

Powerful Positive Thinking!

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

INTRO:

As followers of Jesus, we are those who amid life's setbacks and difficulties and tragedies, we trust God. We have hope, we have optimism about all of life and our prospects. This isn't because we have faith in humanity's potential goodness, but in the **graciousness** and **power** of God. In Christ Jesus, God has subjected all things to himself. We will still see plenty of difficulty in life, but we will also see Jesus, and that keeps us positive about the overall direction of life.

Before Joel Osteen's brand of **shiny, toothy positive thinking**, there was a pastor named Dr. Normal Vincent Peale who was an author AND a pastor. He is probably best known for his book: [The Power of Positive Thinking](#). His message was simple:

"You can if you believe you can."

Others think differently. They think, "**you cannot, and I don't care how much you think you can!**" Much **more** realistic I suppose, but much **less** encouraging and positive.

ME:

I like to think that I'm a pretty positive person. But as I get older, I realize that I have been a pretty optimistic person who complains a lot about small things in a big way. Traffic is a good example. I used to get so angry about the slightest delay caused by traffic. Now I just consider it a chance to be glad to be alive. I used to be an **optimistic realist**. I was smiling about the possibilities while my words were all about all the things that could go wrong, or all the barriers that will keep things from working out like we hope they will work out.

YOU:

Are you a positive person? Or, **do you like to just complain about everything?** The letter to the Hebrews is a great chance to **turn that frown upside down!** God used it to encourage early Christians and I expect he will use it this minoring to encourage us with **Powerful Positive Thinking.**
Let's turn to God now, but first:

Let's pray together...

GOD:

Hebrews 1: 1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. 3 He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat

down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

2:5 Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. 6 But someone has testified somewhere, “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them?

7 You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor,

8 subjecting all things under their feet.” Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, 9 but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10 It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, 12 saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

WE:

Hebrews is known for its determination to try to encourage a group of struggling, early Christians. Hebrews uses every *metaphor, motif, image and rhetorical device* it can to encourage these early believers.

Did you think we were rushing the Christmas season as this reading began? *It is a shout of the triumph of God in the incarnation of Christ!*

It begins by contrasting the *dimly lit revelation* of God in the past and the *fully bright revelation* of God in Christ. We are living “**in these final days**” when God has shifted the world on its axis and a new world has begun. Christ is all-powerful —*the Son of God in creation, the reflection of the glory and radiance of God*. He is the one who “**maintains everything with his powerful message.**” Hebrews makes a sweeping claim for the power of Christ, “**at the right side of the highest majesty.**”

Many have **deemphasized** the real power of Christ, especially as characterized in Hebrews. Some think of Jesus as our buddy, our good friend, our companion in life. He might serve in **any** or **all** of those roles, but only because his Father acted so decisively through the Son. He is God’s Son, the Lord, and the savior of all. This is the message we will receive clearly from Hebrews . . . if we have eyes to **see** and ears to **hear**.

The author of Hebrews honestly tells about the difficulties and tragedies that we all face:

because we don't see everything under God's control yet.

It is clear that the world is not under the lordship of Christ completely. *Not even close!* But . . . *we do see* . . . Jesus. This helps us to be positive about the future even though we do not see the victory of God. Hebrews reminds us that we do see **“the one who is now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of his death.”**

We know so many people who are depressed, hopeless, even pessimistic about life and the world and their place in it. If we use our eyes and our ears, Hebrews may just help us to proclaim to them, or even to ourselves, a savior who is able to turn our pessimism into God-inspired optimism. A savior who breathes hope and life into our dark view of life.

In Christ, we *can* be and we *must* be honest about all the difficulties in life, but also hopeful at the same time. Hopeful because we are at the dawn of a new age in which Christ will be all in all.

Here is the positive thinker, writing to the struggling Hebrews:

“The Son is the light of God's glory and the imprint of God's being. He maintains everything with his powerful message.”

Elsewhere Paul speaks of Christ as the great **“yes”** of God (2 Cor 1: 18-22).

This is unusual for Paul. He is usually a *stern realist*. *It seems we caught him in a rare moment of positive thinking!*

Someone one said they found Paul appealing and Peale appalling and Paul's Peale-like positivism perplexing!

But let's get back to Hebrews In this strong affirmation in Hebrews, is not bubbling praise for the resolute human spirit, or faith in the possibility of human achievement, but a strong and a positive “**Yes**“ to struggling believers then and now! Not because of them, not because of us, but because of God. Jesus has been revealed as “**the light of God's glory.**”

There really is tragedy all around us, there are setbacks, aggravations, and large and small evils. We believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, even though this lordship is not yet fully here.

But. We. Do. See . . . Jesus. We have not seen his fullness yet, but we do see Jesus. Think of this Sunday morning time together as time to get a vision, not to put a happy face on everything. We don't see everything. But we do see . . . Jesus.

We do not give up hope, Be aside we see Jesus. We do not despair . . .
Why? Because . . . we see . . . **Jesus.**

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

Powerful Positive thinking helps us continue in life because we see Jesus.

YOU:

Do you see him? Do you see Jesus? If not, are your eyes open to him?

What shift do you think would help you see him better?

CLOSE:

Once there was a Taoist monk on a raft on a river. The river suddenly began to sweep his raft quickly towards a large waterfall. He and his raft swept over the waterfall! As people ran to the edge of the waterfall's cliff, they were sure he would be found dead! But there he was, standing on the edge of the river! Soaking wet, **but very alive!** The people asked him how he possibly survived the fall!

He said, I accommodated to the water, I did not expect the water to accommodate to me!

This is life changing! This is how a traffic delay can become another opportunity to be glad you're alive. This is how we can see Jesus at work in our lives and in the world.

let's pray together now, because this is another opportunity to be glad we're alive...]