

September 27, 2009 by Steve Brandon



Jesus Is Better, So Press On!

Hebrews

1. Jesus Is Better.

2. So Press On!

We begin this morning an exposition of the book of Hebrews, which is a wonderful book that God has given to us in His Holy Word. I'm excited about this book, because it is all about the Lord Jesus Christ. From beginning to end, it lifts Jesus high.

The relentless argument of the writer is that Jesus is better than anything else that we might look to as we approach God. Jesus is better than the angels (1:4). Jesus is better than Moses (3:3). Jesus is better than Abraham (7:7-9). Jesus is better than Aaron, as He has brought in a new priesthood (7:23-24). Jesus has inaugurated a New Covenant, which is better than the Old (8:6). Jesus has cleaned a holy place that is better than the Old Testament tabernacle (9:24). The sacrifice of Jesus was better than any of the Old Testament sacrifices (10:14).

What a good thing for us as a church to hear over and over again, "Look to Jesus. He is better. He is God's son. He is better than anything offered in the Old Testament. His sacrifice has fully satisfied God's wrath against us (10:18). He is what the Old Testament saints look for (11:39-40)."

One of the characteristics of children is that they like to tell their friends of how much better their father is. "My dad is better than your dad" is the cry of many children. In fact, in my study this week, I found that there was a reality television show called, "My Dad Is Better Than Your Dad." It premiered a year and a half ago (Feb. 18, 2008). In that show, dads teamed up with one of their children and competed against other dads and their children. There were four rounds: My Dad is Faster, My Dad is Stronger, My Dad is Smarter, My Dad is Braver. And there was a bonus round, "My Dad Knows Me Better." In each of the rounds, they set up some sort of competition to see if these things were so. If you have never heard of this television show, it's because it only lasted eight episodes, and was pulled off the air in April of 2008. [\[1\]](#)

But, children aren't the only ones who boast of their accomplishments. Adults like to join in the game as well, which is illustrated in this poem by Shel Silverstein.

My uncle said, "How do you get to school?"
I said, "By bus," and my uncle smiled.
"When I was your age," my uncle said,
"I walked it barefoot--seven miles."

My uncle said, "How much weight can you tote?"
I said, "One bag of grain." my uncle laughed.
"When I was your age," my uncle said,
"I could drive a wagon--and lift a calf."

My uncle said, "How many fights have you had?"
I said, "Two--and both times I got whipped."
"When I was your age," my uncle said,
"I fought every day--and was never licked."

My uncle said, "How old are you?"
I said, "Nine and a half," and then
My uncle puffed out his chest and said,
"When I was your age... I was ten. [\[2\]](#)

Now, there are people like this, who are actually quite annoying, because they are merely trying to make themselves look great, especially as they stretch the truth at times. But, when talking about Jesus we don't have to work hard to make Him look great. We don't need to stretch the truth. Jesus is great. He is greater than anything to which we might turn. And we have warrant in the Scripture to boast about our Savior. Paul wrote, "May it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." One of the characteristics of genuine believers is that we "glory in Christ Jesus." Literally, this means that we "boast in Christ Jesus." Throughout Hebrews, we will spend much time looking at how great Jesus is. My prayer is that we will learn to boast in Jesus Christ.

Now, there is a reason why the book of Hebrews lifts Jesus so high and shows how great He is. It's because there were some in the days of

the early church who weren't quite so sure how great Jesus was. As its name bears out, the book of Hebrews is written to Jewish people. The number of direct Old Testament quotations are astonishing. More than 40 different times in this book, the writer quotes directly from the Old Testament. That's a lot of quotations. It demonstrates that the people to whom he was writing knew the Old Testament Scripture and held it in high regard.

The recipients of this letter were Jewish people who were in the church. On several occasions, the writer addresses them as in the church. He calls them, "holy brethren" (3:1), "beloved" (6:9), and "brethren" (10:19' 13:22). All of these are typical titles of those who are in the church. Further, the writer speaks many times about their inclusion into the church. He told them that they were "partakers of a heavenly calling" (3:1). They had heard much of the word of God (5:12); they had been enlightened (6:4); they had tasted the heavenly gift (6:4); they had become partakers of the Holy Spirit (6:4); they had tasted the good word of God (6:4); they had experienced the powers of the age to come (6:5); they had labored in the work of God (6:10); they had ministered to the saints (6:10).

