



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

The Book of Hebrews

Hold On Tight

Hebrews 3:1–6

Tim Badal | October 11, 2020

Hebrews 3 is where we find ourselves today. This theme of Jesus being greatest is a theme that should readily change our lives. I'm so glad to be part of a church that makes much of

Jesus. It is not difficult for our worship team, your staff and for me, the preacher, to get you excited about this theme. Our leadership team has been blown away by your faithfulness in this season of ministry.

As you know, we have not been sitting idly by, biding our time for this pandemic to get behind us so we can get back on mission. We desire to make so much of Jesus that we've continued trying to do just that. Yes, things have been different and we've had to figure out things, but I don't know of many churches in the midst of this pandemic that are doing major renovations to prepare themselves for the next chapter of ministry. I hear a lot of churches are struggling financially, yet we are a church that continues to give and be faithful.

We're blown away by the faithfulness of our volunteers. When indoor services resumed, we had hundreds of volunteers who said, "I'm ready. Sign me up." Thank you first of all for being a church that makes much of Jesus. Thank you for being a church that gives because without those gifts we would not be able to do what we're doing today. At the end of this message, we'll watch a video from our Executive Pastor, Keith Duff, then talk about a new opportunity we've been planning for over a year now to make much of Jesus in the Fox Valley area and all over the world.

The theme of Hebrews is all about making much of Jesus. Why? Because He's the greatest. He's the greatest endeavor. He's the greatest opportunity. He's the greatest Savior because He has redeemed us from our sin and put us in a right relationship with God. That's what the writer is talking about. But the problem is we live in a world of sin, where not everybody makes much of Jesus. In fact, we live in a world where people want to make less of Jesus. Many don't want Him at all. So this book of Hebrews that we've been studying these past few weeks is a letter that is written to encourage and exhort believers to endure, to hold on tight, even though life is difficult, even though the trials and tribulations that come will make you want to walk away from the faith. These Hebrew Christians must have been thinking, "If I make less of Jesus, life will go a whole lot better for me." You see, they were losing property, family, friends, opportunities and standing in their communities because of their allegiance to Christ Jesus.

Now if we are really honest, do we hang around individuals—maybe in school, at work, in our neighborhoods or maybe even in our families and homes—where people will say, maybe in veiled threats or maybe they just come right out and say, "Make less of Jesus. Stop talking about Him so much. Can you get off the whole Jesus thing, the whole Bible thing?" They are cramping your style and it is really easy to fall prey to the idea that if we make less of Jesus, then our lives will go better for us as well.

The writer of Hebrews says over and over again, "Listen, don't stop loving Christ. Don't stop exalting Him. The most foolish thing any Christ follower can do is give up on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith." So in chapter three, the writer is going to embark on a section that starts with the word "therefore" which means in light of, because of or since. It's a clause that leads us to look back to where we've been. In chapter one we've seen that Jesus is the greatest of all time because He created all things and sustains all things by the power of His word. This Jesus, it says in Hebrews 1, is the greatest of all time, greater than any angel because He is the One Who saves and secures believers.



In chapter two, in light of all we know about this great Jesus, we as Christ followers can still be tempted to drift away from the faith. This is a warning about that slow and subtle process, based on decision upon decision, to walk away, becoming more and more lukewarm in our relationship with Christ. So the author says, “In light of all that, I want you to hold on tight.” We see the phrase “hold fast” in verse six. You know, we do that in life. When times of trouble and difficulty come, when tribulation comes our way, we look for something to grab hold of. For children, it’s that security blanket they want before they go to bed. Or maybe it’s that little teddy bear or something else that makes them feel all warm and fuzzy inside. It makes them feel safe. But we’ve grown up and still have problems, so what do we turn to? Maybe it’s another person—your spouse, parents, pastor—you turn to when the going gets tough. So the first phone call you make is to this person. For others it’s belief in a process, a vice like drugs or alcohol, that favorite TV show or activity that is your safe place, your sanctuary, that you grab hold of as the storm rages on and you hold on tight. When you’re there, you feel like you can endure.

