

# Never Let Go Of Christ

## The Book of Hebrews

R C Sproul once said that, “If I were cast into prison and allowed but one book, it would be the Bible. If I were allowed only one book of the Bible, it would be the Epistle to the Hebrews...because it contains our most comprehensive discussion of the redemption wrought for us in the sacrifice of Jesus.”

The letter of Hebrews was written to prepare Jewish Christians in Jerusalem for the severe religious culture shock which was approaching. Soon after the letter was written, in A.D. 70 a Roman army under Titus destroyed the city. The temple was destroyed and its sacrifices ceased. Jews were not allowed to enter the ruins of the city and rebuild. Consequently, the high priest and other priests were not allowed to perform any sacrificial services.

It was essential for the Apostle Paul to convince the church in Jerusalem that their current earthly city of Jerusalem with its temple, high priesthood, sacrifices and support structure were no longer a necessary part of God’s plan for the church!

They must immediately break away from their immature faith in, and mistaken dependence upon, the city of Jerusalem, the temple and the high priesthood.

Otherwise, when all of these soon disappeared, within a few years at most, their spiritual lives would suffer severe devastation.

In order to break this connection, the Jewish Christians must stop going to the temple for festivals, vows and sacrifices. They must also immediately stop accepting the Levitical high priesthood as legitimate and stop paying tithes to support the system.

Jesus Christ is presented in the *Letter to the Hebrews* as the answer to all problems.

“*In Christ*” the believer has a better country, a better city, a better sanctuary, a better **high** priesthood, a better priesthood, and better sacrifices. The better country, city and sanctuary are heavenly for the church. The better high priest is Christ. The better priests are all believers (not just pastor-teachers).

The better sacrifices from believers are those of praise and thanksgiving.

A theologian once wrote, “Whatever Christ may benefit poor man, He declares Himself able to do. And as He holdeth out Himself in the Scriptures, so faith doth point towards Him.”

If Christ be a Bridegroom, faith will go out in a marriage relation; if He be a Father, faith pleaded the man to be a child; if He be a Shepherd, faith pleads the man may be one of His sheep; if He be a Lord, faith calleth Him so, which none can do but by the Spirit of Jesus; if He be dead, and risen again for our justification, faith ‘believeth God hath raised Him on that account.

Wheresoever He be, there would faith be; yea, when the fame and report of Him goeth abroad in His truth, although faith seeth not much, yet it believeth on His name, upon the very fame He hath sent abroad of Himself.

Only by understanding these truths could the Jewish Christian survive the culture shock which occurred after A.D. 70.

At the time of the writing of the Letter to the Hebrews, tremendous pressure was being applied from within and without the church to abandon Christ. The devil's design was to crush the faith of believers in the Lord.

Three verses in the letter to the Hebrews exhorts Jewish Christians to 'hold fast' their faith in Jesus Christ. "Hold fast and never abandon the Lord," was Paul's message to the Hebrew Christians.

The title of my message today is, *Never Let Go of Christ*. We must never let go of Christ.

Let us study the three 'hold fast' passages in Hebrews, and my prayer is that the Lord will strengthen our faith and resolve to follow after Christ.

**1. Hebrews 3:6**, "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, *if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*"

Christ is a son over his own house. Here in this context in Hebrews, Christ is not a servant. To the whole household or family of God he sustains the same relation which a son and heir in a family does to the household.

To God Christ sustained the relation of a Son, and recognized him as his Father, and sought in all things to do his will; but over the whole family of God--the entire Church of all dispensations--he was like a son over the affairs of a family.

A servant owns nothing; is heir to nothing; has no authority, and no right to control anything, and is himself wholly at the will of another.

A son is the heir of all; has a prospective right to all; and is looked up to by all with respect. But the idea here is not merely that Christ is a son; it is that as a son he is placed over the whole arrangements of the household, and is one to whom all is entrusted as if it were his own.

*Whose house we are.* Of whose family we are a part, or to which we belong. That is, we belong to the family over which Christ is placed.

*If we hold fast.* A leading object of this epistle is to guard those to whom it was addressed against the danger of apostasy.

The apostle here says, that the only evidence which they could have that they belonged to the family of Christ, would be that they held fast the confidence which they had unto the end.

Hold fast (katecho from katá = intensifies meaning + écho = have, hold) means to retain whether by avoiding the relinquishing of something.

