

verses 1 through 3. If you have a copy of God's Word, I would encourage you to turn there. The book of Hebrews was written to a group of Jewish Christians who were suffering persecution on account of their conversion. Now, these Jewish Christians had not yet suffered to the point of martyrdom. But we do learn in this letter that they had suffered by public humiliation and they had even had some of their property plundered. And in the midst of these pressures, these Jewish Christians are tempted to turn back from following Christ. Simply put, life was easier for them before they started following Christ.

They're exhausted. They're worn out. And they're starting to think, is it all worth it? Should I really keep following Him? Or would it be better if I just turn back? And maybe that's someone here this evening. Maybe even as a Christian, you've had those thoughts. I just want to give up. I just want to turn back. Is it really all worth it? Well, Hebrews 1, 1 through 3 says, don't turn back. And don't turn back because Christ is better. Christ is better. And so we'll see that this evening.

But before we read this portion of God's word, let us pray and ask his blessings. Almighty God, we remember the psalm when he said, unless the Lord builds a house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. And unless the Lord God Almighty blesses the reading and preaching of the word, it is read and preached in vain. Pour out thy spirit, oh God, we pray. In Jesus's name, amen.

Hebrews chapter one, verses one through three. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Amen. This ends the reading of God's holy word. May he bless the proclamation of it to our lives.

Ecclesiastes 7.10 says this, Say not, why were the former days better than these? For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. Say not, why were the former days better than these? For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. And in many ways, that is the question and the temptation that is on the hearts of these converts to Christianity.

They are suffering as a result of their conversion to Christianity. And what they're essentially saying is, why were the former days better than these? Why was my life better? Why was my life easier? Why was my life more enjoyable before I started following Christ?

That's their temptation. And again, maybe that is someone here tonight. When you think about your older life and days past, maybe you think those were the good days. Those were the really enjoyable days. And now it's just hard. Now it's just difficult. Why were the former days better than these?

Well, this text comes to us and it says, don't turn back from following Christ because Christ is better. Whatever it is that you turn to, when you turn from Christ is worse than following Christ. And the reason is simple. Christ is the best. And since Christ is the best, everything else you pursue that's not Christ is loss. It's worse. Because He simply is the best. And so our text says, don't turn back because Christ is better. And we'll see that Christ is better

in three particular ways in our text. Christ's word is better, Christ's person is better, and Christ's work is better. His word, his person, and his work are better. So first, Christ's word is better.

Verses one into the start of verse two. We read this long ago, at many times, and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son. Now these opening words are supposed to make it clear to the reader that Christ is the climax and culmination, the center point of all of history. That everything turns upon the coming of Christ. Everything before he came is the former days. Everything after his life, death, and resurrection are these last days. He is saying to them, we have entered into the last days.

God has spoken to us in Christ in a way that is simply better than the Old Testament. Now that could sound really dangerous. Don't misunderstand. It's not better than the Old Testament in the sense that the Old Testament is not the Word of God. He says God spoke by the prophets. It's not better than the things in the Old Testament in that it is somehow more true.

They are both equally and completely true. We need the Old Testament and we need the New Testament. They're both true. They're both spoken from God. But it's better in terms of fulfillment. The substance has arrived. Those were the shadows that were pointing forward to Christ, who is the fulfillment.

And so he's saying to these Jewish Christians, Don't reject Christ and go back simply to the old word in a way that's not tied to Christ. Don't go back to the Old Testament and leave it from its proper connection to Christ. Because if you go to the Old Testament and you leave Christ behind, you don't understand the Old Testament and you don't understand the center and climax of all of redemptive history. Christ is the center and climax of all of human history.

He is a better word. Stick with the fulfillment. Stick with what it was all about all along. He is the fulfillment of all of that Old Testament. And so we should rejoice in him. We should understand that he is a better word. He is the fulfillment of all that came before.

He's the prophet. He's the prophet of prophets. You'll notice in the text that it says, long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, plural. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son. In the coming of the Son comes the prophet of the prophets.

He is the prophet that doesn't preach a word about another to come, like the Old Testament prophets. He is the prophet that preaches a word about himself. He is both the prophet who preaches a message, but that message that he preaches is not about another, it's about himself. Unlike the prophets who were pointing to him, he points to himself. as the prophet, the fulfiller of all that was to come.

And so he's saying to them essentially this, are you tempted to turn back, Jewish converts? Are you tempted to turn back from this word that has come to go to the shadows and ignore the fulfillment? And he's saying to them, this is

the better word. Don't go back. But what bearing does this have on your life today? Well, there are still many voices that speak to us, words that come to us and tempt us to turn back.