The readers of this letter had a security blanket. When the going got tough, these Hebrews had someone they ran to, but it wasn’t Jesus. Like many of us, instead of running to Jesus, we run to all manner of things which can be good things. The Hebrews weren’t running to sin; they grabbed hold of a good thing. Do you know who they were running to? Moses. Now you ask why they would do that. In the 21st century, that doesn’t make any sense, but later today we’ll see how truly great Moses was in their eyes and why they were running to him. What we’ll learn today is that while Moses was great, Jesus is greater. We need to run to Him and hold tightly to Him. There are many benefits and blessings that come when we hold tightly to our Savior

So let’s look at our text this morning. This is how Hebrews 3 begins:

¹ Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ² who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house. ³ For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. ⁴ (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵ Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶ but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

This text unleashes three things for us regarding what we need to do. We need to hold tightly to something, so by nature, we will grab hold of anything we can in times of storm. But believers are to hold fast to Jesus. How do we do that? Holding on involves three things.

Living in community.

Now, you may be thinking, “If I’m to hold tightly to Jesus, why are we talking about other people? I live in community; it doesn’t help me in my relationship. I go to work or school; there’s a community there. I live in my neighborhood; there’s a community there. None of that helps me hold tightly to Jesus. So what in the world are you talking about?”

Notice verse one: “Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession...” What we need to have as followers of Jesus Christ, the writer says, is to be part of a family. He already talked about this in chapter two when he said Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. Amidst our sin and rebellion against God, because of the redemption we have experienced, Jesus says we are now brothers. We’re in a family unit and we should not take that lightly. We’re told a couple things about this.

First, we see that we are to share in something. In other translations, the word “partake” is used instead of “share.” That’s a more literal translation, so the original intent of the author was the idea of you ingesting something, partaking in something. You’ll be sitting at a table this afternoon as you’re eating lunch. You are going to ingest something that is outside of you that will be going inside of you. This idea of partaking in the Greek is that it will then mobilize you, energize you, to greater things. The author is saying you need to be involved in a community to help you hold tight to Jesus. You need other people—your brothers and sisters—who are going to engage with you in such a way that as you partake in the community, you walk out energized, mobilized and ready for the next thing you’re going to do. That’s what food does for us. We come in; we’re famished and low on energy. We sit at the table and partake of something that goes into us and energizes us for the rest of the day to continue what we’re going. The writer of Hebrews is saying these partakers are

the holy brothers and sisters with whom you're living in community. So he's saying you need to hold tightly to Jesus and you need other brothers and sisters who are going to help you along the way.

Now there are a couple things we need to recognize. What do we share in? What are we to partake in? What is our food? The food is our confession; notice at the end of verse one there. We share in this same confession. Now this word confession means we trust in someone who we confide in. What's our confession? Notice that we are to consider Jesus. He is what connects us; this is what we announce to one another. So when we gather together, it's because we have something to say. What is that? Jesus—to every issue, to every part of the dialogue, our common confession is this Jesus Whom we are called to consider. The word confess means it is something we say in unity. It literally means to say the same thing. It's something we unify around together, announcing that this is who we are.

This is so important because we live in a world that tells us we are to be divided, to dissect the culture with various groups, then you need to figure out which group you're part of. We try to dissect it in all kinds of worldly ways. We have these types of peoples and these types of peoples and these types of peoples. Some are oppressing others; some are being oppressed. The world says buy into all of this, but here's what the Word of God says: "As Christians, we are one people." In fact, there are only two types of people in this world: unbelievers and believers. The day of the Lord will be the great litmus test of everyone. Is your name in the Lamb's Book of Life or not?

As we gather together as a church, we're not gathering as bald people or those with hair. Not as White Sox fans or Cubs fans. Not black people or white people. Not rich people or poor people. We are coming together under the banner of Christ Who we consider as our confession. That is what we need to witness to the world. The world is fighting and arguing, "I'm better than you. I'm this over you. I'm that over you. You're hurting me. I'm hurting you." All of this bickering is going on out there, but the church says, "Listen, the only thing we have to say is Jesus. He's the One Who saves."

