

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Bible Survey Lesson 84: The Book of Hebrews, Part I

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews presents Christ as superior to the prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, and Aaron. He interweaves magnificent teaching on the person and work of Christ into frightening passages that warn against apostasy. The superiority of Christ inspired the writer to appeal for faith (ch. 11), perseverance (ch. 12), and good works (ch. 13).

Author:

There are entire books written on the authorship of Hebrews, which has been debated since shortly after the people to whom the letter was written died.

I certainly don't want to take all my time rehashing all the data, but perhaps a brief summary would be interesting.

Luke was named by Clement of Alexandria (AD. 155 to 220). Luke's knowledge of Greek would favor him, but he was a Gentile and the outlook of Hebrews is definitely Jewish. To counter this, Clement proposed in his *Hypotyposes*, that Luke actually translated an original writing by Paul. Interestingly, Clement was named as the possible author by later church leaders.

Barnabus was the favorite of Tertullian (approx. AD. 160-220) and the fact that he had a background as a Levite would have qualified him to write the book, but his choice had little support in the early church.

Silas was chosen because of the similarity of Hebrews to I Peter, on which he served as Peter's scribe (I Pet. 5:12), but historical church support is weak.

Apollos won the vote of Martin Luther (1483-1546) based on his reputation for eloquence (Acts 18:24) and the use of an elegant classic Greek in the letter, but, early church support is non-existent.

Less popular candidates have been **Philip, Aquilla, and Priscilla** named in the nineteenth century with no early documentation whatsoever.

Paul, a long-time favorite and the choice of early writers in the Eastern Roman Empire, was later supported by Jerome and Augustine (late 300s, early 400s), and has been the darling of many fundamentalist, and later, many evangelical scholars.

They point to his: exaltation of Christ; mention of Christ's role in creation; emphasis on miracles and gifts; stress on the new covenant; prominence of teaching on faith; and inclusion of the facts that the writer had been in chains, wrote from Italy, and was a close friend of Timothy, all mentioned in Hebrews.

Those opposed to Paul point to the facts that: his name is not given, and he always gives his name (2 Thess. 3:17); he was the apostle to Gentiles, not Jews; the writer places himself outside the sphere of the apostles (2:3-4); the style is much more classical than Paul's; and the priesthood of Jesus is not mentioned in other of Paul's writing.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Personally I choose to agree with the Biblical scholar Origen when, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, he wrote, "*Who it was that really wrote the Epistle [Hebrews], God only knows.*"

Audience:

Identifying the recipients of the letter may be just as difficult as the author since they are not directly addressed by name or location. It is evident that it is written to a Jewish audience, since it is filled with references to Hebrew history and religion and does not refer to any Gentile or pagan activity, but where?

Jerusalem (Palestine), Alexandria (Egypt), or Rome (Italy) have been suggested, with the weight of evidence leaning toward Rome.

The readers were not poor (6:10; 10:34) and readers in Jerusalem would have been. The Septuagint is used for all Old Testament quotations, again unlikely for an audience in Jerusalem. These facts would suggest Alexandria or Rome.

The phrase in 13:24, "Those from Italy greet you" tends to indicate Italian believers were sending their greeting back to their home, and this carries the day for many scholars, but the phrase may simply indicate it was written from Italy and sent elsewhere.

The fact that believers were being persecuted, but not martyred (3:32-34; 12:4), however, mitigates against Rome itself because this would have been during the rule of the Emperor Nero and he had many Christians killed as enemies of the state, including Paul. Besides, this persecution seems to be persecution by other Jews rather than the Roman government.

So, we don't know who the readers were for certain, and have only our speculation which points to a community of Hebrews (probably Hellenistic Jews since the Septuagint is used) in Italy, possibly outside of Rome itself.

Wherever they lived and whoever the writer was, he knew them well. They were generous (6:10) but immature (5:11-14). They were persecuted (10), and in danger of lapsing into sin (3), and some were considering a return to Judaism (6). His purpose was to avoid this disaster.

