

Christian Stability and Faithfulness

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Hebrews 1:1-4

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- Context/Background of Hebrews and an overview of Hebrews 1:1-4 was given.
- **Main Theme:** Christian stability and faithfulness comes through clear vision of who Jesus is and what He has done.

I. Who Jesus Is

- When trials come and our souls are shaken and hearts troubled, often what we think we need most is for the trial to disappear, to go away. The reality is, that is not what we most need.
- What we most need is not for the trial to be removed (though thankfully, sometimes God does that); rather, what we most need is vision.
- What we most need is clear vision of who Jesus is because when, by faith, we see Jesus Christ as incomparably great, infinitely majestic, and supremely glorious – well then, the relative magnitude of our trials and tribulations diminishes.
- They lose their power to cast a spell of fear, discouragement and even hopelessness over our souls. Furthermore, our faith is strengthened, peace comes, and our joy is renewed.
- Illustration: Jesus and his disciples upon the sea when a fierce storm arose. Jesus asked them “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” In other words, Jesus was saying in essence, ‘don’t you know by now Who I am? Because if you did...if you truly grasped who was with you in the boat, at the time the waves were crashing in upon you, you would not have been so utterly shaken and terrified to the core.’
- In a similar way, in the book of Hebrews, the author was saying to his original audience in essence ‘So you’re terrified of the waves of persecution towering over you, threatening to harm you and your family and possibly take your life? Well then, I ask you -- Do you not realize Who it is that is with you in the boat? It seems you have forgotten, so let me introduce you again to Jesus Christ. Welcome to Jesus Christ. This is who He is AND now, in light of that ---I exhort you—don’t abandon Christ, but instead place all your hope, all your faith, all your trust in Him and in so doing experience God’s abiding peace!’
- Overview of how Hebrews points to Jesus’ identity and invites faith as the proper response.

“...the Lord is my helper; he is able to help, and does help, when none else can; he has promised to be the helper of his people; he has laid help for them on Christ, who is mighty...” – John Gill (on Hebrews 13:6)
- God by the Holy Spirit says to the first readers of this book -- and us -- 'In your trials; in your tribulations; in your sufferings--- Why are you so afraid? Do you not know who I am? Do you not know who is your helper—Do you not know that Christ who is mighty is with you in the boat?'

- As the year 2024 begins, there is nothing we need more than a clear vision of the Christ who is mighty and will never leave or forsake us no matter what trials, hardships, and sorrows we may in fact experience.
Hebrews grants us that kind of vision.

II. What Jesus Has Done

- Verse 4 of our passage speaks of how Jesus made purification for our sins. That is a reference to Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the Cross, which is a major theme in Hebrews.
Hebrews makes much of Jesus' High Priestly work.
- It explains, especially in chapters 4-10, what it means that Jesus is our great High Priest who made atonement for our sins and the practical implications for Christian living.
- The book of Hebrews helps us to be Christ-centered, or gospel-centered, which is one of our seven shared values as a family of churches.
- Hebrews helps us to connect the person and work of Jesus Christ to daily living, which is critical for our maturity and faithfulness as Christians.

The cross of Christ is the heart of the apostles' gospel and of their piety and praise as well; so surely it ought to be central in our own proclamation, catechesis, and devotional practice. True Christ-centeredness is, and ever must be, cross-centeredness. The cross on which the divine-human mediator hung, and from which he rose to reign on the basis and in the power of his atoning death, must become the vantage point from which we survey the whole of human history and human life, the reference point for explaining all that has gone wrong in the world everywhere and all that God has done and will do to put it right, and the center point for fixing the flow of doxology and devotion from our hearts. Healthy, virile [veerile], competent Christianity depends on clear-headedness about the cross; otherwise we are always off-key. And clear-headedness about the cross, banishing blurriness of mind, is only attained by facing up to the reality of Christ's blood-sacrifice of himself in penal substitution for those whom the Father had given him to redeem. – JI Packer

Conclusion

As a pastoral team, we believe the Lord wants to use this series to help us to behold the supremacy of Christ, the majesty of Christ, the glory of Christ, the love of Christ and then to respond by looking to Him in faith and trusting Him in every situation.

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Consider taking time to read Hebrews 1:1-4 out loud. Consider also reading Mark 4:35-41 out loud as this passage was used to illustrate the kind of effect the book of Hebrews is meant to have on our souls.
- In Mark 4, the disciples clearly failed to fully grasp who Jesus is and thus they were terrified to the core when the storm came. What was it that they failed to grasp?
- How can we at times be similar to the disciples in the boat when difficult trials come upon us?

- How do you think this book would have helped strengthen the faith of the original readers, who were facing the threat of increased persecution?
- How can taking time to meditate on Christ -- on who He is and what He has done, strengthen our faith and steady our souls in times of trial and suffering and difficulty?
- Re-read the JI Packer quote in the Sermon Recap. How do you find that quote helpful?
- In your own devotions over the years, when you have read the book of Hebrews, how has this book helped you and encouraged you? What are you looking forward to about the series in Hebrews?
- Consider taking time to pray (A) for this series, that God would use it mightily in our own lives and in our church and (B) that the Lord would help us to keep Christ Jesus -- His person and work, as the central focus of our lives.