So you ask, "What kind of people does He save?" All people. Everywhere. This is what we confess and what was getting the Hebrews in trouble. This confession was not private; it was public. Their boss would hear about it. Their spouse would hear it. Their family would hear this confession. They would say, "What a minute, if that's your confession, then you're not with me." So these Hebrews started to feel alienated and like they had been scorned for their faith. The writer says, "Listen, you may be abandoned or orphaned by those around you, but you have a family of brothers and sisters."

Notice what this commonality is in. It's in our confession and our calling. What is our calling? It's a holy calling, so as we gather under Christ, our goal is to gather together like we are now and live out Hebrews 3:1. Our job as we live this out is to make one another holy. You say, "Wait a minute. We're all sinners. How can we make one another holy?" The writer will say later in chapter ten that we are to spur one another toward love and good deeds. So my job this morning is to spur you on; to push you toward holiness. My role here is to say, "Hey, let's get excited about Christ. Let's get excited about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Let's start serving our Lord together. Let's start worshipping Him like we've never done before."

But I recognize that some will neglect this kind of assembling together. Why? Because some of you think, "These people keep getting into my business. I don't want that. I want to live as I want." Nevertheless, we need to spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Now, all of this can happen as long as we're not distracted, which leads us to the next point.

Looking to Christ.

We can live in community, but here's the problem. If this community doesn't have a firm foundation, then this group of people can easily become a political action committee, a fan club, a country club or all manner of things. "Why do you get together?" "We get together to talk about a lot of things."

The thing I appreciate about the pandemic right now is everybody is online from a church standpoint. I have a friend who is a deacon in a mainline denomination and he invited me to watch his church service, so I did. The person who was speaking was in front of this beautiful setting of colored trees and I thought, "Wow. What a great opportunity to preach from Psalm 8 and how creation speaks of the majesty of our Lord." Now I don't mean any disrespect, but here's what the

whole conversation was. To protect what the attendees saw behind him, he shared three points and all of them started with buying an electric car. I kid you not! He drives a gas-guzzler, by the way.

Now, we need to do our part to protect the environment, but the purpose of God's people gathering is not to promote buying electric cars. Is there anything wrong with electric cars? Well, they don't make them very big for guys like me, so I look at them and see "casket" written all over them. There's nothing wrong with them, but they are not THE thing. This is where we need to be careful. Village Bible Church can fall to this as well. We need to be sure to have a firm foundation under what this community is going to do. So we have this place; we love one another; we're spurring one another on. But what are we spurring them on to?

Notice the text says to consider Jesus. Underline that in your Bible because that is so important. What are the followers of Jesus to do? They are to consider Christ. Now that seems so elementary. Of course we would consider Jesus. Of course anyone who is a Christ follower would do that, but that wasn't the case for these Hebrews. "To consider" in the Greek literally means to apply one's mind diligently; to fix one's attention so that you can understand the significance of it. That's why later in the book, the writer will say, "Fix your eyes on Jesus." Why? Because He's the Author and Perfector—the Finisher—of our faith.

Now to do this, three things need to take place.

- First, there has to be desire. You have to want to consider Jesus. It is not going to happen without a desire behind it.
- Second, you have to have concentration and discipline. Listen, I desire a lot of things in this world, but I don't get them. Why? Not because I don't want them, but because I don't dedicate or concentrate on them. So I've got to desire them and focus on them.
- Third, you have to give it time. I can look and gaze at things, dream up things I want, but until I give it the time and attention it needs, it's not going to happen.

Based on these points, I love what Kent Hughes, a local pastor near here, said about this: "Lack of these things is why so many Christians are sick, useless and falling by the way. They do not cultivate a desire, concentration or give the time to fix their eyes upon Jesus." We have to look to Jesus.