Date:

The dating is more logical. First, the use of the present tense throughout the letter when referring to the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system indicates the Temple was still standing and in use. Since the Temple was destroyed by Titus in AD. 70 the letter must have already been written by then.

Second, Timothy had just been released from prison (13:23), and if this is in conjunction with his ministry to Paul just before his death, that places the date in the very late 60's. It is reasonable, then, to place the writing of the letter to the Hebrews between AD. 67-69.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Purpose:

The purpose of prophecy, especially in the New Testament, is to encourage us to holy living. Seeing how things are getting worse and worse, knowing that we have a "blessed hope" of eternity with God, should change our life-style into one of obedience that brings glory to God.

The main idea of the Book of Hebrews is that the knowledge of who Jesus is, the Great High Priest, should lift a believer from spiritual apathy and move them on to spiritual maturity. In other words, it will change our life-style.

Hebrews 4:14--"Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS, PART I

Introduction:

The rituals and sacrifices of Jewish religion visually represented God's promises (covenant) with Israel. The law and the prophets verbally proclaimed the same truth. Both forms of communication pointed to God's way of forgiveness and salvation that was yet to be totally revealed.

When Jesus came, he fulfilled the law and the prophets, did away with the need for on going sacrifices, conquered sin and death once and for all, and freely provided eternal life through a new covenant in His blood. (Luke 22:20; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 9:15)

This new message was difficult for devout Jews to accept. They were looking for a Messiah coming in great power and glory to set up a New Kingdom on the earth. They were entrenched in forms of worship, obeying the law, and following tradition.

Too many following Jesus were following a false Messiah and they sought to eliminate this "heresy." For those who recognized Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, they often struggled to integrate their heritage, religious practice, and Old Testament teachings into their new-found faith.

And for some, they found it hard not to slip back into the old and familiar forms of worship. Hebrews is a masterful document written to demonstrate the superiority of the New Covenant in Christ. The message of Hebrews is that Christianity is superior to Judaism, because Christ is supreme and totally sufficient to carry out God's covenant of salvation.

I. POSITION (Chapters 1:1-4:16)

The writer of Hebrews presented Jesus Christ as the High Priest who offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sins. Christ was superior to every aspect of the Old Testament system. Understanding this principle could help prevent the readers from abandoning Christ and returning to Judaism.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

JESUS IS . . .

A. Superior to Prophets (1:1-4)

God had spoken in times past through the prophets at many times and in many ways. But, the revelation of God "in these last days" (v 2), through Jesus was superior to that of the prophets.

This is true because Jesus was the Heir, Creator, Revealer, divine Reflection, Image of God, and Sustainer of the universe. Jesus, by providing Himself, the perfect sacrifice, cleansed our sins and then took His seat at God's right hand because His work as High Priest was finished.

And, His work was acceptable to God as evidenced in verse 2 and stated so clearly by Paul in Phil. 2:9-11, ". . . God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father."

B. Superior to Angels (1:5-2:18)

The contrast between angels and Jesus is a powerful one. Angels are servants of God created to minister to believers (1:14) while Jesus is God's Son, who received the worship of angels (1:6) because of who He is. And, who is He?

1. Person (1:5-14)

The writer scours the Old Testament to illustrate who Jesus is:

- a. Verse 5--He is declared to be the Son of God--Ps. 2:7*
- b. Verses 6-7--He is worshipped by angels--Deut. 32:43*
- c. Verses 8-9--His ministry is eternal--Ps. 104:4; 45:6*
- d. Verses 10-12--He is eternal--Psalm 102:25-27*
- e. Verse 13--His work is successfully completed--Ps. 110:1*

2. Proclamation (2:1-4)

The superiority of Christ makes the failure to believe on Him a fearful thing. If not listening to the angels brings punishment, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was spoken through the Lord," confirmed by its hearers, by God's miracles, and by the Holy Spirit.