And yet, they were in danger. They were in danger of falling away from these things (6:6). They were in danger of drifting from the great salvation that had been extended to them (2:1). They were in danger of having a hard heart (3:12). They were in danger of turning away from the truth that they had heard (10:26). They were in danger of coming short of the grace of God (12:15, 25). And so, the simple exhortation comes, "Press on!" (6:1). "Press on to maturity" (6:1). "Pay close attention to what you have heard" (2:1). "Don't be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (3:13). "Pursue God with diligence" (4:11). "Draw near" to Jesus (4:16; 10:22). "Hold fast the confession" (10:23). "Don't forsake your assembling together" (10:25). "Don't throw away your confidence" (10:35). "Endure." (10:36). "Run with endurance the race that is set before us" (12:1).

And now, you can understand the theme of the book of Hebrews: Jesus Is Better, So Press On! "Jesus is better than the Old Testament ways from which you came." So, don't neglect Him. Don't turn back! He can satisfy like nothing else in your life. Press on to know Him and pursue Him. "Jesus Is Better, So Press On!"

Please notice the importance of the little word, "So." God always gives us reasons for obedience. The declarations in Scripture are the foundations of the obligations. God always precedes the imperative with indicative. With every call to obey, there is always a sufficient and compelling reason to want to obey. In this case, the recipients of this letter are told to "press on." Why? Because Jesus is better than anything else that they might pursue. To miss that connection is to miss God's heart. To miss that connection is to miss the gospel. God doesn't say, "Press On!" as if that were the only thing He said. On the contrary, He maintains that Jesus is so gloriously great that we must press on.

C. S. Lewis said it so well, ...

If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desire not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, we are like ignorant children who want to continue making mud pies in a slum because we cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a vacation at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. [\[3\]](#)

This is what the book of Hebrews is all about. It's about showing the glories of vacation at the sea, so that you would have no desire to make mud pies in a slum. It's about showing how great Jesus is, that we would have no other desire, but to pursue after Him! The book, then, is an apologetic on the greatness of Jesus Christ. Over and over and over again, we are shown from the Old Testament how Jesus is better than anything else that was ever offered to the Jewish people before. What else can we do? Press on!

My outline is simple:

1. Jesus Is Better
2. So Press On!

It's the theme of the book. It makes a good outline.

Now, before we get into my first point (and the message of the book), I want to say a few words about the book in general. First of all, we don't know who wrote the book of Hebrews. The book itself doesn't give us any indication, except a reference toward the end of the book to Timothy's imprisonment. That's it. That's all that we know of the writer of this letter. We know that he knew Timothy (13:23). He didn't identify himself. There is no consistent teaching from church tradition.

Such a lack of evidence has caused many to speculate. Perhaps the most common view is that Paul wrote it. However, it reads so differently than all of his other epistles. Some have held that Barnabas wrote it (such as Tertullian, an early church father). Martin Luther suggested that Apollos wrote it. Perhaps. We know that Apollos was "mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24) and that his eloquence may have matched the eloquence of this letter. One has even mentioned that Priscilla wrote it. In the end, we don't know. Origen's comments are the best, "who wrote the Epistle, only God knows." And that's where we will leave it.

Regarding the form of the book, I believe that the book is best understood as a sermon, which was written down as a letter. How appropriate it would have been for Paul or Barnabas or Titus or Apollos or Luke to go out from his own congregation and preach this sermon to many different churches, lifting high the name of Jesus, urging them to remain faithful to Jesus, and pleading them not to return to Old Testament Judaism.

1. Jesus Is Better

For this point, I simply want to walk through this letter to show you how it points out that Jesus is better. Let's begin in the first verse.

Hebrews 1:1-2

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son

Right here the whole contrast of the book is set up. On the one hand, you have Old Testament revelation, which came in various different ways. There were prophets. There were direct revelations. There were smoking mountains. There were angelic visitations. There were fingers writing upon the wall. But, now, on the other hand, you have the New Testament revelation, which has come primarily through Jesus, identified here as "Son." His revelation is better than that of the Old Testament, in that He spoke with finality through a person, the Son of God.

