Hebrews: No Turning Back

Week 1

Main Text: Hebrews 1:1–4; 2:1–4

Key Truth

Hebrews is a call to endure. Written to believers who were experiencing opposition and beginning to shrink back from their faith, the letter continually points them to the ultimate reason to persevere: **Jesus Himself. He is worthy of our devotion, perseverance, and endurance.**

Getting Started

Following Jesus does not mean we will never experience resistance. Scripture describes opposition coming from **the world, the flesh, and the devil**. The world can oppose the truth of Christ, our own sinful nature can tempt us toward what is easier or more comfortable, and our spiritual enemy seeks to distract and diminish our faith.

Eventually, that resistance brings us to a choice: **Will we persevere, or will we shrink back?**

Hebrews answers that question by continually directing our attention to Jesus. Before giving its first warning about drifting away, Hebrews begins by reminding us exactly who Jesus is.

Icebreaker

What is something you have stuck with even when quitting would have been easier? What kept you going?

Who Is Jesus?

Read

Hebrews 1:1–4

God has always desired to make Himself known. In the past, He spoke through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But Hebrews tells us that now God has spoken to us through His Son.

Jesus doesn't merely bring another message from God. **Jesus reveals God to us.**

Hebrews 1:2–3 gives seven descriptions of Jesus that establish His supremacy and show us why He is worthy of our complete devotion.

Heir

Jesus is the **“heir of all things.”**

An heir receives an inheritance, and as the only begotten Son of God, all things have been given to Jesus by the Father.

Jesus said in Matthew 11 that **all things had been committed to Him by His Father**, and in Matthew 28 He declared that **all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him.**

Everything ultimately belongs to Christ.

Creator

Jesus did not begin His existence in Bethlehem.

The Son is eternal, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Hebrews tells us that God made the universe through Him. Jesus was active in creation and is the very agent through whom creation came into existence.

This same truth is also emphasized in **Colossians 1**.

Radiance

Jesus is **“the radiance of God's glory.”**

Radiance is more than a reflection. The moon reflects light that comes from somewhere else, but the sun radiates its own light.

In Jesus we see the radiance of God's glory—His greatness, magnificence, majesty, and excellence made known to us.

Expositor

Jesus is **“the exact representation of his being,”** or as other translations put it, **“the exact imprint of his nature.”**

An expositor explains something, and Jesus **explains God to us**.

By looking at the life, character, words, love, and ministry of Jesus, we see the character and nature of God.

John 1:18 tells us that although no one has seen God, the Son has **made Him known**. If we want to understand what God is like, we look to Jesus.

Sustainer

Jesus is **“sustaining all things by his powerful word.”**

Christ did not simply create the universe and then step away from it. He is actively sustaining His creation.

Galaxies, solar systems, planets, and everything within creation continue because of the sustaining power of Christ.

And what is true of the universe is also true of the details of our lives. **The One who sustains galaxies also sustains us.**

Savior

Jesus **“provided purification for sins.”**

Hebrews will repeatedly return to Jesus as our great High Priest. Unlike the sacrifices offered under the old covenant, Jesus offered **Himself**, and His sacrifice is sufficient.

Through Jesus we can be forgiven, purified, made clean before God, restored to relationship with Him, and receive eternal life.

Jesus is our Savior.

Ruler

After providing purification for sins, Jesus **“sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”**

To sit at God's right hand is a position of power, privilege, and authority.

Jesus completed the work the Father gave Him to do and now reigns as ruler over all.

Everything belongs to Him, and He rules over everything.

Discussion Questions

1. Which of these seven descriptions of Jesus stands out to you most? Why?
2. How does knowing that everything belongs to Jesus affect the way you view your circumstances?
3. What does it mean that Jesus doesn't merely reflect God's glory but is the **Radiance** of God's glory?
4. How does Jesus being the **Expositor** help us understand what God is like?
5. What encouragement do you find in knowing that the One who sustains the universe also sustains your life?
6. Why is Jesus' position as **Savior** and **Ruler** especially important when we face opposition or difficult circumstances?

He is in control.

Read

- Hebrews 1:2–3
- Matthew 28:18

Everything belongs to Jesus. Everything was created through Jesus. Everything is sustained by Jesus. And Jesus now reigns at the right hand of the Father.

That means even when circumstances appear to be out of control, **He is in control.**

When evil appears to have the final say or the world seems to be winning, we can take heart. Our confidence is not based on our circumstances. Our confidence rests in the One who is Lord over them.

Discussion Questions

1. Where in your life is it currently difficult to believe that Jesus is in control?
2. How does our response to difficult circumstances change when we genuinely believe Christ is ruling over all things?
3. Why can what we see happening around us sometimes make us question God's control?
4. How can remembering who Jesus is help us endure rather than shrink back?

He actively cares and provides for you.

