

A WORD ABOUT APPLICATION

Greater Than and Less Than

The Hebrews were (or were about to) experience, severe, “top-notch” persecution. They were out numbered, over powered, under real, physical and violent opposition.

For most of us in 21st century North America this is not the case (though the Book of Hebrews does speak directly to the situation that many of our brothers and sisters are facing.) They were facing a much more difficult and dangerous circumstance than we were. This leads us to a “greater than, less than” form of application: ***If these things are true for the Hebrews, how much more so for us now.***

- If paying attention to the gospel was essential for them, even if doing so was going to end up costing them their lives, then how much more so for us? also incidentally gives us a case study of how God’s glory is worked out in very difficult situations. In order that no child of God would ever feel that he or she was facing something so difficult, so horrible, so overwhelming that God had not anticipated it, or could not handle it, for his own glory he brought the Hebrews under persecution, so that his word of comfort and encouragement to faithfulness could be brought to them. In this way, we have recorded in scripture a “worst case scenario” along with God’s word to those in that scenario. This gives the book another added layer of meaning: God’s instructions to us, his insistence that we look at Christ, his “first language” of theology which the book is dripping with, are all given at the highest level of importance and consideration. We will never find ourselves in a situation that requires more of us than they already have faced. We can’t look to God and say, “this is too much for any Christian to handle” since he has already placed his loved ones in that position so that Hebrews could be written to them.

- **Us and Them** They were facing the ultimate test and were called to faithful obedience, how much more so for us who are being tested by “leisure” or a world that “doesn’t seem to understand?”

Hence we are probably going to be seeing a lot of this type of application. This We do find a basic similarity, however, in our everyday lives to those of the Hebrews even though our situations in life are very different.

They, like us, were tempted to turn their backs on the gospel because they, like us, were prone to believing that following Christ, dying to self, and embracing a lifestyle of repentant faith was not the way forward in life. They, like us, were in danger of believing that there is something “better” than Christ, something safer, something more secure than Christ’s demands of discipleship, something more able to help us than his work. This basic temptation to a “radical disbelief” is the same for them and for us. However, it probably manifests itself differently for them and for us.

Hebrews	Us
<p>Temptation: to return to the Law in order to return to cultural safety in the face of persecution.</p>	<p>Temptation: to return to a “Law way of relating” to God and others because we believe that we can earn God’s favor based on our religious performance and this provides security.</p> <p>E.g’s</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Son’s/Daughters vs. Orphans • Misuse of the Law (legalism) • Thinking that we can “be well” on our own terms. <p>Temptation: to return to a “Law way of relating” to God and others because we believe that our idols will help us. We think that our idols, and not the gospel with its demands and promises, will give us comfort, control, success, security or approval.</p>
<p>Basic Issue: Following Christ was becoming too costly due to external circumstances—they began to doubt if following Christ was really worth it and if JC could really deliver all he promised.</p>	<p>Basic Issue: Following Christ becomes too costly because we think that our performance determines God’s view of us or that our idols can give us what God cannot.</p>