

The Epistle To The Hebrews



Sermon Outlines

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To God Be The Glory!

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The Epistle To The Hebrews

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The Epistle To The Hebrews

Introduction To The Epistle

INTRODUCTION

1. The Epistle to the Hebrews is a unique book in the New Testament...
 - a. It begins as an **essay** - **He 1:1-2**
 - b. It progresses as a **sermon** - **He 2:1-4**
 - c. It ends as a **letter** - **He 13:23-25**
2. Its contents are deep and challenging...
 - a. Many Christians find it difficult
 - b. Some equate its difficulty with the book of Revelation
3. But for Christians who are willing to take the time to read and reflect upon it...
 - a. They are **reminded** of how blessed they are to have trusted in Christ
 - b. They are **impressed** with the superiority of Christ and His New Covenant over Moses and the Old Covenant
 - c. They are **warned** of the danger of apostasy and the need for steadfastness in their faith
4. With this lesson, I wish to begin a series of expository sermons based upon this epistle...
 - a. Yet just as one should not begin a journey without some idea of where they are going
 - b. So it is beneficial to begin with a preview of this epistle, that we might have an idea...
 - 1) Of where we are headed
 - 2) And what we can expect to find

[Such a “preview” or introduction would naturally include some information on...]

I. THE BACKGROUND TO THIS EPISTLE

A. THE AUTHOR...

1. The author does not identify himself
 2. Many believe it to be the apostle **Paul** (e.g., Clement of Alexandria)
 - a. This seems unlikely in view of the author’s statement: “...was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,” - **He 2:3**
 - b. For Paul declared that he had not received the gospel from or through men - **Ga 1:11-12**
 - c. Yet there are many arguments which favor Paul as the author (cf. **New Testament Commentary on Hebrews, Robert Milligan, pp. 5-19**)
 3. Other names have been proposed over the years:
 - a. **Barnabas** (suggested by Tertullian)
 - b. **Apollos** (suggested by Luther)
 - c. **Priscilla** (suggested by Harnack)
- Perhaps Origen says it best, “But who wrote the epistle, to be sure, **only God knows.**”

B. THE RECIPIENTS...

1. The general consensus is that this letter was written to **Jewish Christians**

2. But there is uncertainty as to where they and the author were at the time of composition
 - a. Most believe the recipients were in Palestine, and the author in Rome
 - b. Others suggest the readers were in Rome and the author elsewhere, based upon a possible implication in **He 13:24**
- In any case, they were **Jewish Christians** whom the author knew personally - cf. **He 10:34; 13:19**

C. THE DATE OF WRITING...

1. We know it was prior to 96 A.D., for Clement of Rome quotes from Hebrews in his letter written at that time
2. There are certainly strong implications that it was written prior to 70 A.D.
 - a. There is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple
 - b. The author writes as though priests were still offering sacrifices - **He 8:4; 10:11**
3. If the Jewish Christians were in Palestine, it was likely before or at the beginning of the Jewish Wars (ca. 66-70 A.D.), in light of **He 12:4**
- The time frame of **63-65 A.D.** is often suggested

D. THE PURPOSE OF THIS EPISTLE...

1. To prevent his readers from abandoning their faith in Christ - cf. **He 2:1-4**
2. To encourage his Jewish brethren not to go back to the Old Law
 - a. By showing the superiority of Christ and His Covenant - cf. **He 8:1-2,6**
 - b. A key word found throughout the epistle is **“better”**
 - 1) Christ is “better than the angels” - **He 1:4**
 - 2) We enjoy “the bringing in of a better hope” - **He 7:19**
 - 3) Jesus has become “the surety of a better covenant” - **He 7:22**
 - 4) He is also “the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises” - **He 8:6**
 - 5) The heavenly things benefit from “better sacrifices” - **He 9:23**
- Indeed, the purpose of this epistle has been **to exhort** his readers - **He 13:22**

[With this background to the epistle, let’s continue our brief survey of the book by noticing...]

II. THE MAIN DIVISIONS OF THIS EPISTLE

A. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST... - He 1:1-8:6

1. Better than the prophets, as a much better Spokesman - **He 1:1-3**
2. Better than the angels, by virtue of His Deity and humanity - **He 1:4-2:18**
3. Better than Moses, for He is the Son who provides a heavenly rest - **He 3:1-4:13**
4. Better than Aaron, as His priesthood is a superior one - **He 4:16-8:6**

B. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW COVENANT... - He 8:7-10:18

1. For it is based upon better promises - **He 8:7-13**
2. For it is based upon a better sanctuary - **He 9:1-28**
3. For it is based upon a better sacrifice - **He 10:1-18**

C. EXHORTATIONS DRAWN FROM THIS SUPERIORITY... - He 10:19-13:25

1. To draw near to God and hold fast - **He 10:19-39**
2. To run the race of faith with endurance - **He 11:1-12:29**
3. Miscellaneous exhortations - **He 13:1-25**

[A unique feature of **The Epistle To The Hebrews** are the warnings throughout the book. As we conclude this introduction, perhaps it may be profitable to summarize...]

III. THE KEY WARNINGS IN THIS EPISTLE

A. THE WARNING AGAINST DRIFTING... - He 2:1-4

1. Through neglect we can easily drift away
2. The solution is to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard

B. THE WARNING AGAINST DEPARTING... - He 3:12-15

1. Through sin's deceitfulness we can become hardened and develop a lack of faith by which we can depart from the living God
2. The solution is exhort one another daily and remain steadfast

C. THE WARNING AGAINST DISOBEDIENCE... - He 4:11-13

1. Like Israel in the wilderness, we can fail to enter our rest through disobedience
2. The solution is diligence and heeding the Word of God

D. THE WARNING AGAINST DULLNESS... - He 5:11-6:6

1. Dullness of hearing can make it difficult for us to appreciate the extent of our blessings in Christ, and even falling away to the point of crucifying the Son of God afresh!
2. The solution is grasping the first principles of the oracles of God, and then pressing on to spiritual maturity and perfection

E. THE WARNING AGAINST DESPISING... - He 10:26-39

1. It is possible to so despise God's grace as to no longer have a sacrifice for sins, but only a certain fearful expectation of judgment
2. The solution is to hold unto our confidence in Christ, and believe with endurance

F. THE WARNING AGAINST DEFYING... - He 12:14-29

1. It is possible to refuse to listen to the One who now speaks from heaven!
2. The solution is to look diligently to the grace of God, receiving it in such a way so we may serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear

CONCLUSION

1. With such warnings, this book is indeed a "word of exhortation"! - **He 13:22**
2. As we proceed through the book in the coming lessons, it will be my intent...
 - a. To **remind** you of how blessed we are to have trusted in Christ
 - b. To **impress** you with the superiority of Christ and His New Covenant over Moses and the Old Covenant
 - c. To **warn** you of the real danger of apostasy and the need for steadfastness in our faith

My task will be easy if I am faithful in letting the book speak for itself. That is my hope and prayer...

God's Perfect Spokesman

Hebrews 1:1-3

INTRODUCTION

1. In our introductory lesson, we saw how **The Epistle To The Hebrews** is unique in its beginning...
 - a. There is no mention of the author's name, nor the recipients
 - b. Rather, it starts like an **essay** - cf. **He 1:1-3**
2. We also noted regarding the purpose of the epistle...
 - a. To encourage Jewish Christians to remain steadfast in their faith
 - b. Accomplished by showing the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant
3. That superiority is demonstrated through a number of contrasts...
 - a. The very first contrast begins in these first three verses
 - b. In which Jesus is contrasted with the prophets of the Old Testament
4. In this lesson, we shall take a close look at the contrast...
 - a. Noting how God spoke "in time past", and how He speaks "in these last days"
 - b. Observing how Jesus is certainly qualified to be "**God's Perfect Spokesman**"

[We begin by considering what is said regarding...]

I. GOD'S SPOKESMEN "IN TIME PAST" (1)

A. THE EXPRESSION "IN TIME PAST" ...

1. Refers to the period of time prior to the coming of Jesus
2. I.e., that period of time described in the Old Testament (Genesis-Malachi)

B. GOD SPOKE "TO THE FATHERS BY THE PROPHETS" ...

1. The "fathers" would be the ancestors of the Israelites
2. The "prophets" would include great men like Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel
 - a. The Hebrew word for "prophet" means "**one who boils over**"
 - b. It refers to one who is inspired by God to speak for Him - cf. **2 Pe 1:21**
3. At times, the prophets themselves were unsure of what they spoke - **1 Pe 1:10-12**

C. GOD SPOKE "AT VARIOUS TIMES AND IN DIFFERENT WAYS" ...

1. His revelation did not come all at once, but progressively at different times
2. His methods varied as well, using visions, dreams, symbols, etc.

[So God has clearly revealed Himself as One who "speaks"; that is, He communicates His will to mankind! What He revealed through His prophets "**in time past**" is certainly wonderful, but consider what we learn regarding...]

II. GOD'S SPOKESMAN "IN THESE LAST DAYS" (2-3)

A. THE EXPRESSION "IN THESE LAST DAYS" ...

1. Literally, “at the end of these days”, which may be understood as referring to either:
 - a. The closing period of the Jewish age (cf. Milligan)
 - b. The period of the Messiah (most commentators)
2. The Old Testament often spoke of “the last days” - e.g., **Isa 2:2; Micah 4:1**
3. As such it often had special reference to the age of the Messiah
 - a. The apostles spoke of their time as the time of this fulfillment - **Ac 2:16-17**
 - b. Thus it denotes the final phase of history, brought on by the first coming of Christ, continuing until His second coming and the consummation of all things - cf. **He 9:26; 1 Pe 1:20; 1 Co 10:11**

B. GOD “HAS SPOKEN TO US BY HIS SON”...

1. God has spoken once again, but note the contrast!
2. “In time past” it was through “**prophets**”; but “in these last days” it is by “**His Son**”!
 - a. God has sent His own Son to speak for Him!
 - b. As wonderful as the prophets were, how can they compare to God’s own Son?
- There is no contrast, especially as we read on and notice...

C. THE EXCELLENCE OF “GOD’S PERFECT SPOKESMAN”...

1. Jesus is “**the appointed heir of all things**”!
 - a. The author may have had **Psa 2:8** in mind, for in verse 5 he quotes from **Psa 2:7**
 - b. As the “beloved Son”, it is only natural that He would be the appointed heir
 - c. What does “all things” include?
 - 1) All that the Father has! - **Jn 16:15**
 - 2) The authority to raise and judge the dead - **Jn 5:26-29**
 - 3) The authority to rule in heaven and on earth - **Mt 28:18**
 - 4) This authority Christ has even now! - **Ac 2:36; 10:36; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pe 3:22; Re 1:5**
2. Jesus is “**through whom He (God) also made the worlds**”!
 - a. Not only the “Heir”, but also the “Creator”!
 - b. For it was through the Son that God created the universe - cf. **Jn 1:3; Co 1:16**
 - 1) All things were created “by (or through) Him” (He is the Creator)
 - 2) All things were created “for Him” (He is the rightful Heir)
3. Jesus is “**the brightness of His (God’s) glory**”!
 - a. In Jesus we see the very radiance of the glory of God!
 - b. As John wrote, “...we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father...” - **Jn 1:14**
 - c. When we behold Jesus, we see an extension of the glory of God!
4. Jesus is “**the express image of His (God’s) person**”!
 - a. He is the exact representation of God’s being and character! - cf. **Co 2:9**
 - b. Therefore Jesus could say...
 - 1) To Thomas: “If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” - **Jn 14:7**
 - 2) To Philip: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father;” - **Jn 14:9**
5. Jesus is “**upholding all things by the word of His power**”!
 - a. Not only the Creator, but also the Sustainer of the universe - cf. **Co 1:17** (“in Him all things consist”)
 - 1) By His word the universe holds together!
 - 2) All He has to do is say the word, and the universe is no more!
 - b. Note well:

- 1) This illustrates the power of His Word
- 2) Shall we not listen when He speaks? - cf. **Lk 6:46**
6. Jesus has also **“by Himself purged our sins”!**
 - a. A clear reference to His death on the cross for our sins
 - b. This speaks to His role as our Redeemer, a theme that will be prominent later in this epistle - cf. **He 2:17; 9:26,28**
7. Jesus has also **“sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”!**
 - a. This Jesus did when He ascended to heaven - **Ep 1:20; 1 Pe 3:22**
 - b. Sitting at the right hand of God is a place of honor, but for Jesus it is also a place from which He reigns!
 - 1) As indicated in **Ep 1:21-22; 1 Pe 3:22**
 - 2) It is true that He is waiting for the His enemies to be made His footstool (**He 10:12-13**), but He is reigning until that time! - cf. **1 Co 15:25-26**
 - 3) As stated in Psa 110:1-2, from which the author to the Hebrews quotes, the
 - c. Thus Jesus is truly “the ruler over the kings of earth” - **Re 1:5; 17:14**

CONCLUSION

1. The sentence does not end with verse three...
 - a. It continues on into verse four, with a declaration of Jesus’ superiority over angels
 - b. But that verse and the rest of the chapter we shall save for the next study
2. But what have we seen in this lesson?
 - a. God is clearly a God who speaks, He makes His Will known to mankind!
 - b. And now He speaks through His Son, Who is:
 - 1) The appointed Heir of all things!
 - 2) The Creator!
 - 3) The brightness of God’s glory, the express image of His person!
 - 4) Our Sustainer, Redeemer, and King!

How can one turn their back on Him? Especially when the Majesty on high proclaimed at the Mount of Transfiguration:

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” - Mt 17:5

Are you heeding the words of the Beloved Son, **“God’s Perfect Spokesman”?** - cf. **Mt 28:18-20; Re 2:10**

Jesus' Superiority To Angels

Hebrews 1:4-14

INTRODUCTION

1. The subject of angels has certainly become a popular one lately...
 - a. Bookstores are filled with books dealing with angels
 - b. Popular TV shows and movies depict angels working in our lives (“Highway To Heaven”, “Touched By An Angel”, “The Preacher’s Wife”, “It’s A Wonderful Life”)
2. Angels were also an important part of the Jewish religion...
 - a. Angels assisted with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai - cf. **Deu 33:2; Psa 68:17; Ac 7:53; Ga 3:19**
 - b. They appear throughout the history of Israel, coming to Abraham, Daniel, and many others
3. Since the purpose of **The Epistle To The Hebrews** is to show the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant to the Law of Moses...
 - a. It is necessary that the writer have something to say about angels
 - b. So it is that we find the comparison of the Son to prophets followed now by a comparison to angels - **He 1:4-14**
4. The premise is clearly stated that the Son (Jesus) is “much better than the angels”... - **He 1:4**
 - a. The reason in a nutshell is that “He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they”
 - b. That name is “Son”, a title that only Jesus can properly wear...
 - 1) Angels may be called “sons of God” **collectively** - cf. **Job 1:6**
 - 2) But no angel can be called this name **individually!**

[As evidence for the superiority of Jesus over angels, the author proceeds to offer scriptural support from the Old Testament. His first two quotations are to prove...]

I. JESUS IS THE “SON” (5)

A. TWO PROPHECIES REFER TO THE MESSIAH AS “SON”...

1. The first is **Psa 2:7**
 - a. A psalm depicting the enthronement of the Messiah (the Lord’s Anointed)
 - b. In which Jehovah calls the Messiah “My Son”
 - c. The “begetting” has reference to the resurrection of Jesus - **Ac 13:33; Ro 1:4**
2. The second is **2 Sam 7:14**
 - a. This passage had immediate application to Solomon, David’s son
 - b. But as the Messiah who would receive the throne of David was also descended from David...
 - 1) It’s ultimate application would be to the Messiah
 - 2) I.e., Jesus, the “son of David” - **Mt 1:1; Mk 10:47; Jn 7:42**

B. BUT NO ANGEL IS EVER CALLED “MY SON”...

1. Collectively they were called “sons of God”, but never individually!
2. This not only demonstrates Jesus’ superiority to angels...

- a. It proves that Jesus Himself was **not** an angel!
- b. Contrary to what some (such as JWs) believe

[The superiority of Jesus over the angels is further illustrated as we continue...]

II. JESUS IS “THE FIRSTBORN” WHO RECEIVES WORSHIP (6)

A. JESUS IS DESCRIBED AS “THE FIRSTBORN”...

1. The term “firstborn” does not always mean “born first”
 - a. It is also used in the Scriptures as a metaphor to describe one who occupies the rank and privilege of being firstborn (without literally being “firstborn”)
 - b. Used by God in this way to refer to the nation of Israel - **Exo 4:22**
 - c. Used by God in this way to refer to David, youngest of eight - **Ps 89:20,27**
2. It is used of Jesus in this way to stress His preeminence over creation...
 - a. As Paul explains in **Co 1:15-18**
 - b. By virtue of being the Creator, He maintains the rank and privilege of “firstborn”!

B. WHEN THE FIRSTBORN CAME INTO THE WORLD, THE ANGELS WERE TO WORSHIP HIM...

1. The quotation in **verse 6** is from **Deu 32:43** as found in the Septuagint version
2. The angels of God were to worship Him
3. Note well: No created being is or was ever worthy of worship!
 - a. The angels themselves refused to be worshipped - cf. **Re 22:8-9**
 - b. The apostle Peter refused to accept worship - cf. **Ac 10:25-26**
4. Yet Jesus received worship!
 - a. From the wise men - **Mt 2:11**
 - b. From the leper - **Mt 8:2**
 - c. From the ruler - **Mt 9:18**
 - d. From His disciples in the boat - **Mt 14:33**
 - e. From the Canaanite woman - **Mt 15:25**
 - f. From the man born blind - **Jn 9:38**
 - g. From the women and other disciples following His resurrection - **Mt 28:9,17**
 - h. From the disciples following His ascension - **Lk 24:52**

[That Jesus is worthy of worship, especially now, becomes more evident as we consider how...]