Some voices tempt you to turn back from following Christ by blatant immorality. This is the voice that says to you, just sin, just give in, it's going to be better. That's a voice that comes to you and says, turn back from Christ. And the word here comes to you and says, the voice of God speaking in the fulfillment of Christ is better than immorality.

Don't turn back. Follow Christ. Some voices tempt you to turn back by saying to you, look at your sins. You're such a failure. You call yourself a Christian. Just give up. You know as well as anybody that you're a total and complete failure. You've done it again. Just give up. Just turn back. Don't follow Christ. Stop pretending. And this voice comes to you and it says, Christ is better. His word is better. Stick with Christ. Don't turn and follow that voice. Don't follow that word. It's a lie.

And then there's a voice that comes to you in the form of moralism. This voice looks a little nicer, at least on the outside. It says, just try harder. Just try harder and do more. You can do it. You can do it. And that voice is a little bit harder to discern where truth is and error is. But at the end of the day, that voice is really saying, look at yourself. You can do it. Just trust in yourself. Trust in yourself.

That's the moralism voice. And this word says, Christ is better. Follow Christ. Look to Christ. Listen to his word. This word isn't going to do it for you. You're not good enough. You can't pull yourself up, but Christ can. Follow his voice. Don't turn back on him. He is everything. Stick with him. But you might be thinking to yourself, why should I listen to him? Certainly, if there's an unbeliever in this room, you might think to yourself, why should I listen to this voice?

And this takes us to our second point. Christ's person is better. Christ's person is better. Beginning about a fourth or so of the way through or a third of the way through second verse, we see the person is better. Whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God in the exact imprint of his nature. And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. So here we see something about this person, Christ, and we see that his person is simply better.

The more you get to know the Lord of the Word, the more you get to know, the more you rather get to know the Word of the Lord, the more you get to know the Lord of the Word. And the more you get to know the Lord of the Word, your own experience is, I hope, that he is simply better than everything and everyone else. His person is simply better.

Think about how important his person is in the midst of the argument that the author of Hebrews is making, which, by the way, is God. He's the one who wrote the book of Hebrews, if you're ever trying to figure it out. Think about how important a person is, though, behind this letter. Here's what's so important. When somebody writes you a love letter, all of their sweet words, which you're very grateful for, what makes that letter, though, so valuable to you? is the person behind it. It's when you read those words of that love letter to you, you're thinking of that person, and they're revealing something about themselves to you, and that's what makes it so special to you. That person matters. It brings value and importance to the words. And so here he begins to talk about the person who is Christ so that you might appreciate his words all the more. Who is this person? What makes his words so good?

Well, we read in verse two, he is appointed the heir of all things. This means that all things exist for the son of God. He is the omega of existence. Everything is going towards Him. He's the telos, He's the purpose for which all created things exist. But then we read this, through whom He created the world. So while the previous words as air make it clear that He is the omega, He is the purpose for which all things were created. then these words, through whom he created the world, highlight that he is the one through whom the world was created, that he is the alpha from which the world exists. It is through him that everything exists. So everything exists through him and everything exists for him.

And we already saw that he is the climax and center of all of history. In His coming, the last days have been inaugurated. So think with me for a moment. We are learning here that the Son of God, as He came in the incarnation, marks the center point and climax of all history.

All things were created for Him. He's the purpose for all of existence. And it is through Him that all things were created. It's simply amazing. And then dropping down a little bit to verse three, he upholds the universe by the word of his power. So put it all together. He created all things through him. All things exist for him. He's the climax of all of history upon which everything turns. And he's the constant upholder of everything by the word of his power.

And actually this word, Hunter, our Greek scholar here can confirm is a present participle and it literally means carrying. He is perpetually carrying the world. It's actually more vivid than our word uphold can really get at. The point is simply this, he is perpetually carrying the world to its predetermined end. Every single moment of this existence we call life, he isn't just upholding it in sort of a static manner, he is carrying it to the destination to which it has been predestined from before all time that it would go.

This is the person whose word we read in the Bible. His coming is incredible. And then we read that he is, in verse three, he is the radiance of the glory of God. Now the word radiance is especially important here because what is being taught is that the eternal son of God, the second person of the Trinity, doesn't only reflect God's glory, he actually radiates the glory of God. And this is important.

Because what it's capturing is something of the oneness of God the Son and God the Father, and we could say God the Spirit as well. But in this way, all illustrations of divine things fall short. A pastor would say that all the time. But this might be a helpful way of thinking of it.

