

FOCUS Hebrews 1:1-14

Having focus is very important in life. Webster defines focus as a “center of activity, attraction, or attention.” It says that focus is a “point of concentration and directed attention.” Focus is a “state or condition permitting clear perception or understanding.” Many studies have emphasized the importance of having focus. Athletes are encouraged to focus on the skills that will enable them to succeed in their sports. Focus is crucial for competent work skills in professions. Teachers often remind their students in the classroom to focus. The purpose of focus is to direct our thought, activity, and energy towards a goal without being distracted. It is so easy to get distracted. Distractions are all around us. This saying makes more sense on the mainland because of the animal life there, but I am reminded of the person walking the dog and demanding the dog’s focus, when all of a sudden, “squirrel” and all the focus has changed. Unfortunately, we can lose focus and get distracted on very important activities and people. Distracted driving can have serious and costly consequences. We can lose focus in a church service. We can lose our focus on God because of circumstances and trials in life.

While the word focus is not used in the bible, the concept is present in numerous places. We are commanded in God’s Word to direct our mind, heart, and actions toward God and his kingdom. We are to love the Lord our God with all of our being. The concept of focus is expressed with the concepts of fixing our eyes on Jesus, or setting our minds on the things above, or seeking first the Kingdom of God.

The writer of Hebrews is writing to Jewish Christians who because of persecution are tempted to turn away from Jesus Christ and lose their focus on him. They are tempted to renounce Christ and return to

Judaism. Ray Stedman reminds us that “The author intends to present a series of arguments for the superiority of Jesus over all rival claims to allegiance which his readers were feeling and hearing. Their attention was easily diverted off in other directions, just as our attention is easily distracted today. They, like us, were being tempted, frightened or pressured into following other voices and serving other masters.”¹

So, the book of Hebrews is going to emphasize the superiority of Jesus over everything the Jewish people thought was important and valuable in their day. In our passage today the writer emphasizes that God has spoken in many ways, but the revelation of the Son is the climactic revelation of God. Jesus is superior to the angels whom the Jewish people believe were instrumental in delivering the Law to Moses. In later chapters the writer will emphasize the superiority of Jesus over Moses, the law giver, and Joshua the leader of the conquest. He will emphasize the superiority of Jesus over David as God’s messiah by quoting numerous messianic passages from Psalms and other Old Testament writings. He will emphasize Jesus as the superior high priest greater than Aaron the first high priest and all the Levitical priests. He will emphasize the superior sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the once for all sacrifice that actually cleanses us from our sin. And he will emphasize the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant which is established by the sacrificial death of Jesus. The question for all of us is what or who do we focus on? The writer of Hebrews is going to emphasize and remind his first century readers and everyone in the

¹ Ray C. Stedman, [Hebrews](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1992), Heb 1:1–3.

future who reads this letter that they need to focus on the Son, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

⁵For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? ⁶And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." ⁷In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."

⁸But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." ¹⁰He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. ¹¹They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. ¹²You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." ¹³To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? ¹⁴

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?²

1. Focus on the Son Because of Who He Is

We need to focus on the Son, because of who he is. The Son, Jesus Christ, is the most definitive complete revelation of God. Raymond Brown writes that “The letter to the Hebrews begins by asserting the greatest single fact of the Christian revelation: God has spoken to humans through his word in the Bible and through his Son, Jesus. In Christ God has closed the greatest communication gap of all time, that which exists between a holy God and sinful humanity.”³ One of my professors Tommy Lea writes that “God has spoken! He has sent us a victorious E-mail message. He has not left us groping in the dark for spiritual direction. God has spoken in two ways. First, he has spoken in many different ways through the Old Testament prophets. Second, he has spoken gloriously and fully through Jesus Christ. We do not serve a silent God. Our God has spoken. We must search out the meaning of his message like one seeking directions to buried treasure.”⁴ The Son is the complete and climactic revelation of God.

The Son is also the heir of all things. Clinton Arnold writes that “The reference to the Son as “heir” in 1:2 alludes to a royal psalm (Ps. 2:8), which the author of Hebrews also quotes at Hebrews 1:5: “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your

² [*The Holy Bible: New International Version*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Heb 1:1–14.