III. JESUS IS “GOD” ENTHRONED AND ANOINTED (7-9)

A. ANGELS ARE SIMPLY FOR THE SERVICE OF GOD...

1. They are created spirits to serve God (called “ministering spirits” in **He 1:14**)
2. Their service can be as powerful yet transient as “wind” or “flames of fire”, if need be

B. BUT THE “SON” IS GOD HIMSELF, ENTHRONED AND ANOINTED...!

1. The author is quoting from another Messianic psalm - **Psa 45:6-7**
2. Notice that the Son is called “God”! - **He 1:8**
 - a. The Hebrew writer clearly proclaims the deity of Jesus! - cf. **He 1:3a**
 - b. Yet in the next verse we read where it says “God, Your God has...”
 - 1) Here we find a distinction of personalities within the Godhead
 - 2) Which we learn through later revelation involves the Father and Son (and Holy

Spirit)

3. The Son, Who is God, has been enthroned, and reigns over an everlasting kingdom with righteousness
 - a. A kingdom of which Daniel said “shall never be destroyed” - **Dan 2:44**
 - b. A kingdom of which Gabriel (an angel) told Mary: “there will be no end” - **Lk 1:33**
 - c. Both Paul and John wrote of this kingdom - **Co 1:13; Re 1:9**
4. This Son, Who is God and King, has been “anointed” - **He 1:9**
 - a. Of course, the word “Messiah” means “anointed one”
 - b. In this passage, the emphasis is on how Jesus has been anointed with gladness “more than Your companions”
 - 1) Who are these “companions”?
 - 2) In view of **He 2:11; 3:1**, it is likely the followers of Jesus, His brethren!

[As God, King, and Messiah, Jesus is certainly greater than angels! But there is even more...]

IV. JESUS IS THE “LORD” WHO IS THE ETERNAL CREATOR (10-12)

A. JESUS IS “YAHWEH” (JEHOVAH)...!

1. Now the Hebrew writer is quoting from **Ps 102:25-27**
 - a. A psalm which addresses God using His covenant name Yahweh (or Jehovah)
 - b. This is the name that God used to identify Himself to Moses - **Exo 3:13-14**
2. But the Hebrew writer by inspiration knew this psalm equally applied to Jesus!
 - a. Such would be blasphemy, unless Jesus is truly Deity!
 - b. So while the Son is distinct from the Father (cf. **He 1:9**), He and the Father are also the same!
3. In this chapter, then, we find evidence relating to the nature of the Godhead...
 - a. There is one God, but three distinct personalities within the Godhead (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)
 - b. As Jehovah, Jesus is not “a god”, or any sort of created being (contra JWs, Mormons)
 - c. As the Son who is distinct from the Father, the Son is not the same in personality as the Father (contra Oneness Pentecostals)

-- Though not a biblical term, the word “trinity” does help to convey the Biblical evidence as to the nature of the Godhead!

B. JESUS IS THE ETERNAL CREATOR...!

1. In the beginning it was He who created the earth and the heavens - **He 1:10**
 - a. As the author had already stated in **He 1:2c**
 - b. As both John and Paul professed - **Jn 1:3; Co 1:16-17**
2. He is also eternal, therefore unchangeable - **He 1:11-12**
 - a. The heavens and earth “will perish”, “grow old” and “be changed” - cf. **2 Pe 3: 10-12**
 - b. But Jesus will “remain”, be the “same”, and “not fail” - cf. **He 13:8**

[The superiority of Jesus over angels is illustrated with one last comparison in this chapter...]

V. JESUS IS THE “SOVEREIGN” (13-14)

A. NO ANGEL HAS BEEN INVITED TO SIT AT GOD’S RIGHT HAND...

1. The psalm quoted now is **Ps 110:1**
 - a. This psalm is quoted or alluded to more than any other psalm in the NT

- b. It refers to the Messianic reign of Christ that began when Jesus sat down at the right hand of God - cf. **He 1:3; Ac 2:34-36; 1 Pe 3:22**
2. That no angel has been asked to sit at God's right hand...
 - a. Once again proves that Jesus was not an angel (contra JWs)
 - b. Only Jesus, as the Son of God, has been so invited, and is truly the Sovereign!

B. ANGELS ARE BUT MINISTERING SPIRITS...

1. While Jesus sits enthroned in heaven, angels are "sent forth to minister (serve)"
2. They minister for those "who will inherit salvation"
 - a. They have certainly ministered in the past - cf. **Lk 1:11-38**
 - b. They will certainly minister at the time of Christ's return - cf. **Mt 13:36-43**
 - c. But to what extent they minister in the present, the Scriptures reveal little (cf. **Mt 18:10**), and we should be careful to refrain from vain speculation

CONCLUSION

1. In a very forceful manner, the writer to the Hebrews has shown Jesus' superiority to angels:
 - a. Jesus is the **Son** (angels are not)
 - b. Jesus is the **Firstborn** who receives worship (angels are not and do not)
 - c. Jesus is **God** enthroned and anointed (such is not the case with angels!)
 - d. Jesus is the **LORD** (Yahweh) who is the eternal creator (angels are created beings)
 - e. Jesus is the **Sovereign**, reigning at God's right hand (angels are but ministering spirits)
2. While angels certainly have a special place in God's plan for redeeming man...
 - a. They are not to become the object of worship or adoration - cf. **Co 2:18-19**
 - b. Only Jesus is worthy of such worship and adoration!

As innumerable angels proclaimed with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (cf. Re 5:11-12)

Let Jesus, and not angels, be the focus of your interest and adoration!

Lest We Drift Away

Hebrews 2:1-4

INTRODUCTION

1. The author of **The Epistle To The Hebrews** was concerned about the spiritual well-being of his initial recipients...
 - a. They were fellow Jews who had become Christians
 - b. His concern is that they not drift back into Judaism
 - c. He deals with this problem in two ways:
 - 1) By emphasizing the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant
 - 2) By a series of exhortations for them to remain steadfast
2. In chapter one we saw...
 - a. The superiority of Christ to the prophets - **He 1:1-3**
 - b. The superiority of Christ to the angels - **He 1:4-14**
3. Now we come to the first of several exhortations - cf. **He 2:1-4**
 - a. In which we find a warning about the danger of “drifting”
 - b. The figure suggested is that of a boat...
 - 1) Drifting along at an almost imperceptible pace
 - 2) Carried along in the wrong direction by a subtle current
4. In this lesson, I want us to examine...
 - a. The reasons behind such an exhortation
 - b. Various “currents” that can cause us to “drift away”
 - c. The key to avoiding “drifting away”

[Let's begin, then, with some...]

I. REASONS FOR THIS EXHORTATION

A. THE REAL DANGER OF DRIFTING...

1. It is possible for us to “drift away” from our salvation!
 - a. We can certainly “neglect” our salvation - **He 2:3**
 - b. Later, we will learn that we can “depart” from God - **He 3:12-14**
 - c. Also, that one can so “fall away” that it becomes impossible to renew them to repentance! - **He 6:4-6**
 - d. One can reach a point where the sacrifice of Christ is no longer available for their sins! - **He 10:26-27**
2. The danger of “drifting” is very real!
 - a. It is possible for a child of God to so sin as to be lost!
 - b. Otherwise, such an exhortation as this is meaningless!

B. THE DIGNITY OF THE ONE THROUGH WHOM GOD HAS SPOKEN...

1. As pointed out in **He 1:1-2**, God now speaks to us through His Son
 - a. We have seen that this Son is:

- 1) Superior to the prophets - **He 1:1-3**
- 2) Superior to the angels - **He 1:4-14**
- b. We have seen that this Son is:
 - 1) The appointed Heir of all things!
 - 2) The brightness of God's glory, the express image of His person!
 - 3) Our Sustainer and Redeemer!
 - 4) The "Firstborn" who receives worship
 - 5) "God" enthroned and anointed
 - 6) The "LORD" (Yahweh) who is the eternal creator
 - 7) The "Sovereign", reigning at God's right hand
2. When God spoke through angels...
 - a. His word proved steadfast
 - b. Every transgression and disobedience received a just reward - **He 2:2**
3. How much more, then, when He speaks through His Son!
 - a. Will not His word prove just as steadfast?
 - b. Will not every unrepented transgression and disobedience receive a just reward?
 - Dare we neglect the Word of God spoken through His Son?

C. THE CONFIRMATION GIVEN THIS REVELATION...

1. The word spoken by the Son was confirmed by His apostles - **He 2:3**
 - a. Individuals who were eyewitnesses - **Ac 10:39-41; 2 Pe 1:16**
 - b. Men who endured much to serve Him - cf. **1 Co 4:9-13**
2. The word spoken by the Son was confirmed even further! - **He 2:4**
 - a. By God Himself, through signs, wonders, and miracles - cf. **Jn 10:37-38**
 - b. By the Holy Spirit, with gifts according to His will - cf. **1 Co 12:7-11**
 - Shall we neglect that Word to which such have born witness?

D. WHAT WE LOSE IF WE DRIFT AWAY...

1. We lose "so great a salvation"! - **He 2:3**
2. It is a "great salvation", because it offers such things as:
 - a. The forgiveness of sin
 - b. Transformation of character by providing power over sin
 - c. Assurance of God's fatherly presence
 - d. A clear and peaceful conscience
 - e. A glorious hope for eternity
 - Dare we lose all this through "neglect"?

[Just as those who neglected the word spoken through angels (i.e., the Law of Moses) lost their "promised land", so there are grave consequences for those who neglect the salvation spoken of by the Son of God! Such "neglect" is possible when we "drift away". Following the metaphor of drifting, what "currents" might cause one to drift?]

II. CURRENTS THAT CAN CAUSE US TO DRIFT

A. THE CURRENT OF "TIME"...

1. In which we grow weary of doing good, a concern expressed in **Ga 6:9**
2. As time passes by...
 - a. We can gradually lose some of the fervor of our devotion - e.g., **Re 2:4**
 - b. We may begin to rest on past accomplishments, and cease pressing forward - cf. **Ph 3:**

13-14**B. THE CURRENT OF “FAMILIARITY”...**

1. As we become familiar with the truth, it may seem common place to us
 - a. We may lose its sense of novelty
 - b. We may take it for granted
2. Again, like the Ephesians we may lose our “first love” - **Re 2:4**

C. THE CURRENT OF “SOCIETY”...

1. The tides of modern opinion can easily induce us - cf. **1 Co 15:33**
2. Bombarded by the secular humanism, false religions, and even plastic “Christianity” offered as “truth”, it is hard to maintain the course!
3. Such things can move us away from the simplicity and wisdom of our Lord! - e.g., **2 Co 11:2-3**

D. THE CURRENT OF “THE FLESH”...

1. Our warfare is not only without, but also within - **1 Pe 2:11**
2. Our flesh is constantly waging war against our souls, and against the Spirit who desires that we follow Him - **Ga 5:16-17**

E. THE CURRENT OF “DAILY CONCERNS”...

1. The constant pressure of daily cares, anxieties, duties, etc., can distract us
2. Jesus warned against this on several occasions - **Lk 8:14; 21:34**

[Any and all these things can slowly move us away from the Lord and His great salvation if we are not careful! However, as we return to our text, we can learn...]

III. THE KEY TO PREVENT DRIFTING AWAY**A. WE MUST GIVE “THE MORE EARNEST HEED”...**

1. Imagine yourself in a canoe, in a river with a slow moving current...
 - a. Failure to pay constant attention leads to drifting
 - b. The drifting may be subtle, but often by the time you realize it, it is too late!
 - c. Last minute corrections may be made, but even then one may still run into the brush, crash into the rocks, or go over the falls!
 - Only by giving earnest heed can that be avoided
2. So it is with our salvation!
 - a. We must be “diligent” to the task at hand - cf. **2 Pe 1:5,10**
 - b. There is no place to be halfhearted about this! - e.g., **Ph 3:12-15**
3. Note that we must give the “more” earnest heed
 - a. We are to be more earnest than those who heard the word of God spoken through angels (i.e., the Israelites)
 - 1) Because we have the word of God spoken through the Son
 - 2) Which pertains to a salvation greater than that enjoyed by them
 - 3) To whom more is given, more is required! - cf. **Lk 12:48**
 - b. Are you more earnest in giving heed to what you have heard, than those saints in the Old Testament?

B. WE MUST GIVE SUCH HEED TO THE “THINGS WE HAVE HEARD”...

1. The “things we have heard” refer to:
 - a. The Word of God spoken through His Son
 - b. The great salvation
-- I.e., the gospel of Christ in all aspects!
2. How can we do this?
 - a. The Bereans provide a good example - **Ac 17:11**
 - 1) In the way in which they initially listened (“received the word with all readiness”)
 - 2) In the way in which they followed up (“searched the Scriptures daily...”)
 - b. Certainly through:
 - 1) Earnest attention whenever God’s word is proclaimed
 - 2) Earnest study of God’s Word on our own
 - 3) Earnest study in preparation for our Bible classes
 - c. With the sort of study of God’s Word...
 - 1) Entered into with a prayerful devotion to God - **Psa 119:18**
 - 2) Concluded with a prayerful desire to please God - **Psa 119:10-11**
3. Are you giving “the more earnest heed to the things we have heard”?
 - a. Another year has past; how did you do?
 - b. Another year is already started; how will you do?

CONCLUSION

1. We have been blessed to receive “**so great a salvation**”...
 - a. A salvation spoken to us first through God’s own Son!
 - b. A salvation then confirmed by God Himself, the Holy Spirit, and those who heard Him!
 - c. A salvation much greater than any offered before!
2. But please note carefully...
 - a. One need not “reject” or “actively fight” against this great salvation to “receive a just reward”
 - b. Those who simply “drift away” through “neglect” will also not escape!
 - 1) Escape what?
 - 2) From what we learn later, it will be “much worse punishment”! - cf. **He 10:28-29**

Have you neglected this great salvation Jesus offers? If so, may this first exhortation found in **The Epistle To The Hebrews** move you to repent, and cause you to give “**the more earnest heed**” to the gospel of Christ!

Advantages Of Jesus' Humanity

Hebrews 2:5-18

INTRODUCTION

1. Following his warning against drifting (**He 2:1-4**), the writer of Hebrews continues to illustrate Jesus' superiority to angels...
 - a. In the first chapter the emphasis was on Jesus' deity
 - b. Now the focus is on Jesus' humanity
2. One can imagine the sort of objections that could be raised about Jesus' humanity...
 - a. When Jesus became flesh, didn't that make Him lower than the angels?
 - b. How then can it be said that He is superior to angels?
3. The response is that Jesus' humanity provided several advantages...
 - a. In regaining man's lost dominion
 - b. In bringing many sons to glory
 - c. In disarming Satan, and delivering us from the fear of death
 - d. In becoming a sympathetic high priest

[Yes, becoming flesh did not prove to be a handicap or a mark of inferiority; rather, it served to make Him "perfect"! To see how, let's note how Jesus' humanity first...]

I. ENABLED JESUS TO REGAIN MAN'S LOST DOMINION (2:5-9)

A. MAN ONCE HAD DOMINION OVER THE EARTH...

1. At the beginning, man was given dominion over God's creation - **Gen 1:26-28**
2. David marveled that God set man over His works - **Psa 8:4-6**
 - a. Even though man was made "a little lower than the angels"
 - b. Yet God "crowned him with glory and honor"!

B. MAN HAS LOST THAT DOMINION...

1. As is rather evident: "But now we do not yet see all things put under him." - **He 2:8**
2. As a result of The Fall, man lost his dominion

C. JESUS, AS A MAN, REGAINED THAT DOMINION...!

1. Jesus was "made a little lower than the angels"; i.e., He became a man!
2. Because of His suffering of death, He was "crowned with glory and honor"!
 - a. What man once had and lost...Jesus has regained!
 - b. Those who are in Him share in that rule, both now and in the future!
 - 1) Seated at the right hand of God, Christ rules over all - cf. **Ep 1:20-22**
 - 2) Those in Christ sit together with Him - cf. **Ep 2:4-6**
 - 3) Especially so, when we pass from this life to the next... - cf. **Re 2:26-27; 3:21**

[Such dominion, both now and in "the world to come", was never given to angels (**He 2:5**). Man had it and lost it. Becoming a man and suffering death enabled Jesus to regain that dominion for man! By the

same suffering and death, Jesus was able to “taste death for everyone” (**He 2:9**). By the grace of God, then, His humanity also...]

II. ENABLED JESUS TO BRING MANY SONS TO GLORY (2:10-13)

A. HIS SUFFERINGS IN THE FLESH WERE “FITTING”...

1. God gave Jesus the task...
 - a. To bring many sons to glory (to restore man to his position of glory and honor)
 - b. To be the “author” (captain, pioneer, leader) of man’s salvation
2. His sufferings in the flesh made Jesus “perfect” for the task!
 - a. This is not to imply that Jesus was imperfect when He was on the earth
 - b. The word “perfect” means to be “complete, effective, adequate”
 - c. To be complete and effective as our Savior and High Priest, Jesus’ sufferings were necessary - cf. **He 2:18**

B. HIS HUMANITY MAKES HIM “ONE” WITH THOSE BEING SAVED...

1. Even though He is the One who “sanctifies”, and they are “being sanctified”
2. His humanity (and suffering) makes them “all of one”
3. Such identity with man makes Jesus proud to call us “brethren”! - **He 2:12-13**

[The idea of Jesus as the One whose suffering in the flesh makes Him the perfect author of our salvation, and not ashamed to call us brethren, is expanded even further in the remaining verses of the chapter. Here we see that the humanity of Jesus...]

III. ENABLED JESUS TO DISARM SATAN AND DELIVER US FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH (2:14-16)

A. JESUS’ DEATH GAVE HIM VICTORY OVER THE DEVIL...

1. Through His own death and resurrection, Jesus “destroyed” the devil!
 - a. The devil is still very active - cf. **1 Pe 5:8-9**
 - b. But though he once “had” (past tense) the power of death, no more! - cf. **Re 1:18**
2. His power greatly weakened by Jesus’ victory over death, Satan will be destroyed for all time at the time of our own resurrection! - cf. **Re 20:10-12**

B. JESUS’ DEATH GAVE US FREEDOM FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH...

1. A fear that keeps many in bondage throughout their lifetime
2. But the faithful Christian need not fear death!- cf. **Ro 8:37-39; 1 Co 3:21-23; Ph 2:21**
3. Thus it is to the “seed of Abraham” (faithful Christians, cf. **Ga 3:29**), and not to “angels” that Jesus has given such aid! - **He 2:16**

[Finally, partaking of flesh and blood, suffering and dying on the cross...]

