) and proceeds to list the qualifications of the elders (1:6-9). The high qualifications will both prevent and refute unsound doctrine and improper conduct in their midst. The seriousness of this task and the need for elders is emphasized by the threat of false teachers in Crete (1:10-16). Paul describes these teachers (1:10-12) and the consequent duty of Titus and the elders to oppose them (1:13-14).

Paul also instructs Titus about his duty to various groups of people in the church (2:11-15). Titus is to instruct each different age group in sound doctrine and proper behavior while being an example himself (2:1-8). He must likewise instruct servants so that their good works will vindicate true doctrine (2:9-10).

This doctrine is the basis for good behavior, so Paul explains the grace of God in salvation as a motivation for godly living (2:11-14). It teaches to deny sin and live righteously in view of the Lord's return. Paul closes this section with an appeal to Titus to be bold and authoritative in teaching, exhorting and rebuking (2:15).

The final section contains some instructions about the relationship of church members to the world (3:1-11). Their conduct toward government and fellow citizens should reflect good works and humility (3:1-2). Again, Paul appeals to the grace of God as a motivation for proper conduct (3:3-8). God saved us by the gracious appearing of Jesus

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Christ, the manifestation of His mercy through Him and the regenerating work of His Spirit (3:3-6).

By God's grace believers are justified and made heirs of eternal life (3:7), thus they should live lives of good works consistent with this doctrine (3:8). By such an emphasis on good works, Paul is fortifying the defense of sound doctrine against the attacks of the false teachers. Nevertheless, when false teachers persist, their teachings should be avoided and those who are divisive should be rejected (3:9-11).

Paul concludes the letter with information about a visit from a companion and a request for Titus to join him in Nicopolis for the winter (3:12). There is a commendation of Zenas and Apollos (3:13) and a final exhortation about the importance of good works, which has proved to be a main theme of the letter (3:14). Paul closes with a greeting and benediction (3:15).

With Paul's written instructions in hand, Titus will be equipped to finish the work of organizing and instructing the church. He will also be able to authoritatively engage and refute the false teachers. But as Paul argues, much can be accomplished preventively by diligence in good works.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. For a bishop must be _____, as the steward of God; not _____, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy _____;
2. Not by works of _____ which we have done, but according to his _____ he saved us, by the _____ of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON

Introduction:

Philemon is the final prison epistle and the final letter in regards to the chronology of the Bible to the Body of Christ by the Apostle Paul. Philemon was a fellow laborer of Paul who allowed the church to meet in his house in Colosse.

Philemon owned a slave named Onesimus who ran away from him. Paul met the slave while in prison and won him to Christ. Paul wrote this letter to Philemon to seek forgiveness for Onesimus and to request for the services of Onesimus while in prison.

Statistics: 1 Chapters, 23 verses, and 445 words

The Author:

It is hardly necessary to defend Pauline authorship of this brief letter. Three references identify Paul as the author (vv. 1,9,19) and the close association with Colossians is seen by mention of Paul's companions (vv. 23-24; Col. 4:10,12,14,17).

The Date and Place:

Philemon is considered one of Paul's prison epistles (with Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians) since it was written during his first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:30).

Its date and place of origin is established by the fact that it was written and sent at the same time as Colossians (v. 12; Colossians 4:7-9). Tychicus carried both letters to Colossae. This fixes the date at about A.D. 61 from Rome.

The Destination:

The letter was a personal correspondence to Philemon and the church that met at his house (v. 1-2). Philemon was a resident of Colossae and a man of some wealth, as indicated by his ownership of slaves and a house big enough to accommodate the church.

It is often postulated that Apphia was Philemon's wife and Archippus, a leader or the pastor of the church, his son (v. 2; Colossians 4:17). Apparently, Philemon owed his conversion to Paul's ministry (v. 19).

The Occasion:

The circumstances behind Paul's writing are evident in the contents of the letter itself. Onesimus, a slave of Philemon's, had run away from his master and stolen from him (vv.

