

# God's Message to Us in Hebrews

Halifax, NS

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## Introduction

This afternoon, we come to the epistle to the Hebrews in our sermon series on God's message to us in each book of the Bible.

- Hebrews is one of the few books in the New Testament in which the author is not identified.
  - There is no consensus in the early church fathers, though from about AD 400 to 1600, it was assumed that Paul wrote it.
  - This was called into question in the 16<sup>th</sup> century for several reasons...
    - because Paul customarily identifies himself when he writes...and the author of Hebrews does not do that...but that could be because Hebrews is written to Hebrews, and it is not customary among them to identify yourself at the outset as it was for the Greeks—for example, Luke, writing to a Greek, identifies himself at the start of his gospel, but Matthew does not...
    - because the style is different—but it makes sense that it would be since he is writing to Hebrews instead of to Gentiles...
    - because in Hebrews 2:3, he speaks of “those who heard” Christ as if he is not among them—yet he might speak that way in the context where he is talking about those who heard Christ when He was here instead of afterward...
  - Other suggestions have included Barnabas and Apollos—and few others.
    - It is hard to say for sure, but I am inclined to agree with those who say Paul.

But we might ask what this epistle, written to Hebrew Christians, has to say to us today?

- And the short answer is, “Much indeed!”
- It was written to Jews who were tempted to return to the ceremonies of the Old Testament because of social pressure from the people.
  - In John 4:21-24, Jesus told the woman at Samaria that worship would no longer be by ritual but in spirit and in truth. In Jn 4:23, He said:
    - **But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.**
  - In other words, instead of the centre of worship being sacrifices and ceremonies at the temple,
    - worshippers would come into the real presence of God.
    - The worship we find in Acts and the epistles is very simple and spiritual rather than full of rituals. There are no priests and no altars.
      - Instead there is the preaching and reading of the word, the singing of praise, prayers, and the Lord's Supper.
    - When Jesus says **in spirit and in truth**, He does not mean that the worship of the Old Testament was devoid of the spirit or was false...
      - *In spirit* means that we draw near to God apart from fleshly ordinances.
      - *In truth* means that we come to Him instead of to pictures and copies of heavenly things... the reality instead of signs.

- So the message of Hebrews is that Jesus replaces the worship of the Old Testament,
  - For the Hebrews it was to lead them away from the temptation to return to the worship of the Old Testament,
    - but even more it is to encourage us of the excellence of Christ that we might love Him and hold on to Him and that we might draw near to God through Him who makes us perfect.
  - Indeed, the word tele-i-o-w which means “to make perfect or complete,” (along with its related forms as a noun, adjective, and adverb) is used 14 times at crucial points in Hebrews to speak about Jesus and how He brings us to perfection and completion before God the Father.
    - We will see that and that idea (even when the word is not used) as we take our overview of Hebrews today.
    - It is He, not the rituals of the Old Testament, who make us perfect and complete.

So let’s get underway with our overview...

Hebrews begins by showing us what has changed in what it calls “these last days.”

- Remember, as we saw when we studied the book of Acts, the *last days* began when Jesus came and will continue until He returns... it refers to the final age before glory.
- So what has changed in these last days? Hebrews 1:1-4 says:
  - **Heb 1:1-4: God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; <sup>3</sup> who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.**
  - To put it in a few words, the change is that Christ has come and purged our sins so that now He is reigning with all authority in heaven for us.
- The rest of the book of Hebrews shows us how that changes things for the church.
  - In short, our worship has moved from the tabernacle on earth with symbols of Christ to the true tabernacle where Christ Himself is who has reconciled us to God.
  - Already, we are (by Christ the forerunner) in glory, in the presence of God, and soon we will be (as 2 Thess puts it) gathered to Him.
- Hebrews shows us how Christ is superior to the old way.
  - It teaches us to come to God, not by symbols, but in personal faith and communion.

## **I. Christ is worthy to be the object of our faith.**

### **A. He is superior to the angels (Heb 1-2).**

1. He is superior because He is God the Son (1:4-14).
  - We already read verse 4 where it tells us that He is superior to the angels
  - In the rest of chapter 1, this is spelled out for us clearly by showing us how He is spoken of in the Old Testament...
    - vs. 5... that only to Him does God say, “You are My Son, today I have begotten you.”