We have a beautiful picture of the word for hold fast used as a nautical term which means to steer toward or land at.

Luke uses katecho with this meaning in Acts 27:40 writing that... "casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders, and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for (katecho) the beach. They were "holding theirs course toward beach."

By the grace of God we need to each keep our rudders firmly in hand and our faces fixed like flint toward Jerusalem so that our vessels are "headed for the beach" of God's Eternal Kingdom. Remember we are not home yet! Lord give us this seeking, holding fast heart please.

We "prove" we are God's house **if** we do not desert His way, His truth, His life. We can neither save ourselves nor keep ourselves saved. The meaning is simply that **continuance** is the proof of reality. We can tell if we are really the house of God because we stay there. The one who falls away never belonged in the first place.

This is John's point in his first epistle where he writes that..."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, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us."  
(1John 2:19).

The theme on perseverance of the true saint is woven throughout the New Testament.

Jesus warned His disciples..."you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." (Matthew 10:22)

John MacArthur commenting on this same verse explains that..."Endurance does not produce or protect salvation, which is totally the work of God's grace. But endurance is evidence of salvation, proof that a person is truly redeemed and a child of God."

Donald Barnhouse once illustrated this principle of perseverance by asking..."remember the child's toy that's a big vinyl doll with a heavy round weight of sand in the bottom?

You punch it, it bounces right up again. Punch it again and it comes back to the upright position. Similarly those Christians in the early church kept bouncing back."

He is not saying you "become the house of God by holding fast" but if you are the house of God you will hold fast. If you do not hold fast you are not the house of God! He is telling us the end result of our salvation...perseverance to the end.



We must never let go of Christ for another house.

**2. Hebrews 4:14**, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, *let us hold fast our profession.*”

One of the things on which the Jews most valued their religion, was the fact that it had such a minister of religion as their high priest--the most elevated position of that system.

It came, therefore, to be of the utmost importance to show that Christianity was not inferior to the Jewish religion in this respect, and that the High Priest of the Christian profession would not suffer in point of dignity, and in the value of the blood with which he would approach God, and in the efficacy of his intercession, when compared with the Jewish high priest.

Moreover, it was a doctrine of Christianity that the Jewish ritual was to pass away; and its temple services cease to be observed. It was, therefore, of vast importance to show why they passed away, and how they were superseded. To do this, the apostle is led into this long discussion respecting their nature.

He shows that they were designed to be typical.

He proves that they could not purify the heart, and give peace to the conscience.

He proves that they were all intended to point to something future, and to introduce the Messiah to the world; and that when this object was accomplished, their great end was secured, and they were thus all fulfilled.

In no part of the Bible can there be found so full an account of the design of the Mosaic institutions as in chapter 5 through 10 of this epistle; and were it not for this, the volume of inspiration would be incomplete.

We should be left in the dark on some of the most important subjects in revelation; we should ask questions for which we could find no certain answer.

The phrase "great High Priest" here is used with reference to a known usage among the Jews.

In the time of the apostle the name high priest pertained not only to him who actually held the office, and who had the right to enter into the holy of holies, and to those who had held the office, but who had retired from it.

The name "great high priest" would designate him who actually held the office, and was at the head of all the other priests; and the idea here is, not merely that the Lord Jesus was a Priest, but that he was at the head of all.

In the Christian economy he sustained a rank that corresponded with that of the great high priest in the Jewish religion.

The Jewish high priest went once a year into the most holy place in the temple, to offer the blood of the atonement. Paul says that the Christian High Priest has gone into heaven. He has gone there also to make intercession, and to sprinkle the blood of the atonement on the mercy-seat.

*Let us hold fast our profession.* This is the drift and scope of the epistle-- to show that Christians should hold fast their profession, and not apostatize.

The object of the apostle now is to show why the fact, that we have such a High Priest, is a reason why we should hold fast our professed attachment to him.

(1.) We may look to him for assistance--since he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Heb 4:15,16.

(2.) The impossibility of being renewed again if we should fall away from him, since there is but one such High Priest, and since the sacrifice for sin can never be repeated, Heb 6:1-20.

(3.) The fact that all the ancient types were fulfilled in Christ, and that everything which there was in the Jewish dispensation, to keep men from apostasy, exists much more powerfully in Christ

(4.) The fact that they who rejected the laws of Moses died without mercy, and much more any one who should reject the Son of God must expect more certain and fearful judgment, Heb 10:27-30.