Beginning in the second half of verse 2, we see seven descriptions of Jesus:

Hebrews 1:2b-3

(1) whom He appointed heir of all things, (2) through whom also He made the world. (3) And He is the radiance of His glory (4) and the exact representation of His nature, (5) and upholds all things by the word of His power. (6) When He had made purification of sins, (7) He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

When we come to this verse, we will spend some time looking at each of these phrases in detail. It's sufficient now, simply to comment that these verses show how great Jesus is. He is God, whose sacrifice cleansed our sins, and now He is seated in a position of authority. We see that

a. Jesus is better than the angels

Hebrews 1:4

... having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

At this point, we encounter this little word, "better." "He is much better than the angels" (1:4). This word occurs 18 times in the entire New Testament. Two-thirds (twelve) of those references are in Hebrews. It's because Hebrews is all about telling us that Jesus is better. Jesus is better than the angels. The writer states the fact in verse 4 and spends the rest of chapters 1 and 2 proving it from the Old Testament. First of all, he focuses upon the name of Jesus.

Hebrews 1:5

For to which of the angels did He ever say, "You are my son, today I have begotten you"? And again, "I will be a father to him and he shall be a Son to Me"?

Jesus has the name, "Son," which none of the angels had. We see "Michael" and "Gabriel", but not "Son." Furthermore, we see how Jesus has a greater position:

Hebrews 1:6

And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."

The angels were summoned to worship Jesus. They are called servants.

Hebrews 1:7

And of the angels He says, "Who makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire."

Angels are servants. They are not to be worshipped. Jesus is served. Jesus is greater. In verse 8, we see that Jesus has a throne. In verse 9, we see that Jesus has been anointed by God. In verses 10-12, we see that Jesus was the creator of the world! The position of Jesus in this world is made clear:

Hebrews 1:13-14

But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

Again, you see the contrast. Jesus is seated upon His throne awaiting a time of victory. But, the angels are servants to those who are saved. Angels are servants; Jesus is our King. Jesus is better. The argument continues on, ...

Hebrews 2:5

For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking.

Angels do not have domain over the earth. This is followed by a quotation from Psalm 8,

Hebrews 2:6-8 (Psalm 8:4-6)

What is man that you remember him?

or the son of man, that you are concerned about him?

You have made him for a little while lower than the angels;

You have crowned him with glory and honor,

And have appointed him over the works of your hands;

You have put all things in subjection under his feet

And then comes the explanation, ...

Hebrews 2:8

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

Catch what is being said here. Everything is subject to Jesus. There is nothing that isn't subject to Him. That makes Jesus greater than all things, including angels. Jesus is better than the angels. In chapter 3, we see that ...

b. Jesus is better than Moses.

Hebrews 3:3

For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.

Jesus has more glory than Moses. For some in the days after Jesus, this was difficult to believe. Indeed, there was an entire sect of people, the Sadducees, who followed nothing but the law of Moses. To them, Moses was their hero. But, the author he goes on to explain why Jesus was greater.

Hebrews 3:5-6

Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house--whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Moses was a servant in the house. But, Jesus was the Son over His house. Jesus is better than Moses. For much of chapters 3 and 4, the writer gives an exhortation flowing from the life of Moses. But, his argument of showing how Jesus is greater picks up late in chapter 4. Here we see that ...

c. Jesus is better than the high priests.

Hebrews 4:14-15

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

The high priests of the Old Testament were earthly high priests. But, Jesus, the new high priest, is a heavenly high priest. He had passed through the heavens. The high priests of the Old Testament were imperfect. But, Jesus, the new high priest, is a perfect priest. We see His perfection in these verses:

Hebrews 5:9-10

And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

A perfect priest is better than any of the other priests that have ever existed. His priesthood isn't of the normal variety. Rather, His priesthood was on the order of Melchizedek. The writer then picks up the life of Melchizedek in chapter 7, when he shows that ...

d. Jesus is better than Abraham.

We pick it up with a discussion about a man named Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:1-7

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he

remains a priest perpetually. Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.

And now, I ask you, "Who is greater? The one who blesses? Or, the one who receives the blessing?" The answer is clear, "Without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater" (7:7). Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek. Therefore, Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. Since Jesus was a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:6), He, too, is greater than Abraham. Next, we see that ...

e. Jesus is better than the priests of Aaron.

Hebrews 7:11

Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?

Do you see the reasoning? If perfection was obtained through Aaron and his line of priests, then there would have been no need for another priesthood to arise. However, another priesthood did arise, the priesthood of Melchizedek. Back in Psalm 110, it was prophesied that the Messiah would be of the order of Melchizedek. Thus, there must have been something imperfect concerning the priesthood of Aaron. In verse 18, the writer begins to contrast the priests of Aaron with the priest of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:18-25

For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. And inasmuch as it was not without an oath (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever"); so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

The law of the priests of Aaron were set aside. But, the hope of Jesus came in. The priests of Aaron became priests without an oath. But, Jesus became a priest with an oath. The priests of Aaron existed in great numbers, because they died. Their priesthood was temporary. But, Jesus lives forever. So, His priesthood is permanent. Therefore, "He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him"!!! (7:25). The priests of Aaron could never do that. Jesus is better than the priests of Aaron. In chapter 8, we see the next item on the writer's agenda:

f. Jesus has a better covenant.