- vs. 6... that God orders all the angels to worship Him.
  - vs. 8... that God tells the Son that His throne is forever and ever.
  - and verse 10-12, that to Him is attributed the creation and the transformation of the heavens and the earth.
  - and in vs. 13, that God said, not to angels, but to Him, **“Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”**
- What glorious things are said of Him!
    - The angels are ministering spirits, sent to help the heirs of salvation, but He is the Son of God whose throne is forever...
      - This one who came here and purged our sins!
      - He is the very Son of God!
2. Because He God’s Son, we ought to listen diligently to what the apostles have told us about Him and His ministry.
- That is how Hebrews chapter 2 opens...
    - We need to listen because God has spoken through those who were with Christ when He came, and He has backed up their words by signs and miracles—to show that they are speaking His true word.
  - The Hebrews were being tempted to drift away from Christ, just as we are.
    - I was just warning people in the PCC about drifting from Christ as their denomination has just endorsed gay marriage.
    - The question is asked in verse 3, **How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?**
      - As we saw in the opening of Hebrews, the Son of God Himself has come and purged our sins and been received into glory.
- We must never drift away from Christ!
3. God has put the world to come in subjection to Him.
- He is not put it in subjection to the angels but to Him (Hebrews 2:5)
  - The passage goes on to explain how the Father has crowned Christ who came in our flesh (now man) as Lord of all—giving Him dominion over the whole creation.
    - Even though everything is not yet in subjection to Him, it will be (v. 8-9)!
  - But the best thing of all is that now that Christ has become man, He has been made one with us—with us His church—with all of His people...
    - And He has been made everything that we need through His sufferings.
      - Everything that we need to be brought to the glory that He has already entered...into the real presence of God!
    - Hebrews 2:10 says: **“For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”**
      - By His sufferings, He became perfect for us—all that we need—that we might at last come to God!
    - Verses 14-18 explain that He became flesh—a human being—in order that He might be a priest to us—He had to become one of us because none of us were able to be the priest that is needed.

TRANS> What a grand thing!

- How much better He is than all the angels.
    - They minister to us, but it is He alone who brings us to glory.
  - Now let's see another way that He is superior... in chapter 3 & 4.
- B. He is superior to Moses and to Joshua.
1. Chapter 3 opens by telling us that as God, Christ is the builder of God's house, whereas Moses is only a part of the house.
    - Obviously, as verse 3 says, **"He who built the house has more honour than the house, for every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God."**
      - Then verse 6 tells us that we are part of Christ's house **if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firm to the end.**
        - We have to keep on in the faith and not turn back—
  - Turning back was the great temptation that the Hebrews were facing and it is the great temptation that we face in a world where it is not popular to serve the Lord.
  2. The remainder of chapter 3 and all of chapter 4 is a warning not to harden your heart the way so many people did in the Old Testament.
    - a. It is basically a sermon from Psalm 95 where the Psalm warns Israel not to harden their hearts the way they did in the time of Moses.
      - In the wilderness, they did not believe that serving God was worthwhile and consequently were not able to enter His rest in Canaan.
        - Because of their unbelief, they did not pursue God's inheritance and He swore that they would not be allowed to enter His rest.
        - The rest referred to was the presence of God, symbolised by the Promised Land with the temple and the holy place.
    - b. But because Psalm 95 was written long after Joshua had led them to the Promised Land, it must have been talking about another rest that God gives.
      - And indeed it was (and is).
        - It was talking about the greater rest that Christ has already entered into which is the true rest—it is being brought into the presence of God as those who have been perfected.
      - Joshua brought the generation after Moses into the rest of Canaan, but it was only a type of the final rest—
        - the presence of God in ritual and symbol versus the actual presence that Jesus has entered.
      - The contrast is stated in 4:8-10 where it says: **For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.** [as it does in Psalm 95]. Verse 9: **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he [this refers to Jesus] who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His.**
        - That is what we read in the opening paragraph of Hebrews—Christ, after He had purged our sins, sat down at the right and of God, having obtained His inheritance, until all His enemies are brought under Him.
        - He rested as God did after He made the world, having finished His work.