IV. ENABLED JESUS TO BE A SYMPATHETIC HIGH PRIEST (2:17-18)

A. JESUS IS A MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST...

1. In coming to this world, Jesus was “made like His brethren”
2. He became like man “in all things”
3. This equipped Him for the role of a merciful and faithful high priest
 - a. “In things pertaining to God”

- b. “To make propitiation for the sins of the people”
- c. We read later that the role of high priest involved offering gifts and sacrifices for sin
- **He 5:1**

B. HE IS ABLE TO AID THOSE WHO ARE TEMPTED...

1. He too has suffered, and been tempted, though we learn later He remained without sin
- **He 4:15**
2. Such suffering makes Him compassionate - cf. **He 5:2**
3. Therefore those who come to Him can expect to receive mercy and grace in time of need!
- cf. **He 4:16**

CONCLUSION

1. What angel has accomplished such things as...
 - a. Regain man’s lost dominion?
 - b. Bring many sons to glory?
 - c. Disarm Satan, and deliver us from the fear of death?
 - d. Become a sympathetic high priest?
2. All these things (and certainly much more) Jesus has done by virtue of becoming man...
 - a. Yes, He became “a little lower than the angels”
 - b. But in so doing, even **His humanity** makes Him far superior to angels!
3. With the first two chapters, then, we see the superiority of Jesus...
 - a. Over the prophets, as God’s perfect spokesman
 - b. Over the angels, by virtue of His deity and His humanity
 - Why should we ever want to turn our back on such a Savior?

We have also seen that Jesus, who was tempted, who has suffered and tasted death for everyone, is not ashamed to call us “brethren”. Are we ashamed to call Him “Lord”? Are we willing to serve Him as “Lord”?

The Supremacy Of Jesus Over Moses

Hebrews 3:1-6

INTRODUCTION

1. We have seen that the writer to the Hebrews sought to encourage faithfulness to Jesus by illustrating His superiority...
 - a. Over prophets - **He 1:1-3**
 - b. Over angels - **He 1:4-2:18**
 - Both of which were very important to the Jewish people
2. Highly revered also by the Hebrews was Moses...
 - a. The author of the first five books of the Old Testament
 - b. The deliverer, who led them out of Egyptian bondage and to the promised land
 - c. The Lawgiver, through whom God revealed so much of the Jewish religion
3. If the writer was to be successful in encouraging his brethren to remain faithful to Jesus...
 - a. He would have to compare Jesus with Moses
 - b. He would have to illustrate **“The Supremacy Of Jesus Over Moses”**
 - This he does, especially in **He 3:1-6**, which serves as the text of our study

[In the first verse, we note the...]

I. THE CALL TO CONSIDER JESUS (1)

A. TO WHOM THIS CALL IS GIVEN...

1. The readers are described as:
 - a. **“holy brethren”**
 - 1) I.e., brethren who are sanctified, set apart for a holy purpose
 - 2) Cf. what was written in **He 2:10-11**
 - 3) It is to the brethren of Christ that these things are being written!
 - b. **“partakers of the heavenly calling”**
 - 1) They had come to share in the call from heaven
 - 2) This “calling” was the call of the gospel
 - a) For that is how God calls us - **2 Th 2:13-14**
 - b) It is a call to glory - **2 Th 2:14; 1 Th 2:12**
2. Clearly the original recipients were **Christians!**
 - a. Some commentators try to reason that they were not, because of the warnings found throughout this epistle
 - b. But it is evident they were, which is why we need to give earnest heed to the warnings!

B. TO CONSIDER JESUS AS APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST...

1. How is Jesus an **“apostle”**?
 - a. The word means “one sent”
 - b. Just as Moses was sent by God, so was Jesus, as foretold by Moses and the prophets that followed! - **Ac 3:22-26**; cf. **Jn 7:16**
2. How is Jesus a **“high priest”**?

- a. That is one of the important themes of this epistle
 - 1) Introduced in **He 2:17**
 - 2) Expounded upon in detail later in **He 4:14-7:28**
 - b. He has made “propitiation” (an appeasing sacrifice) for our sins, through offering Himself on the cross - **He 7:26-27**
 - c. He continues to intercede on our behalf - **He 7:24-25**
- Thus Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest “**of our confession**” (i.e., whom we confess as Christians)

[As we now note the actual comparison of Jesus with Moses, we are told that...]

II. JESUS IS GREATER IN HIS PERSON (2-4)

A. THE ISSUE IS NOT ONE OF FAITHFULNESS...

1. Jesus was faithful to the One who appointed Him - cf. **Jn 17:4**
2. Moses likewise was faithful - cf. **He 11:24-29; Num 12:6-8**

B. JESUS IS GREATER BECAUSE HE IS THE BUILDER (CREATOR)...

1. Jesus is worthy of more glory, just as one who builds a house has more honor than the house itself
 - a. Jesus is the builder
 - b. Moses is part of the house itself-- Implying that what Moses did was in service to the work of the Son!
2. Once again the author declares the deity of the Son as the Creator of all things - cf. **He 1:2c,10; 3:4**

[The comparison continues as we note that...]

III. JESUS IS GREATER IN HIS MINISTRY (5-6)

A. MOSES WAS A FAITHFUL “SERVANT”...

1. We have already seen that issue is not one of faithfulness - **Num 12:6-8**
2. Moses’ task was to testify of things to come, which he did faithfully - e.g., **Deu 18:15-19**; cf. **Lk 24:44**

B. JESUS IS A FAITHFUL “SON”...

1. Moses was simply a servant in the house, Jesus is the Son “**over**” the house
2. Not only did Jesus do the work He was sent to do (**Jn 17:4**), but He was given authority over all the things of God - cf. **Mt 28:18; Jn 3:35; Ep 1:22**

CONCLUSION

1. How is Jesus superior to Moses?
 - a. Not in faithfulness, but in person and service
 - b. Moses was a servant in the house of God; Jesus is the builder of the house, and serves as the Son over the house!-- Indeed, Moses points us forward to Jesus (cf. **Deu 18:15-19**); for one to forsake Jesus in an attempt to go back to Moses alone is to frustrate the desire of Moses himself!

2. Speaking of the house of God, of which Jesus is the builder and over which He presides...
 - a. The writer to the Hebrews affirms that **“we”** are the house of Christ
 - 1) Speaking of the church, which is the house of God - cf. **1 Tim 3:15**
 - 2) In Christ, we are now “members of the household of God”, and together with the faithful saints of old (including Moses) we are now “fellow-citizens” in the commonwealth of Israel! - cf. **Ep 2:11-22**
 - b. Yet our status as the “house” is conditional!
 - 1) “whose house we are **if** we hold fast...” - **He 3:6**
 - 2) We must hold fast “the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm **to the end.**”

Therefore the need for steadfastness, and the reason this epistle is filled with exhortations to that end! Indeed, the next exhortation begins in **verse 7**, which we shall examine in our next lesson (“**A Warning From The Wilderness**”).

Is your faith wavering? Then heed the words of this epistle and **“...consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus”**. As you contemplate His person and His ministry, it should help you hold fast to your confession of faith!

A Warning From The Wilderness

Hebrews 3:7-19

INTRODUCTION

1. In the previous study, we considered “**The Supremacy Of Jesus Over Moses**”...
 - a. Jesus was superior, not in faithfulness, but in His person and service
 - b. Moses was a servant in the house of God
 - c. Jesus, however, is the builder of the house, and serves as the Son over the house!
2. In **He 3:6**, the writer to the Hebrews affirms that “we” are the house of Christ...
 - a. Referring to the church, which is the house of God - cf. **1 Tim 3:15**
 - b. For in Christ, we are now “members of the household of God”, and together with the faithful saints of old (including Moses) we are now “fellow-citizens” in the commonwealth of Israel! - cf. **Ep 2:11-22**
3. Yet our status as the “house” is conditional!
 - a. “whose house we are **if** we hold fast...” - **He 3:6**
 - b. We must hold fast “the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm **to the end.**”
4. The need for steadfastness explains the exhortations in this epistle...
 - a. We saw the first exhortation in **He 2:1-4**, regarding the danger of **drifting**
 - b. Now we come to the second exhortation, regarding the danger of **departing** from the living God - **He 3:7-19**

[To warn against the danger of departing, the writer appeals to...]

I. THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS (7-11)

A. ISRAEL HARDENED THEIR HEARTS...

1. The quotation in **verses 7-11** is from **Psa 95:7-11**
 - a. In which the Holy Spirit warned Israel not to be like the fathers in the wilderness
 - b. A warning which the Hebrew writer found just as necessary in his day
2. In the wilderness, the Israelites had...
 - a. Hardened their hearts in rebelling against God
 - b. Tested (tried) God with their lack of faith
3. This they did many times during the forty years of wandering, but especially...
 - a. At the beginning, with the incident at **Massah (tempted)** and **Meribah (contention)** - cf. **Exo 17:1-7**
 - b. Toward the end, with the incident at **Kadesh** - **Num 27:14**; cf. **20:1-13**

B. THEREFORE THEY DID NOT ENTER GOD’S REST...

1. God became angry with that generation in the wilderness for their persistent rebellion - e.g., **Psa 106:13-33**
2. So God swore that they would not enter His rest - cf. **Num 14:22-24,26-35**
 - a. Of those over the age of 20 when they departed from Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua entered the promised land

- b. The rest (of which there were **603,548** men) died in the wilderness!

[Because of hardened hearts Israel departed from God which led to rebellion. In turn, they fell short of the Canaan rest that had been promised them. With “**A Warning From The Wilderness**” fresh on their minds, the writer therefore exhorts his brethren by warning them of...]

II. THE DANGER OF DEPARTING (12-14)

A. THERE IS A NEED TO “BEWARE”...

1. A believer can develop “an evil heart of unbelief”
 - a. Remember that the recipients of this epistle were “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” - **He 3:1**
 - b. The warning against developing a heart of unbelief presumes a real possibility
 - c. Thus a “believer” can become an “unbeliever”!
2. Unbelief is produced as one is “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”
 - a. Sin is deceitful...
 - 1) Promising pleasure, power, and prestige
 - 2) In the short term that may be true, but such things are “**passing**” (temporary)
 - e.g., **He 11:25; 1 Jn 2:17**
 - b. Because of its deceitfulness, it is easy to become “**hardened**”
 - 1) I.e., to be stubborn and not heed the Word of God
 - 2) It happened to Israel, and it can happen to us!
3. The consequence of unbelief is “departing from the living God”
 - a. As one grows in unbelief, so they drift away from God
 - b. While a believer remains in fellowship with God, an unbeliever can only depart further and further away from God!

B. THE SOLUTION IS TO “EXHORT ONE ANOTHER DAILY”...

1. This is how a believer avoids becoming an unbeliever!
2. Through mutual edification on a daily basis, we can prevent the “hardening” that comes from sin’s deceitfulness
3. An important part of such exhortation is our assembling together - cf. **He 10:24-25**
 - a. Which should certainly involve assemblies on the first day of the week - e.g., **Ac 20:7**
 - b. But with a need for “daily exhortation”, should we be content to limit our assembling to one service a week?
 - c. If we have the opportunity to assemble more often, shouldn’t we?
4. Even if it is only by phone, we should seek to “exhort one another daily”!

C. OUR PARTICIPATION IN CHRIST IS CONDITIONAL...

1. Once again we see the conditional nature of our participation with Christ
 - a. We are house of Christ “...**if** we hold the fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” - **He 3:6**
 - b. We have become partakers of Christ “...**if** we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,” - **He 3:14**
2. What about the security of the believer?
 - a. The “believer” does indeed enjoy the assurance of his salvation
 - b. But we have seen that a “believer” can develop “an evil heart of unbelief”; i.e., become an “unbeliever” - **He 3:12**
 - c. When a “believer” becomes an “unbeliever”, what promises of security and salvation

there may be to the believer are no longer applicable!

- Thus the many warnings to remain faithful, including that of our Lord's - **Re 2:10**

[The danger of departing from God is so great, that the writer of Hebrews returns to “**A Warning From The Wilderness**”...]

III. THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS REVISITED (15-19)

A. ANOTHER APPEAL IS MADE...

1. Quoting again from **Psa 95:7-8**
2. The Hebrew writer applies the quotation to Christians
 - a. They need to “hear His (God’s) voice” - remember **He 1:1-2; 2:1-4?**
 - b. That is, hear with a desire to hearken, for they too can easily harden their hearts “as in the rebellion”

B. THE NEED FOR CHRISTIANS TO BELIEVE, AND OBEY...

1. In the case of the Israelites, who was it that rebelled?
 - a. All those who came out of Egypt (save Joshua and Caleb)!
 - b. Though led by Moses, they still rebelled!
 - We may have been delivered by Christ from the bondage of sin, but rebellion is still possible!
2. In the case of the Israelites, with whom was God angry forty years?
 - a. Those who sinned
 - b. And who died in the wilderness as a result of their lack of faith
 - If we become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, shall we escape judgment?
3. In the case of the Israelites, who did God not allow in the promised land?
 - a. Those who did not obey!
 - b. Those who developed unbelief!
 - Shall we enter our promised rest if we disobey through unbelief?

CONCLUSION

1. When the apostle Paul related some of the same experiences of Israel in the wilderness, he wrote:

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” (1 Co 10:11)

2. It is for our own admonition that we have such warnings as that found in our text...
 - a. For **the deceitfulness of sin** is just as strong today
 - b. For **the hardening of one’s heart** is just as dangerous today
 - c. For **departing from God** is just as possible today
 - Thus the potential for falling short of our promised rest is just as much a reality for us as it proved to be for the Israelites in the wilderness!
3. That is why we need to “exhort one another daily”...
 - a. To encourage one another to remain strong in faith - cf. **He 3:19**
 - b. To encourage one another to remain strong in obedience - cf. **He 3:18**
 - Have you exhorted your brother or sister lately?

Finally, did you notice how **“faith”** and **“obedience”** were used interchangeably in these last two verses? These terms are not opposed to one another, for in fact Paul himself wrote about “obedience to the faith” (**Ro 1:5; 16:26**). Faith is dead unless there is obedience (**Ja 2:17,26**), and so those who truly believe will obey.

That is why Jesus can be described as “the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (**He 5:9**). Have you obeyed Jesus by obeying His gospel? - cf. **Ro 10:16; 2 Th 1:7-8; 1 Pe 4:17**

The Rest That Remains

Hebrews 4:1-11

INTRODUCTION

1. In chapter three of **The Epistle To The Hebrews**, we saw...
 - a. A comparison of Christ to Moses
 - b. How the comparison led to a warning based upon the example of Israel in the wilderness
2. Appealing to the example of Israel's fall in the wilderness is a natural one...
 - a. For despite Moses' leadership, most died in the wilderness and did not enter the promised land for lack of faith
 - b. Now under Christ's leadership, we face a similar danger of falling short of our "promise" through a lack of faith - cf. **He 3:14-15; 4:1**
3. **Chapter four** continues the warning with a focus on the promised "**rest**" which awaits the faithful Christian...
 - a. This promised "rest" is actually one of several "rests" found in the Scriptures
 - b. It is a "rest" that Moses and Joshua did not provide, which is just another reason why the Hebrew Christian should not forsake Jesus and return to Judaism
 - c. It is "**The Rest That Remains**" for the people of God today!
4. In this lesson, we shall address two questions...
 - a. What is "**The Rest That Remains**"?
 - b. What essential elements are necessary to enter "**The Rest That Remains**"?

[Let's begin, then, with the first question...]

I. WHAT IS "THE REST THAT REMAINS"?

A. IT IS NOT IS THE "CANAAN" REST...

1. This "rest" is alluded to in **Deu 3:20; 12:9-10; Josh 1:13-15**
 2. This "rest" was given as God promised - **Josh 21:43-45**
 3. But in chapter four "His rest" (or "My rest", "God's rest") is clearly delineated from that which Joshua provided - **He 4:8**
 - a. Long after Joshua died, the passage in **Ps 95:7-8** was written
 - b. The word "Today...", indicates that the Spirit was warning the Israelites who had long before received the "Canaan" rest
- **So Joshua provided the "Canaan" rest, but there is still "The Rest That Remains"!**

B. IT IS NOT THE "SABBATH" REST...

1. It is natural to think of the Sabbath day when one hears or reads the word "rest"
 - a. When first introduced to the nation of Israel, it was spoken of as "the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the LORD" - **Exo 16:23**
 - b. This was the seventh day rest, patterned after God's own rest following the creation - **Gen 2:2**
 - c. It was encoded into the Law given on tablets of stone - cf. **Exo 20:8-11**

2. But the Sabbath as a day of rest was given only to the nation of Israel
 - a. It was not given to the nation's fathers (i.e., ancestors such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) - cf. **Deu 5:2-22; Neh 9:13-14**
 - b. It was given to Israel as a weekly remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt - **Deu 5:12-15**
 - c. The only Gentiles ever commanded to keep the Sabbath were those living among the Israelites in Canaan ("your stranger who is within your gates")
 3. The Sabbath day, like the rest of the Old Law, has been done away
 - a. It was nailed to the cross - cf. **Ep 2:14-15; Co 2:14**
 - b. Those in Christ have died to the Old Law, having been delivered from it that they may now serve Christ - **Ro 7:4,6**
 - c. As part of "the ministry of death" (i.e., the Old Testament), it has been replaced by "the ministry of the Spirit" (i.e., the New Testament) - **2 Co 3:5-8,11**
 - d. It is now a matter of indifference to God, left to one's individual conscience, and not to be bound on anyone - cf. **Ro 14:4-6; Co 2:16-17**
 4. Finally, the argument regarding Joshua can also be made regarding Moses...
 - a. Long after Moses provided the "Sabbath" rest, **Psa 95:7-8** was written
 - b. Indicating that there was still another "rest" to come
- **While Moses provided the "Sabbath" rest, there is still "The Rest That Remains"!**

C. IT IS "GOD'S REST"...

1. Through this section of Scripture there are repeated references to:
 - a. "My rest" - **He 3:11; 4:3,5** cf. **Psa 95:7-11**
 - b. "His rest" - **He 3:18; 4:1**
 - 1) Which those who fell in the wilderness did not enter - **He 3:18**
 - 2) Which Christians today have a promise of entering - **He 4:1**
 2. It is a rest that God entered upon the completion of His creation - **He 4:4,10**
 3. It is a rest that Joshua (and Moses) did not provide...
 4. God's rest is one in which...
 - a. We must be diligent not to come short of it - **He 4:1,11**
 - b. One who has "entered His rest" has "ceased from his works" - **He 4:10**
- **"God's rest" is the "heavenly rest" of which we read in the book of Revelation...**

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." (Re 14:13)

["The Rest That Remains" in this passage is therefore "God's Rest", and in particular that "heavenly rest" one enters in which they cease from the labors. Now if we wish to one day enter this "rest", some things are necessary...]

II. WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TO ENTER "GOD'S REST"?

A. THE WORD OF GOD...

1. Note that both Israel and we today have had "the gospel" preached unto us - **He 4:2**
 - a. The "gospel" (i.e., good news) proclaimed unto the Israelites pertained to the promises of Canaan
 - b. The "gospel" proclaimed unto us pertains to the blessings we have in Christ
2. The Word of God is essential for at least two reasons:

- a. Without it we would not even know about our promised rest!
 - b. Without it we would not know how to receive our promised rest!
 3. But the Word of God (i.e., the gospel) is truly God's power to save - cf. **Ro 1:16-17**
 - a. For it tells us of God's salvation in Christ
 - b. And how we might receive that wonderful salvation
- **But as we proceed, we learn that the Word of God alone is not sufficient...**

B. MIXED WITH FAITH...

1. The Word of God did not profit many in Israel because they did not receive it with faith - **He 4:2**
 2. As powerful as the Word of God may be (cf. **He 4:12**), it's power in our lives is hindered unless we accept it with faith!
 - a. Of course, the Word is designed to create and nurture faith to a point - **Ro 10:17; Jn 20:30-31**
 - b. But unless our hearts are good and noble, the Word will not find the proper soil needed to produce its intended fruit - cf. **Lk 8:15**
- **Without faith, then, the promise of God's rest will not be experienced by us!**

C. FEAR AND DILIGENCE...

1. The Hebrew writer stressed both of these essential elements
 - a. "Let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short..." - **He 4:1**
 - b. "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall..." - **He 4:11**
 2. Fear (awesome reverence) has an important place in the life of the Christian
 - a. Jesus taught us Whom to fear - **Mt 10:28**
 - b. Paul taught that "fear and trembling" should accompany efforts to serve God - **Ph 2:12**
 3. Diligence (strenuous effort) likewise is important - cf. **2 Pe 1:5,10**
 - a. We must be diligent to grow in Christ-like character
 - b. We must be diligent to "make your calling and election sure"
- **The need for such fear and diligence is understandable only if the possibility of falling short is very real!**

CONCLUSION

1. **"The Rest That Remains"** is indeed a wonderful blessing...
 - a. It is "God's rest", therefore a "heavenly rest"
 - b. It is a rest in which one has "ceased from his work as God did from His" - **He 4:10**-- It is the rest of which John heard a voice from heaven speak in **Re 14:13**
2. But we have seen how disobedience led many Israelites to fall short of their "Canaan rest"...
 - a. Though they collectively as the nation of Israel were God's "elect", predestined to receive the promises made to Abraham (cf. **Gen 12:1-3**)
 - b. But individually, they failed to make their "calling and election sure"
 - 1) They had the "gospel" spoken to them
 - 2) But they did not receive it with faith
 - 3) And so they did not have the fear and diligence necessary to persevere!
3. Brethren, what about us today?
 - a. If we are "in Christ"...
 - 1) We are blessed to be God's "elect" in a collective sense as Christ's body, the church

- 2) We are predestined as such to receive the wonderful blessings of salvation in Christ, including the “heavenly rest” that awaits us
- b. Yet individually we must still make our “calling and election sure”...
 - 1) Are we receiving the Word mixed with faith?
 - 2) Do we have that proper sense of fear?
 - 3) Are we diligent in our efforts to remain faithful and steadfast?
- Only then can we have the assurance of entering into **“The Rest That Remains”!**

May the words of the writer to the Hebrews sink deep into our hearts...

“Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.” - He 4:11

God's Powerful Word

Hebrews 4:12-13

INTRODUCTION

1. In **He 4:11**, we find a succinct summary of all that has been said in **He 3:7-4:10...**
 - a. We need to be diligent to enter “the rest that remains”, our heavenly rest
 - b. Or we may fall short of our rest, just as many Israelites fell short of their Canaan rest...

“Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.” - He 4:11
2. To stress the need for diligence, we are reminded regarding the Word of God - **He 4:12-13**
 - a. That Word which provided the example of the Israelites’ disobedience
 - b. That Word which is now warning them not to emulate the Israelites’ example
3. In this passage, the Word of God is described in amazing terms...
 - a. It is “living”
 - b. It is “powerful”
 - c. It is “sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit”
 - d. It is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”
4. At a time in which God’s Word is so often neglected, even by some Christians, it never hurts to contemplate the wonder of God’s Word...
 - a. And so we take this opportunity to reflect upon what is said in this passage
 - b. With a desire to renew and increase our appreciation of the power of God’s Word!

[We begin by noticing...]

I. THE WORD OF GOD IS “LIVING” AND “POWERFUL”

A. GOD’S WORD IS NOT SOME “DEAD LETTER”...

1. Not only in this passage, but elsewhere we read of the abiding nature of God’s Word
 - a. Notice Peter’s description of it - **1 Pe 1:23-25**
 - 1) It “lives and abides forever”
 - 2) It “endures forever” - cf. **Isa 40:8**
 - b. Jesus said “my words shall not pass away” - **Mt 24:35**
2. The “life” of God’s Word is due to the nature of God Himself!
 - a. God is eternal, He is “the living God” - cf. **He 3:12; Jer 10:10**
 - b. He cannot lie, so what He says will come to pass - cf. **He 6:18; Ti 1:2**
-- Thus His Word will never perish!
3. As Jesus said, “...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” - **Jn 6:63**

B. THAT GOD’S WORD IS “ALIVE” IS SEEN IN ITS “POWER”...

1. It has the power to accomplish its intended purpose - **Isa 55:10-11**
2. The gospel in particular has the power to save - **Ro 1:16-17; Ja 1:21**

3. Through God's word we can be born again - **1 Pe 1:22-23; Ja 1:18**
4. It works effectively in those who believe - **1 Th 2:13; cf. He 4:2**
5. It can build us up, and give us the inheritance that is ours - **Ac 20:32**
6. It can make the man of God complete for all good works - **2 Ti 3:16-17**
- How could anything with such power be a "dead letter?"

[With such a "living" and "powerful" word at our disposal, we would be foolish to neglect the blessings it offers, or the warnings it gives! It's power is seen further as we note how...]

II. THE WORD OF GOD IS "SHARP" AND "A DISCERNER"

A. SHARPER THAN AN "TWO-EDGED SWORD"...

1. The Word of God is often likened to powerful objects
 - a. Here it is described as a sword - cf. also **Ep 6:17**
 - b. Elsewhere it is it described as fire, and a hammer - **Jer 23:29**
2. To illustrate its sharpness as a "sword", the Word of God is said to pierce...
 - a. "...even to the division of soul and spirit"
 - b. "...and of the joints and marrow"-- i.e., the divine word is able to cut through everything that is in man (Lightfoot)

B. A DISCERNER OF "THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTS OF THE HEART"...

1. With its sharpness, it is capable of sifting through and revealing the heart of man
2. It's effect on man reveals his true heart...
 - a. In some cases, that one's heart is sincere and open to change- e.g., **Ac 2:36-37**
 - b. Other times, that one's heart has no desire to change - e.g., **Ac 5:33; 7:54**-- One cannot hear or read the Word of God without being affected!

[As stated earlier, the "life" of God's Word is due to the nature of God Himself. In a similar way, the "power" of God's word is due to the nature of God...]

III. THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD IS DUE TO HIS OMNISCIENCE

A. GOD IS OMNISCIENT...

1. The word "omniscient" means "all-knowing"
2. David extolled the omniscience of God in **Psa 139:1-12**
3. Solomon also wrote of God's omniscience - **Pr 15:3**
- That is why "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open" to His eyes

B. THEREFORE NO CAN HIDE FROM THE JUDGE...

1. As David counseled his son Solomon - **1 Chr 28:9**
2. It is before this Omniscient Judge that we must one day give an account
 - a. There is a judgment day coming, in which God will judge the world through His Son, Jesus Christ! - cf. **Ac 17:30-31; Ro 2:16; 2 Co 5:10**
 - b. We read of that Judgment Day in the last book of Bible - cf. **Re 20:11-15**
3. The standard by which we will be judged are the words spoken through His Son
 - a. As stated by Jesus in **Jn 12:48**
 - b. Which should give special force to the warning found in **He 2:1-3**
 - 1) If the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression was

- justly punished...
- 2) ...then how shall we escape judgment if we neglect the words spoken through God's Son?

CONCLUSION

1. Yes, the power of God's Word is derived from God Himself...
 - a. God is **omniscient**, able to see into the hearts of men; therefore His Word is able to cut to the hearts of men and reveal their true nature
 - b. God is **living, eternal**, who will one day **judge** the world; therefore His Word that abides forever will be the standard by which we will be judged
2. In view of the power of God Himself and His powerful Word...
 - a. How dare we neglect the warnings given in it, such as those found in **He 4:1,11**?
 - b. How dare we neglect to even read about the warnings (as many do by not reading the Bible)?
3. And remember, how we react to the Word of reveals our true character...
 - a. Some are so "dull of heart", that they react with indifference and say "so what?"
 - b. Some are "cut to the heart", angrily resist the Word, and blame the messenger - **Ac 7:54**
 - c. Some are "cut to the heart", and cry out "what shall I do?" - **Ac 2:37**

What kind of heart do you have? If your heart cries out "what shall I do?" in response to the gospel message of salvation in Christ, then I encourage you to heed what Peter said:

***"Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
- Ac 2:38***

If you have so responded to God's saving grace, then I encourage you to heed the warnings found throughout the Scriptures, especially here in the book of Hebrews, and in the words of our Lord Himself:

"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." - Rev 2:10

Coming Boldly To The Throne Of Grace

Hebrews 4:14-16

INTRODUCTION

1. In our study thus far we seen the concern of the author of **The Book Of Hebrews**...
 - a. That the Jewish Christians remain steadfast and firm in their faith
 - b. That they not make the same mistake of departing from the living God, as did many of their ancestors
2. His **modus operandi** (method of operation) has been twofold...
 - a. Illustrate the superiority of Jesus (e.g., to prophets, to angels, to Moses)
 - b. Exhort them to faithfulness in light of these comparisons
3. In two exhortations we have seen thus far, to remain faithful we must...
 - a. "...give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard" - cf. **He 2:1-4**
 - b. "...exhort one another daily..." - cf. **He 3:12-14**
4. To put it another way, to remain faithful we must be diligent...
 - a. In our study of the Word of God
 - b. In exhorting one another daily
 - Other things are also necessary, and in our text we read of another - cf. **He 4:14-16**
5. The main thought in this passage is that we should "come boldly to the throne of grace"...
 - a. But what does that mean?
 - b. And why should we be diligent to do this?

[These are the questions we shall address in this lesson, and so we begin by considering...]

I. WHAT IT MEANS TO "COME BOLDLY TO THE THRONE OF GRACE"

A. THE "THRONE OF GRACE"...

1. This is simply another way to say the "throne of God"
 - a. Other passages emphasize that "God's throne" is one of righteousness, justice, mercy and truth - cf. **Psa 89:14**
 - b. I.e., God is known for these things
2. **He 4:16** emphasizes that "God's throne" is one of mercy
 - a. "the throne of grace"
 - b. I.e., where kindness, mercy, and benevolence may be found

B. THE EXPRESSION "LET US COME" ("DRAW NEAR" ASV)...

1. This is a priestly expression, used in the OT of priests in their approach to God
 - a. E.g., **Lev 21:17-21**
 - b. It denotes approaching God for worship and prayer
2. It's use here suggests that the priestly privilege of access to God is now extended to all Christians!
 - a. As we saw in Leviticus, only certain individuals had this privilege

- b. But now, in Christ we can **all** “draw near” to God in worship and prayer!

C. THIS WE CAN DO “BOLDLY”...

1. This word means “with confidence” (Gr., **parresia**, meaning “full story”)
2. In ancient Greece...
 - a. It was used to describe the right of a citizen to speak his mind on any subject in the town assembly (**Lightfoot**)
 - b. Only “full citizens” had this right, slaves did not
3. As used here in Hebrews, it stands for our freedom to approach God...
 - a. Without hesitation or inhibitions
 - b. Made possible by the blood of Jesus - cf. **He 10:19-22**

[And so this passage speaks of the wonderful privilege Christians have through prayer to approach our gracious God, with full confidence that He hears our prayers! It is important to utilize this privilege, and in our text we find several **reasons** for doing so...]

II. WHY WE OUGHT TO “COME BOLDLY TO THE THRONE OF GRACE”

A. BECAUSE WE HAVE YET TO ENTER “THE REST THAT REMAINS”...

1. As seen earlier in this chapter, there is still a promised “rest” for the people of God
 - a. We need to “fear” lest we come short of it - **He 4:1**
 - b. We need to be “diligent” - **He 4:11**
2. This being true, we need all the “mercy” and “grace” we can find!

B. BECAUSE OF THE “HIGH PRIEST” THAT WE HAVE...

1. In Jesus we have a “great” High Priest - **He 4:14**
 - a. One who has “passed through the heavens” - cf. **He 9:24; 7:26-27**
 - b. Having ascended to the right hand of God, He has become “higher than the heavens”!
 2. In Jesus we have a “sympathetic” High Priest - **He 4:15**
 - a. The word “sympathy” literally means “to suffer with”
 - 1) The Greek word suggests an intensity that is lost in the English word “sympathy” (**Lightfoot**)
 - 2) **Westcott** describes it as “the feeling of one who enters into the suffering and makes it his own.”
 - b. Jesus’ sympathy is due to being “tempted as we are, yet without sin.”
 - 1) This qualifies Him to be a “merciful and faithful” High Priest - **He 2:17**
 - 2) One who is “able to aid those who are tempted” - **He 2:18**
 3. With such a High Priest interceding for us, shall we not take advantage of Him while we can? - cf. **He 7:24-25**
 - a. Especially since He is able “save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him”
 - b. And since He “always lives to make to make intercession for them”
- Does this not encourage us to “come boldly to the throne of grace”?

C. BECAUSE OF THE “MERCY” AND “GRACE” THAT AWAITS...

1. Christians continue to need two things throughout their lives:
 - a. “mercy”
 - 1) I.e., forgiveness for our sins
 - 2) For we do sin; to deny that is to call God a liar - cf. **1 Jn 1:8,10**
 - b. “grace to help in time of need”

- 1) I.e., God's favor to help us in time of need
 - 2) E.g., His providential protection (cf. **1 Co 10:13**) and divine strength (cf. **Ro 8:13; Ph 4:13**)
2. The Christian finds these things in answer to **prayer!**
- a. By confessing our sins to God in prayer, there is mercy - cf. **1 Jn 1:9**
 - b. By praying for strength from God's indwelling Spirit, there is grace to help in time of need - cf. **Ep 3:16,20; 6:10-13**

CONCLUSION

1. Brethren, when we are diligent to "come boldly to the throne of grace", what do we find...?
 - a. A "graceful God" and a "sympathetic High Priest"!
 - b. Mercy, and grace to help us in time of need!
2. The means by which we "draw near" is prayer, and so, to...
 - a. **Diligent study** of the Word of God - cf. **He 2:1-4**
 - b. **Diligent exhortation** of our brethren on a daily basis - cf. **He 3:12-14**
 - We must add **diligent prayer** if we are to going to find the mercy and grace necessary to "hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end"
3. Brethren...
 - a. Do we appreciate the "great" and "sympathetic" High Priest that we have in Jesus?
 - b. Are we utilizing the opportunities we have to "come boldly to the throne of grace"?
 - May this passage remind us never to take the privilege of prayer lightly!

As for the "privilege" of prayer itself, by which we can now "draw near" to God, bear in mind that it is made possible by "a new and living way" (**He 10:19-20**). Only by the blood of Jesus shed in His death can we now come to God.

Have you been washed in the blood of Jesus for the remission of your sins? For those seeking this wonderful blessing, give careful attention to these words by the disciple sent by Jesus to Saul of Tarsus:

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." - Ac 22:16

Christ's Qualifications As High Priest

Hebrews 5:1-10

INTRODUCTION

1. A recurring theme in this epistle is that of Jesus as our High Priest; He has been described as:
 - a. A “merciful and faithful High Priest” - **He 2:17**
 - b. The “High Priest of our confession” - **He 3:1**
 - c. A “great High Priest who has passed through the heavens” - **He 4:14**
 - d. A High Priest who can “sympathize with our weaknesses” - **He 4:15**

2. This is in keeping with the overall purpose of the epistle...
 - a. Which is to show the superiority of Jesus and His new covenant
 - b. We have considered Jesus’ superiority to...
 - 1) Prophets - **He 1:1-3**
 - 2) Angels - **He 1:4-2:18**
 - 3) Moses - **He 3:1-6**
 ...it is only natural that a comparison to Aaron and his priesthood be made

3. The actual comparison with Aaron will follow later, but first there is a need to...
 - a. Review the qualities required in high priests
 - b. Establish that Jesus does indeed qualify as a High Priest
 - Which is what we find in the text for our study today - **He 5:1-10**

[For non-Jewish readers who may be unfamiliar with the role of high priests, this section of Scripture can be enlightening and increase our appreciation of Jesus as our High Priest. We begin by noticing...]