If the Son merely reflected the glory of God the Father, it would be something like the way the moon simply reflects the light of the sun. The moon doesn't actually shine in and of itself, it's a mere reflection of the light of the sun. But because Jesus, the second person in the Trinity here, is said to be the radiance of the glory of God, the text is saying that in and of himself, he actually radiates the glory of God. He is like the sun, in that the sun itself produces that light that shines forth. He is the very He is very God of very God, very light of light, God of God as our Nicene Creed puts it.

Here's an illustration from scripture, remember this story in Exodus 34. This is Exodus 34, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. Why did Moses's face shine?

Because he was talking with God. That's exactly what the text says. What was he doing? He was reflecting the glory of God. Here's the difference. Moses's face shined or shone because he reflected the glory of God. Jesus's face was shining because he is the glory of God. He is the radiance of the glory of God, the text is saying.

Isaiah 42 verse 8 we read this, Yahweh says my glory I give to no other. My glory I give to no other. Isaiah 42 8. Hebrews 1 3. He is the radiance of the glory of God. So how can Yahweh say I give my glory to no other. Isaiah 42 8 and Isaiah and Hebrews 1 3 says he is the radiance of the glory of God. How can he be the radiance of God's glory if God doesn't share his glory with any other? Because he's God. He is the second person of the Trinity. He radiates the glory of God.

Because Jesus radiated the glory of God, he could say in John 14, 9, whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Because Jesus radiated the glory of God, even in his incarnation, though concealed, but not fully revealed, but still here, because he radiated the glory of God, John 118 can say, he made God known. Because he radiated the glory of God, he could say, I am the light of the world. This is how Jesus could say these things, because he radiated the very glory of God as a second person of the Trinity. But why, if all this is true, Should you care that Jesus Christ, the second person in the Trinity, took on flesh, radiates the glory of God? Why should you care? Well, because humanity desperately needs the radiant light of the glory of God.

Ephesians 4.8 says, you were darkness. Notice that the text Ephesians 4 says you were darkness it's not just that you walked in darkness is that you were walking darkness you were darkness yourself the text says but then we read this in Ephesians 4 8 but now you are the light you are light in the Lord walk as children of the light.

The point is this. In the Lord Jesus Christ, the light of the world has come, the radiance of the glory of God to shine into our hearts that we might be made children of light, that we might be brought from darkness to light. This is the radiance of the glory of God. He came not for our destruction, but for our salvation. Then the text continues on and it says, he is the exact imprint of his nature. The idea here is that he is exact correspondence in his nature to God himself, the exact imprint of his nature. One author said this, if the radiance of the glory of God expresses Christ's oneness with the Father, the exact imprint of his nature expresses oneness but also distinction.

So while there is oneness between God the Father and God the Son, there is distinction. God the Father is not God the Son. God the Son is not God the Father. We believe in the triune God, three persons in one God. You remember how John 1 puts it, in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The text says that he is both with God and that he was God in John 1, 1.

That is the idea here. He is the radiance of the glory of God. So that's that oneness being highlighted. But then there's a distinction. He is the exact imprint of his nature. He is not the same person as God, the father. So he radiates God and he is the imprint of his nature. Well, it is surely undeniably obvious that there is no better person in the world than this person we've just discussed, the second person of the Trinity.

But these Christians were being tempted to look to someone else, look to someplace else other than Him for their soul's satisfaction. And they were genuinely going through persecution and hardship and trial. And you are probably too going through legitimate difficulties in your life. And the temptation is the same as the temptation that they faced.

I want to turn back. But when you see how good this person is, how truly incomprehensibly grand this person is in the text, Ask yourself this, where am I going to turn that's better than him? Where are you going to go that's more wonderful than coming to this glorious, amazing God?

Beloved, if you have Christ, as trite as it might sound, you have all you need. You really do. You have everything you need here tonight if you have Christ. And if you don't have Christ, look at what you don't have from Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 and 2 and 3. You don't have this incredible and comprehensibly grand God. You ultimately have nothing compared to Christ. Well, thirdly, Christ's work is better. Christ's work is better.

You see this at the end of verse 3, after making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. What's especially incredible here is to consider what is it that this person we've just been introduced to, what does he do? What is this person we've just met actually do? And we read, astonishingly, that he made purification for sins. It is obvious that the person we just met does not need us. It is obvious the person we just met in the text completely self-existent. He doesn't need anything. He's altogether awesome in and of himself. He's dependent upon no one and nothing.

