

December 6, 2009 by Steve Brandon



Better Than Moses

Hebrews 3:1-6

1. Similar to Moses (verses 1-2)

2. Superior to Moses (verses 3-6)

I want for you to think in your minds of the one that you think is the most famous Christian alive today. I want for you to think in your minds of the name of the one who is revered highly among the many, many people across the world. I want for you to think of someone who has tasted great success in the ministry. Many have come to Christ under his watch. Many have sought his counsel. Many have looked up to him.

I want for you to think of someone who is known far and wide for his godliness. He hasn't been rocked by any scandals. He has had integrity in his family and in his ministry. He has maintained financial integrity. I want for you to think of someone who is known for his humility. In some sense, he stands larger than life. Perhaps several people have come into your mind. I know that only one person comes to my mind: Billy Graham. He has led hundreds of crusades across the world over the years. He has preached the gospel to countless millions. Many point back to him as the one who brought them to Christ.

OK, now, let's go back to the first century, just after the days of Jesus. They had one who they revered highly among all of the saints that walked in the Old Testament. They had one who tasted much success in his ministry. God used him to do many miracles. Many sought his counsel. Many looked up to him. He was known far and wide for his godliness. He had no glaring sin in his life. He walked with integrity. He was known for his humility. Any thoughts on who this might be? It was Moses, the most famous Jew of the Bible. He was a religious icon in the days of Jesus. He was a hero, and admonished by all.

Moses knew the providence of God in his life. He was rescued as a little child in the waters of the Nile. Instead of facing death, he grew up in the house of the Egyptian Pharaoh, knowing all of the privileges which came with it. He led the people of God out of slavery. God worked the miracles of the 10 plagues at the hand of Moses. God split the sea as Moses held out His hand. God brought the water from the rock and provided Manna in the wilderness at the hand of Moses. He experienced God. God appeared to him in the burning bush. God appeared to him on the mountain. God gave the law through Moses. God spoke with Moses face to face. God listened to Moses. When fighting the Amalakites, it was the outstretched arms of Moses that caused Israel to prevail. When God was ready to abandon the people of Israel for their sin, it was the prayer of Moses that led God to have mercy instead.

And despite all of the amazing things that the LORD did through the life of Moses, he was humble man. In fact, we read in Numbers 12, verse 13, "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth." In the eyes of the Jewish people, Moses was their hero. He was regarded as the greatest of men. He was "The highest example of human fidelity" known among the Jews. [\[1\]](#) He would be looked at in much the same way that many in our country look at Billy Graham: a humble and faithful man, well respected by all.

The Jewish attitude toward Moses was not folklore, nor imagery, nor misguided. Rather, it was rooted in the testimony of the Scripture. In Numbers 12, the story is recorded of how Aaron and Miriam spoke against their brother Moses. They said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" (Num. 12:2). When the LORD heard of their complaints, he summoned Aaron and Miriam to a meeting. Here's what the LORD said to them, ...

Numbers 12:6-8

Here now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. Now so, with My servant Moses, he is faithful in all My household. With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?

Such words place Moses above all the prophets. The revelation that he received was greater. Listen to the words of one of their own Rabbis said, "God calls Moses faithful in all his house, and thereby he ranked him higher than the ministering angels themselves." [\[2\]](#)

It was a rebuke that was felt in Israel for over a thousand years. People looked up to Moses. They wouldn't speak a word against him. When Stephen came preaching the good news of Christ, the accusation against him was that the people "heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God" (Acts 6:11). They said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law" (Acts 6:13). To do such a thing was unthinkable to the Jews. They were so angry at Stephen's words that they murdered him. In the days of the New Testament, you simply didn't speak against Moses. He was revered in the mind of everyone.

With that as an historical backdrop, I invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 3. Our text this morning is the first 6 verses of the chapter. In these six verses, the writer to the book of Hebrews will argue that Jesus is better than Moses. Thus, it is appropriate that my message would be entitled, "Better Than Moses." This is just one of many arguments in the entire book of Hebrews, showing that Jesus is better than anything else they might turn to be right with God.