I. THE QUALITIES REQUIRED IN HIGH PRIESTS (1-4)

A. DIVINE APPOINTMENT... (1,4)

1. The work of the high priest involves “things pertaining to God” - cf. **He 2:17**
2. He must “offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins” - cf. **He 8:3**
- Thus only God can rightfully select a high priest, even as God called Aaron - e.g., **Exo 28, 29; Lev 8,9; Num 16-18**

B. HUMAN SYMPATHY... (1-3)

1. A high priest is selected “from among men”
2. This helps to ensure a spirit of “compassion”...
 - a. Toward “those who are ignorant and going astray”
 - 1) Note that the high priest was to make a distinction between sins of ignorance and sins of presumption (rebellion) - **Num 15:22-31**
 - 2) Sacrifices were to be offered in behalf of the former, but not the latter
 - b. For “he himself is often beset by weakness”
 - 1) A high priest who knew his own weakness would be more likely to be understanding of his brethren
 - 2) It also explains why the high priest in the OT offered sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people - cf. **Lev 16:11**

-- Thus a high priest would need to be well acquainted with the “human condition”

[The parallel between high priests in the OT and Jesus as our High Priest does not hold true in every minute detail (e.g., **He 7:26-27**). But certainly in the most fundamental ways Jesus has the qualities to be our High Priest, as we now consider...]

II. CHRIST’S QUALIFICATIONS AS HIGH PRIEST (5-8)

A. DIVINELY APPOINTED... (5,6)

1. Christ was Divinely called to serve as High Priest, just as Aaron was
2. As evidence of His calling, two Messianic prophecies are offered...
 - a. His position as God’s Son - cf. **Psa 2:7**
 - b. His appointment as a priest after the order of Melchizedek - cf. **Psa 110:4**
 - As God’s Son, sitting and ruling at the right hand of God (cf. **Psa 110:1-3**), His calling as a priest is only natural

B. SYMPATHETIC BECAUSE OF HIS OWN SUFFERINGS... (7,8)

1. While “in the days of His flesh”, Christ...
 - a. “offered prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears”
 - b. He prayed “to Him who was able to save Him from death”
 - c. He was heard “because of His godly fear”
2. That Jesus would have “godly fear” and offer such prayers provides insight into the extent of His temptations and sufferings in the flesh- cf. also **He 2:18; 4:15**
3. Even though He was God’s Son, by the things which He suffered “He learned obedience” - what does this mean?
 - a. Certainly He knew obedience as the Son of God
 - b. Perhaps it means He came to know what obedience involved as one “in the flesh” (i.e., the challenge of obedience in the midst of suffering, temptations, etc.)
 - Through His suffering, Jesus certainly understands the “human condition” which qualifies Him to serve as High Priest

[Qualified by virtue of His calling and His compassion to be a High Priest, what kind of High Priest is Christ? The next two verses introduce two themes that will be developed much further later on...]

III. CHRIST’S CALLING AS OUR HIGH PRIEST (9,10)

A. “THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION...” (9)

1. “Perfecting” by virtue of His sufferings “in the flesh”, He has become the “author” of eternal salvation
 - a. The word “author” comes from **aitio**, meaning literally, “cause”
 - b. Later, we will see how Christ is the “cause” of our salvation - cf. **He 7:24-27**
2. But for now, note that He is the cause of salvation for “all those who obey Him”
 - a. Is obedience necessary for salvation? Consider these verses:
 - 1) Jesus will bring vengeance on those who have not obeyed the gospel - **2 Th 1:7-9**;
cf. **1 Pe 4:17-18**
 - 2) Paul sought to bring about the “obedience to the faith” among all the nations - **Ro 1:5; 16:25-26**
 - a) But not all had obeyed the gospel - **Ro 10:16**
 - b) Yet he was grateful for those who had - cf. **Ro 6:17,18**

- 3) Those who have obeyed the truth have purified their souls - **1 Pe 1:22**
- b. If obedience is necessary for salvation, are we saved by works?
 - 1) Not if by “works” you mean “meritorious works” (works by which we **earn** salvation)
 - 2) But if you mean by “works” the “works of God” (works by which we **receive** God’s unmerited gift of salvation) which God has ordained, then yes!
 - a) E.g., believing in Christ is a “work of God” - **Jn 6:28-29**
 - b) Since repentance and baptism are likewise enjoined by God, they too would be “works of God” that we must obey in order to receive salvation - e.g., **Ac 2:38; 10:48**
- Thus salvation “by grace through faith” does not preclude the necessity of obedience to Christ and His gospel!

B. “ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK...” (10)

1. Here we begin to learn the distinct nature of Christ’s priesthood
2. As prophesied in **Psa 110:4**, the Messiah would be “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”
3. Thus His priesthood would be different from the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood
 - a. Different, but would it be superior?
 - b. Would the difference be enough to persuade them not to forsake Christ?
- The difference between the two priesthoods and the superiority of Christ’s over Aaron’s is taken up later in this epistle (cf. **He 7:1-28**)

CONCLUSION

1. The spiritual immaturity of the Hebrew readers will necessitate a temporary digression
2. But for the moment, the author has established “**Christ’s Qualifications As High Priest**”...
 - a. He was Divinely appointed
 - b. He is sympathetic because of His own sufferings
3. This makes Jesus suitable as the “author of eternal salvation”
 - a. But don’t forget that He is the author of salvation “to all who obey Him”
 - b. Have you rendered obedience to the gospel of Christ? - cf. **Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:36-39**

Marks Of Spiritual Immaturity

Hebrews 5:11-14

INTRODUCTION

1. Just because one has been a Christian for many years, does not mean they are “mature”...
 - a. They may be like the person who had been teacher for twenty-five years
 - 1) When she heard about a job that would mean a promotion, she applied for the position. However, someone who had been teaching for only one year was hired instead.
 - 2) She went to the principal and asked why. The principal responded, “I’m sorry, but you haven’t had 25 years of experience as you claim; you’ve had only one year’s experience 25 times.”
 - During that whole time the teacher had not improved!
 - b. So it may be with many Christians; they have not grown, but simply repeated their first year of spiritual life many times!
2. The lack of spiritual growth (i.e., spiritual immaturity) is a dangerous thing...
 - a. For there some blessings to be enjoyed in Christ that only the mature Christian can truly understand and appropriate
 - b. If one remains spiritually immature, they do not come to fully appreciate their standing and blessings that they have in Christ!
 - Deprived of a greater understanding, they are more susceptible to the wiles of the devil
3. The author of the book of Hebrews found himself faced with this problem...
 - a. He had much to say about Christ as our High Priest
 - b. But the spiritual immaturity of his readers made it difficult
 - And so he thought it necessary to temporarily digress - cf. **He 5:11-14**
4. How about you?
 - a. Are you growing as a Christian?
 - b. Or are you repeating your first year over and over again, remaining spiritual immature?
 - Do you know how to determine whether you are spiritually mature?

[In our text we find some of the identifying “**Marks Of Spiritual Immaturity**”, indicators that reveal when one is in need of “growing up” spiritually. For example, one mark of spiritual immaturity is...]

I. DULLNESS OF HEARING (11)

A. THE HEBREWS HAD BECOME “DULL OF HEARING”...

1. This prevented the writer from continuing with his argument at the moment
2. While the material he had to share was “hard to explain”...
 - a. It wasn’t so much the difficulty of the material itself
 - b. As it was their own inability to receive it!
3. That they had “become” dull of hearing may imply a regression...
 - a. At one time they were not “dull of hearing”
 - b. They may have been like the Bereans at one time, “who received the word with all readiness” - **Ac 17:11**

- c. Indeed, most converts are truly “sharp” in their listening at the first
 - 1) They are excited about what they are learning
 - 2) They listen with great “readiness”, and spiritual growth occurs
- d. But it is not uncommon for apathy to set in, making one “dull of hearing”
 - When one becomes “dull of hearing”, they begin to regress to a state of spiritual immaturity

B. ARE YOU “DULL OF HEARING”...?

- 1. Ask yourself these questions:
 - a. Is the Bible dull?
 - b. Are the Bible classes dull?
 - c. Are the sermons dull?
 - d. Is anything that is spiritual in nature (like singing, praying) dull?
- 2. If so, then you have become “dull of hearing”!
 - a. If you listen at all, it will be to those who are willing to “tickle your ears”
 - b. And you will be susceptible to being misled - cf. **2 Ti 4:3-4**

[When one is “dull of hearing”, it is only natural that the next “mark of spiritual immaturity” will be evident...]

II. THE INABILITY TO TEACH OTHERS (12a)

A. THE HEBREWS SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS...

- 1. They had been Christians for some time (“by this time you ought to be teachers”)
 - a. They had time to learn, to grow
 - b. A natural response to growth is to bear fruit
 - c. One way we bear fruit is by teaching others
- 2. In one way or another, they should have been able to teach others
 - a. Perhaps not in a formal sense, for not all are gifted in that way - cf. **1 Co 12:29; Ep 4:11; Ja 3:1**
 - b. But all can share the good news and hope they have with others - cf. **Ac 8:4; 1 Pe 3:15; Ti 2:3-5**
- Their need for someone to teach them again “the first principles” demonstrated their spiritual immaturity

B. ARE YOU ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS...?

- 1. Assuming that sufficient time has passed, are you teaching others?
 - a. Either formally as a teacher instructing others in the faith?
 - b. Or informally by sharing your faith with others?
- 2. Do you find yourself saying “I don’t know what to say?”
 - a. Then it sounds like you have forgotten “the first principles”
 - b. And you need to have someone teach you again!

[If one has not progressed to the point where they are somehow teachings others about Christ, then they are still spiritually immature! One reason why this may be true is also another indicator of spiritual immaturity...]

III. A DIET OF “MILK” (12b,13)

A. NOW, A DIET OF “MILK” IS OFTEN NECESSARY...

1. Certainly it is needed for those who are “babes in Christ” - e.g., **1 Co 3:1-2**
2. Also for those who have regressed (as with the Hebrews) - cf. **He 5:12b**
3. Such a diet includes what is described as “the first principles of the oracles of God” (later called “the elementary principles of Christ” in **He 6:1-3**)

B. BUT OUR DIET MUST ONE DAY INCLUDE “SOLID FOOD”...

1. Just as a physical baby must graduate to solid foods in order to grow to maturity
2. So a “babe in Christ” cannot mature unless the diet goes beyond the “first principles”
3. Wiersbe offers an interesting explanation as to the difference...
 - a. “Milk” refers to what Jesus did on earth: His birth, life, teaching, death, burial and resurrection
 - b. “Solid food” refers to what Jesus is now doing in heaven: e.g., His priesthood
4. If our diet remains “milk only”...
 - a. Then we will be “unskilled” (lit., without experience) in the word of God
 - b. We will remain “babes” in Christ - cf. **He 5:13**

C. WHAT HAS YOUR “DIET” BEEN LATELY...?

1. Has it been limited to “milk”?
 - a. Has it even included “milk”?
 - b. Some Christians may not even be getting the “milk” of the Word!
2. Are you getting any “meat”?
 - a. Studying portions of God’s Word that challenges your understanding?
 - b. Stay with us in this study in Hebrews, and you will be sure to get some!

[A “milk only” diet leaves one immature, and by default one who is “unskilled in the word of righteousness”. This will in turn produce another trait of spiritual immaturity...]

IV. THE INABILITY TO DISCERN (14)

A. NORMAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH EXERCISES THE SENSES...

1. Even the “milk” of the word is designed to train one’s faculties
 - a. By exposing us to the difference between right and wrong
 - b. In this way our spiritual sense is “exercised”
2. Then “by reason of use” we learn to “discern both good and evil”
 - a. With clear examples set before us in the Scriptures, we learn right from wrong
 - b. We thereby develop the ability to “distinguish” between good and evil
 - c. We become able to apply general principles to specific situations
 - 1) Specific condemnation of a practice is not always necessary
 - 2) We can discern when something is more like the good, or more like the bad

B. SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY LACKS THIS ABILITY TO DISCERN...

1. A babe in Christ often has difficulty discerning the difference between:
 - a. Good teaching (truth) and bad teaching (error)
 - b. Good conduct (righteousness) and bad conduct (wickedness)
2. Inability to discern leaves them open to being...
 - a. “Tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” - cf. **Ep 4:14**
 - b. Like “a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind...a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” - cf. **Ja 1:6-8**

C. DO YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO DISCERN...?

1. Can you apply general principles to a specific situation, or do you require a clear “Thou shalt not” to determine if something is wrong?
2. Are you able to recognize when a doctrine is true to God’s word?
3. Or are you dependent upon someone else...
 - a. To “spoon feed” you?
 - b. To “take you by the hand and lead” you?
-- I.e., to tell you what is right and wrong, what is truth and what is error

CONCLUSION

1. There are certainly other indicators of spiritual immaturity...
 - a. E.g., behaving in a carnal way
 - b. E.g., possessing strife, envy, and jealousy - cf. **1 Co 3:1-4**
2. But in our present text we have focused our attention on the four presented here...
 - a. Dullness of hearing
 - b. The inability to teach others
 - c. A diet of “milk”
 - d. The inability to discern
-- All of these should serve as “warning signs” that something is amiss in our lives as Christians, they are truly **“Marks Of Spiritual Immaturity”**

In our next lesson (“**The Peril Of Not Progressing**”), we shall see why it is so important to grow spiritually. As Peter warned, growth is the “antidote” to falling away:

“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” - 2 Pet 3:18

Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord?

The Peril Of Not Progressing

Hebrews 6:1-8

INTRODUCTION

1. The normal Christian life is to be one of spiritual growth and progression...
 - a. Starting as “babes in Christ”, we feed on the “milk” of the Word
 - b. As our spiritual senses are exercised to discern good and evil, we are then able to progress to “solid food” (meat)
 - In this way we are to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
- **2 Pe 3:18**
2. But as we saw in a previous lesson (“**Marks Of Spiritual Immaturity**”), not all grow as they should, and some of the indications of immaturity are...
 - a. Dullness of hearing
 - b. Inability to teach others
 - c. Diet of “milk” only
 - d. Inability to discern good and evil - cf. **He 5:11-14**
3. But what if we don’t grow spiritually as we should, so what?
 - a. Is spiritual growth really that essential?
 - b. Is there a “danger” involved in not progressing spiritually?

[In the text before us (**He 6:1-8**), we find that indeed there is “**The Peril Of Not Progressing**”; that it is possible for Christians to find themselves in a very precarious situation. As we examine this passage, we note first...]

I. THE DUTY OF PRESSING ON TO PERFECTION (1-3)

A. THE PERFECTION WE SEEK IS TWOFOLD...

1. Maturity in religious knowledge, as a **means** - cf. **1 Pe 2:2; Ja 1:21**
 - a. We need the Word of God, that we may grow thereby
 - b. By receiving the Word with humility into our hearts, it can save our souls
2. Full development of spiritual life, as an **ends** - cf. **2 Pe 1:5-8**
 - a. To faith and knowledge, we must add the qualities of godly character
 - b. As we develop this godly character, we truly come to know the Lord

B. FOR THIS WE NEED “THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF CHRIST”...

1. Our text reveals that this involves teaching on such subjects as:
 - a. “**Repentance from dead works**”
 - 1) I.e., turning from works which produce spiritual death, not life
 - 2) Paul describes such works in **Ep 2:1-3; Ro 6:21**
 - b. “**Faith toward God**”
 - 1) I.e., that trusting conviction in God and His promises that is essential to pleasing Him - cf. **He 11:6**
 - 2) This faith is produced by the Word of God itself - cf. **Ro 10:17; Jn 20:30-31**
 - c. “**The doctrine of baptisms**”

- 1) In the first century A. D., there were many ritual washings practiced by the various sects of the pagans and Jews
 - a) Such practices needed to be carefully distinguished from Christian baptism
 - b) Just as John's baptism was distinguished from baptism into Christ - cf. **Ac 19:1-5**
- 2) Today, it is important to understand the different kinds of baptisms practiced...
 - a) Nearly all "Christian" religions practice some sort of baptism
 - b) But most do not baptize for the reasons stated in the Scriptures - cf. **Ac 2:38; 22:16; Ro 6:1-6**
- d. **"Laying on of hands"**
 - 1) In the early church, this was done for various reasons:
 - a) By Jesus, and others with the gift of healing, to heal the sick - **Lk 4:40; Mk 16:18; Ac 28:8**
 - b) By Jesus, to bestow special blessings upon others - **Mk 10:16; Mt 19:13-15**
 - c) By the apostles, to impart the Spirit in a miraculous measure- **Ac 8:14-25; 19:1-7; 2 Ti 1:6**
 - d) By church leaders, to appoint different ones for service - **Ac 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 1 Ti 4:14; 5:22**
 - 2) Note that the laying on of hands was accompanied by prayer; perhaps the imposition of hands being the outward symbol of the prayer (**Lightfoot**)
- e. **"Resurrection of the dead"**
 - 1) A central theme of apostolic preaching was the resurrection of Jesus - **Ac 2:31-32; 10:40; 13:33**
 - 2) They also preached in Jesus our own resurrection, which is our precious hope! - **Ac 4:2; 24:15; 1 Co 15:12-23**
- f. **"Eternal judgment"**
 - 1) Another theme of apostolic preaching - cf. **Ac 17:30-31; 24:24-25**
 - 2) Also stressed in their epistles - cf. **Ro 2:16; 14:10-12; 2 Co 5:10**
2. Understanding these concepts serves as the "beginning" of spiritual growth!
 - a. Sadly, some who have been Christians for years still "need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God;"
 - b. Such people are still "babes" who "need milk and not solid food." - **He 5:12**

C. BUT WE ALSO NEED TO "GO ON TO PERFECTION"...

1. Once we have laid the foundation, we need to build on it
2. With an understanding of the doctrines previously described, we are ready to receive more difficult knowledge
 - a. Such as the high priesthood of Christ - cf. **He 5:9-11**
 - b. We might also add the work of Christ as our "King of kings and Lord of lords", as depicted in the book of Revelation
3. By comprehending the more "meatier" parts of the Word of God, we are more likely to remain steadfast in our faith

-- And so we need the attitude of striving toward perfection as described by Paul - **Ph 3:7-15**

[Is this our attitude? It should be, for as we continue to read in our text, there is...]