3. Purpose (2:5-18)

Jesus didn't become an angel to save angels but a man to save men.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

C. Superior to Moses (3:1-6)

Christ is superior to Moses in three ways:

- 1. Moses was a servant, Jesus was the Son.*
- 2. Moses was in God's house (people of God), Jesus was over God's house.*
- 3. Moses testified to a coming reality, Jesus was the coming reality.*

D. Superior to Other Men of Faith (3:7-4:16)

Jesus' superiority over Moses just makes it a more dangerous matter to reject Him than to reject Moses. And rejecting Moses is bad enough.

1. Catastrophe of Unbelief (3:7-19)

The writer refers to the experience of Israel in Numbers 14 as an illustration. The people hardened their hearts and refused to believe and obey God, again and again, for forty years. This caused God to be angry and react with a just punishment, loss of entrance to the Promised Land.

The warning is clear. "Don't let the same thing happen to you in your daily walk." "For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end" (v. 14).

2. Consequence of Unbelief (4:1-10)

Just as disobedience and unbelief caused Moses and the children of Israel to lose out on their rest, dwelling in Canaan, disobedience can cause believers to miss out on "His" (God's) promised rest.

"Entering His rest" has been interpreted several ways, largely depending on people's interpretation of the entire book.

If one interprets Hebrews as being written exclusively to believers, then you must see this rest as a rest that includes God's peace, confidence of salvation, reliance on his strength, and assurance of a future heavenly home. Entering His rest becomes synonymous with perseverance in faith and obedience, unless you hold an Arminian position in which true believer can lose his salvation.

If one sees Hebrews as a book written to professing believers, some of whom are "professors, but not possessors" or not true believers, you may view this as remaining faithful and obedient to a head knowledge until persecution comes and then "failed to enter because of their disobedience" (v. 6).

If one looks at Hebrews as a letter written to three distinct groups of Jews: believers; intellectually convinced unbelievers; unbelievers attracted by the message but not finally committed to Christ, with a peculiar message for each (see notes in MacArthur Study Bible), you can creatively interpret this passage with no difficulty whatsoever.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

There is one other view worthy of consideration. This interpretation is based on the belief that the rest refers to the promise of the Millennial Kingdom which will begin at the second coming of Christ. In this view, a Canaan rest, entrance into the promised land, and a Sabbath rest, the rest after creation, were mere pictures or shadows of the final promise.

I am sure there are other views, but I didn't find any others that made sense or took into consideration all of the passage.

This we do know, God's true rest did not come through Joshua or Moses, or David, but through Jesus Christ who is greater than all of them. Joshua led the children into the Promised Land, but that was just an earthly rest.

God was still offering His rest in the time of David, long after they were in the land, so the rest must have been spiritual rather than physical, and thus far superior to the anything they obtained. Heavenly rest, according to Paul in Ephesians 1, is characterized by the fulfillment of the heavenly promise and cannot be obtained by earthly labor.

3. Cure for Unbelief (4:11-16)

And how do we know we are faithful and obedient? It is the Word of God which exposes disobedience and judges our sin.

"For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of the soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (v 13).

And it is our Great High Priest Jesus who, having been a real man, can sympathize with our weaknesses (v 15), and provide grace and help in our time of need (v 16) by interceding with the Father for us.

Lessons:

- 1. Christ is superior to all the temporary systems of sacrifice, law, or prophets since His substitute sacrifice was "once for all."*
- 2. Jesus is a sympathetic and faithful high priest who stands before God in our behalf.*
- 3. The Word of God is the "sharp sword" that exposes disobedience and judges our sin.*

Homework:

Read: Finish reading or reread The Book of Hebrews

Think: Do I understand faith and live by it as the heroes in Hebrews did?

Apply: Live this week reviewing how Jesus has changed your life.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Bible Survey Lesson 85: The Book of Hebrews, Part II

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS, PART II

Introduction:

The writer of Hebrews presents Jesus Christ as the perfect High Priest who offered Himself, the perfect sacrifice, once and for all. He was superior to every aspect of the Old Testament system.

He was superior to the prophets because he was more than just a man speaking to the people for God. He was the Heir, Creator, Revealer, divine Reflection, the Image of God, and Sustainer of the Universe.