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15-16,18). Somehow, Onesimus met Paul during his Roman imprisonment, was converted, and became useful to Paul in Rome (vv. 10-11).

Paul, in agreement with Onesimus, realized that this slave had a Christian duty to return to his master, fulfill his obligations and make restitution. Therefore, Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon (v. 12) accompanied by Tychicus (Colossians 4:7-9) and this letter through which Paul makes a plea on Onesimus' behalf.

The Purpose:

Paul wrote to urge Philemon to receive Onesimus in a manner worthy of a Christian brother, not a runaway slave (vv. 15-16). Paul also writes to assure Philemon that anything owed by the slave will be paid by the apostle himself (v. 19).

Argument:

The address in the introduction (vv. 1-3) assures Philemon of Paul's love and high regard for his friend. Even more, Paul expresses his thanksgiving to God because of Philemon's good testimony and ministry to the saints in Colossae (vv. 4-7).

Paul begins his appeal to Philemon (vv. 8-21) by explaining the circumstances leading up to the return of Onesimus (vv. 8-16). Paul makes his appeal in love instead of by command (vv. 8-9).

He then explains his relationship to Onesimus, whom he met in prison, converted, and found useful (vv. 10-11). Though Paul would have liked Onesimus to stay and minister to him, he is sending him back (v. 12).

He wants Philemon to receive Onesimus as if he were Paul himself, and gives the slaveowner the opportunity to respond voluntarily with the subtle hint that Onesimus be released to minister to Paul on Philemon's behalf (vv. 13-14).

Paul suggests that God's providential design in all of this is that Philemon might enjoy an eternal relationship with Onesimus as a brother in Christ (vv. 15-16).

Paul closes with a direct appeal to Philemon (vv. 17-21). He urges that Onesimus be received in a manner worthy of the apostle himself (v. 17). He also promises to pay Philemon whatever Onesimus might owe, but reminds Philemon that he himself is a debtor to the apostle (vv. 18-19).

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Paul encourages Philemon to fulfill his joy in this and expresses the confidence that he will do more than Paul has asked (vv. 20-21). Paul may be hinting here that Philemon give Onesimus his freedom from slavery.

Paul's final remarks express his intention to visit (v. 22), and send greetings from his associates (v. 23-24). He closes with a benediction (v. 25).

The loving and gentle tone of this letter present a strong appeal on behalf of the slave, Onesimus. It is hard to conceive of Philemon doing any less than Paul asks in this matter.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Not by _____ of righteousness which we have done, but according to his _____ he saved us, by the washing of _____,

And renewing of the Holy Ghost;

2. Philemon owned a slave named _____

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Christ the New and Living Way

Introduction:

Hebrews is primarily a doctrinal dissertation to the Hebrews in the last days. The epistle serves as an amendment to the Mosaic Covenant because a better covenant was established by the death of the Jewish Messiah at Calvary (8:6). The word better occurs thirteen times in twelve verses of the thirteen chapters and three hundred and three verses. As the Book of Acts transferred from Jews to Christians so the epistle of Hebrews transferred back to the Jews.

The title of the epistle clearly distinguishes the addresses as the Hebrews of the religion of Judaism (Jeremiah 34:9; Acts 22:3; Philippians 3:5). The plural pronouns us, we, and our clearly refer to the same recipients of the national prayer for Israel in Matthew 6:9 and the Jewish signs are evident (2:3-4).

The time period of the letter is called the last days, which are characterized by an earthly ministry of the Son of God as a King, followed by the destruction of the heaven and the earth (1:2, 8-12; 12:25; Revelation 20). This time period is also called the end because it is the end of the reign of the Devil and the Gentiles (Ezekiel 7:2-6; Daniel 12:4-9; Matthew 24:13-21; Hebrews 3:14).

The last days is a time period that includes the ministry of the Lord Jesus, the Tribulation, and the beginning of the Millennium because it will be the final days of the control over the world kingdoms by Satan and the Gentiles (Isaiah 2:2; Luke 21:24; Romans 11:25; Revelation 11:15).