II. THE DANGER OF IRREVERSIBLE APOSTASY (4-8)

A. NOTE THE PRIVILEGES SOME APOSTATES HAD ENJOYED...

1. They **“were once enlightened”**
 - a. This likely refers to their conversion - cf. **He 10:32**
 - b. By the second century, the word “enlightenment” was used as a synonym for baptism (**Justin**, Apology, 1.61.65)
 - c. The Peshitta Syriac translates the verse, “who have once descended to baptism” (**Lightfoot**)
2. They **“have tasted of the heavenly gift”**
 - a. The word “taste” suggests a deep personal experience - cf. **1 Pe 2:3; Ps 34:8**
 - b. Their tasting the “heavenly gift” refers back to the past experience of salvation...
 - 1) In which they experienced the forgiveness of sins
 - 2) In which they began to receive the spiritual blessings of being in Christ
 - c. The clause “describes vividly the reality of personal experiences of salvation enjoyed by Christians at conversion (baptism).” (**Behm**, TDNT, I, 676)
3. They **“have become partakers of the Holy Spirit”**
 - a. This also refers back to their conversion - cf. **Ac 2:38; 5:32**
 - b. The word “partakers” (**metochous**) is significant...
 - 1) Christians are “partakers (metochoi) of the heavenly calling” - **He 3:1**
 - 2) They are “partakers (metochoi) of Christ” - **He 3:14**

-- So they are also partakers in the Holy Spirit! (**Lightfoot**)
4. They **“have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come”**
 - a. Again the word “tasted” suggests personal experience
 - b. They had experienced the good things the word of God promises
 - c. They had experienced “the powers of the age to come”
 - 1) The “age to come” is likely the Messianic age, ushered in with the first coming of Christ, and consummated with His second coming (**Lightfoot**)
 - 2) The “powers of the age” they had experienced...
 - a) Certainly included the “power” experienced by all Christians - cf. **Ep 1:19; 3:20; 6:10**
 - b) But perhaps even “signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit” - cf. **He 2:4**

-- Can these be anyone other than true Christians who had once believed in Jesus?

B. NOTE HOW FAR THEY HAD FALLEN...

1. It was now **“impossible...to renew them again to repentance”**
 - a. It is apparent that Christians can “fall away”
 - 1) Paul warned that one can become “estranged from Christ” and “fall from grace” - **Ga 5:4**
 - 2) Peter described those once saved whose “latter end is worse than the beginning” - **2 Pe 2:20-22**
 - b. Here we learn that some can fall away to the point they are beyond rescue!
 - 1) We cannot say when a person reaches that point
 - 2) But there is a point where renewal becomes impossible!
2. In such a state **“they crucify again for themselves the Son of God and put Him to an open shame.”**
 - a. This is not a Christian who sins out of weakness or ignorance
 - b. This is one who knowingly and openly rejects Christ publicly!
 - 1) It is one whose heart has been so hardened by sin that in unbelief they have departed from the living God - cf. **He 3:12-13**
 - 2) It is one who despises Jesus, His blood, and the Spirit of grace - cf. **He 10:29**

- c. It is one thing to “yield” to sin contrary to the new life in Christ, it is another thing to “abandon” that new life altogether! (**Lightfoot**)
- But such can happen if we are not careful to “go on to perfection”!

C. NOTE THE FEARFUL DESTRUCTION RESERVED FOR THEM...

- 1. Like unproductive branches, they are “**rejected...whose end is to be burned**”
 - a. Having received blessings from God, they should have produced good fruit
 - b. But instead they are like thorns and briars, taking nourishment but not producing useful fruit in return - **He 6:7-8**
- 2. With a similar illustration, Jesus warned His disciples! - **Jn 15:1-8**
 - a. By abiding in Him, we are able to bear fruit to God’s glory
 - b. But if we do not bear fruit, we will be cut off and “burned”!

CONCLUSION

- 1. From this stern passage, we learn some sobering truths...
 - a. Receiving wonderful blessings from God does not preclude the impossibility of apostasy
 - b. For those who fall away to the point of casting off their faith, destruction awaits!
- 2. In view of such truths...
 - a. “**The Peril Of Not Progressing**” is very real!
 - b. We need to heed the exhortation: “let us go on to perfection”
 - 1) We cannot be content with spiritual immaturity
 - 2) We must be diligent to “press on” in our spiritual growth

Does this mean we must live our Christian lives with insecurity regarding our salvation? No, for as we will see in our next lesson (“**The Basis For Spiritual Security**”), there are things upon which we can base our hope and trust for the future. But the warnings in this passage should be heeded!

Brethren, what are you doing with the blessings you have received in Christ...?

The Basis For Spiritual Security

Hebrews 6:9-20

INTRODUCTION

1. We have seen the author of **The Epistle To The Hebrews** express his concern for the initial recipients of this epistle...
 - a. He makes mention of their spiritual immaturity - **He 5:11-14**
 - b. He warns them of the peril of not progressing - **He 6:1-8**
2. While he writes in this way, he has great confidence for their ultimate salvation...
 - a. Though others had indeed fallen to the point where it was “impossible...to renew them again to repentance...” - cf. **He 6:4-6**
 - b. Yet he could say of them, “we are confident of better things, concerning you, yes, things which accompany salvation...” - cf. **He 6:9**
3. What was it that gave the author confidence regarding his readers’ salvation?
 - a. I.e., what was the basis for their spiritual security, when the danger of apostasy had just been described in vivid detail?
 - b. What can we glean from this passage which may help us understand the basis for our own spiritual security?

[There are three things mentioned in this section of scripture (**He 6:9-20**), that gave the author his confidence. The first of which is the fact...]

I. GOD DOES NOT FORGET OUR WORK AND LABOR OF LOVE (9-10)

A. GOD IS A JUST GOD, ONE WHO DOES NOT FORGET...

1. He is very much aware of our **service in the past** (“in that you have ministered”)
 - a. Service that has been shown toward Him (“toward His name”)
 - b. Service that has been shown toward His servants (“to the saints”)
2. He is very much aware of our **service in the present** (“and do minister”)

B. KNOWING THIS CAN BE A SOURCE OF GREAT COMFORT...

1. In contrast to every sin which is “blotted out” and “remembered no more” (cf. **He 8:12**), service rendered in love to God is not forgotten!
 2. We need not fear that God will not see or remember our efforts to be pleasing to Him
 - a. God seeks to show Himself strong to those who are loyal to Him - cf. **2 Chr 16:9**
 - b. If He took note of Cornelius’ desire to please Him in his unsaved state, how much more will He take note of His children’s effort to serve Him! - cf. **Ac 10:1-6**
- Thus when we stumble, but repent of our sins, our labor of love is remembered and our sins forgotten!

[Knowing that God sees and does not forget our service of love, both past and present, should help us feel spiritually secure. But note that what He does not forget is our “work and labor of love”, which implies the need for...]

II. DILIGENCE, FAITH, AND PATIENCE ON OUR PART (11-12)

A. NOTE THE AUTHOR'S DESIRE...

1. That his readers' show the same **diligence** (earnestness) they had shown in the past
 - a. Diligent regarding their assurance of hope
 - b. Diligent until the end - cf. **He 3:6,14**
2. That they do not become **sluggish**
 - a. The word "sluggish" is from a Greek word meaning "dull"
 - b. The same word as used in "dull of hearing" - cf. **He 5:11**
 - They were already dull of hearing; his desire is they not become dull in conduct!
3. That they have **faith** and **patience**
 - a. Imitating "those who through faith and patience inherit the promises"
 - b. Such as Abraham, who is given as an example later - **He 6:15**

B. THESE QUALITIES ARE NECESSARY FOR SPIRITUAL SECURITY...

1. Peter describes the need for **diligence** to "make your calling and election sure" - **2 Pe 1:5, 10-11**
2. Jesus called upon His disciples to remain **faithful** if they wished to "receive the crown of life" - **Re 2:10**
3. Paul wrote that eternal life is for those "who by **patient continuance in doing good** seek for glory, honor and immortality" - **Ro 2:7**; cf. also **He 10:36**

[Only by developing such virtues as **diligence, faith, and patience** can we rightfully have an assurance that we will one day "inherit the promises". Without them, we become **sluggish**, and as such expose ourselves to the danger of apostasy. To encourage us further, we note that another reason we can have spiritual security is because...]

III. GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES (13-20)

A. THE EXAMPLE OF GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM...

1. God made a promise to Abraham - **He 6:13-15**
 - a. In which He swore by Himself (because He could not swear by anyone higher)
 - b. A promise which Abraham obtained after patient endurance - cf. v.15 with v.12
2. God confirmed His promise with an oath - **He 6:16-18a**
 - a. For men, an oath confirms what they say, ending all dispute
 - b. To assure us of the unchangeableness of His promise, God also swore an oath
 - c. This provided a double assurance that He would keep His promise:
 - 1) One, because it impossible for God to lie anyway - cf. **Ti 1:2**
 - 2) Two, because of the oath by which He confirmed it
 - How does this relate to our spiritual security? Read on...

B. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IS OUR ASSURANCE...!

1. It gives us "strong consolation" - **He 6:18b-19b**
 - a. We who are seeking refuge
 - b. We who need "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast"
2. This is especially true regarding our "hope", which is Jesus! - **He 6:19b-20**
 - a. I understand Jesus to be the "hope" in this passage...
 - 1) For He is "our hope", to whom we can flee as a refuge - cf. **1 Ti 1:1**
 - 2) As such, He is our "anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast"

- b. As a forerunner, He has entered “the Presence behind the veil” (i.e., heaven)
- c. He has become “High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”
 - 1) Even as God swore He would do - cf. **Psa 110:4**
 - 2) God not only promised, but He swore an oath, just like He did for Abraham
- So He has kept His promise, providing us a superior High Priest!
- 3. Upon such an example of God’s faithfulness, we can have an assurance of our salvation as long as we continue to lay hold of the “hope” (Jesus) set before us

CONCLUSION

1. With a finely crafted argument, the author has returned his readers back to his original subject, which is Jesus as “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”...
 - a. Our spiritual security is first based upon the character of God...
 - 1) Who is not unjust to forget our work and labor of love
 - 2) Who keeps His promises
 - b. God has promised and sworn with an oath concerning the priesthood of the Messiah
 - c. This priesthood Jesus now has in heaven, and as such is the basis of our “hope”
 - For which reason we should seek to learn what we can about the priesthood of Jesus
2. Yet as wonderful is the character and promises of God, we are not to take them for granted...
 - a. We must be careful not to become sluggish
 - b. We must be careful to be diligent, imitating the faith and patience of those like Abraham who obtained God’s promise for them
 - Together with God’s character and promises, this is **“The Basis For Spiritual Security”**

Have you fled to Jesus for refuge? Is He your “hope”, your “anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast”? Is He your “High Priest”? If so, then let these words sink deep into your heart:

“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (He 6:11-12)

If you have not yet fled to Jesus for refuge, then please consider His tender invitation:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Mt 11:28-30)

The Greatness Of Melchizedek

Hebrews 7:1-10

INTRODUCTION

1. Thus far in our study, we have seen the writer mention Melchizedek...
 - a. That Jesus is a priest “after the order of Melchizedek” - **He 5:9-10; 6:20**
 - b. It has only been a brief mention, for the dullness of the readers required a necessary digression - cf. **He 5:11-6:20**
2. But now the writer returns to his theme concerning Melchizedek, in which he...
 - a. Establishes the greatness of Melchizedek - **He 7:1-10**
 - b. Shows the significance of Melchizedek’s priesthood - **He 7:11-19**
 - c. Thereby illustrating the greatness of Christ’s priesthood - **He 7:20-28**
3. Since this subject is **meat** compared to the **milk** of the Word (cf. **He 5:10-12**)...
 - a. We want to approach it slowly and carefully
 - b. Allowing ourselves to slowly “digest” what is said in this seventh chapter of Hebrews

[For this reason, this lesson will limit itself to the first ten verses, in which we read of “**The Greatness Of Melchizedek**”. To appreciate his greatness, we must first be aware of...]

I. THE HISTORY OF MELCHIZEDEK (1-3)

A. THE HISTORICAL RECORD AS FOUND IN GENESIS 14...

1. We first read of “The Battle Of The Kings” - **Gen 14:1-11**
2. In which Lot is captured, and then rescued by Abram (Abraham) - **Gen 14:12-17**
3. Upon his return, Abram is met by Melchizedek - **Gen 14:18**
 - a. Who is “king of Salem” (thought to be later known as Jerusalem)
 - b. Who is also “the priest of God Most High”
4. In this meeting, two things happen...
 - a. Melchizedek blesses Abram (Abraham) - **Gen 14:19**
 - b. Abram pays tithes to Melchizedek - **Gen 14:20b**

B. IN REFERRING TO MELCHIZEDEK, THE AUTHOR OF HEBREWS...

1. Summarizes the events in **He 7:1-2**
 - a. How Melchizedek met Abraham and blessed him
 - b. How Abraham gave “a tenth part of all” (i.e., tithes) to Melchizedek
2. Explains the meaning of his name and title - **He 7:2**
 - a. The name “Melchizedek” means “king of righteousness”
 - b. The title “king of Salem” means “king of peace”
3. Makes some intriguing statements about Melchizedek...
 - a. “without father, without mother, without genealogy”
 - b. “having neither beginning of days nor end of life”
 - c. “made like the Son of God”
 - d. “remains a priest continually”

C. WHO IS THIS “MELCHIZEDEK” ...?

1. Some have suggested that he was:
 - a. An angel (Origen, Didymus)
 - b. Enoch (Husius, Calmet)
 - c. Shem (Jerome, Luther)
2. Others have taken the statements in **v.3** to suggest that Melchizedek was a theophany (a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ), for the following reasons:
 - a. The name Melchizedek, meaning “king of righteousness” (**v.2**)
 - b. The designation “king of peace” (**v.2**)
 - c. The possibility that the lack of recorded genealogy mentioned in **v. 3** is due to actual lack of ancestors, rather than the mere absence of historical record
 - d. He is said to remain “a priest continually” (**v .3c**)
 - e. He is contrasted with “mortal men” (**v. 8a**)
 - f. Of him “it is witnessed that he lives” (**v. 8b**)
3. Most take that he was simply a man (note **v.4**), but because he appears suddenly in Scripture as a priest...
 - a. With no mention of parentage or genealogy
 - b. With no mention of his birth or death
 - c. With only a mention of him as a priest of “God Most High”
...that he is a “type” of Christ, and what His priesthood would be like

[While the true identity of Melchizedek may remain a mystery because of the brevity of scriptural information, his importance as it relates to the superiority of Christ’s priesthood becomes very clear as we consider...]

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MELCHIZEDEK (4-10)**A. MELCHIZEDEK RECEIVED TITHES FROM ABRAHAM... (4-6a)**

1. Abraham paid a tenth to Melchizedek
2. Just as the nation of Israel would later pay a tenth to the sons of Levi
-- Thus Abraham, great as he was, showed his deference to Melchizedek

B. MELCHIZEDEK BLESSED ABRAHAM... (6b-7)

1. Melchizedek blessed him “who had the promises” (Abraham)
2. There is no dispute that “the lesser is blessed by the better”
-- Thus Melchizedek is clearly “better” than Abraham

C. MELCHIZEDEK’S SERVICE WAS NOT AFFECTED BY DEATH... (8)

1. In the priesthood under the Jewish system (i.e., the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood), tithes were received by “mortal men” (whose service ended at death)
2. But it has been witnessed that Melchizedek “lives” (“remains a priest continually” - **He 7:3**)
3. How he lives and remains a priest continually, the Bible does not say
-- But in this way Melchizedek is greater than the Levitical priests (a point made concerning Jesus later in the chapter)

D. EVEN LEVI PAID TITHES TO MELCHIZEDEK... (9-10)

1. Levi was “in the loins of his father” Abraham when Melchizedek met him
2. Thus Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes “through Abraham, so to speak”
-- Again illustrating the greatness of Melchizedek, as one greater than Levi!

CONCLUSION

1. There is a lot more I wish I knew about Melchizedek...
 - a. Was he a **theophany**, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ?
 - b. Was he is an angel? Enoch? Shem?
 - c. Was he simply a man?
 - 1) One whose Biblical record is such that he serves as a **type** of Christ
 - 2) If so, I would love to know where he came from, and how he came to be “priest of God Most High”
 - d. How does he remain a priest continually?
2. But what I do know is this...
 - a. Jesus is “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”, as God promised and swore He would be in **Psa 110:4**
 - b. And that Melchizedek is clearly presented to be greater than Abraham and Levi!

Understanding “**The Greatness Of Melchizedek**” helps prepare us to appreciate the superiority of Christ’s priesthood over the Levitical (Aaronic) priesthood, which we will consider later...

The Significance Of Christ's Priesthood

Hebrews 7:11-19

INTRODUCTION

1. A major theme in **The Epistle To The Hebrews** is the priesthood of Jesus Christ...
 - a. His humanity prepared Him to be “a merciful and faithful High Priest” - **He 2:17**
 - b. He is the “High Priest of our confession” - **He 3:1**
 - c. He is “a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens” - **He 4:14**
 - d. He is a sympathetic High Priest, for He “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” - **He 4:15**
 - e. His calling as High Priest came from God Himself - **He 5:5-6**
2. His is a **unique** priesthood, however...
 - a. It is not according to the “Levitical priesthood”
 - 1) He is a not priest in the order of Aaron
 - 2) A priesthood that began with the giving of the Law through Moses at Mt. Sinai
 - b. His priesthood is “according to the order of Melchizedek” - **He 5:9-10**
 - 1) Melchizedek was a priest “of God Most High” who met Abram - **Gen 14:14-20**
 - 2) And God swore that the Messiah would be a priest like Melchizedek - **Psa 110:4**
3. In our previous study, we saw how Melchizedek was superior, in that...
 - a. He received tithes from Abraham - **He 7:4-6a**
 - b. He blessed Abraham - **He 7:6b-7**
 - c. Even Levi, in the loins of his ancestor Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek - **He 7:9-10**
 - All of this proving that the priesthood of Christ, which is after the order of Melchizedek, is superior to the Levitical priesthood
4. That Jesus would come to serve as a priest after the order the Melchizedek is not without great significance and major implications...
 - a. Regarding the efficacy of the Levitical priesthood
 - b. Regarding the law of Moses itself!