- c. Jesus is already there, and we are warned to continue in the faith so that we will be able to enter into the rest that He has obtained for us.
  - He has finished His work, but as long as we are in this world, 4:11 advises us with these words: **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.**
  - Jesus our priest is already there for us—and our calling is to continue trusting in Him until the end.
    - Look at 4:14-16: **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, [He has already gone to God’s presence] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**
      - Our help comes from Him.
      - We come to Him to save us because we can’t save ourselves, and if we do come to Him, we will enter the rest that He has entered.
  - The warning is well summarised in 3:12 where it said: **Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; <sup>13</sup> but exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**
    - See that you do not come to suppose that it is not worth it to keep on serving Him the way Israel did when they were barred from Canaan.
      - You are only a true Christian if you have faith that continues to trust in Christ... 3:14 says: **For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.**

TRANS> Christ’s rest is superior to the rest that Joshua gave them in the land—He brings us into the true presence of God in heaven.

- And this leads us to consider a third way that Christ is superior...

C. Hebrews chapter 5 through chapter 7 shows us that He is superior to the priests of the Old Testament.

1. His appointment as our priest is more certain than the appointment of Aaron.
  - a. Chapter 5 begins by reminding us that the job of a priest is to offer sacrifices to God for sin.
    - Then it declares that this is not an honour that any man takes to himself.
      - Anyone that does this must be appointed by God to do it.
    - Aaron was indeed called by God (as it says in 5:4),
      - But Christ was appointed to by God to be our priest forever...
        - Verse 6 reminds that God said to Him: **“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”**
  - b. It goes on to say that as our priest, He (verse 7) **in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.**
    - As we have already seen, He is the priest who was perfected for us by His sufferings for us. Verse 9: **and having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all obey Him, called by God according to the order of Melchizedek.**

2. Our slackness keeps us from learning all that we ought about Him.
  - From Hebrews 5:12 – 6:12, the author laments that he is having to go over the basics of the faith because of their spiritual immaturity.
    - There is so much glory in Christ, so many treasures of grace in Him, but sadly we are not able to hear it when we are wavering about whether we are even going to continue following Christ or not...
      - If you don't go on, you may be in danger of complete apostasy (6:4-6).
      - It might show that you do not even have saving faith.
    - But the author has seen the fruit of true salvation in the Hebrews, in that they have shown hospitality to those being persecuted for Christ...
      - He is convinced that they are not those who will draw back but who believe to the saving of their souls.
      - At least that is his desire for them (v. 11-12: **And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, <sup>12</sup> that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**
3. The promise to bless Abraham (and all the church) which God swore was not based on the priesthood of Aaron, but on the priesthood of Christ.
  - Hebrews 6:13-20 speaks about how God's promise to Abraham made our salvation so sure and certain...
    - And that now it is *even more certain* because Christ has entered into the true presence of God forever...
      - verse 19-20: **This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, <sup>20</sup> where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."**
  - Chapter 7 explains that when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek and was blessed by him, it showed that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham.
    - This shows that all the sons of Levi who were later made the priests of the Old Testament were inferior to Melchizedek, because the Levites all came from Abraham as their father.
      - The priests of the Old Testament were unable to make the worshippers perfect—they only represented the One who would make them perfect.
  - Hebrews 7:11 declares to us that there was a need for a priest that would replace the sons of Levi and of Aaron...
    - **Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?**
  - Thus with Christ, there is a new covenant with a new priesthood that He fills, as priesthood that entirely replaces the old covenant and its priests.
    - Hebrews 7:24-28 tells of His excellence as the one who continues to take away our sin forever: **But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. <sup>25</sup> Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. <sup>26</sup> For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become***

higher than the heavens; <sup>27</sup> who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. <sup>28</sup> For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever.

TRANS> So chapter 8 introduces the next section of Hebrews by telling us that:

## II. The main point is that we have such a priest in glory now!

A. In Christ our priest, we have a new covenant.

1. The old covenant—in all of its rituals of service—was essentially a pattern, a representation of heavenly realities...
  - Heb 8:5 tells us that those priests **serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He [God] said, “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”** <sup>6</sup> **But now He [Christ] has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.**
2. The fact is, as Hebrews 8:7-13 explains, Israel failed even to maintain this ritual service and had to be *disregarded* by God as it says in verse 9.
  - But it was in disregarding them that He promised them that in the new covenant, their hearts would be changed by the Holy Spirit and their sins would not simply be ritually cleansed, but actually cleansed.
  - When that is done, there will be no place for the ceremonies of the old covenant: 8:13 says: **In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.**
    - He promised that when Christ came, they would have all that they needed to come into the true presence of God for life and forgiveness.
      - Christ will never fail as the priests and people of Israel did.
      - He will never be disregarded as they were.