Devotional instructions for all people may be found throughout the letter, but the epistle primarily discloses doctrinal truths for the Jews during the end times.

Statistics: 13 Chapters, 303 verses, and 6,913 words

The Author:

It appears that Paul may have been the human author of the letter (13:23; 2 Peter 3:15), but the human authorship is not as vital as the inspiration and its preservation by the Holy Ghost. It appears that God may have allowed Paul to author the letter to the people of his great burden (Romans 9:1-5). Paul wrote of better things, a better hope, a better testament, better promises, and better sacrifices in order to obtain a better resurrection because of the better Messiah (John 4:22; Hebrews 1:1-4).

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The Date and Place:

The date of the epistle cannot be later than A.D. 70 because there is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem which would have bolstered the author's argument about the cessation of the Old Testament sacrificial system.

The sense from the epistle is that it is still operative (8:4,13; 9:6-9; 10:1-3). Also, the date can be placed in the lifetime of Timothy (13:23), yet a generation of church leaders had already passed away (13:7). The prospect of persecution and possible martyrdom (12:4) may suggest a date within the Neronian persecution. This would place it somewhere in A.D. 64-68. There is not the first clue as to its place of writing.

The Destination:

The identity of the readers is likewise unknown, but some things can be learned from the epistle. They were part of a community at a definite place which the author intends to visit (13:19,23).

Furthermore, they were from a Jewish background. This is evidenced somewhat by the ancient traditional title "To the Hebrews", but more so by the heavy use of the Old Testament and the stress on Jewish prototypes. The readers were obviously Christians (e.g. 3:1; 5:12; 6:9) as is consistent with the readers of any New Testament epistle.

Another question that brings debate is the location of this Christian community. The traditional view maintains the epistle was addressed to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem or Palestine.

Key Words: Better, perfect, eternal, forever, partakers, Heaven, priest, and high priest

The Occasion:

The circumstances that provoked the writing of Hebrews are apparent in the epistle. This Christian community was faced with increasing persecution for their faith (12:4-12) and were in danger of falling away or drifting from their Christian commitment (2:1-3; 6:4-6; 10:35).

There is no hint that any had actually given in totally to this temptation (6:4-9; 10:39). The "falling away" probably refers to those who were tempted to cloak their Christian

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faith in Jewish ritual so as to escape persecution as Christians. Such a compromise displayed unbelief, neglect, and a drifting away from the sufficiency of Christ in their salvation experience.

However, the Christians had already grown listless and stagnant in their growth as they held back from full commitment (5:12-6:2,11-12; 12:1-2). The author of Hebrews writes out of concern for the readers' danger of stagnation and apostasy.

The Purpose:

The author of Hebrews wrote to move the readers from a position of spiritual stagnation and potential apostasy to a diligent pursuit of the superior blessings in Christ. To do this, he uses instruction, warning, and encouragement.

He instructs them throughout the epistle on the superiority of Christ over the old revelation (1:1-3), the angels (1:4-2:18), Moses (3:14:13), the Levitical priesthood (4:14-7:28), and the Levitical sacrifices (8:1-10:18). The aim of the writer is to show the full significance of Christ and His work so that the readers would realize and appropriate these blessings.

Interspersed are five warnings (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:20; 10:26-39; 12:25-29) which serve as a negative motivation to the same positive end. They are designed to shake up the readers to go on to maturity by an explanation of the dangers of turning aside in unbelief.

The author also uses encouragement to stimulate the readers to faith and maturity. He exhorts them to continue forward in the Christian life (3:14; 6:1; 12:1) stressing the need for steadfast endurance (3:14; 4:14; 10:23,36; 12:1).

He further encourages them by mentioning those who have faithfully endured in times past (chapter 11) and by exhorting them to endure in the faith and to fulfill their Christian duty (chapters 12-13).

Argument:

The basic design of Hebrews is built around the argument of the superiority of Christ and Christianity over the old Judaic system. The author begins with the superiority of the person of Christ, then moves to the superiority of His work in the high priesthood, and finally to the superiority of the Christian's walk in Christ.