³ Raymond Brown, [*The Message of Hebrews: Christ above All*](#), *The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 27.

⁴ Thomas D. Lea, [*Hebrews, James*](#), vol. 10, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 11.

possession.” In context, this psalm addresses the rebellion of the nations against God and God’s rebuke of them. The content of that rebuke largely has to do with the enthronement of his Son, who will rule the nations with strength and crush any form of insurrection with his “iron scepter.” Those nations that are wise, however, will submit themselves to the Anointed One (Ps. 2:11–12) and will find cause for rejoicing. Regardless of the nations’ response, however, the extent of the Son’s rule comes through clearly as “the ends of the earth.” All are subject to his will. The author expands this idea to “all things,” meaning the whole created order.”⁵ We do not currently see all things subjected to his rule at this time as much of the world lives in rebellion, but in the future at his second coming his rule will be evident to all.

The Son is also creator being one with the Father and the Spirit in bringing creation into existence. Scripture reveals that all things were created through him and by him and for him.

The Son is the radiance of God’s glory. Clinton Arnold writes that “The author wishes to proclaim the close relationship between the Father and the Son. Just as one cannot separate the brightness of light from the light itself, one cannot separate seeing the Son from witnessing the presence of God, since the Son manifests the person of God.”⁶ George Guthrie writes that “By analogy, to see the Son is to view God’s glory or

⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*](#), vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 11.

⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*](#), vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 12.

manifest presence. So as the “radiance of his glory” the Son is the manifestation of the person and presence of God.”⁷

The Son is the exact representation of God’s being. Paul said in Philippians 2:6 that Jesus Christ in his very nature is God. Colossians 1:15 says that he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn which in this case means the one who has supremacy. Colossians 1:19 says that God was pleased to have his fulness dwell in Jesus Christ. The Son is the true embodiment of God as he really is and the exact representation of God’s Being, so if you want to know what God is like you look to Jesus, the Son. We need to focus on the Son because of who he is.

2. Focus on the Son Because of What He Has Done

We need to focus on the Son, because of what he has done. The Son sustains all things just through his powerful word. Bruce Barton says that “Christ not only created the universe (1:2), he also sustains it. Christ spoke the world into existence, and he supports the world with his omnipotent word (see 11:3). Christ guides the world toward its appointed future—the time when he will receive it as his inheritance (1:2). Because Christ sustains everything, nothing in creation is independent from him. All things are held together in a coherent or logical way, sustained and upheld, prevented from dissolving into chaos. In him alone and the mighty power of his command, we find the unifying principle of all life. He is transcendent over all other powers.”⁸

⁷ George Guthrie, [Hebrews](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 48.

⁸ Bruce Barton et al., [Life Application New Testament Commentary](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 1012.

The Son has purified us from our sins through his death and resurrection. The Son has rescued us from the judgment we deserve. Through his humanity, the incarnation of the eternal Son, and his atoning death he has provided for the purification of our sins. The Old Testament priest's work was constantly repeated because it was only temporarily beneficial. Raymond Brown notes that "Christ 'offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins'. The priest stood because his task was never complete. He could never hope to bring it to the moment of final achievement. Only Christ's sacrifice could be eternally effective. Christ *sat down* to indicate that the work was finished. On that day when he bore our sins in his own body, he cried, 'It is finished.'"⁹ George Guthrie emphasizes that "It is only the exalted Jesus who can make purification of sins, according to Hebrews (1:3; 8:1–2; 9:1–10:18), and provide us a way to draw near to God (4:14–16; 10:19–25). It is only the exalted Jesus who can offer help to us in our time of need (4:15–16), deliver us from death (2:14–15), and lead us to glory (2:10; 12:22–24)"¹⁰ We need to focus on the Son because of what he has done.

3. Focus on the Son Because He is Worthy of Worship

We need to focus on the Son, because he is worthy of worship. Tommy Lea writes that "Jesus is not merely a good example, a beautiful friend, a teacher of ethics, or a narrator of parables. He is the eternal God, worthy of our worship, and deserving of our constant obedience."¹¹

⁹ Raymond Brown, [*The Message of Hebrews: Christ above All*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 33.