He was superior to the angels because they were servants of God created to minister to believers, while Jesus is God's Son who receives their worship.

He was superior to Moses because Moses was a servant, one of God's people who testified of a coming savior, while Jesus is God's Son, over all of God's people, and the savior.

He was superior to other men of faith such as Joshua, who was unable to lead the children of Israel into their rest in Canaan because of their unbelief and David, who was unable to fulfill the promised rest even though he was in the land. Jesus is able to lead men through salvation, obedience, and perseverance into His final rest as they allow the Word of God to expose disobedience and judge their sin.

So, Jesus is superior to the Prophets, Angels, and Patriarchs . . . AND JESUS IS ALSO SUPERIOR TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

II. PRIESTHOOD (CHAPTERS 5:1-10:39)

The job of a high priest was to represent the people before God by offering prayers, gifts, and sacrifices in order to deal with their sin problem.

A. Superior Qualifications (5:1-10)

The qualifications for high priest are stated in these verses, and Aaron, the first man to be appointed by God for this office, is used as the example of what a high priest does. Because Aaron was surrounded by weakness and "beset with weakness himself," he is able to have compassion on the people. (1-4)

What makes this especially difficult is that, since he is a sinner he must offer sacrifices for his own sin as well as the sins of others, over and over again.

Jesus was also appointed to the priesthood by God (v 6), and also faced suffering and hardship requiring Him to cry out to God for mercy for Himself and the people (v 7) He too had to "learn obedience from the things He suffered" (v 8).

What made Him different was that, ". . . having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (v 9).

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Jesus, who was not a Levite but from the tribe of Judah, was appointed by God to be a high priest not in the order of Levi, but, according to the order of Melchizedek which is explained more fully in chapter 7.

B. Parenthetical Warning (5:11-6:20)

There are a number of warnings in the letter to the Hebrews:

In chapter 2 the writer warned against drifting and made it clear that, since the Old Covenant provided penalties for disobedience, there would certainly be penalties attached to neglecting the New Covenant.

In chapters 3 and 4 the writer warned against actively turning ones back on God. If the Israelites, by disobedience, were unable to enter the promised land, so those who fail to believe and obey the good news will not enter the kingdom of God.

In chapter 12 we will see warning against rejecting God, this time stating if the Israelites who rejected God did not escape His earthly judgment, surely no one who rejects God will escape His heavenly judgment.

These three warnings are melted into the text. There are two more warnings, but these are emphasized by placing them in a parenthetical form. The first is here and the second is in CHAPTER 10.

This one is the most controversial passage in the entire letter. The struggle centers around the phrases, "once enlightened and . . . tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (v 4), "fallen away," and "again crucify to themselves the Son of God" (v 6) which have been viewed in several ways:

1. These are true Christian who are in danger of losing their salvation.

This reflects the Arminian position that a believer who, by his free will, does not remain faithful and persevere to the end will be lost. This view is in direct opposition to many verses that teach that believers cannot lose their salvation. (i.e. Jn. 6:37-38, 10:27-29; Rom. 8:29, 8:35-39, 11:29; Eph. 4:30; Phil. 1:6; 2 Pet. 1:4-5)

Even believers in the Arminian position have trouble with verse 6 that indicates that once fallen away a person cannot repent again.

2. These are Jews who lean toward following but don't yet believe.

Verse 4 indicates that they have "tasted" of the truth that indicates that they are, at the very least, professing believers.

3. These are believers in danger, not of losing salvation but rewards.

Some feel this passage is an attempt to keep believers from the practice of being saved over and over again for fear of being lost. But, if they are in the practice of constant repentance, how will they "fall away?"

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

The stress of the passage is on a need of faith and repentance, not continued works, which would indicate a need of salvation in the first place.

4. These are "professing believers" who may or may not be truly saved.

They are not referred to in terms that apply solely to believers, i.e. holy, born again, righteous, saints, etc. So, they could be true believers, but don't have to be.

