

# The Author and Perfecter of Faith

Week 45: November 5-11 — *Hebrews 8:3-12:3*

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## Helpful Resources

Who Is the Author of Hebrews? (p.63), Tabernacle of Moses (p.65), Tabernacle Blueprints (p.66)

## Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

The writer of *Hebrews* meticulously explained the superiority of Christ over the Old Testament types and symbols. His purpose was not only to prove that Christ is the fulfillment and completion of all that God foretold and foreshadowed in the Old Testament, but also to strengthen the faith of his readers (that's us). God is not only the Author or originator of our faith, but He is also the one who perfected our faith through Christ, who did everything necessary to complete our salvation. Remember, He said, "It is finished" (*Jn. 19:30*).

In some small way, "the Author and Perfecter of our faith" is symbolized in the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, our faith, or salvation, was begun (*Gen. 3:15*) and slowly unveiled. However, our salvation was never completed in the Old Testament. God only provided hints, shadows, symbols, predictions, and types of the Messiah to come. But when Christ the Savior appeared, He fulfilled, completed, or perfected all the imagery and prophecies, providing "a new and living way" for us to be made right with God (*Heb. 10:20*). In this review, let's reconsider the Old Testament symbols that were perfected in Christ's New Testament sacrifice, as well as how our faith is bolstered by all that He has completed.

- The First and Final

The writer has already proven Christ's superiority over several Old Testament icons, which were glimpses of what Christ would do when He arrived. He continued this theme by aiming his sights on the covenants, tabernacles, blood, and sacrifices.

1. **Old and New Covenants** (*Heb. 8:3-13*): The old covenant (testament) was imperfect and, therefore, temporary and incomplete. God was not at fault for the failure of the old covenant; rather it was the people (Israelites) who could not keep it. While God's laws are perfect, the people were not. Therefore, they could not live up to God's standards.

Final: What the people could not do in the old covenant, Jesus did. He fulfilled the law, following it perfectly without sin. Thus, He was qualified to establish a new covenant (testament) by faith in Him. His new covenant, therefore, replaced the old one.

2. **The Better Tabernacle** (*Heb. 9:1-15*): The tabernacle of Moses was an earthly temple in which God dwelled with His people. But only priests could enter the tabernacle, and only one priest was allowed into God's presence (Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies).

Final: The earthly tabernacle was a picture of heaven. The only way for men to get to heaven and stand in the presence of God is through Christ. Christ tabernacled with us (*Jn. 1:14*) and did all that was necessary as our Great High Priest, to grant us access to God's presence (heaven). He now indwells us (His tabernacles) by His Spirit (*1 Cor. 3:16*).

3. **The Better Blood** (*Heb. 9:16-28*): From the beginning, God established the principle that something or someone must die for sin. "The wages of sin is death" (*Rom. 6:23*). Only blood can atone for sin, and for a while, God allowed the blood of animals to suffice.

Final: While God allowed the blood of animals to cover sin for a short time, animals were not a permanent solution. Only the blood of Jesus would be sufficient to atone for sin permanently. Because of His sinless life, Jesus' blood was acceptable to God.

4. **How Many Sacrifices?** (*Heb. 10:1-18*): Because of their imperfection, the priests had to perform continual sacrifices. Consequently, they were never allowed to sit down because their work was never finished.

Final: Because of the perfection of Christ's sinless sacrifice, God accepted His atonement for all sin, thus completing the need for sacrifices. Christ paid the price for sin once for all. Therefore, His work was finished, complete. He sat down at the Father's right hand.

- Faithful Priest, Faithful People?

Christ is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. There is nothing else that He can do, nothing else that needs to be done. His work is complete, and we have been made right with God. He remembers our sin no more. In His eyes, we are new creatures, just as if we have no sin.

But Christ is not the problem. We are the problem. Even though Christ has perfected our faith (salvation), our faithfulness wanes at times. Thus, the writer of *Hebrews* attempted to encourage and challenge us.

First, he encouraged us to "draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith..." (*10:22*) and "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering..." (*10:23*). He also encouraged us to "stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our assembling together..." (*10:24*). When we are together with others, our faith is encouraged and challenged.

Second, the writer challenged his readers (and us) "not to shrink back" and fall away from the faith (*10:26-39*), but rather to be like the men and women who have gone before us and demonstrated great faith (*11:1-12:3*). We have such "a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance... and run with endurance the race that is set before us..., fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith..." (*12:1-3*).

## The Bottom Line

Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. The question is will we be faithful to Him?

## Questions to Consider

1. Which of the Old Testament icons that Jesus fulfilled did you find most encouraging? Why?
2. How does knowing what Christ has done reassure your faith?
3. Re-read *Hebrews 10:24, 25*. Why is assembling with fellow believers important?
4. Have you ever found it difficult or challenging to attend church? Why or why not?
5. When you read the list of men and women in the Hall of Faith (*Heb. 11:1-12:3*), which example inspires you most? Why? What "great cloud of witnesses" do you have today?
6. What encumbers your walk with the Lord and keeps you from running with endurance?
7. What does it look like to "fix your eyes on Jesus" in this race?