And yet we read here that he made purification for sins. But why did the text not just get to that right away? I mean we live in a day and age that we want to get to the part that directly has to do with Me. Why did the text not read this way? Long ago at many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son who made purification for sins.

Why all that middle stuff about his person? Why not skip over the whole thing about, yeah, he's the radiance or the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature and upholds the universe by the word of his power? Why not just skip all that stuff about how cool he is and get the important stuff about what did he do for me?

Right? Why don't we, why do we, why do we not do that? Well, I'm going to read you several different quotes that get at this idea. And it boils down to this. Apart from his person, his work is useless. Apart from his person, his work is useless. Several quotes. I'm going to read to you.

The efficacy of Christ's work is contingent upon the unique constitution of Christ's person. Another one, the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is traced to the dignity of his person. Or another one, Christ's infinite nature gave to his finite sufferings infinite value. Or to paraphrase what I've heard came from the lips of Dr. Will, it wasn't the quantity of Christ's suffering that made it efficacious. but the quality of the person who suffered that made his suffering efficacious. In other words, you needed God to save you from your sins. And what verse two and three are telling you is God came to save you from your sins.

If you don't know who this person is, that last statement where it says, After making purification for sins he sat down, that's wishful thinking. Unless it's God, because God's the only one who can accomplish that work. God is the only one who can actually make purification for sins and sit down having beat sin to death. Only God can accomplish that work. And so it's very important. While chapter two, we'll get there eventually, highlights that he was a man and can sympathize with us in our weaknesses, Chapter one is highlighting that he is God who is able to conquer sin. And so that's what's being highlighted here. He's wanting us to understand who he is so that when we read that he made purification for sins, we can actually believe that he could do such a work, that he could accomplish such a work if he were a mere man.

Without being God, he could have never made purification for sins. He could never have atoned for your sins. If all the mere men who have ever lived, every single one of them, the billions, and you added them up and every single one of them said, I'm going to go shed my blood for your sins. Every single one of them slaughtered, just one after another. They could not make purification for your sins.

Our sins deserve an infinite punishment because they are against an infinite God. and the only one who can handle an infinite load is the infinite God himself. And so it's incredibly important that we know who this person is. And the fact that he sat down is merely highlighting the reality that it is finished. He accomplished it fully. There is no work left for you to do.

Hebrews chapter 10 verse 11 says this of the Old Testament priests, and every priest stands stands, you hear that? Stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. So they were standing daily, offering, and they could not atone for sins. Christ offers himself as a substitutionary atonement for all of his children, and it is completely finished, therefore he sits down So my question then for you and it's a question that these readers would have been asking or should have been asking is what work are you going to do to make Jesus's work better?

Are you going to add something to this work to make it better? You can't do anything to make this work better. This work is perfect. Any work you do to try to make this work better, it's gonna make it worse because it's perfect. We can't add anything, dear ones. It's finished. Christ did it all. Works? Works? There are no works. We can't do anything. Can we not just be content with the fact that Jesus did it for me? Is that not enough for us?

Christ did it all. That should be the joy of your heart. And here's the wonder of the Christian religion. And I feel as I've been beating this drum recently, but here's the joy of the Christian religion. You can get up tomorrow and stand. and live for Jesus because he's seated in heaven for you.

Because he's done it all, you can get up and live boldly for him because he's done it all for you. You have nothing to earn. He's earned it all. Just live for him because he's literally, and it sounds trite, but he is the best. And I mean that, he's the best. And so just what else would you want to do other than live for this glorious God who's done it all for you? He's wonderful. He's amazing.

And so today we've seen this, we've seen this, don't turn back from following Christ tonight, you're exhausted, you're weary, you wanna throw down the towel, you wanna give up, and the text says don't turn back because Christ's word is better, because Christ's person is better, because Christ's work is better. We could even just say it this simply. Christ's work is the best work. Christ's person is the best person. And Christ's word is the best word. Don't go anywhere else. Just go to Christ. Let's pray.

Almighty God, we do thank you and praise you that we can actually say here who know Christ this evening that we have the very best relationship in all the world. that there's nothing that could be given to us that could be better than what we already have.

And yet, oh Lord, we do want to confess that every single day we're tempted to turn back, tempted to listen to the voices that we think are going to be better than the voice that has come and laid down himself for us and redeemed us from all of our sins and clothed us in immutable, glorious righteousness. the voice of Christ, and we want to turn from that at times in our life. And when we see a text like this, it strikes us as to how foolish that is. God, I pray that each one of us would be less inclined to turn back from Christ. And all of us, because of how good he is, would be more and more inclined to turn towards him and follow after him, no matter what it might cost. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.