The book of Hebrews begins with a testimony to how Jesus is a better revelation of God than anything ever written in the Old Testament (Heb 1:1-3). The Old Testament was mere pen and ink, but Jesus came in the flesh to reveal God to us. Chapters 1 and 2 show us how Jesus was better than the angels (Heb 1:4-2:18). So, the argument goes, turn to Jesus and not to the angels. He is your true source of help.

This morning, as we come to chapter 3, we will see the writer argue that Jesus is better than Moses. This text addresses the real danger facing these original readers. From various angles, they were being pulled away from the church and back into their historical roots. They felt the pull of family. They felt the pull of tradition. They felt the pull of the social strata of the day. They felt the pull to return to the religion of Moses. Following Moses and the law was the only thing that the Jewish people ever knew. And thus, it was a big temptation for those in the church to fall back into the ways of Judaism, thinking that salvation came through the law: circumcision, rituals, festivals, sacrifices.

Now, I don't believe that the temptation for any of us here this morning is to fall back into the Mosaic law. None of us believe that we need to be circumcised to be saved. None of us are tempted to offer up bulls and goats for our sins. And yet, there are some temptations that are very real for us today. We might easily add certain requirements to the gospel, like baptism or church attendance or Bible reading. We might easily come to look at our practices as the only way to live a Christian life: the way that we do church, the way that we do family, the way that we do family worship, the way that we school our children.

And all these things, as good as they may be, may very well distract us from the only thing that matters: Jesus, His blood and His righteousness imputed to us. In fact, this is where our text begins. It begins with Jesus. Look there at verse 1, ...

Hebrews 3:1

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

The writer here addresses his hearers as "holy brethren." That is, those who have been set apart, those who have been sanctified through the body and blood of Jesus Christ. These words draw us back into chapter 2, verse 11, when he wrote, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11).

In this verse, we see the concept of the purity of the saints as well as the brotherhood of the believers. In verse 1, he continues on to describe them as being "partakers of a heavenly calling." These words tell us of the realities of those who have embraced Jesus as the Messiah. God initiates His call from heaven. God calls us to heaven. According to chapter 2, verse 10, Jesus is actively "bringing many sons to glory." This is in contrast to the calling of Moses. His was an earthly calling to an earthly community, the Jews. But, Christians have a higher calling than merely the things on earth. Christians have a heavenly city which we anticipate someday. Indeed, we are citizens of heaven.

The key to Christian living is to keep your hope set before you. Throughout the book of Hebrews, we read of those who had a heavenly focus. Consider the following verses.

Hebrews 11:13-16

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 10:32-35

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

A heavenly focus will keep your life in focus. A heavenly focus will help you persevere through the trials and temptations of life. A heavenly focus will help these Jewish believers not to fall back into their old ways.

But, beyond a heavenly focus, there is a focus upon Jesus that will help sustain us through our days as well. In fact, that's what the writer says in verse 1, "consider Jesus." This is the application of our text this morning: "consider Jesus." It's the only command in the first six verses. The NIV pulls the picture of this word nicely when it says, "fix your thoughts on Jesus."

Really, this is the call of the book of Hebrews. It's a call to look at and think about and consider Jesus. It's a call to consider the greatness of Jesus. And when you see how great Jesus is, then follow Him until the end. Or, as I have identified the theme of Hebrews, "Jesus Is Better, So Press On!"

There is nothing else in this life that compares with Him. No greater pleasure, no greater religion, no greater help in temptation, no greater confidence, no greater path to godliness. We have already seen this call to think of Jesus in the book of Hebrews. "For this reason [in light of the greatness of Jesus and His superiority over angels] we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it" (Heb. 2:11).

"Paying much closer attention" and "considering Jesus" are practical synonyms. They mean the same thing. They call us to "look to Jesus", "Run to Jesus", "Trust in Jesus", "Think about Jesus", "Set your mind on Jesus." This was my message from last week: Heb 2:18.

Our danger is when we neglect this. When we begin to focus our attention upon other things, we run into trouble. Whether that's merely straying into worldly thinking, thinking about your job or your finances or your pleasures, or it's looking to your own religious deeds, thinking that they will justify you before God, the trouble is the same. You are drifting from Christ, because you aren't considering Him. But, the danger of the original readers is that were in danger of drifting back in the Jewish manner of life, with all of its rituals and sacrifices, which can never make the worshiper perfect in conscience.