It is possible to be enlightened, convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, see miracles performed (vv. 4-5), and yet be lost. (see 2 Pet 2:20-22 and Matt. 7:21-23. They could then be "fallen away" from the knowledge of the truth not the personal possession of it (vv. 6 and 9).

The warning for believers not to fall back into the form of Judaism, and for non-believers not to commit themselves to their old religion instead of placing their trust in Jesus by faith, then makes sense.

The work and love of the readers seems to have convinced the writer that they were mostly believers and not apostate so he urges them to press on to achieve maturity by obeying the promises of God (6:13-18).

C. Superior Order (7:1-8:13)

Not only is Jesus superior in His qualifications for the priesthood, He is superior in the order of His priesthood.

1. Presentation of Melchizedek (7:1-3)

The writer reached back to Genesis 14 and the story of Melchizedek to explain the nature of Jesus' priesthood. His name and hometown suggest that he was the "king of righteousness" and "king of peace," and the Bible didn't record a beginning or ending for his life. He was a priest-king, clearly a type of Christ, who "like the Son of God, abides a priest perpetually."

2. Preeminence of Melchizedek (7:4-28)

His greatness is evident since Abraham paid him tithes. Because the priesthood of Aaron did not bring people into obedience to God, He changed the priesthood. He installed Christ as the priest of another order, the Order of Melchizedek.

His priesthood was superior for three reasons:

1) It was founded not on the law, but God personally initiated it with an personal oath (vv. 16-24).

2) Christ's priesthood is permanent and will not be passed on (v 25).

3) Christ's character is far superior to that of any Aaronic priest since He has no sin of His own for which to atone. He provided one sacrifice that was effective, once and for all (26-28).

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

D. Superior Ministry (8:1-10:18)

1. Better Covenant (8:1-13)

In addition to a new order of priesthood, God inaugurated a new covenant. Jeremiah foretold of this new covenant (31:31-34) which provides three benefits to those who lived under the law:

1) A new awareness of the purpose of the law (to reveal our sinfulness) and a new nature by which to obey God.

2) A personal knowledge of God that inspired loyalty and obedient commitment to Him.

3) A complete forgiveness for sins. Christians today have inherited this covenant relationship with God.

2. Better Sanctuary (9:1-12)

In these verses the writer gives a brief description of the Tabernacle. It was provided to make possible the removal of external pollution by use of animal sacrifice. "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through that greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands . . . and not through the blood of goats or calves, but through His own blood, He entered into the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." (vv. 11-12).

3. Better Sacrifice (9:13-10:18)

This sacrifice was better than animal sacrifices because:

1) It removes more than the external stain of sin, cleansed the conscience, and inspired holy living (vv13-14).

2) It resulted in the complete removal of sin by Christ's blood (vv 15- 22).

3) By entering God's presence, Christ showed the sacrifice to be perfect and sufficient and guaranteed He will come again to complete the salvation process by taking us to His Father (vv. 23- 28).

And above all . . .

4) It is a permanent sacrifice. The once-for-all death of Jesus forever took away all our sins and need for further sacrifice remains (10:1-18)

E. Parenthetical Warning (10:19-39)

This is the second warning which the writer drops into his letter as an aside. The first was for the believers not to fall back into Judaism. This one warns them not to pull away from Jesus Christ. In fact, the writer calls them to, "have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus . . . and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds." (vv. 19-24).

Turning away from Christ and neglecting other believers exposes us to sin and divine judgment. Perseverance is a demonstration of faith and obedience (vv. 26-39). He ends this portion by quoting Habakkuk 2:4, one of Paul's favorite verses on faith (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11). ". . . By my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." (v 38)

This clearly teaches that the person who has been made righteous by God lives, and survives every trial by faith. The believer trusts God for everything, and that trusting makes it possible to persevere to the end no matter what happens.

III. POWER (Chapters 11:1-13:19)

Jesus is superior to the Prophets, Angels, Patriarchs and the Old Testament Priesthood . . .

AND JESUS IS ALSO SUPERIOR IN POWER.

A. Power of Faith (11:1-40)

Carrying on with his theme of faith the writer first defines it, then, to make sure we understand, gives a host of examples.