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This presentation, together with the periodic warnings and exhortations, is intended to motivate the readers to forward progress in their Christian growth and to prevent their turning away from Christianity.

The argument begins immediately with the presentation of the superiority of the person of Christ (1:1-4:6). The first area of superiority is that of the Son of God over previous prophetic revelation (1:1-3).

The title “Son” expresses the unique and revelatory relationship of Christ to God that cannot be compared to any previous prophetic revelation in the Mosaic law. It also is His title as the “heir of all things” (1:2), a concept used convincingly in Hebrews to show that a decision to forsake Christ is a decision to forfeit an eternal inheritance.

The second comparison proves Christ is superior to God’s angels (1:4-2:18). He alone possesses deity as a Son and a King and in His eternality and exaltation, as the Scriptures prove (1:4-13). He is thus entitled to God’s inheritance (1:4), whereas angels are merely ministers to those who inherit the kingdom through Christ (1:14).

At this point, the author inserts his first warning about the danger of neglect or drifting away from Christ’s sufficiency (2:1-4). Since speaking of angels, he reminds of the certainty of punishment for disobedience under the revelation they delivered in the law. Christ is superior to the angels, therefore how much greater is the accountability and certainty of judgment for those who neglect the superior revelation in Christ.

The writer also demonstrates that Christ is superior to the angels in His deity (2:5-18). As the Son of Man, He is destined to rule (2:5-9), but also, He must suffer as the representative Man (2:10-18). He secured salvation for man through His death and in His oneness with man is a sympathetic High Priest.

If Christ so rules creation and represents mankind, then those who are Christ’s are destined to rule with Him. This is a powerful argument against deserting the faith and for pressing on in growth in Christ.

The writer’s third comparison shows Christ is superior to Moses, the mediator of the old revelation (3:1-4:13). Christ and Moses are similar in their positions of presiding over God’s house (3:1-2), but Christ is superior as the Owner and Builder of the house (3:3-6). Moses presided over the tabernacle, but Christ over the obedient community of believers. Those who persist in faith and obedience are members of God’s house under the ministry of the High Priest (3:6).

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The second warning appears here in response to the statement of 3:6, because the opposite of enduring faithfulness is unbelief (3:7-4:13).

This warning uses the example of Israel in the wilderness (Psalm 95:7-11) to show how the blessing of God can be lost through unbelief.

The blessing of God denoted by the term “rest” refers to the benefits available at any time to the people of God who believe and obey. This is the rest that God entered into after creation (4:4), is ultimately experienced in the millennial kingdom, yet can be enjoyed at present under the ministry of the High Priest, Jesus.

The author is warning against unbelief based on Israel’s failure (3:7-19). Just as Israel forfeited their rest in Canaan, so the readers can miss present rest through unbelief (3:16-19).

He proceeds to demonstrate that the promised rest is a present possibility (4:1-10). It is available today (4:1-3) because it has been available since God entered rest at the time of creation and it was available in David and Joshua’s day (4:4-8). The rest remains for the Christian who lives in obedience to God and thus has “ceased from his works,” for to obey is to do the work of God in the fullest (4:9-10).

The final exhortation to diligence in entering God’s rest is made on the basis of the Word of God which will judge those who fall short (4:11-13).

This warning concludes the argument for the superiority of the person of Christ and introduces the argument for the superiority of the priesthood of Christ (4:14-10:18). The blessings of the Christian’s rest are mediated and secured by Jesus, the High Priest, who is over the household of obedient believers. The discussion of Christ’s position as High Priest focuses on His person and His work.

First, the writer sets forth the superiority of Christ in His person as High Priest (4:14, 15; 7:26-28). His superior position and sympathetic regard are a strong motivation to “hold fast” to the faith and avail oneself of its mercy and grace (4:14-16).

The author shows how this position is possible because of the Son’s superior qualifications (5:1-10). The priesthood necessitates one who can mediate between God and man, can identify with men in weakness, and is called by God (5:1-4). Christ qualifies because He is begotten and called by God and perfected through obedience that caused Him to suffer as a man (5:5-10).