How ever you are drifting, the message is the same: look to Jesus. One of the best verses in all of Hebrews comes in the following verses.

Hebrews 12:1-2

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, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

It's what I preached last week. The same message comes this week: consider Jesus. Let's look at our text in whole and see what we learn about Jesus in these words.

Hebrews 3:1-6

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. 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. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. 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.

It is worthy to note that nowhere in this text does the writer speak badly of Moses. In verse 2, we read that Moses was a faithful man in all His house. In verse 5, we read that Moses was faithful as a servant. The word here used for "servant" isn't your typical word for "servant." This word isn't derogatory at all. Moses wasn't a slave. Rather, Moses was the ship doctor, serving very honorably in the ship. Moses was the children's tutor, serving the family in this way in a most important role.

When Moses was said to be faithful, it meant that he did everything that God called him to do. He listened to God. He obeyed God. He remained loyal to God. Even when an entire nation was engaged in idolatry, Moses remained loyal to God. Now, it's not that Moses was perfect. He murdered a man in Egypt. He initially resisted the call of God upon his life. When told to speak to the rock, Moses lashed out in anger toward the people and struck the rock twice. It's not that Moses was perfect. However, when you look at his life, you come away impressed by his faithfulness. And in this way, Moses and Jesus share many similarities.

My first point this morning is this: Jesus is ...

1. Similar to Moses (verses 1-2).

You can see that right there in verse 2, "Jesus was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house."

I've talked a bit about the faithfulness of Moses. Let's consider the faithfulness of Christ. It says in verse 1 that Jesus was "the Apostle and High Priest" of our confession. This word "apostle" might easily throw you. When we think of this word, we often think of the twelve apostles. We think of Peter and Andrew and James and John. We think of the apostle, Paul. All of these men were apostles of Jesus Christ. All of these men were "sent out" by Jesus to accomplish His mission. They were "apostles." But, we don't often think of Jesus as being an "apostle." And rightly so, as this is the only time in the entire New Testament that Jesus is called an apostle. But, it's entirely right for Jesus to be called an apostle.

An apostle is, literally, one who is sent. But, the word also has the connotation of being sent with the authority of the sender. It is similar to an ambassador to another nation, who represents his home country. Peter and Andrew and James and John and Paul were all sent by Jesus Christ to represent Him. They had authority in that Jesus Christ had sent them directly and personally. Jesus was also sent by His heavenly Father as well. Over and over throughout His ministry, Jesus constantly spoke of how He was sent by His Father in heaven. John 6:29, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent. John 6:57, "the ... Father sent Me." John 7:29, "I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me." ^[3] Jesus was sent by God with authority to be His ambassador. Jesus was an apostle in every sense of the word.

And, you can easily argue that Moses was an apostle as well. Admittedly, the label, "apostle," was never placed upon Moses. But, He was sent by God to the people of Israel. God said to Moses, ...

Exodus 3:10-14

"Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"

And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"

God said to Moses, "I AM who I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Three times in this text we see God affirming to Moses that it was He who was sending him. And Moses was sent with authority to act on behalf of God. God's message to Pharaoh was, "Let my people go." Moses would be the one delivering that message on God's behalf. And, this wasn't the only time that Moses was sent by God. Throughout the entire ordeal of the ten plagues, you see Moses meeting with God, who, in turn, sent him with a message to deliver to Pharaoh. When on Mount Sinai, receiving the law, Moses was sent by God back to the people with the law. Moses was an apostle in every sense of the word, even though he was never properly identified as such.

In this way, Jesus was similar to Moses (verses 1-2). But, there is another way in which Jesus was similar to Moses. Again, you can see it there in verse 1, Jesus is also identified as a "High Priest of our confession." For the last several weeks, we have been spending time looking at what this means. It means that Jesus, who sits at the right hand of God, can plead to God on our behalf.

Jesus comes to God with His blood, which has made propitiation for our sins, enduring the wrath of God (Heb. 2:17). Jesus comes to God with His prayers, pleading the Father's mercy upon us. Later in Hebrews, we will hear that Jesus "is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). In this way, Jesus is our high priest. We will see this concept come up again and again in the book of Hebrews. And as our high priest, Jesus can come and help us in our times of distress. He is able to help us in our temptation (as we saw last week in chapter 2:18). He is able to help us in our weakness as the following verses tell us.