[Some of the significance and implications of Christ’s priesthood is described in **He 7:11-19**. As we consider “**The Significance Of Christ’s Priesthood**”, we notice first that ...]

I. THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD WAS LACKING (11)

A. IT DID NOT BRING “PERFECTION”...

1. Otherwise there would not have been another priest to arise like Melchizedek
2. The fact that one has come proves the order of Aaron was lacking

B. THE MEANING OF “PERFECTION”...

1. Perfection means “completeness” and in this context it indicates making men acceptable to God (**Believers’ Study Bible**)
2. The Old Law with its priesthood could never fully reconcile man back to God
 - a. The animal sacrifices could not make one “perfect” - **He 10:1**

- b. They could not cleanse the sinner's conscience - **He 10:2-3**; cf. **9:9**
- c. They could not take away sin - **He 10:4**; cf. **10:11**

[Jesus coming as a priest after the order of Melchizedek implies that the Levitical priesthood, while having served the purpose for which it was intended (to foreshadow the sacrifice of Christ), was not able to provide man what he really needs. The priesthood of Christ also signifies...]

II. THE LAW HAS BEEN ANNULLED (12-18)

A. A CHANGE IN THE PRIESTHOOD SIGNIFIES A CHANGE IN THE LAW...

1. Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, not Levi - **He 7:13-14**; cf. **Mt 1:1-2**
2. Moses had not authorized anyone from Judah to serve as priest; indeed, God specifically forbid anyone other than a descendant of Aaron - cf. **Num 16:40**
3. For Christ to serve as priest, then, a change must have occurred - **He 7:14**
4. Especially for one who serves "according to the power of an endless life" - **He 7:15-17**
 - a. The Levitical priests were "mortal men", whose service ended at death
 - b. But Jesus is a priest "forever", His priesthood is therefore unchangeable - **He 7:24**

B. WITH THE CHANGE IN PRIESTHOOD, THE LAW IS NOW ANNULLED...

1. "Annulled" means "to declare as void, to invalidate, to abrogate" (**Lightfoot**)
2. The "former commandment" (as the Law is called) has therefore been set aside - **He 7:18-19a**
 - a. Because it was weak and unprofitable
 - b. In the sense of making us "perfect" (acceptable to God) - cf. **He 10:1**
3. That the Law has been done away should not surprise us...
 - a. God foretold this would happen - cf. **He 8:7-13**
 - b. Jesus implied that the Law would be done away once it was fulfilled - **Mt 5:17-18**
 - 1) One "jot" or "tittle" would not pass from the law until it was fulfilled
 - 2) If the priesthood was changed, then it must have been fulfilled!
 - c. Paul described how Jesus abolished it in His death on the cross
 - 1) To the Ephesians - **Ep 2:14-16**
 - 2) To the Colossians - **Co 2:14-16**

[This significance of Christ's priesthood has powerful implications. With the Law annulled, it would be folly to seek justification by the Law (cf. **Ga 5:4**); it also explains why we should not go to the Old Law to find our authority for the work, worship, and organization of the church! Finally, there is that significance of Christ's priesthood which should be most precious to us...]

III. THERE IS NOW A BETTER HOPE (19)

A. THROUGH WHICH WE CAN DRAW NEAR TO GOD...

1. As we saw earlier, the Levitical priesthood did not offer "perfection"
 - a. Its sacrifices could not make one "perfect" regarding:
 - 1) "Consciousness of sins", for sacrifices were "year by year" - **He 10:1-3**
 - 2) Actual forgiveness of sins, for "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" - **He 10:4**
 - b. Thus the Law, because of its "weakness and unprofitableness", "made nothing perfect" - **He 7:18-19**
2. But now we have in Christ a "better" hope

- a. Here we find the keyword of this epistle: “better”
 - 1) First used in comparing Jesus to angels - **He 1:4**
 - 2) Used later in contrasting the new covenant and its promises with the Old Covenant - **He 7:22; 8:6**
- b. Our hope in drawing near to God is now “better” than before!

B. CHRIST’S SUPERIOR PRIESTHOOD IS THE BASIS OF THAT HOPE...

1. Because Jesus is “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”, our hope for drawing near to God is much better:
 - a. As we have seen, Melchizedek is superior to Abraham and Levi
 - b. Therefore his priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood
-- Making Jesus’ own priesthood superior
2. More evidence of superiority will be seen later (cf. **He 7:24-28**), but note again how the greatness of Jesus’ priesthood should strengthen our hope in drawing near to God
 - a. Our High Priest has “passed through the heavens” - **He 4:14**
 - b. Our High Priest can “sympathize with our weaknesses” - **He 4:15**
 - c. Our High Priest makes it possible to “come boldly to the throne of grace” and “obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” - **He 4:16**

-- Can we see how His service as our High Priest provides “a better hope, through which we draw near to God”?

CONCLUSION

1. More is yet to come regarding Christ’s Priesthood, but perhaps we better appreciate how...
 - a. The Levitical priesthood does not provide what man really needs (access to God)
 - b. There has been a change in the Law; indeed, it has been replaced with a new covenant
 - c. In Jesus, our hope in drawing near to God is much better than ever before!
2. In view of such things...
 - a. Why would the Hebrew Christians ever want to leave Jesus and return to the Law?
 - b. Why would people seek to use the Law to justify their religious practices, as many do when they turn to the Old Testament to establish authority for such things as a separate priesthood (clergy), burning of incense, or even instrumental music?

Jesus is the only way to God (cf. **Jn 14:6**). Are you willing to come to the Father through Him? Let us be sure to serve God through Him only! - cf. **Ga 5:4-6**

The Superiority Of Christ's Priesthood

Hebrews 7:20-28

INTRODUCTION

1. In the first seven chapters of **The Epistle To The Hebrews**, the main thought is the superiority of Christ...
 - a. To the prophets - **He 1:1-3**
 - b. To angels - **He 1:4-2:18**
 - c. To Moses - **He 3:1-5**
 - d. To Aaron and his Levitical priesthood - **He 5:1-10; 7:1-28**
2. In showing the superiority of Jesus' priesthood, the author has done so step-by-step...
 - a. Jesus is qualified to be a priest by virtue of His calling by God and His suffering - **He 5:1-8**
 - b. He has been called to be "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" - **He 5:9-10**
 - c. The priestly order of Melchizedek is shown to be superior by comparing Abraham and Melchizedek - **He 7:1-10**
 - d. That Christ has become such a priest has several implications - **He 7:11-19**
 - 1) The Levitical priesthood could not make one perfect before God
 - 2) The Law upon which the Levitical priesthood was based has been annulled
 - 3) Christ now provides "a better hope, through which we draw near to God"
3. This brings us to **He 7:20-28**, in which we find a climatic comparison...
 - a. Where Jesus is contrasted with those who served in the Levitical priesthood
 - b. Where "**The Superiority Of Christ's Priesthood**" is clearly demonstrated

[In this passage, we find at least four points illustrating Jesus' superiority, the first of which pertains to...]

I. HIS DIVINE APPOINTMENT (20-22)

A. LEVITICAL PRIESTS WERE APPOINTED BY A "COMMAND"...

1. Beginning with Aaron, he and his descendants served in the Levitical priesthood
2. It was a divine command that so appointed them - cf. **Exo 28:1-4**
3. While divinely commanded, it was not with an oath

A. JESUS WAS MADE A PRIEST WITH AN "OATH"...

1. Again, the reference is to **Psa 110:4**, in which God swore an oath concerning the coming Messiah and His priesthood
2. We saw earlier that a promise joined with an oath really confirms the "immutability" (unchangeableness) of God's counsel - cf. **He 6:17**
2. Appointed by an oath and not just a command, Jesus has become "a surety of a better covenant"...
 - a. "Surety" means "guarantor" (NEB)
 - b. Appointed by such an oath from God, Jesus guarantees the new covenant, that it is "better" (there is that key word again!)

[The superiority of Christ's priesthood is also illustrated by...]

II. HIS ETERNAL INTERCESSION (23-25)

A. LEVITICAL PRIESTS WERE LIMITED IN SERVICE BY "DEATH"...

1. When one died, another took his place
2. Of necessity there had to be "many priests"

B. JESUS "EVER LIVES" TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR US...

1. That is because "He continues forever"
2. As seen earlier, Jesus came "according to the power of an endless life" - **He 7:16**
3. He therefore "has an unchangeable priesthood"
 - a. He is "able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him"
 - 1) He can do what the law could not do: make one "perfect" - cf. **He 7:19**
 - 2) That is, make one "holy, and blameless" - cf. **Co 1:21-22**
 - b. And "He ever lives to make intercession for them"
 - 1) I have always been impressed by this phrase
 - 2) For it suggests what Jesus is doing for us now, and is most willing to do!

[As we continue in our text, we see yet another contrast with Levitical priests...]

III. HIS PERFECT CHARACTER (26-27)

A. LEVITICAL PRIESTS WERE "SINNERS"...

1. Some more so than others
2. Even the best of them had to "offer up sacrifices"...
 - a. On a daily basis
 - b. For his own sins before offering sacrifices others

B. JESUS IS "SEPARATE FROM SINNERS"...

1. We see our High Priest described in regards to...
 - a. His holy character: "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"
 - b. His preeminent position: "higher than the heavens"
-- Thus He does not need to offer sins for Himself
2. This makes Him a High Priest "fitting" (becoming, seemly) for us

[Add to His perfect character another element that shows His superior priesthood...]

IV. HIS PERMANENT SACRIFICE (27)

A. THE LEVITICAL PRIESTS SACRIFICED "DAILY"...

1. Every day they offered sacrifices for their own sins and for those of the people
2. That they had to be continually offered implies a fundamental weakness in the efficacy of the sacrifices themselves
3. Later we learn that the problem was the inability of animal sacrifices to make one perfect and to cleanse the conscience of sins - **He 10:1-4**; cf. **9:9**

B. JESUS OFFERED HIMSELF "ONCE FOR ALL"...

1. This implies the efficacy of His sacrifice

2. The superiority of Jesus' sacrifice will be explained further, later on- cf. **He 9:11-15; 10:11-14**

CONCLUSION

1. In **verse 28**, we find a summary statement that contrasts the two priesthods...
 - a. The **law**, upon which the Levitical priesthood derives its authority, appoints men who "have weaknesses"; for example:
 - 1) They are sinners themselves, and death terminates their service
 - 2) Their sacrifices cannot truly remove sin, so had to be repeated daily and yearly
 - b. The **oath**, given after the law and the basis for Christ's priesthood, appoints the Son "who has been perfected forever"; for example:
 - 1) His humanity and the obedience learned through suffering makes Him most "fitting" to be our High Priest - cf. **He 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 5:8-9**
 - 2) His sinlessness makes the sacrifice of Himself the perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice, given once for all! - cf. **He 10:12-14**
2. In **chs. 9 and 10**, the focus of this epistle will center on the superiority of Christ's sacrifice; but for now, our attention has been those things that illustrate what a great High Priest we have:
 - a. His appointment by an oath from God, not just a command
 - b. His eternal intercession, not limited by death
 - c. His perfect character, untainted by sin
 - d. His permanent sacrifice, offered once for all when He offered Himself

Don't you desire to have such a High Priest interceding in your behalf? Then as Christians...

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." - He 4:16

Let us never forget that "He ever lives to make intercession" for those who come to God through Him!

Our Glorious High Priest

Hebrews 8:1-6

INTRODUCTION

1. With the beginning of **chapter eight**, we come to the close of the first major section of **The Epistle To The Hebrews...**
 - a. In which the key thought is **“The Superiority of Christ”**
 - b. In which Jesus is shown to be superior to:
 - 1) To the prophets - **He 1:1-3**
 - 2) To angels - **He 1:4-2:18**
 - 3) To Moses - **He 3:1-5**
 - 4) To Aaron and his Levitical priesthood - **He 5:1-10; 7:1-28**
2. The next major section really begins in earnest with **verse 7...**
 - a. In which the key thought will be **“The Superiority of the New Covenant”**
 - b. In which this covenant is shown to be based upon:
 - 1) Better promises - **He 8:7-13**
 - 2) A better sanctuary - **He 9:1-28**
 - 3) A better sacrifice - **He 10:1-18**
3. In **He 8:1-6**, we find a transition...
 - a. In which the main point of the first section is summarized
 - b. In which the main points of the next section are introduced-- Indeed, these six verses truly summarize what the author seeks to establish in the first ten chapters of this epistle!
4. It can all be summarized in these words: **“We have such a High Priest...”**
 - a. In Jesus, we have a High Priest
 - b. Not just any High Priest, but **“such”** a High Priest; i.e., a glorious High Priest!

[In what ways is Jesus **“Our Glorious High Priest”**? First, He is...]

I. SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD (1)

A. THE PHRASE “THE MAJESTY IN THE HEAVENS”...

1. A Jewish circumlocution meaning “God” (Believers’ Study Bible)
2. I.e., a roundabout way of referring to God - cf. **He 1:3**

B. MANY PASSAGES REFER TO JESUS AT GOD’S RIGHT HAND...

1. David prophesied that the Messiah would sit at God’s right hand - **Psa 110:1**
2. Jesus said that He would sit at the right hand of God - **Mk 14:60-62**
3. When He ascended to heaven, He then sat down at God’s right hand - **Mk 16:19; He 12:2**
4. At God’s right hand, He poured forth the Holy Spirit - **Ac 2:33**
5. Peter preached Jesus as being exalted to be at God’s right hand as our Prince and Savior - **Ac 5:30-31**

6. Paul taught that Jesus is at God's right hand, interceding for us - **Ro 8:34**
7. He is at God's right hand, "waiting till His enemies are made His footstool" - **He 10:12-13**
8. Yet while He sits and waits, He rules! - **Psa 110:1-2,5**; cf. **1 Co 15:24-26**
9. For at God's right hand, He is above all other authority - **Ep 1:20-22**; **1 Pe 3:22**
- In one place, we read of Jesus "standing at the right hand of God" (**Ac 7:55-56**); was Jesus showing His respect for Stephen, the first Christian martyr?

[Exalted to such a place of honor and authority, we truly have a "glorious" High Priest, one who is "the ruler over the kings of the earth" (**Re 1:5**)! As we look at the next verse in our text, we see that He is also...]

II. A MINISTER OF THE TRUE TABERNACLE (2-5)

A. ERECTED BY GOD, NOT MAN...

1. We are now introduced to a contrast between two "tabernacles"
 - a. There had been the earthly sanctuary or tabernacle
 - 1) As ordained under the first covenant (i.e., the Law) - cf. **He 9:1ff**
 - 2) It was built by man
 - b. But now we read of one "which the Lord erected"; i.e., a heavenly tabernacle
2. The heavenly tabernacle is none other than heaven itself! - cf. **He 9:11-12**; **23-24**

B. IN WHICH HE OFFERS "SERVICE"...

1. As a High Priest, it is necessary for Him to have something to offer - **He 8:3**
 - a. Every high priest is appointed for this purpose - cf. **He 5:1**
 - b. What Jesus has to offer is not mention here, but will be later - cf. **He 9:12**
2. This service He renders in heaven, not on the earth - **He 8:4**
 - a. If He were on earth, He couldn't be a priest!
 - b. For the Law required priests from the tribe of Levi, and Jesus was from Judah
3. As for priests on the earth...
 - a. They serve only the copy and shadow of the heavenly things - **He 8:5**
 - b. For Moses had been told by God to build the earthly tabernacle according to the pattern shown to him on the mountain - cf. **Exo 25:40**

[As "**Our Glorious High Priest**", then, Jesus renders service in the true tabernacle, which is heaven itself. This thought will be expanded upon in chapters **nine** and **ten**. But consider also how He is...]

III. THE MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT (6)

A. HE HAS OBTAINED A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY...

1. In contrast with the ministry of the Levitical priests
2. Their ministry was simply a shadow and copy of His ministry - cf. **Co 2:16-17**

B. AS MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT...

1. The word "mediator"...
 - a. The Greek is **mesites** {mes-ee'-tace}
 - b. It means "one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or form a compact, or for ratifying a covenant"
2. By His death on the cross, Jesus has become the Mediator of the new covenant - cf. **He 9:15**; **12:24**

3. This new covenant is here referred to as “a better covenant”
 - a. Better than what? Better than the “first covenant” - cf. **He 8:7**
 - b. I.e., what had been established through Moses

C. ESTABLISHED ON BETTER PROMISES...

1. What makes the new covenant better than the old are its promises
2. Some of those promises are explained later - cf. **He 8:10-12**
3. But Peter describes the promises we receive as “exceedingly great and precious promises” - cf. **2 Pe 1:3-4**

CONCLUSION

1. With this transition passage, then, we are introduced to things that will be expounded upon as we proceed through the epistle...
 - a. The better covenant we have in Christ, based upon its better promises
 - b. The better ministry Christ renders as our High Priest in heaven, seated at God’s right hand
2. When such things are properly understood, we can see how Jesus is truly “**Our Glorious High Priest**”...!
 - a. One who stands ready to minister in our behalf
 - b. He is “able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him” - **He 7:25**
 - c. He is “able to aid those who are tempted” - **He 2:18**

Have you accepted Jesus as your High Priest by obeying His gospel? He is truly...