By considerations such as these, the apostle aims to show them the danger of apostasy, and to urge them to a faithful adherence to their Christian profession.

We must never let go of Christ for this passing world.

**3. Hebrews 10:23**, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;).”

Our salvation is kept by Christ’s holding us fast, not primarily by our holding Him fast. Our holding onto Him is evidence that He is holding onto us! The present tense calls for the hearer to keep on holding on to the One Who will never leave us nor forsake us.

Hold fast is literally “hold down” and speaks of a firm hold which masters that which is held. Holding on is the human side of eternal security. The Reformers called it “the perseverance of the saints”

Holding on is not something believers do to keep themselves saved, but it is evidence from the human perspective that one is saved. Unsaved people would not keep on holding on, especially when the going gets "tough" and persecution begins to rise.

They are like those Jesus described in His parable of the "soils" ...Mark 4:16 "And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, **when** (not "if", but "when") affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.

Steadfast faith marks the elect. Persistence and hope characterize members of God's family.

Jonathan Edwards once said that, "the sure proof of election is that one holds out to the end. How sad that many individuals come to Christ and say they believe and yet are gone so soon. Mass evangelistic campaigns that have followed up the "decisions" several years later usually reveal a significant number who fail to hold fast.

It is evident that those to whom Paul wrote were suffering persecution, Heb 12:1-29 and that there was great danger that they would apostatize. As these persecutions came probably from the Jews, and as the aim was to induce them to return to their former opinions, the object of the apostle is to show that there was in the Christian scheme every advantage of which the Jews could boast;

everything pertaining to the dignity of the great Founder of the system, the character of the High Priest, and the nature and value of the sacrifices offered; and that all this was possessed far more abundantly in the permanent Christian system than in that which was typical in its character, and which were designed soon to vanish away.

In view of all this, therefore, the apostle adds that they should hold fast the profession of their faith, without being shaken by their trials, or by the arguments of their enemies. We have the same reasons to hold fast the profession of our faith--for it is the same one true religion; we have the same Saviour, and there is held out to us still the same prospect of heaven.

### **GOD IS A FAITHFUL PROMISER.**

John Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, once wrote that when Christians begin to lose communion with God, one of the first things forgotten is that they live in God's very presence and their lives are in God's hands.

Martin Luther had deeply rocked the boat of the church world. The full imposing might of a papal council was called against him; they summoned him before them to Worms, demanding he recant. Terrified, some of his best friends left him. Yet Luther set his face like a flint. He bravely set out for the trial: "If there be as many devils at Worms as tiles on the roof-tops, I will enter!" There on that day they pointed to a row of his books; he was asked whether he would retract them or not? Faced with the combined might of his intellectual and theological peers, his courage almost failed him. He requested time to think it over. They gave him a day. Friends came to encourage him and next afternoon he was once more before the assembly. He acknowledged in the heat of controversy, he had expressed himself too strongly against persons. But the substance of what he had written he could not retract, unless convinced of its wrongfulness by Scripture or adequate argument. The Emperor could hardly believe someone, would dare deny the infallibility of a general council and cut the discussion short. Eck, a chief Church official, told him (in Latin) "Martin, your plea to be heard from Scripture is the one always made by heretics. You do nothing but renew the errors of Wycliffe and Huss . . . would you put your judgment above that of so many famous men and claim you know more than any of them? . . . I ask you, Martin - answer candidly and without distinctions - do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors they contain?" In German Luther replied, ". . . Unless I am convicted by the testimony of Sacred Scripture or by evident reason . . . my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against my conscience is neither right nor safe." Then, fully prepared to die for what he believed, Luther supposedly cried out the words engraved on his memorial at Worms: "Here I stand; I can do no other. God help me. Amen."

We must never let go of Christ because his promises are sure and trustworthy.

In conclusion, the Letter to the Hebrews was written to exhort God's people to hold fast their profession in Christ. Paul's message to the Hebrew Christians was, "you must never let go of Christ." In Christ the believer has a better country, a better city, a better sanctuary, a better high priesthood, a better priesthood, and better sacrifices. How is your grip on Christ today? Do you have a firm grip or a loose grip on Him? Let us pray!