

**BETTER
Upgrades
Hebrews 1:1-3**

We live in a world obsessed with UPGRADES, and for good reason. We all want life to be better, and every upgrade comes with a promise that – in that one respect - life will definitely now be better. We experience this with cell phones and shampoos and breakfast cereals. I even looked at buying a hunting coat with the label Drake LTS 4-in-1 Camo Hunting Gear 3.0. Did you know that hunting coats now have upgrades? And who here has not yet purchased their tickets to the next Star Wars upgrade? Hurry up! Right now it is the season of retail. Everyone is buying the latest, greatest products on the market because the prices are right. The greatest problem with this is that as soon as you buy a product in this ambitious, ever-changing world, a new product comes out that almost makes what you bought obsolete! I remember when my iPhone 5s was the pinnacle of phone purchases. People waited all night in lines to be the first to buy one of these babies. Now, it is a relic! People that I used to call friends now shun me because I only have an iPhone 5, and they have the iPhone 6 with sixty million gigabytes of memory!

Everything in this life that is better now is only better for a SEASON. But what if there were something on this earth that was ALWAYS and EVER BETTER? Wouldn't it be great if you could find something on this earth that would NEVER be LESS than BETTER than anything else that could ever be compared to it? Well, I cannot promise that I know of any PRODUCT that will ever be able to make this claim, but I do know of one single PERSON who has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that he is INFINITELY BETTER than anything that could ever be compared to him. **Jesus is better!** He is the picture of perfection. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the author of Hebrews painted a compelling picture of the perfection of Christ. He made it clear that Jesus is the Ultimate Word of God and the Highest Expression of God in this earth. **Hebrews 1:1-4 NLT**

1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. **2** And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. **3** The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. **4** This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

I want to use this passage as a springboard to demonstrate the truth that the entire book of Hebrews sets out to prove: Jesus is better. By giving us his only Son, God has given us his very best. We will never be able to improve on this One who is our ONLY HOPE for salvation. I do not hesitate to recommend him to anyone

because I have come to know him as the only one worthy of ALL my affection and trust. Here are a few reasons.

Jesus is better than a message about God.

Everything that was ever said ABOUT God in the Bible was CONFIRMED in the person of Jesus Christ. He made the message become more than an idea or a philosophy or a religion. Jesus is the only Son of God and the Final Word from God. He far exceeds any prophet or priest that has ever come before men with a message from God, because he IS God! I have said it to you many times before: Jesus did not BEGIN TO BE at the manger. He is the Infinite Infant. He existed long before the day that he came to this earth as a baby born in a manger. This is why he told the Pharisees, **“Before Abraham was born, I AM!” (John 8:58)** The apostles publicly declared the truth that Jesus did not just come into this world to REDEEM it, but that he is also the One who CREATED and sustains this world! **(Vs. 2-3)** That is a massive claim for these followers of Jesus to make, but they made it without hesitation before all people in their day. Remember, they SAW him walk on water, raise dead people back to life, heal the sick, command demons, and calm raging storms with a word! He was better by far than anyone that they had ever heard of or known. This is why the author of Hebrews made it clear that Jesus is better than the angels. In fact, the angels are compelled to worship Jesus! **Hebrews 1:6 NLT**

6 And when he brought his supreme Son into the world, God said, "Let all of God's angels worship him."

He astonished the angels by entering our world this way, and they looked on with wonder and worship at it all. **But Jesus came to us this way so that he could make God approachable.** Jesus is the perfect manifestation of God in human form. **Only God WITH us can reveal God TO us! (Vs. 3)** This is why he told the apostle Phillip, **“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father!”** Only by coming in human form could God be seen and touched and heard by men. The closest that men were ever able to come to him before was when he spoke from the mountaintop in the wilderness to the people of Israel. He was anything but approachable at that time! But when Jesus came to this earth in humble, human flesh, people could get close to him and ask him questions and watch him work. **Even the worst sinners loved to get close to Jesus, because he was not haughty and aloof in his holiness and perfection. He perfectly revealed the limitless love of God to them.** But Jesus was not just a better message from God. He came with a purpose to fulfill.

Jesus is a better sacrifice for sin.

Throughout human history, people have longed to know and worship God, but they don't feel worthy to approach him. **Any honest person knows he is plagued by sin!** This is why so many cultures and peoples have had some form of animal sacrifice attached to their worship. God himself initiated this concept when sin entered this world through Adam. He killed an animal to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness.

When God delivered his people from Egypt, he commanded them to make all kinds of sacrifices for sin. These animals were to be killed in the tabernacle and offered to God as a symbolic substitute for the sins of the people. But Jesus is far better than those sacrifices. He was NOT a symbolic substitute; he was the real deal!

Hebrews 2:14-15 NLT

14 Because God's children are human beings--made of flesh and blood--the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. 15 Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

It is no wonder that we worship him! He died to pay the price for our sins. This is why Simon Peter wrote that Jesus has better blood! **1 Peter 1:18-19 NLT**

18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. 19 It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

Jesus's blood was better because it was not stained by sin. He was the Lamb of God who came to die in our place and for our sins. Even though he was innocent of all crimes, he was slaughtered on a criminal's cross. But his blood does not demand our death. It is a better blood! **Hebrews 12:24 NIV**

24 [You have come] to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

His blood does not cry out for vengeance on me because of his death. Instead, his precious blood cries out for MERCY for ME! Hallelujah! Jesus's blood is better. Not only that; he is better because he is the FINAL substitute. He not only died in my place for my sin (that is better!), but there is now NO NEED for any more bulls and goats to be slaughtered for the sins of mankind. Besides, none of those animals ever WILLINGLY died for us! Jesus, the Lamb of God, did! **Hebrews 9:12-14 NLT**

