

Hebrews

BACKGROUND:

Although the King James Version uses the title "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews," there is no early manuscript evidence to support it. The oldest and most reliable title is "To Hebrews." Early church tradition is divided over the author; some attribute it to Paul, others to Barnabas, Luke or others. The recipients of the letter were believers (3:1) who had come to faith through eyewitnesses of Christ (2:3). They were not novices (5:12) and had endured hardships because of their stand for the gospel (10:32-34). Unfortunately they had become "dull of hearing" (5:11) and were in danger of drifting away (2:1, 3:12). That the readers were on the verge of lapsing into Judaism to avoid persecution directed at Christians seems to be supported by the whole tenor of the book. The place of writing is unknown but evidence suggests a date of between A.D. 64 and 68.

Many Jewish believers, having stepped out of Judaism into Christianity, wanted to reverse their course in order to escape persecution by their countrymen. The writer of Hebrews exhorts them to "press on" to maturity in Christ. His appeal is based on the superiority of Christ over the Judaic system. Christ is better than the angels, for they worship Him. He is better than Moses, for Moses was created by Him. He is better than the Aaronic priesthood, for His sacrifice was once for all time. He is better than the Law, for He mediates a better covenant. In short, there is more to be gained by suffering for Christ than by reverting to Judaism. Pressing on to maturity produces tested faith, self discipline and a visible love seen in good works.

The basic theme of Hebrews is found in the use of the word "better" (1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24). The words "perfect" and "heavenly" also appear frequently.

Five solemn warnings point out the peril of turning away from Christ (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:20; 10:19-39; 11:25-29).

A brief outline of Hebrews:

- I. Superiority of Christ's Person--The Majesty of Christ (1:1-4:13).
 - A. Christ Over the Prophets (1:1-1:3).
 - B. Christ Over the Angels (1:4-2:18).
 - C. Christ Over Moses (4:1-4:13).
- II. Superiority of Christ's Work--The Ministry of Christ (4:14-10:18)
 - A. Christ's Priesthood (4:14-7:28).
 - B. Christ's Covenant (8:1-8:13).
 - C. Christ's Sanctuary and Sacrifice (9:1-10:18).
- III. Superiority of the Christian's Walk (10:19-13:25).
 - A. Full Assurance of Faith (10:19-11:40).
 - B. Endurance of Faith (12:1-12:29).
 - C. Exhortation to Love (13:1-13:25).

HELPS: Before turning to these, read prayerfully the Word of God, praying that the Holy Spirit will guide you and instruct you.

If you don't own a Bible dictionary, encyclopedia, atlas, or reference search, don't worry. They are all available on the link below.

http://www.preceptaustin.org/2_corinthians_commentaries_3.htm

This excellent website is full of helps including commentaries. You will find John MacArthur, Ray Stedman and John Piper along with Charles Spurgeon and the Intervarsity Press Commentary (Navigators) as well as Matthew Henry's Commentary.