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At this point the author introduces the subject of the “order of Melchizedek,” but hesitates to expand because of the readers’ incapacity due to spiritual immaturity (5:11).

The recognition of the readers’ immaturity causes the author to address it with a warning about the danger of falling away (5:11-6:20). The danger of falling away includes the failure to press on to maturity as well as the more severe neglect altogether of the faith. Just as in a foot race, there can be no standing still or turning back without irreparable loss.

Thus, he rebukes their immaturity which has kept them in spiritual infancy (5:11-14) and exhorts them to go on to maturity (6:1-3). The readers have never progressed beyond the most fundamental Christian doctrines. Should they further turn away from their Christian commitment there can be no compensation for what is lost (6:4-8). They will become as useless to God as thorn infested land to a farmer (6:7-8).

But the author is encouraging through his expression of confidence that they will endure to inherit the promises (6:9-20). These promises, secured by God’s integrity (6:13-18) and mediated through the high priesthood of Christ (6:19-20), are the Christian’s confidence in steadfastness.

The mention of the high priesthood after the order of Melchizedek (6:20) resumes the discussion left in (5:10-11). Since the priesthood of Christ is essential to obtaining the promises of God, the author presents Christ’s superiority in this order of priesthood (7:1-28).

Melchizedek is described as a priest forever (7:1-3) whose priesthood was superior to the Levitical priesthood (7:4-10). The Melchizedekian priesthood is then compared to Christ’s priesthood (7:11-25).

The Levitical priesthood was inadequate because it was transitional and temporary, and thus it was finally replaced by an eternal priesthood after the order of Melchizedek (7:11-19).

This priesthood belonging to Christ is superior (7:20-25) because it is guaranteed by a permanent oath (7:20-22) and by a permanent life (7:23-25). Such a High Priest is totally sufficient for the Christian (7:26-28).

The author now moves from the superiority of the person of Christ as High Priest to the superiority of His work as High Priest (8:1-10:18). In this position, He mediates a new covenant (8:1-13) as he ministers in a new sanctuary, the heavenly eternal one (8:1-6).

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The new covenant, the writer argues, would not have been necessary if the old were faultless (8:7). Jeremiah 31 is quoted to show the origin and blessings of the new covenant (8:8-12).

Next, the superiority of the new covenant sacrifice is explained (9:1-10:18). Under the old covenant, the priest made atonement in the tabernacle for all the sins of the people once a year (9:1-10). But the new covenant atonement proves far superior (9:11-28). The sacrifice of Christ under the new covenant was “once for all having obtained eternal redemption” (9:11-14).

By His death, Jesus ratified the new covenant through His shed blood, much superior to the blood of animals sprinkled by Moses to ratify the old covenant (9:27-28).

Furthermore, the ministry of Christ’s sacrifice has eternal significance as it was applied in the presence of God on man’s behalf (9:23-28). Thus, the efficacy of Christ’s atonement is far superior to its old covenant prototype (10:1-18). Old covenant sacrifices had to be repeated yearly and served only to remind of sin (10:1-4). But Christ’s sacrifice replaced the old according to the will of God so that believers can be sanctified before God once for all (10:5-10).

The conclusion about the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice is stated succinctly in 10:11-18. Whereas earthly sacrifices were insufficient to take away sin, Christ finished sacrifice for sin by His one act making further sacrifice needless.

The sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice is the basis for the author’s next section which exhorts the Christian to a walk of faith. The superiority of Christ’s ministry is sufficient for a superior Christian walk in faith (10:19-13:17).

This section begins with a direct exhortation to the readers to have a full assurance of faith (10:19-39). The readers should avail themselves of Christ’s superior priestly ministry and approach God boldly through the way prepared by Christ (10:19-25).

This appeal urges them to hold fast the confession of their hope according to the faithful promise of God. There is clearly a choice here, for the readers can also hold back from the exercise of their privileges in Christ and forsake the assembling of themselves together, as indeed some have done already (10:25).