¹⁰ George Guthrie, [*Hebrews*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 65.

¹¹ Thomas D. Lea, [*Hebrews, James*](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 12.

“Our writer presented angels as servants God created to minister to believers. He portrayed Christ as God’s Son, who received the worship of angels and had an eternal existence. The superiority of Christ made the failure to believe on Him a fearsome experience. The author concluded that Christ’s incarnation and crucifixion enhanced His superiority and qualified Him to become a spiritual trailblazer for believers.”¹² David Peterson says that “As a result of his heavenly ascension, the Son rules with justice and righteousness, waiting for all his enemies to be subdued, and uses angels to sustain ‘those who will inherit salvation’ (1:14). Angels worship the Son and serve his eternal purpose by ministering to the needs of his people.”¹³ Tommy Lea emphasizes that “Christ’s superior rank and authority compel us to worship and obey him.”¹⁴ We need to focus on the Son because he is worthy of worship.

4. Focus on the Son Because He Reigns

We need to focus on the Son because he reigns. Clinton Arnold notes how “Psalm 110:1 is a royal psalm that speaks of the “Lord” being seated at Yahweh’s right hand in a rank of power, as demonstrated by the subjugation of his enemies. The New Testament utilizes this psalm more than any other Old Testament text, heralding its fulfillment in the

¹² Thomas D. Lea, [“The General Letters,”](#) in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 621.

¹³ David G. Peterson, [Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary](#), ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 15, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London; Downers Grove, IL: IVP; IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), 80.

¹⁴ Thomas D. Lea, [Hebrews, James](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 17.

exaltation of Jesus.”¹⁵ The Son is enthroned as the messianic king. George Guthrie emphasizes that “This allusion to Psalm 110:1, presents the exaltation of Christ. The concept of “the right hand” represents either superior power or ultimate honor, though it also carries the derivative meanings of “greatness” or “favor.” As adapted in the New Testament, Psalm 110:1 supported Jesus’ messiahship, vindication (through resurrection and exaltation), role as judge, lordship, and his intercession on behalf of believers.”¹⁶ One day, as Philippians 2 says, all creation will acknowledge his reign even if they reject him now. In the future every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. We need to focus on the Son because he reigns.

5. Focus on the Son Because He is Constant and Eternal

We need to focus on the Son because he is constant and eternal. Tommy Lea reminds us that “Hebrews points us to someone who does not change (vv. 10–12). Years on our mortal time clock tick away. Heaven and earth will perish. Only Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb. 13:8).”¹⁷ We can count on the Son because he will not change with current fads. He will not change with the shifting sands as history moves forward. His promises will always remain true.

¹⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*](#), vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 13.

¹⁶ George Guthrie, [*Hebrews*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 49.

¹⁷ Thomas D. Lea, [*Hebrews, James*](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 13.

Tommy Lea warns us that “We are living in the last days, not in a chronological sense but in a theological sense. Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension showed that we have entered new territory in God’s plans. In these final days God has spoken through his Son. God wants us to hear him. We had better listen. Anyone neglecting what Jesus says faces the spiritual danger of a driver crashing through road signs announcing, “Bridge out ahead!”¹⁸ We need to focus on the Son because he is constant and eternal.

Hebrews 1 states that we need to focus on the Son because of who he is, because of what he has done, because he is worthy of worship, because he reigns, and because he is constant and eternal.

In a world full of distractions what are some ways that we can keep our focus on the Son. Let us focus on putting God first in our lives. Focus by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus. Let us pray continuously as Paul shared in his letter to the Thessalonians. Focus by reading and studying the Bible. Let us worship our Lord privately and in community. Let us renew our minds as we focus on the Son. Focus by putting on the full armor of God that Paul speaks about in Ephesians. We need to be filled by the Spirit by submitting to the leading, guiding, and empowering work of the Holy Spirit as we live our lives for Christ. God wants us to focus on the Son.

¹⁸ Thomas D. Lea, [Hebrews, James](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 9.