Now what do we need to look to Jesus about? What are we to focus on? First, consider Who Jesus is. The writer says He is the Apostle and the High Priest. Now right way, you say, "Wait a minute. Jesus didn't do any of those things during His earthly ministry. At no point was Jesus an apostle; He had apostles. Nowhere do we see that Jesus actually did the role of being a priest." In fact, it was many of the priests who hated His guts during His ministry here. We need to recognize what the writer is saying here. Jesus was acting as an apostle and high priest in a way that no one ever had before. An apostle is one sent from God to speak on God's behalf. The 12 apostles were commissioned by God Himself and given a message to declare to the world. Jesus is the quintessential apostle, sent from God, to speak on behalf of God, proclaiming the message God has for people. That's the downward trajectory of that calling. That's what apostles do; their calling was a downward one, meaning they received from God and then gave it to people.

The high priest had the exact opposite role which was to go from the people to God. He was a representative who had been given the charge of taking their message to God. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would represent his people, going into the Holy of Holies with an unblemished sacrifice and speak on behalf of the people, saying, "Lord, forgive us our sins. We have rebelled and sinned against You. Forgive us and heal us." He spoke as a representative from the people to God—an upward calling.

Jesus is the greatest of all time because He doesn't stop with the calling of Apostle. He plays the role of both Apostle and High Priest. As Apostle, Jesus came and spoke the gospel, proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Who sent Him? God the Father. He then turns around and puts another hat on—that of the High Priest—saying, "Okay Father, on behalf of these sinful people, I stand as a sacrifice to You. Heal them; forgive them; blot out their transgressions because as their High Priest, I am representing them to You."

This calling that God has given to Christ makes Him greater than anyone. Now again, I wonder if the writer is hearing the argument of “Yeah, but...”

My kids love the “Yeah, but...” statements. I hate them. This is what the Hebrews say, “Yeah, but what about Moses?” So the author says let’s consider Moses. Notice what he says in verses two through five:

² ...just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. ³ For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. ⁴ (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵ Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant...

The Hebrews bring up their objections. “What about Moses? What about our security blanket? You want us to hold tightly to Jesus? They killed Him? They beat up on Jesus and now they are beating up on us? You know who didn’t get beat up? Moses.” Remember they also did this with angels in chapters one and two. “What about angels? Every time they showed up, victories happened.” So now they pivot to, “What about Moses?” Notice that nowhere in the text was Moses denigrated or spoken less of.

In Jewish families, Moses is on everyone’s Mt. Rushmore. He is a first-ballot, unanimous Jewish hall of famer in everyone’s book. Only an idiot would say that Moses did not play a pivotal and massive roll in their history. People who have given up on God in the Jewish ethnicity and religion still hold Moses in high esteem. They don’t bad-mouth Moses.

Do you see how a good thing can become your security blank? Maybe you’re holding on to something right now, thinking it’s a good thing—a gift from God. Moses was a gift from God to the Jewish people and they were holding on tightly to him. So the writer says, “Okay, let’s talk about Moses for a moment.” We know about Moses, but not like the Jewish people knew him.

When I talk about Moses, right away you probably get a picture of Charlton Heston and the 1956 Ten Commandment movie in your mind, unless you’re under 35 and think Charlton Heston was an apostle of some sort. So what do we need to know about Moses? Everything about Moses was miraculous. He was living during one of the lowest points of Jewish history. They were enslaved in Egypt and the only thing going for them was a high birth rate. The Pharaoh saw that and said, “We’ve got to reduce that because their sons will become an army. Let’s end this.” The decree was sent out to kill all the baby boys. Moses was in Pharaoh’s bullseye, but in a miracle, his peasant mother decided to hide her baby in a basket and put him in one of the largest rivers in the world. She hoped he would go down the river and show up in Pharaoh’s daughter’s home. Yeah, that was a good plan. Then she decided to send her own daughter to say to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Hey, you found this baby and want to adopt him? I have a great nanny who can nurse and wean him, taking care of him for you.” Wouldn’t you know, it was Moses’ own mother! Moses then lived in Pharaoh’s house and little by little, learned that he was of Israelite descent and that his adoption story would come out. He knew there would be troubles in his life so he fled for a while.