Lest the readers are tempted to shrink back, the author elicits his fourth warning about the danger of drawing back (10:26-39). It is a serious thing to willfully reject God’s superior provision in Christ (10:26-31).

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Judgment is more certain and more severe than a deliberate rejection of the Mosaic law under the old dispensation.

The author does not specify exactly what the judgment is, but his ambiguity may serve to intensify its dread. It is some kind of disciplinary measure against “His people” (10:30). The author’s next appeal is abruptly positive as he encourages the readers to persevere in faith (10:32-39).

He does this by reminding them of their past perseverance in tribulation (10:32-34) and of their future reward at Christ’s coming (10:35-38). He is confident enough to identify himself with his readers and declare his assurance of their faithful perseverance (10:39).

The next important section continues the positive appeal based on the argument of the future reward mentioned in 10:35-38).

In this section, the writer lists examples of faith from the antediluvian era to the later history of Israel (11:1-40). The readers can be encouraged that their many predecessors persevered in the face of adverse circumstances, persecution, opposition, sin, and even death. He points out that they persevered by faith in God’s promise though they did not receive their reward on earth (11:13,39).

The exhortation to endure in faith (12:1-29) is then made on the basis of the examples of faith who preceded the readers. The author begins by addressing the relationship of faith to suffering (12:1-11).

The motivation to endure suffering comes not only from the early examples from biblical history, but also from the example of Christ’s faithful endurance (12:1-4). In addition, it will help the readers if they view suffering in a positive way as a display of God’s love for them as His children (12:5-11).

Those who do not draw back but yield to God’s purposes in suffering will enjoy the result of their faithful endurance which is “peaceable fruit of righteousness” (12:11). With such a view of suffering, the readers can be renewed personally and in their duties toward others (12:12-17).

Another motivation to faithful endurance is the affirmation of the believer’s privileges in Christ (12:18-24). The fear and dread of the old approach to God (12:18-21) has been replaced by the mediatorial ministry of Jesus and the sufficiency of His atonement which gives confidence before God (12:22-24).

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The final motivation to endure in the faith comes in the fifth warning which addresses the danger of refusing God (12:25-29). From such a sin there is no escape because God has promised to render judgment by shaking the earth and heaven. Therefore, the believer should continue to serve God with the firm conviction that his inheritance in the kingdom is unshakeable.

The epistle closes with exhortations to practical obligations (13:1-17). The Christian who continues in faith must show his diligence by fulfilling certain obligations he might otherwise neglect.

The author begins with social obligations such as love, hospitality, care of the persecuted, marital chastity and contentment (13:1-6). He then urges them to fulfill certain religious obligations (13:7-17). They should recall their former leaders in the faith, maintain true doctrine, be willing to bear reproach and sacrifice for Christ, and obey their present leaders.

The obligations listed might be the first the readers would be tempted to neglect in the face of persecution.

The epistle concludes on a personal note (13:18-25). The author requests their prayers, prays for their completeness, urges them to accept exhortations he has written, informs them about Timothy's release, extends greetings and pronounces a benediction.

This epistle is a powerful and persuasive argument against neglect of or departure from the Christian faith. The author has conclusively demonstrated the superiority and sufficiency of Christ's person and work over the old Levitical religion so that a return to it would not only be hazardous but preposterous.

By way of instruction, warning and encouragement he motivates them to continue faithfully in their commitment to Christ in spite of persecution.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. The time period of the letter is called the _____
 - a. Previous days
 - b. Last days
 - c. Tribulation days
 - d. Millennium days

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

2. Devotional instructions for all people may be found throughout the letter, but the epistle primarily discloses _____ for the Jews during the end times.

3. For the Word of God is _____, and _____, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even the dividing asunder of _____ and _____, and of the joints and marrow, and is a _____ of thoughts and intents of the heart.

4. And almost all things are by the _____ purged with _____; and without _____ of blood is no remission.

5. And every priest standeth daily ministering and _____ oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can _____ take away _____: But this man, after he had offered _____ sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God;

6. Not _____ the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but _____ one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

7. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never _____ thee, nor _____ thee.