12 With his own blood--not the blood of goats and calves--he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. 13 Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. 14 Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus is a better message from God and a better sacrifice for sins. But it gets even better! **Jesus is a better Savior.**

We love heroes and saviors! We all long for someone to come and not only save us, but also to come and make us conquerors as well. This is why books and movies about heroes abound. [Think Sherlock Holmes and Watson, Obi Wan Kenobi and Luke Skywalker, Captain America and that flying guy!] We love to turn the people around us into heroes, even by denying the faults and flaws that they clearly have. Presidents and Kings and movie stars and martyrs all achieve a high level of respect and admiration because we long for people to be MORE. We want to find someone who is better. But Jesus exceeds them all without having a single flaw, and the Word does not present him as some comic book hero or mythical god. He is REAL! Look at him again in the gospels and see if you can find any fault in him! Pilate could not even though he sent him on to the cross! But Jesus CONQUERED ALL on that cross. Think of it! Jesus is the Ultimate Conqueror because he conquered our two biggest enemies: SIN and DEATH! Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords who rides a white horse and who leads ALL of his followers to victory. **(Revelation 19:11-16)** Jesus is our mighty Savior. But he is a better Savior because he did not abandon us after his great victory. Instead, now he is seated at the right hand of the Father and he is interceding for mercy for us before the Father as a much better HIGH PRIEST. **The O.T. priests represented men before God and God before men. That was their job.** But Hebrews says that ancient priests were inadequate as saviors and representatives for us. They died. Jesus is better. **Hebrews 7:23-25 NLT**

23 There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. 24 But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. 25 Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.

Because Jesus is constantly interceding for us before God as our High Priest, we now have a much better hope that what we had when we were simply trying to keep the LAW. **The law NEVER made anyone perfect! This is why I constantly say that you do not come to Christ after you clean up your own life; you come to Christ so that HE can MAKE YOU BETTER!** The New Testament covenant with Christ is much better than the Old Testament covenant, because it relies on HIS faithfulness IN ME, not on my faithfulness to him! He is there to catch me every time I fall or fail. This new covenant that is ours because of his blood is better in every way. **Hebrews 8:6 NLT**

6 But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for he is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises.

There are so many more reasons why Jesus is better, but I want to give you just one more. **Jesus is unchangingly better.**

Jesus will never NOT be better. Got that? Because he is absolutely perfect, he never needs to change! There will never be an UPGRADE on Jesus. He is EVER BETTER.
Hebrews 1:10-12 NLT

10 He also says to the Son, "In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth and made the heavens with your hands. 11 They will perish, but you remain forever. They will wear out like old clothing. 12 You will fold them up like a cloak and discard them like old clothing. But you are always the same; you will live forever."

Hebrews 13:8 NLT

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Oh, I could go on and on about this One who is better than life itself! Even though he never changes, he is never static or stagnant. He is beauty beyond understanding, and love beyond measure. He is the ultimate expression of everything perfect that you could ever long for, and he has made himself known to us so that we could know God intimately. **In fact, this One who is unchanging is the ONLY ONE who can actually change us! Is there anyone listening to me who needs to change in some way today? I have Good News for you: Revelation 21:5 NLT**

5 And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true."

Don't you love that? Jesus has come to make all things NEW. He promised that he would give his followers and NEW HEART and put a NEW SPIRIT within them. Our old heart is dark and deceitful, but our new heart is formed in the image of God. Our old spirit was dead, but Jesus has placed his Holy Spirit us. In fact, when a person trusts in Christ for their salvation, here is what happens: **2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV**

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The change that Jesus brings in a believer's life is RADICAL. It is obvious. And it is awesome! On the final day when Jesus comes to get us all, he will make the final glorious change in us by transforming our bodies. **But until then, he is working to transform our character day by day. We were saved to be better.** But I want to finish this message by asking those of you who are believers a simple question. This question will be especially important even to those who are not followers of Christ, because they have been wondering the same thing that I am going to ask you. Here is my question: If Jesus is truly all that the writers of Scripture say about him, and if he truly is able to DO all of the things that the Word says that he can do not only FOR US, but also IN US: **Why are YOU not getting any better?**

I have wrestled with this question more than any other single issue throughout my entire Christian life. I have watched people who at one time claimed to have a deep love for Christ and a full commitment to his lordship simply walk away and forsake the life that once was “precious” to them. I have seen Christians act in ways that would make a prostitute blush, and I wonder how we can claim to know the One who is perfect in holiness and power and yet still live blatantly sinful lives. **This is not just confusing to outsiders; it messes with those inside the faith as well.** Of course, I know that I am capable of doing anything that a person outside of the faith will do (I am a SINNER saved by grace!), but I cannot believe that a true follower of Jesus could EVER simply walk away from Christ’s infinite perfection. He is better than that, and so are his children. This is why it is written: **Hebrews 6:7-9 NLT**

7 When the ground soaks up the falling rain and bears a good crop for the farmer, it has God's blessing. 8 But if a field bears thorns and thistles, it is useless. The farmer will soon condemn that field and burn it. 9 Dear friends, even though we are talking this way, we really don't believe it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation.

Do you wonder why some believers do not seem to act like believers at all? Maybe there is something that we need to know that we do not now know. That is what I want to address throughout this series. **If Jesus is TRULY better, then how can that make US better?**

For now, I want you to go home asking your self the question that I posed to you a moment ago. **Are you getting better?** Are you becoming more like Christ every day? Let that question bother you. Let it drive you to really examine yourself to see if you are truly “in Christ” or not. If he is IN YOU, then you cannot help but GET BETTER.

Let’s pray.