Hebrews 4:14-16

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. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

This is what it means that Jesus is our high priest. He comes to God with His blood and with His prayers, pleading for us, so that we will be helped by him in our weakness. In this sense, Moses was also a high priest. Now, the Scriptures never call Moses a high priest. And, he never offered sacrifices like his brother, Aaron, who was the first high priest. But, Moses often acted like a high priest.

When Jethro saw the way in which Moses was judging all the people, he said, "Listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God will be with you. You be the peoples' representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God" (Ex 18:19). Isn't that the role of the high priest: "to be the people's representative before God"?

I take you back to the day when Moses was on the mountain, receiving the law of God, written by the finger of God. But Israel, down below at the base of the mountain was engaged in full-fledged idolatry, worshipping a golden calf.

Exodus 32:7-10

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."

At this point, Moses turned into the high priest, who pleaded God on behalf of the people of Israel.

Exodus 32:11-13

Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

And then, we read,

Exodus 32:14

So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

Now is not the time or place to consider the theology of such a verse, "The LORD changed His mind." But, now is the time to consider how Moses was a high priest. God was about to destroy the people, and Moses went to God on behalf of the people. And the efforts of Moses made a difference. The people were saved. Moses acted like a high priest. In this way, Jesus and Moses were similar. And this is the point of verse 2, "Jesus was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house." Jesus was similar to Moses.

Now, the reason why the writer tells us to think about Jesus isn't because He is similar to Moses, though He is, and though that point is made

in verse. But, the reason for considering Jesus comes in verse 3, which begins my second point. Jesus is ...

2. Superior to Moses (verses 3-6)

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.

As similar as Jesus and Moses were--they both functioned as apostles and high priests--Jesus has been "counted worthy of more glory than Moses." We have seen the glory of Jesus in chapters 1 and 2. He is the Son of God (1:5). Moses certainly had a relationship with God, but Moses certainly wasn't the Son of God. Jesus is worshiped by the angels (1:6). Moses was admired and esteemed by many, but he wasn't ever worshiped by the angels. Jesus has a throne that will last throughout all eternity (1:8). Moses had place of authority. He had a place of judgment that people would come to help solve their disputes. But Moses had no eternal throne. Jesus was the creator of the world (1:10). Moses was merely a creature in the world. Jesus is seated at the right hand of God (1:13). Moses surely has a high seat of honor in heaven. But, the seat of Moses isn't at the right hand of God.

It's obvious that the glory and honor of Jesus is greater than Moses. But the writer gives an analogy here in verse 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."

When a building is built, it has honor. A new home is pretty special. A new office building attracts the attention of many who drive by. At times, a building can have great honor. The Sears Tower, when it was built, was the tallest building in the world. For 24 years, it held such a distinction. But, whatever honor the building has, we all know that it is eclipsed by the builder. Now, we may not be able to name the builder of the Sears Tower, but we know that the building would be nothing apart from the builder. Houses don't build themselves. A house is not a plant. The existence of a house argues for a builder. It's the builder who receives the honor for the house.

Such an argument extends to everything that we see in the universe. The existence of anything argues for a creator. Things don't merely come into being. This is the point of verse 4, ...

Hebrews 3:4

For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

When it comes to Moses, he was simply a part of his house, the people of Israel. But, when it comes to Jesus, He was the builder of His house, the church of God. The analogy is applied in verses 5 and 6, ...

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 in his house. He was a member of his house; he was one of many. Jesus was over His house; Jesus is the head.

Moses was in his house as a servant; Jesus was over His house as a Son. There's a big difference between the servant and the son. The son is the heir, who owns everything; the servant serves the son.

Moses was a sign, anticipating something better to come; Jesus was the substance, the better one to come. In every way, Jesus turns out to be greater than Moses. Moses existed to point the way to Jesus. That's what the phrase at the end of verse 5 means, "for testimony of those things which were to be spoken later." The ministry of Moses was primarily a ministry of testifying to what would come later. And Jesus is the one who would come later.

