

Why Has the Author Written This Letter?

- Because of *the condition and circumstances* of the believers to whom he is writing:
 - The **danger** of their “*departing from the living God*” (3:12), “*falling away*” (6:6) from the glorious truths of the gospel, and “*shrinking back*” (10:39) to the Old Testament sacrificial system which served only as a type and shadow of the Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his once for all sacrifice for their sins (9:11-12, 24-28; 10:11-12) which is superior to everything under the old covenant (7:18-19)
 - The **discouragement** they felt because of their “hard struggle with sufferings” and “being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction” and even the confiscation of their property and imprisonment (10:32-34; 13:3).
- As a “*word of exhortation*” (13:22) or encouragement:
 - The letter contains many **warnings**, giving examples from God’s people in previous generations who succumbed to danger and discouragement (3:7-4:11; 6:1-8; 10:26-31; 12:12-17, 25-29).
 - The warnings are ALWAYS followed by pastoral words of comfort and encouragement:
 - “Exhort one another daily” 3:13
 - “Hold the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end” 3:13
 - “We which believe do enter into rest” 4:3
 - “They SHALL enter into my rest” 4:3,5
 - “Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and the things which accompany salvation” 6:9
 - “We have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” 6:18
 - “We are not of them that draw back unto perdition” 10:39
 - “You are come unto mount Zion, unto the city of the living God” 12:22-23
 - **What is it that will cause them to endure danger and discouragement?** *FAITH*. Not a merely intellectual belief that God will deliver them in the end, but *a faith that actively lives moment by moment by faith in the future and final fulfillment of God’s promises*, even as present danger and discouragement calls into question the veracity of those promises. What does this active, living faith look like?
 - **Guarding** our hearts from being hardened against God by our unbelief: 3:12
 - **Holding fast** our confidence: in God, in his Word, and in his promises: 3:6, 14; 10:23, 35-36

*His oath, his covenant, his blood
Support me in the whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.*

- **Persevering (enduring)** under trials: *patience* – 6:12,15; 10:36; 12:2
 - “unto the end” 3:6; 3:14:6:11
 - “the hope set before us” 6:18
 - “Jesus, the author and *finisher* of our faith” 12:2
 - “receiving the end of your faith” 1 Peter 1:9
- **Rejoicing** in hope, recognizing that *Christ is our hope*: 3:6; 6:11, 17-20; 7:19
- **Drawing near** to God through Christ: 4:14-16; 10:19-22; 12:2-3

“boldly” in 4:16 and “boldness” in 10:19 (KJV) is the same Greek work translated “confidence” in 3:6, 3:14, and 10:35

Our confidence is in our great high priest who is interceding for us (7:24-25) on and from his throne of grace

- **Exhorting one another**: 3:13; 10:24-35; 12:12-14
 - *parakaleō* call to one’s side for comfort, encouragement, and strength
 - The word Jesus used of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16,26
 - “beseeching” (making strong appeals) to those who are doubting, discouraged, and in danger of shrinking back or living contrary to their faith in the gospel: 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 6:1; 7:6-7; Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:11; 4:1; 5:11, 14; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9; 2:15; 1 Peter 2:11; Jude 3
 - An intentional, personal, one-to-one ministry of admonition:
 - 2 Corinthians 1:4-6
 - Colossians 3:12-17

Eric Alexander: “We often speak about Hebrews chapter 11 as ‘God’s Picture Gallery of Faith,’ but it is much more than that. It is primarily a series of biblical illustrations of *faith working under fire*. That’s why the author chooses these particular instances. It is faith under fire that he is speaking about. Not just faith in a general sense, but faith in a specific sense: *faith under pressure*.”

Without denying the very **real pain** of our present circumstances, faith works with a future focused confidence (11:13) to **a real person** (2:9-18), who is **a real priest** (4:14-5:10; 7:22-28; 9:11-12; 10:11-13; 12:24) securing **real promises** (6:13-20), which will be fulfilled in **a real place** of eternal peace and safety (11:16; 12:22-23) by the Captain of our Salvation (2:10), the Author and Finisher of our faith (12:2), the risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ (13:20-21).