B. In Hebrews 9, we are show that Christ in the new covenant, goes into the real presence of God to offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

1. 9:1-10 speaks of how the earthly sanctuary had a holy place and a most holy place that represented the true presence of God with the mercy seat and the cherubim.
  - The high priest could only go in once a year to offer sacrifices, and that only after making offerings for himself and for the people.
    - All this showed that his sacrifice did not take away Israel's sins—it was just a copy that represented the presence of God and the atonement that was needed.
    - Verse 9-10 summarise this insufficiency: **It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—** <sup>10</sup> **concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.**
2. Christ, in contrast with this, goes into the real presence of God.
  - In 9:11-14, it says: **But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.** <sup>12</sup> **Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He**

**entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

3. Going into the real presence called for a much greater sacrifice than what was offered under the old covenant...
    - And that was the offering of Christ Himself...
      - Heb 9:23-24 spells out this requirement: **Therefore *it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.* <sup>24</sup> For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.**
- C. Hebrews 10 picks up on this requirement of a better sacrifice and shows us that Christ Himself *was* that better sacrifice.
1. Heb 10:1-4 spells out that the blood of bulls and goats could not cleanse us from sin, being only ritual sacrifices that were copies and shadows of the true.
  2. Then Hebrew 10:5-10 quotes Psalm 40 which tells us that Christ, the Son of God, was a given a body to offer according to the will of God.
    - The sacrifices of the old covenant could not take away sin, but a body was prepared for Christ the Son of God that He might do the will of God.
  3. And so under the new covenant we are made perfect by the sacrifice of Christ.
    - Heb 10:11-14 says: **And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup> from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. <sup>14</sup> For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.**
      - Notice the language—by the offering of Christ, we are perfected forever!
        - Verses 15-18 assure us that the new covenant promises of a new life by the Holy Spirit and of complete forgiveness are the outcome of His sacrifice.
      - Think about what that means.
        - The Son of God came from heaven to be a sacrifice for us and now by that offering we are truly reconciled to God...
          - He promises to change us by His Spirit...
          - And His wrath toward us is forever extinguished...
            - All through the offering of Christ our priest!

TRANS> He changes everything!

### **III. How should we respond? The rest of Hebrews tells us how.**

- A. Draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith—
1. Since Jesus has gone into the real presence of God (not some earthly sanctuary), we have full access to God.
    - If we had cleansed ourselves or if some priest on earth had done it, we could have no confidence in coming before God.
    - But since it is Christ the Son of God who has gone before God and remains before God for us, we can draw near with full assurance.



- Look at 10:19-22: **Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, <sup>21</sup> and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**
2. This is really the foundation of everything.
    - By Christ we truly come to God—in faith now—
      - meaning that we are not yet in glory—but we come believing that the Father hears us and accepts us through faith in Christ...rather than ceremonies...
    - If we do that—if we consciously come to the true and living God who is pure and holy and full of grace and truth by Christ,
      - to commune with Him, to worship Him, to thank Him, to live for Him,
        - we have responded to God in the way we ought to under the new covenant.
  3. But we are still in the flesh (not yet perfected in glory ourselves) so it is often a struggle.
    - a. Verses 23-25 tell us to hold fast to our confession without wavering...
      - and to encourage and exhort each other—especially by coming to church where we receive the word...
        - We need to encourage each other of the riches we have in Christ that enable us to come to the Father.
    - b. There is even a danger that we would draw back as those who never truly knew Him in a saving way.
      - In Hebrews 10:26-39 we have some of the most solemn warnings in the whole Bible about drawing back.
        - It is not that a true believer can draw back, but a person who professed to be a true believer may indeed draw back.
        - 10:26-27 says: **For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.**
          - If you are drifting away from Christ, it could be that you never even knew Him.
      - Don't be one of those—turn at once to Christ for help.
        - We do not save ourselves—we come to Him for salvation.
        - He is the only one who can save us.
          - Verse 39 says: **But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.**
- So the first way to respond is by drawing near to God through Christ our priest.
- B. Second, learn to live in the reality of what is promised (not by what is seen).
    - That is the subject of Hebrews 11.
      1. The chapter opens by telling us that **faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.**
        - In other words, faith takes the promises of God as something real and it lives in relation to those promises.