We see this thought come up several times in the Scriptures. In John 5, Jesus is speaking with the Pharisees, who were seeking to kill Him, because he was breaking the Sabbath, as well as making Himself equal with God. Jesus told them this, ...

John 5:39-47

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. "I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

And when on the road to Emmaus with His disciples, Jesus began with Moses and with all the prophets and explained to His disciples the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). He said, "These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44).

Paul said it this way, "by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (Romans

3:20). It's not the law. It's not the sacrifices. It's not the feasts and festivals that make you righteous before God. No, these things merely point to the need for another way. They anticipate Jesus. They anticipate the house that Jesus would build.

Look once again at verse 6, "But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house." What was the house that Jesus would build? Isn't it the church? In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised to build His church. Throughout the New Testament, the church is described as a house. "I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim. 1:15). "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5).

Christ was faithful as a Son over His house, which is the church. When describing the church, Paul repeatedly said that Jesus is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3). Now, here's the question: Are you a part of His house?

That's the question that comes up in verse 6, "...whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end." Did you notice the conditional word in this sentence? It's the word, "if." We are the house of Jesus "if" something else is true. What's the condition? That "we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end."

Now, I want for you to clearly understand what's going on here, as it sets the tone for the rest of the book of Hebrews. There are some statements in the book of Hebrews that come very close to indicating that you can lose your salvation, particularly in chapters 6 and 10. But, however you interpret those passages, they need to be consistent with this passage here. For instance, consider the following passages from the book of Romans.

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:39-30

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

It's one thing if you read passages like the above and conclude that Paul believes that we cannot lose our salvation. But, the writer of the Hebrews is different. He believes that you can lose your salvation (per the passages in Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 10). But, it's another thing if you see these verses in Hebrews 3 teaching that you cannot lose your salvation, but that the verses in Hebrews 6 and 10 teach that you can. That's an entirely different difficulty. You need to wrestle much with this sort of conclusion, because it demonstrates that the writer to the Hebrews wasn't even consistent with himself in the same writing.

So, let's look closely at Hebrews 3:6. So, watch the tenses of the verbs. "You are his house if you hold fast until the end." In other words, you are in his house if you persevere until the end. This verse doesn't say, "You will be in his house if you persevere until the end." Rather, it says that you are in his house today if you continue until the end. Let me say it another way by stating it in the opposite way. If you don't persevere until the end, then you are not in his house today. In other words, the lack of your endurance demonstrates that you didn't have the salvation that you professed to have. We can say this because genuine faith is enduring faith. The faith that continues is the faith that is real.

Jesus said it this way, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31). In other words your continuing in the words of Jesus demonstrates that you are a disciple of Christ. This is exactly what is written here in Hebrews.

The same is also true in Hebrews 3:14, "For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." Again, look at the tenses of the verbs. The words "have become" indicate a past event having taken place. "Hold fast ... until the end" demonstrates the past event to be true if it continues. In other words, your continuing on in the faith is a testimony to the fact that you have become a genuine partaker of Christ.

At this point, it must be noted that enduring on in your faith doesn't save you. The picture the writer gives here isn't that those who scrape by and hold on with their lives finally obtain their salvation. Rather, enduring on in your faith shows that your faith is genuine.

We see two things here in Hebrews 3:6 that need to endure until the end: (1) our confidence and (2) the boast of our hope. The first phrase refers to the assurance of our faith. It refers to our confidence that Christ is our only hope to bring us to God. Later the writer will say, "Do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward" (Heb. 10:35). Confidence here is a synonym for our faith in Christ, which will yield our reward of heaven in the end. The second phrase refers to what we communicate with others. We boast of our hope in Jesus. It's important for us to continue in our boast. Or, as the writer will say later, "You have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Heb. 10:36). Both of these phrases indicate the nature of our perseverance until the end.

Should you fall away, it demonstrates that you never really possessed it at the start. Other passages in the Bible communicate the same thing. "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19). "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach -- if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister" (Colossians 1:21-23).

Are you in His house? Is your faith genuine?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 6, 2009 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, p. 70.

[2] Rabbi Jose ben Chalafta, quoted in by William Barclay, in the Daily Bible Study Series, p. 29

[3] See also 3:17, 34; 5:36-38; 8:48; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3; Luke 10:16; 1 John 4:10