Read

- Hebrews 1:3
- Colossians 1:15–17

Jesus doesn't merely possess authority over creation. He is actively involved in sustaining it.

If you belong to Christ, you are His son or daughter. He knows every detail of your life. He knows exactly what you are experiencing, including the trials and difficulties you are facing.

The One who sustains all things is also **carrying, caring for, and providing for you.**

Discussion Questions

1. How is believing that God *can* provide different from trusting that He actively cares and provides for you?
2. Where have you seen God's provision during a difficult season?
3. What situation do you need to entrust to Christ's sustaining care right now?
4. How does knowing that Jesus understands every detail of your circumstances encourage you?

He advocates for you.

Read

- Hebrews 1:3
- 1 John 2:1

An advocate is someone who speaks on behalf of another person.

Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and **advocates for us**.

When the guilt and shame of sin weigh heavily upon us, Jesus' sacrifice speaks on our behalf. He provided purification for our sins. We have an advocate before the Father because Christ died for us.

But His advocacy does not stop with forgiveness. Scripture also tells us that **Jesus prays for us**.

Think about the significance of that. The One who knows every detail of your past, present, and future—the One who is in control and who perfectly loves you—is praying for you as you walk through trials and opposition.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is your advocate?
2. How can Christ's advocacy help us deal with guilt and shame over forgiven sin?

3. How does knowing that Jesus prays for you affect the way you face trials?
4. How do these three truths together—**He is in control. He actively cares and provides for you. He advocates for you.**—give us reason to endure?

The Danger of Drifting

Read

Hebrews 2:1–4

After showing us the supremacy and worth of Jesus, Hebrews gives its first warning:

"We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away."

The language used here pictures a ship. To "pay attention" carries the idea of **fastening or attaching a ship to the dock so that it does not drift away**.

In the same way, believers must fasten themselves to the truth of the gospel.

Drifting usually doesn't happen all at once. It can happen slowly through apathy, busyness, misplaced priorities, or giving our affection, attention, energy, and resources to other things until our devotion to Christ gradually becomes less and less.

C.S. Lewis captured that danger well:

"If you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away?"

Discussion Questions

1. Why is drifting often harder to recognize than a sudden decision to walk away from Christ?
2. What are some early warning signs that someone may be drifting spiritually?
3. How can good things like work, family, hobbies, or responsibilities contribute to spiritual drift if we aren't careful?
4. Have you experienced a season when you realized you had slowly drifted in your relationship with Christ? What helped you recognize it?
5. What are you currently fastening your life to?

The gospel is the antidote for drifting and falling away.

Read

- Hebrews 2:1–4
- John 6:60–69
- Revelation 2:4–5

Hebrews doesn't simply warn us not to drift. It tells us what we must fasten ourselves to: **the gospel**.

We must continually return to the truth that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, rose again, and now sits at the right hand of God.

The gospel is not merely the message that begins the Christian life. It is the truth we continue to cherish and cling to throughout the Christian life.

The gospel is the antidote for drifting and falling away.

In John 6, many who had followed Jesus began walking away when His teaching became difficult. Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked if they wanted to leave too.

Peter responded:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

Where else would we go? There is no greater Savior and no greater salvation.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do we need to continually return to the gospel even after we have trusted Christ for salvation?
2. What do you think it means to truly **cherish the gospel**?
3. How does remembering what Jesus has done for us help when we face opposition, temptation, or discouragement?
4. Why is Peter's response, *“To whom shall we go?”* such a powerful answer to spiritual drift?
5. What practices help keep you anchored to Christ and the gospel?

Living It Out

Jesus told the church at Ephesus:

“You have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.”

If you recognize that you are drifting, Scripture gives a clear response.

Remember.
Think back to where you once were in your relationship with Christ.

Repent.
Confess where other things have taken priority and turn back toward Him.

Return.
Do the things you did at first. Spend time with Him in prayer. Read His Word. Worship with other believers. Serve Him where He has placed you.

And as you return, remember who is waiting for you:

Heir.
Creator.
Radiance.
Expositor.
Sustainer.
Savior.
Ruler.

He is in control.

He actively cares and provides for you.

He advocates for you.

There is no reason to turn back when Jesus is this worthy.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 2:1 (NIV)

"We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away."

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for revealing Yourself to us through Your Son. When we face opposition from the world, our own flesh, or the enemy, help us fix our attention on Jesus and remember that He is worthy of our complete devotion.

Remind us that **He is in control, He actively cares and provides for us, and He advocates for us.** Keep us from slowly drifting away through apathy, busyness, misplaced priorities, or distraction.

Help us fasten ourselves to the truth of the gospel. Where we have drifted, lead us to remember, repent, and return to You. Give us the strength to persevere with our eyes fixed on Jesus, knowing there is nowhere better to go.

In Jesus' name, Amen.