The key verses here come in verses 6 and 7, ...

Hebrews 8:6-7

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.

The first covenant was flawed. It was flawed because the people could never keep it. We needed another covenant by which we would be enabled to keep the covenant. That's the New Covenant, which God promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34. God promised to put His law into their minds and upon their hearts. God promised to be their God and be merciful to them.

g. Jesus has a better tabernacle.

Perhaps you are familiar with the tabernacle of the Old Testament. At the beginning of chapter 9, the writer describes it a bit.

Hebrews 9:2-7

For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.

Perhaps you are familiar with all of this. But, are you familiar with its significance?

Hebrews 9:8-12

The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

In other words, the temple on the earth was only a temporary sign, pointing to the greater tabernacle that Jesus would come and cleanse, which He did through His death and resurrection.

h. Jesus has a better sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:1-4

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

These words show how futile the Old Testament sacrifices were. But, in contrast to them, he writes, ...

Hebrews 10:10

By this we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

He also writes, ...

Hebrews 10:14

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

The sacrifice of Jesus was a sacrifice only needed once! There was no need for it to be repeated. There was no need for another one. It was so much greater than all of the Old Testament sacrifices put together. In fact, His sacrifice was so great that ...

Hebrews 10:18

There is no longer any offering for sin.

A sacrifice that never needs to be repeated is certainly better than the sacrifices that were repeated over and over and over again.

Jesus is better than the angels. Jesus is better than Moses. Jesus is better than the high priests. Jesus is better than Abraham. Jesus is better than the priests of Aaron. Jesus has a better covenant. Jesus has a better tabernacle. Jesus has a better sacrifice. That gives you a flavor of the book of Hebrews. Jesus Is Better. But, there is a second part. There's more to the book than merely saying that Jesus is better. It draws the proper conclusion for us, which I am saying this way:

2. So Press On!

Sprinkled throughout the book of Hebrews, there are 5 warning passages. Each of these passages is a warning to us to press on in our faith. The first comes in chapter 2. After lifting Jesus high and showing how He is greater than angels, the writer warns,

Hebrews 2:1-3a

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

God has granted to us a great salvation.

a. Don't drift.

Oh, if we only knew how great our salvation was, we would not drift.

I remember in the 1990's, that everything in Chicago was about the Chicago Bulls. They won 6 championships with Michael Jordan at the helm. But, over the years, something has happened. Many of the Chicago Bulls fans have drifted away. Where once they wouldn't miss a game, now they are barely interested. Why? Because the Chicago Bulls are terrible. It's easy to understand why they drift away. But, imagine

that the Chicago Bulls continued their dominance. Instead of having won only 6 championships, imagine that they owned 16 titles by now. How would their fan base be? It would still be many. Bulls mania would still be sweeping Chicago. Sure, there would be some who would drift away. But, the numbers would be fewer than they are today. Why? Because they have a great team to follow.

In the same way, we have a great Savior to follow! We have a great salvation to possess, which is far better than any basketball team. Let us not drift away from Him! Jesus is always better than angels, Moses, the high priests, and Abraham. His covenant is better! His tabernacle and sacrifice is better! Jesus will never lose to these things. So, don't drift. Or, you might say, "Press On!"

The second warning comes in chapter 3, verse 7:

b. Don't harden your hearts.

Hebrews 3:7-11

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw my works for forty years. "Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know my ways'; as I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

You can see the warning right there in verse 8, "Do not harden your hearts." The admonition comes from the last half of Psalm 95. David remembers the time in which the Israelites were witnesses to the unbelievable power of God. They witnessed the power of God in the plagues. They witnessed the power of God in the dividing of the Red Sea. They witnessed the power of God in providing water in the desert. They witnessed the power of God in providing manna in the wilderness. And what was the result? They hardened their hearts against the LORD and complained against Him. And, the danger still stands for us today. The warning is brought home to us in verses 12-14.

Hebrews 3:12-14

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

The key verse comes in verse 14.

Hebrews 3:14

We show that we have become partakers of Christ by persevering until the end.