These Hebrews who received this book knew what it’s like to flee; they knew what it was like to live in someone else’s house because during this time they were under Rome rule. Moses was like them. That’s why they loved Moses so much.

So he fled for a season, but then returned with only a borrowed staff. He walked into the most powerful man’s throne room—Pharaoh—without an army. He said, “Let me people go.” Pharaoh laughed at first, but then Moses said, “Okay, try these ten things on for size.” Miracle upon miracle occurred—the Nile River turned red, there were plagues of locusts and frogs, ending with the death of the firstborn sons in all of Egypt. The Israelites thought this was all because of Moses, but he was just getting started. Then he liberated a million to two million individuals, again with no army and without shooting an arrow. That’s miraculous. So the Egyptians let the Israelites go and let them take all the riches of Egypt with them. Come on! Those were the good ol’ days. They left slavery behind and took all the investments of Egypt with them. They packed everything up, saying, “Yeah, yeah, Moses is great.” Then Pharaoh’s army started chasing after them and they found themselves at the Red Sea. What did Moses do? He split the darn thing in half. This guy was amazing; he did awesome things. Then he fed a couple million people for 40 years; he looked to heaven and prayed, then bread fell down from the sky. He hit a rock and fresh water came from it.

You say, "Yeah, I know all those stories from Sunday School." These things had bearing on the first-century Jewish individuals who were saying, "What a minute, when we look at Moses and then look at Jesus, Moses takes the cake." You know, we do that when we trust things other than Jesus? We take other things and say, "Wow! They are more important; stronger; more available to me than Jesus." The Hebrews were doing exactly what we do when we trust our bank accounts, other people, other relationships, our 401Ks. When we trust those things, we make little of Jesus and make much of other things. They had done that with Moses, who by the way, is considered the most humble man who lived.

Let's not forget that Moses talked to God. The first five books of Scripture were all about Moses, they would say. Think about this. Of the Torah—the Jewish Scriptures—what books did every Hebrew have to memorize? The first five. Those were written by Moses himself. Do you see how enthralled they were about Moses? The author of Hebrews says, "Let's talk about Jesus. Here's what you need to know about Jesus."

Let's talk a little more about Moses before we go on to Jesus. I found this quote by Dr. I.M. Haldeman:

"The life of Moses presents a series of striking antitheses. He was the child of a slave and the son of a queen. He was born in a hut and lived in a palace. He inherited poverty and enjoyed unlimited wealth. He was the leader of armies and the keeper of flocks. He was the mightiest of warriors and the meekest of men. He was educated in the courts and dwelled in the desert. He had the wisdom of Egypt and the faith of a child. He was fitted for a city and wandered in the wilderness. He was tempted with pleasures of sin and endured the hardships of virtue. He was backward in speech and talked with God. He had the rod of a shepherd and the power of the infinite. He was a fugitive from Pharaoh and an ambassador from heaven. He was the giver of the law and the forerunner of grace. He died alone on Mt. Moab and appeared with Christ in Judea. No man assisted at his funeral, yet God buried him."

Let's be honest, a lot of that could be said about Jesus, right? Moses was a great man. We can fall in love with this great man, but let's not forget Jesus. Moses was part of the house as a servant; Jesus is part of the house as a Son. Let's do a compare and contrast for a moment:

- Moses was faithful in his generation, but Jesus is faithful in all generations.
- Moses freed his people from Egypt and took them into a wilderness; Jesus frees His people from death and brings them into eternal life.
- Moses did miracles, but only when empowered by God; Jesus did miracles by the power of His word.
- Moses had episodes of walking and talking with God; Jesus lives in perpetual fellowship and communion with our Father in heaven.
- Moses was a great servant; Jesus is the only One Who can be called God's Son.

So the role of Moses is to point to Jesus. The role of that good thing that you're holding on to tightly is to point you to a greater thing that will keep you safer than anything in this world. So stop looking to that good thing and look for the greater thing—Jesus.