1. Examination (11:1)

"Now faith is the assurance (or reality) of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Faith gives reality and to things we cannot see, treating them as if they were already objects of sight rather than just objects of hope. What does that mean? Perhaps some examples will help.

2. Examples (11:2-40)

In the generations before the flood, Abel, Enoch, and Noah responded by faith and demonstrated obedience to God. Their faith pleased Him.

Abraham demonstrated his faith by forsaking the comforts of Ur and Haran to follow God to the Promised Land. By faith Abraham and Sarah had a son Isaac even though they were too old (8-12). Moses showed his faith by leaving the wealth and power of the Egyptian palace to suffer with the Hebrew slaves (23-28).

The writer went on to present Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel, and many other heroes, both men and women, as examples to help us understand faith. The promises that the Old Testament believers expected, because they believed God, were coming true in the very events that the New Testament Christians experienced, including the Messiah (39-40).

Note: Faith results in action. By faith Abel offered, , Enoch walked, Noah built, Abraham left, Sarah conceived, Abraham offered, etc.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

B. Power of Hope (12:1-29)

And now these "men of whom the world was not worthy" (11:38) are "so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us" (v 1). This should inspire us to:

1. Discipline (12:1-11)

The example of these saints should cause us to "lay aside every encumbrance" (the outward impediments such as legalism or persecution), and "sin which so easily entangles us" (the inward bent that splits our focus), and "run with endurance the race." The Greek word used here is the root of the English word "agony." It is a long distance race, not a sprint.

And are the O.T. saints our only encouragement and example of endurance under pressure? No, we can fix our eyes on Jesus as the object of our faith. He is the "author" (originator) and "perfecter" (completer) of faith. He literally wrote the book about faith, in His blood, His suffering, and His final exaltation.

When we consider the hardship Jesus faced, we should find strength and courage to persevere. God allows us to experience hardship because hardship develops holiness and rough times produce righteousness.

2. Direction (12:12-29)

So, the perseverance of the saints and Jesus help us to discipline ourselves to run with endurance, but, it is the character of God that gives us the direction for our lives.

God desires that all believers seek personal holiness (v 14). God will not tolerate a disobedient, self-serving life-style. God is awesome. His presence at Sinai which caused thunder and lightning created a fear in the people. How much more should we fear God when He is speaking to us from His heavenly throne. The eternal kingdom, to which all believers belong, cannot be shaken so Christians have the grace to serve God with both stamina and reverence (25-29).

C. Power of Love (13:1-25)

The last chapter of this letter focuses on some of the essentials of Christian ethics which portray the true gospel to the world and encourage others to believe in Christ and bring glory to God. This is the result of love for fellow believers and for a lost world.

1. Social Duties (13:1-6)

Christians have practical duties toward one another, including sympathy to those being persecuted and living moral lives. God has promised never to leave Christians and that alone should banish greed and fear from our lives.

2. Spiritual Duties (13:7-25)

Christians must follow examples of the faith of their leaders and submit to those who care for their spiritual needs. This allows them to do their jobs with joy and not hardship or frustration (7-8; 17).

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

God is pleased with spiritual sacrifices believers offer up to Him. Those pleasing sacrifices include commitment, praise, and unselfish sharing of resources (9-16).

The writer ends with a prayer of thanksgiving and the request that Jesus, "equip you in every good thing to do His will" (v 21). He asks them to continue to pray for the ministry, reports on Timothy's release from prison, and calls for God's grace to be with them all.

Lessons:

- 1. Jesus is superior, not only to Judaism, but to all contemporary religions.*
- 2. Christianity is a relationship to Jesus, not a religious system.*
- 3. Because of the ministry of Christ we can draw near to worship Him (10), live by faith (11), persevere to the end (12), and live a life of love and obedience (13).*

Homework:

Read: The Book of James

Think: Does my faith bring joy and produce works in the areas of everyday testing that James presents?

Apply: Ask the Lord to work in you this week to build your faith, focus your hope, and increase your love.