In other words, those who hold fast their assurance firm until the end demonstrate that they have indeed become partakers of Christ. And so, he says, "Press On" that you might show you have become partakers of Christ. This is one of many times that the book of Hebrews will deal with issues of security and assurance of salvation. The third warning comes in chapter 6.

c. Press On.

Hebrews 6:1

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity,

The call upon the readers is to press on, continue on, don't stop. Some translations read this way, "go on" (ESV, NIV)." We are called to press on to maturity. Immaturity is not God's call upon our lives. This was the point of what was just said in chapter 5.

Hebrews 5:12-14

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

God doesn't want us to be infants, accustomed only to milk. No. We are to grow up. We are to be mature. We are called to be able to discern between good and evil. Again,

Hebrews 6:1

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

And we see the sovereignty of God coming in verse 3.

Hebrews 6:3

And this we will do, if God permits.

Don't think that you can press on by your own strength. God needs to act. He needs to let it happen. So pray that He does! Plead with Him that He does. And then comes one of the most terrifying passages in all of Hebrews.

Hebrews 6:4

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Impossible to renew again to repentance!?? To be so close and then to reject Jesus is the ultimate sin. That's what was so terrible about the Pharisees who saw Jesus up close and followed up by identifying His works with the devil's. Jesus said, "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:31-32).

This is what's being talked about here. It's impossible to renew these people again to repentance! It's those who have tasted the best and then rejected it! The reasoning comes in verses 7 and 8,

Hebrews 6:7

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

Press on! Don't wait to be burned up! Don't drift; don't harden your heart; press on.

d. Don't set Jesus aside.

In verses 26 and 27, we see one who goes on "sinning willfully," therefore rejecting Christ.

Hebrews 10:26-27

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

This is not so much sinning with desire. We always sin like this. It's only afterward that we cry out with Paul, "For what I am doing I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate" (Romans 7:15). Rather, in this context, "sinning willfully" means going back to our old ways in full knowledge of the truth. In the case of the Jews, going back to the ways of the Old Testament with their sacrifices and laws. For us, it may mean going back to our old ways of religion and trusting in the rituals and prayers, rather than in Christ Jesus. The judgment that awaits such a one is terrible.

Hebrews 10:28-29

Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of Grace?

"Trampling ... the Son of God," "regarding as unclean," and "insulting the Spirit of Grace" all are like spitting in the face of Jesus.

For instance suppose that you are enjoying a potluck dinner here at church. One of the women in the church (who is especially known for her cooking) presents to you a piece of apple pie for you to enjoy. However, you choose to turn down the apple pie and go for a dirty radish covered with mud that had just been plucked from the garden. This would be most insulting to the woman who offered the apple pie. In this same way, turning back to anything else other than Jesus is insulting God. How much punishment do you think that person deserves?

God will not have it! And we see that this is truly a terrifying thing.

Hebrews 10:30-31

For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Don't test God. Don't try Him. Don't fall away. Press on. We have great need to press on, as we see in verses 35 through 39.

Hebrews 10:35-39

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, receive what was promised. "For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and

will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

The people of faith filling Hebrews 11 have become our model. They have believed and pressed on. And so likewise, we must believe and press on as well. In chapter 6, verses 11 and 12, we can see that we ought to imitate them and their faith.

Hebrews 6:11-12

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Those in chapter 11 weren't perfect. But, they believed in God and so gained His approval. And again in chapter 12, verse 1:

Hebrews 12:1

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us

Do not set Jesus aside! Our fifth warning is this:

e. Don't come short.

Hebrews 12:15

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.

Don't come short of the grace of God. Take hold of it. Now, it's important to see here that in all the discussion about pressing on, it's not about earning anything. It is by faith that we are following after God. But, we are enduring and we are embracing the grace of God.

Let us press on and not be like Esau (12:16-17). When Esau wanted it, he couldn't grab hold of it. So we too may find ourselves in this same situation if we come short of God's grace.

Hebrews 12:18-24

For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned." And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

Therefore, don't refuse! Let's press on.

Hebrews 12:25

See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.

Verse 29 says that "our God is a consuming fire." Jesus is better, so press on! How should you press on? Chapter 13 gives much practical instruction in ways of how to press on. But, don't do so without remembering the theme of Hebrews, "Jesus Is Better, So Press On!"

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 27, 2009 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Dad_Is_Better_Than_Your_Dad.

[2] "When I Was Your Age," By Shel Silverstein, found in "*Falling Up*," p. 159.

[3] C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*.