Leaning on Him in all circumstances.

So what are we to do with this Jesus? We are to lean on Jesus in all circumstances. What are we to do with this confession we have, this consideration of Jesus Who is counted worthy of more glory even than Moses? We are to join in the house that Jesus is building. He uses the illustration that God is building a house. Moses is not the builder; Jesus is. He is the One Who will inherit the house and He is the One Who is building the house. There are servants who come along and are part of the material that helps the house to be built. We are those servants. The Bible says we are living stones being built into a spiritual house, Peter tells his readers in 1 Peter 2.

So what are we to do? Well, it's easy for us, instead of being part of the building, to drift away. We can play the part, like Moses did, preaching, proclaiming and serving in our generation. But notice there is a caveat in verse six. All of this can happen if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in hope. Do you want to be part of this building? It's not

for sure that you will; it's conditional. There are a couple things that need to happen. We need to hold fast. Hold tightly to Jesus.

This phrase hold fast is used a couple different times in the New Testament. It's used in Acts 27 when Paul and his companions were on this boat and a storm came up. The water was moving up and down and they were about to be shipwrecked. So as good sailors they went to their security place. Where's that? The shore. That's where they found the peace they were looking for, so they made haste to get to the shore.

The first step of holding fast is not tightening your grip; it's getting close to the person you're going to grab hold of. So we need to ask, "Am I running to Jesus? Am I leaning on Jesus? Before I can take hold of Him, I have to be near Him." Isn't that what all the banks are telling us today? "We want to make your finances accessible at all times. We don't want to leave you hanging, so we're going to get as close to you as possible so you can have peace." Jesus says, "I am there in the storm." So are you going to grab hold of Him?

Well, you cannot if you've distancing yourself away from Him; if you're drifting away from Him. We need to make our way to Jesus. We need to beeline it to Jesus. Whatever troubles and struggles are coming our way, Jesus is our safety, so we need to take hold of Him. This idea of taking hold also gives the idea of being singular in your focus, thinking, "This is what I'm going to do; I'm taking hold of Jesus." So how tightly are you holding on to Jesus right now? Have you ever noticed that you hold tighter to Jesus in storms and troubles than you do when life is good? Maybe life is going really, really well for you right now. I would encourage you to not distance yourself from Jesus during good times. Get close to Him. Lean on Him.

Notice why we need to hold on tightly to Him. We need confidence and hope. How do those two things work? Confidence we need in the present; hope we need in the future. Confidence we need today; hope we need for tomorrow. So how do we lean on Jesus? How do we hold tightly to Him? We hold tightly to Jesus by getting close to Him, confessing and making Him our all in all. We do that today because our problems are here today and we're going to do it tomorrow because tomorrow will have its own set of problems. The only way we're going to get through this life is when we make Jesus number one.

Now we're going to talk more about this in weeks to come, but it's easy for us to say, "Well, that doesn't sound like much fun. That sounds like just a grit-and-bear-it idea." Here is our takeaway for today: **Holding on is more about delight and enjoyment than simply duty and endurance.**

When we grab a hold of Jesus as our security blanket, many benefits and blessings come along with it. The peace of God which transcends all your understanding will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus we are told in Philippians 4:7. We are to throw our anxieties on Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). It is a good thing, an enjoyable thing, a hopeful thing for us to trust Jesus and put our lives in His hands.

Are you holding fast to Jesus? If not, what does your community life look like? Are you looking for what Christ has to offer? Have you even considered Jesus? Are you leaning on Him no matter the circumstances that come? This whole first part of the book of Hebrews is about making as much of Jesus as we can. This is not just true for us as individuals, it is true for us as a church. Your elders and staff pray for this all the time, asking, "Lord, we want our world to make much of You and if that means we need to go and shake our neighborhoods out of their slumber because they don't see Jesus as great, we're going to invade those communities and make Your name great so people will be able to bow the knee and give their lives to Christ."