- If you have faith, you have a different perception of things than the person who does not have faith.
  - If you are an unbeliever, you are honestly out of touch with reality.
    - You do not perceive (as verse 3 says), **that God is and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.**
    - Until the day of judgment comes, this failure to regard God may not seem to you to make a lot of difference...
      - but I am warning you—when He comes at the end of the age, it will be a very huge difference.
    - We are all cut off from Him by our sin—we have pushed away the truth about Him and this is a greater wickedness than murder or rape or torturing innocent people...
      - But as we have seen, Christ has come to purge sin, all the sin of His people.
      - And if you will come to Him and believe in Him, you can be forgiven too, and become one of His people.
2. Hebrews 11 gives us a wonderful list of those who lived by faith in God in the old covenant.
- It is an impressive company of persons who lived according to the reality of God and His promises instead of living only for what they could see in the world.
  - Noah is in the list—who built the ark for no reason except that God told him to because God was going to destroy the earth with a flood...
  - Moses is in the list—who left the palace of Egypt and chose to suffer with the people of God in the wilderness rather than to enjoy the pleasure of sin... because he believed that what God promised was far better even though he did not receive it in this life.
  - Abraham was the same—no inheritance here, but looked for the city God promised him in glory.
3. The chapter ends by reminding us that these OT saints served in hope even though they had not yet received what we have now received in Christ.
- They had the promise that God would bless them and forgive them, but they did not have the benefit of seeing what Christ did to perfect us...
    - How He, the Son of God, came to be an offering for our sins so that by Him we might be forgiven.
      - 11:39-40 says: **And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.**
    - They only had the ritual sacrifices with promises.
      - We now have Christ who has gone into the real presence of God.
    - The point is, if they held on to God's promises by faith, how much more should we!

C. So chapter 12 tells us to run the race with endurance!

1. It begins with these words: **Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking**

**unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

- Go forward with Christ!
  - Go forward without turning away from Him.
  - Run with endurance.
2. God does not make the race easy.
- We have deep sin and rebellion that needs to be drawn out of us.
    - The root of that sin and rebellion is our unwillingness to serve God.
    - We want to live to please ourselves instead of to please Him—that is what began when Adam and Eve fell.
  - So God tests us to discipline us when we have been reconciled to Him.
    - He makes it hard to serve Him by sending trials and difficulties.
    - And these force us to continually choose Him instead of allowing ourselves to become bitter and hardened.
      - It is the same warning we have seen through all through Hebrews.
  - The benefit of this is that each time we are tested and we turn to God, we come to realise that much more how good it is to serve Him.
    - It deepens our love for Him.
    - He chastens us in this way because He loves us.
    - He does it for our own good.
      - Heb 12:11 explains: **Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.**
3. We are warned in the rest of the chapter that there are some who don't run the race... they don't believe that God is a rewarder of them that seek Him... they don't live in the reality of what God has revealed about Christ our Saviour.
- These persons grow bitter and angry toward God.
    - They are persons like Esau who is mentioned in verse 16 who sold his inheritance in God's house for some red stew.
    - He had no interest in future promises—he lived only for what he could see.
  - It is a fearful thing to reject God like that, for He is a holy God and will not receive those who reject His Son.
    - He will be to such persons a consuming fire—as shown in the remainder of chapter 12.
- D. The fourth way we should respond to God is to live the new life you have in Christ.
- This is the subject of chapter 13.
1. In verses 1-6, we are instructed about loving each other as those who are in Christ.
- Loving our brothers, loving strangers, loving those imprisoned for Christ, loving our spouse in sexual purity, and living without covetousness—as those who really do have God as our reward.
- And that brings us to verses 7-17.
2. In 7-17, we are instructed to worship God in the way of the new covenant.

- a. First, that we should obey our leaders who speak the word to us... considering the outcome of their faith (end up in glory with God where Christ is!)...
- b. Second, that we should not be led into ritual worship again with foods and altars and priests...
  - Now that Christ has come, it is not rituals and sanctuaries; but heartfelt thanksgiving and praise that is required.
    - Look at verse 14-16: **For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. <sup>15</sup> Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. <sup>16</sup> But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.**
- c. Third, again, that we should obey those who rule over us—following the teaching and worship of the apostles, which has just been described...
  - loving and caring for each other...
  - offering as our sacrifice, heartfelt praise and thanksgiving to God...

**Conclusion:** The epistle closes with a request for prayer and with a benediction that we will please God in the only way we can—through Christ who shed His blood to purify us.

- What a wonderful Saviour He is.
- It is all about Him.