“...the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.” (He 5:9)

For those who have not obeyed His gospel, we find this awesome warning:

“...and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those WHO DO NOT OBEY THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power...” (2 Th 1:7-9)

Please render obedience to the gospel today if you have not yet done so! - cf. **Ac 2:36-39**

The Promises Of God's New Covenant

Hebrews 8:7-13

INTRODUCTION

1. Up to this point, the focus of **The Epistle To The Hebrews** has been on Christ...
 - a. His superiority to prophets, angels, Moses
 - b. The superiority of His priesthood to the Levitical priesthood
2. With the transition in **He 8:1-6**, the focus shifts to the New Covenant...
 - a. A new covenant in which Jesus has already been described as:
 - 1) The “surety” (guarantor) - **He 7:22**
 - 2) The “Mediator” (one who intervenes) - **He 8:6**
 - b. In both passages, this covenant was described as a “better” covenant
3. Better than what? Better in what way? In **Hebrews 8**, we learn the answer...
 - a. Better than the “first covenant” - cf. **He 8:7**
 - b. Better because of the “promises” contained in it - cf. **He 8:6**

[In this study, “**The Promises Of God’s New Covenant**”, we shall examine our text (**He 8:7-13**) to ascertain how the New Covenant is better, especially with regard to its promises.

Let’s begin by noticing...]

I. GOD’S PROMISE OF A NEW COVENANT (7-9,13)

A. THE FIRST COVENANT WAS NOT FAULTLESS... (7)

1. Otherwise, there would have been no need for a second covenant
2. We have already seen concerning the first covenant that...
 - a. The Levitical priesthood could not bring perfection - **He 7:11**
 - b. The Law made nothing perfect, and was therefore annulled due to its weakness and unprofitableness - **He 7:18-19**
3. This inadequacy has special reference to the sacrifices of the first covenant...
 - a. They could not make those who approach perfect - **He 10:1-3**
 - b. The blood of animals offered by the priests could not take away sins - **He 10:4,11**

B. THE PEOPLE OF THE FIRST COVENANT WERE ALSO AT FAULT... (8-9)

1. God found fault because they did not continue in His covenant - cf. **Jer 11:7-10**
2. For this reason He disregarded them, allowing them to be taken away by their enemies - cf. **Jer 11:11-14**
- Even so, He did not leave them without some hope, for through the prophet Jeremiah He made a promise...

C. GOD PROMISED A NEW COVENANT... (8-9)

1. Promised in **Jer 31:31-34**
2. In which God would make a “new covenant” with Israel and Judah
2. A covenant different than the one made at Mt. Sinai (how, we shall see in a moment)

D. THE NEW COVENANT HAS MADE THE FIRST “OBSOLETE”... (13)

1. By even calling the promised covenant “new”, God made the first covenant obsolete
 - a. The old covenant actually continued on for about 500 years after Jeremiah
 - b. But with the promise of the new, attention would be taken away from the Old Covenant and directed toward the new one that was coming!
2. Its obsolescence was especially seen in the days of the Hebrew writer...
 - a. It was “becoming obsolete and growing old”
 - 1) The death of Jesus rendered the sacrifices of the first covenant unnecessary
 - 2) Before long, the temple itself would be destroyed, and along with it, the last vestiges of the Levitical priesthood
 - b. Truly, it was “ready to vanish away”

[So God promised a “new covenant” to replace the “old covenant”; and Jesus is the “Mediator” of this covenant, which is “a better covenant”. Better in what way? Better because it “was established on better promises”. Let’s now consider some of...]

II. GOD’S PROMISES INVOLVING THE NEW COVENANT (10-12)

A. IT WILL BE INWARD AND SPIRITUAL... (10)

1. “I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts”
 2. The first covenant had its laws written on tablets of stone; the new covenant is one that requires God’s laws be written in our hearts
 3. It is not enough to have God’s Word in our hands, on our coffee tables, etc.
 - a. We must plant God’s Word into our hearts - cf. **Ja 1:21**
 - b. For only then can we truly be born again by the incorruptible seed, the word of God - **1 Pe 1:22-23**
- Are you living up to intent of the New Covenant, or are you little different than those under the first covenant, who had the Word, but not on their hearts?

B. IT WILL PROVIDE A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD... (10)

1. “I will be their God, and they shall be My people”
 2. The actual terms of this promise is really nothing new - cf. **Exo 6:7; Lev 26:12**
 3. But in each successive “age”, its promise is filled with fresh meaning; for example...
 - a. In “this age”, we enjoy a closer relationship with God - cf. **2 Co 6:16-18; 1 Pe 2:9-10**
 - b. But even more so, in the “age to come”, which is in eternity - cf. **Re 21:1-7**
- Are you utilizing the blessings whereby you can have a closer relationship with God?

C. IT WILL BE WITH PEOPLE WHO KNOW THE LORD... (11)

1. “None of them shall teach...saying, ‘Know the Lord’, for all shall know Me...”
 2. The New Covenant will be with people who have already come to know the Lord
 - a. Unlike the first covenant, in which people entered it at birth; as they grew up, they needed to be taught about the Lord
 - b. In the new covenant, one must come to know the Lord before they can enter the covenant
 3. So it is that one must believe in Jesus before they can enter into a covenant relationship with their Lord through baptism - cf. **Ac 8:36-38**
- Does not this feature of the New Covenant preclude the practice of infant baptism?

D. IT WILL PROVIDE TRUE FORGIVENESS FOR SIN... (12)

1. “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more”
2. Here is the ultimate basis of the blessing previously described; by virtue of the forgiveness of sins can we truly be God’s people, and He our God!
3. Thus the New Covenant provides what the first covenant could not: true forgiveness of sins! - cf. **He 10:1-4,11**

CONCLUSION

1. Such are “**The Promises Of God’s New Covenant**”...
 - a. As foretold through the prophet Jeremiah
 - b. Now fulfilled through the coming of Jesus and His death on the cross
 - By virtue of “better promises”, Christ is truly the Mediator of a “better covenant”!
3. But there is more to be said about why the New Covenant is a better covenant...
 - a. It also has a better sanctuary
 - b. It also has a better sacrifice
 - But consideration of these things will be saved for later

At this point it might be appropriate to ask: **Have you truly entered into a covenant relationship with the Lord?**

The entrance terms of this New Covenant are simple: They involve faith in Christ and a confession of that faith (**Ro 10:9,10**), along with repentance of sins and baptism into Christ (**Ac 2:36-39**). The promised blessings of the New Covenant await any and all who are willing to so respond to the gospel of Christ!

The Earthly Sanctuary

Hebrews 9:1-10

INTRODUCTION

1. The main points in **The Epistle To The Hebrews** are rather simple...
 - a. The superiority of Christ - **He 1:1-7:28**
 - b. The superiority of the New Covenant - **He 8:7-10:18**
2. In the **transition passage** of **He 8:1-6**, we find...
 - a. The first point summarized - **He 8:1**
 - b. The second point introduced - **He 8:2-6**
3. In demonstrating the superiority of the New Covenant, three points are made...
 - a. The New Covenant is based upon “better promises”
 - b. The New Covenant pertains to a “better sanctuary”
 - c. The New Covenant provides a “better sacrifice”
4. In **He 8:7-13** we read of the “**better promises**”...
 - a. Foretold through the prophet Jeremiah - cf. **Jer 31:31-34**
 - b. In which God promised a closer relationship with His people, made possible by the forgiveness of sin
5. In **chapter nine**, our attention is now drawn to the matter of the “**better sanctuary**” provided by the New Covenant...
 - a. To appreciate the author’s argument, we must be acquainted with the sanctuary of the first covenant
 - b. Therefore we find a brief discussion concerning “**The Earthly Sanctuary**” - **He 9:1-10**

[We could turn back to the books of **Exodus** and **Leviticus** to read about the earthly sanctuary, but in our text we find a helpful and concise summary. Beginning with...]

I. THE EARTHLY SANCTUARY: ITS DESCRIPTION (1-5)

A. THE HOLY PLACE... (2)

1. This was the first part of the tabernacle, in which the priests entered daily
2. Inside of it were...
 - a. **The lamp stand** - cf. **Exo 25:31-40; 26:35**
 - 1) Placed next to the south wall of the tabernacle
 - 2) Made of gold and had seven lamps for burning olive oil
 - 3) It was never allowed to go out
 - b. **The table and the show bread** - **Exo 25:23-30; 26:35; Lev 24:5-9**
 - 1) A table overlaid with gold
 - 2) On which were kept twelve loaves of bread, in two rows of six
 - 3) Fresh loaves were brought in each Sabbath, and the old were eaten by the priests
- cf. **1 Sam 21:3-6; Mt 12:3,4**

B. THE HOLIEST OF ALL... (3-5)

1. This was the part of the tabernacle behind the veil, also called “The Most Holy” - **Exo 26:31-33**
2. This innermost room of the tabernacle, the holiest place in the worship of Israel, had...
 - a. **The golden altar of incense (golden censer, KJV)**
 - 1) The golden altar of incense was actually in the Holy Place, just on the other side of the veil separating the two rooms - **Exo 30:1-10**
 - a) On this altar sweet spices were continually burned with fire taken from the brazen altar (which was outside the tabernacle)
 - b) The morning and evening services were begun by the high priest offering incense on this altar
 - c) Once a year, the High Priest would take a censer of burning coals from this altar along with incense into The Most Holy Place - **Lev 16:12**
 - 2) It is appropriate to say The Most Holy Place “had” the golden altar...
 - a) For the smoke of the daily incense would permeate through the veil, and as such be “a perpetual incense before the LORD” - **Exo 30:8**
 - b) The annual ceremony on the Day of Atonement connected in a tangible way the altar of incense with The Most Holy Place - **Lev 16:12**
 - b. **The ark of the covenant**
 - 1) A chest made of acacia wood, about four feet long by two and half feet high and wide - **Exo 25:10-16**
 - 2) Covered with gold, it was the most sacred thing in the tabernacle
 - 3) In it contained...
 - a) **The golden pot that had the manna - Exo 16:32-34**
 - b) **Aaron’s rod that budded - Num 17:1-11**
 - c) **The tablets of the covenant - Deu 10:1-5**
 - 4) Covering the ark was **the mercy seat - Exo 25:17-22**
 - a) This lid, covered with gold, was topped with two cherubim (with wings stretched upward, and their faces “toward each other and toward the mercy seat.”)
 - b) The Lord was said to appear in a cloud above the mercy seat - **Lev 16:2; Num 7:89; 2 Kin 19:5**

[As stated by the author himself, “of these things we cannot now speak in detail”. But a little more is now said regarding the ritual of the earthly sanctuary...]

II. THE EARTHLY SANCTUARY: ITS RITUAL (6-7)**A. THE RITUAL OF THE HOLY PLACE... (6)**

1. Every morning and evening, the priests would go into The Holy Place “performing the services”...
 - a. They would trim the lamps on the lamp stand - **Exo 27:20-21**
 - b. They would offer incense on the altar of incense - **Exo 30:7-8**
2. On the Sabbath, the priests would replace the show bread - **Lev 25:4-9**
 - But none went into The Most Holy Place during these daily services

B. THE RITUAL OF THE MOST HOLY PLACE... (7)

1. Once a year, only the high priest entered The Most Holy Place - **Lev 16:2**
 - a. On the Day of Atonement

- b. The tenth day of the seventh month - **Lev 16:29**
- 2. The high priest would do three things:
 - a. Offer the incense to cloud the mercy seat - **Lev 16:12-13**
 - b. Sprinkle the mercy seat with the blood of a bull, as a sin offering for himself and his family - **Lev 16:11,14**
 - c. Sprinkle the mercy seat with the blood of a goat, as a sin offering for the people - **Lev 16:15**
- 3. In this way he offered blood for his own sins and those of the people committed in ignorance - **He 9:7**

[With this summary of the ritual of the earthly sanctuary, we are reminded of the sort of services rendered under the first covenant. But was the true purpose of such service? And did the sacrifices provide complete redemption? These questions are addressed in the next two verses...]

III. THE EARTHLY SANCTUARY: ITS SYMBOLISM AND LIMITATION (8-10)

A. IT WAS SYMBOLIC...

- 1. As already stated, the tabernacle and its service was “a copy and shadow of the heavenly things” - **He 8:4-5**; cf. **He 10:1a**; **Co 2:16-17**
- 2. Thus it was “symbolic for the present time” - **He 9:9**
 - a. Symbolizing what eventually would occur when Christ came
 - b. Symbolizing what Christ has now done in reality when He entered heaven - cf. **He 9:11-12,24-26**
- 3. The Holy Spirit was thus indicating that “the way into heaven itself was not yet made manifest” - **He 9:8**

B. THERE WERE LIMITATIONS...

- 1. The gifts and sacrifices could not make one perfect in regard to the conscience - **He 9:9**; cf. **He 9:14**; **10:1-4**
- 2. The ceremonies involved “fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation” - **He 9:10**
 - a. Just as the sanctuary was “earthly”, the ordinances were “fleshly”
 - 1) In contrast to that which is heavenly, spiritual
 - 2) Indeed, all of the ritual was designed to impact the physical side of man
 - a) I.e., his senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch)
 - b) E.g., the burning of incense, the blowing of trumpets, the vestments
 - b. Such ordinances were designed to be temporary
 - 1) Until “the time of reformation”, when changes in worship would be made
 - 2) Indeed, now God expects “spiritual” worship - cf. **Jn 4:21-24**
 - a) Worship that is more in keeping with God’s true nature (Spirit)
 - b) Worship that focuses on the inner man
 - 1/ E.g., singing, where the emphasis is on melody made in the heart - cf. **Ep 5:19**; **Co 3:16**
 - 2/ Even in the Lord’s Supper, which has physical elements, the emphasis is on the communion we share in the body of and blood of Jesus as we commemorate His death - cf. **1 Co 11:23-26**; **10:16-17**
- Therefore we should not be surprised to learn that the early church did not simply institute the fleshly ordinances of the first covenant into their worship

CONCLUSION

1. The earthly sanctuary and its fleshly ordinances served God's purpose well...
 - a. It revealed the terrible nature and high price of sin
 - b. It revealed the need for the shedding of blood to provide the remission of sin
 - c. It prepared people for the coming of the ultimate sacrifice and complete redemption
2. But as useful as it was, it was temporary and symbolic...
 - a. A copy and shadow of what was to come
 - b. Designed to vanish away when what it represented came to pass
3. As we shall see more fully in our next study...
 - a. Christ has come and entered into "the greater and more perfect tabernacle"
 - b. He has "obtained eternal redemption"
 - c. He has made it possible to "purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God"

Why would one ever wish to go back to the earthly sanctuary and its fleshly ordinances? Why do some people wish to introduce Old Testament practices into the worship of the Lord's church?

It can only be a failure to appreciate what we now have in Christ, and the kind of worshippers God now desires. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well...

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23-24)

Are we worshipping God the way He desires? Or whatever way that appeals to our fleshly senses and personal desires? Brethren, think on these things...

The Superior Sanctuary

Hebrews 9:11-28

INTRODUCTION

1. In the current section of **The Epistle To The Hebrews**, the focus is on the superiority of the New Covenant which provides...
 - a. Better promises - **He 8:7-13**
 - b. A better sanctuary - **He 9:1-28**
 - c. A better sacrifice - **He 10:1-18**
2. Our previous study considered “**The Earthly Sanctuary**” of the Old Covenant, that tabernacle which...
 - a. Served as copy and shadow of the heavenly things - cf. **He 9:9; 8:5**
 - b. Involved fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation - **He 9:10**
...and was therefore limited in its ability to provide what man truly needed! - **He 9:9b**
3. In the second half of the ninth chapter, we are now introduced to “**The Heavenly Sanctuary**” of the New Covenant...
 - a. The true tabernacle in which Christ is a minister - **He 8:2**
 - b. The true tabernacle “which the Lord erected, and not man” - **He 8:2**

[As such it is “**The Superior Sanctuary**”, which becomes apparent as we make our way through the rest of the ninth chapter...]

I. IT IS HEAVENLY (11,24)

A. A GREATER AND MORE PERFECT TABERNACLE...

1. A tabernacle “not made with hands”
2. A tabernacle “not of this creation”
- Where then is this tabernacle? Look ahead to **verse 24...**

B. IN HEAVEN ITSELF...

1. Christ has not entered the earthly tabernacle “made with hands”
2. It is “into heaven itself” that Christ has entered!
3. He now appears “in the presence of God”
- Therefore “**The Superior Sanctuary**” is none other than heaven , where God dwells!

[In this heavenly sanctuary Christ serves as “High Priest of the good things to come”. The “good things” likely including the promises of **Jer 31:31-34**, especially the one pertaining to forgiveness of sin, for the author explains how with “**The Superior Sanctuary**”...]

II. ITS MINISTRY EFFECTIVELY DEALS WITH SIN (12-15)

A. ETERNAL REDEMPTION IS PROVIDED... (12)

1. Christ entered the “Most Holy Place” (heaven)
 - a. Just as the high priest entered the Most Holy Place in the earthly sanctuary

- b. With these two major differences:
 - 1) Jesus took not the blood of goats and calves, but His own blood
 - 2) Jesus entered “once for all”, not once a year
- 2. With His blood, He “obtained eternal redemption”
 - a. This is why He does not need to offer His blood every year - cf. **He 10:10-12**
 - b. But His redemption is “eternal” in another sense, as seen later in **verse 15**

B. THE CONSCIENCE IS PURGED OF SIN... (13-14)

- 1. The blood of animals was able to purify the flesh of an unclean person
- 2. But the blood of Christ is able to purge the conscience from dead works (i.e., sin) to serve the living God
 - a. The animal sacrifices could not do this - cf. **He 9:9-10; 10:1-2**
 - b. For the daily and annual sacrifices constantly reminded them of sin - **He 10:3**
 - c. Therefore Christ not only removes the “legal” guilt of sin, but also the “inward” (or emotional) guilt of sin!

C. THERE IS REDEMPTION FOR SINS UNDER THE FIRST COVENANT... (15)

- 1. His role as Mediator of the New Covenant is not limited to those who came after it became of force
- 2. His death covers not only sinners since His death, but also those who lived under the first covenant, who were called to receive the promise of eternal inheritance!
 - In providing atonement for those before and after His death, Jesus has truly “obtained eternal redemption”

[The service rendered by its High Priest certainly makes the “heavenly sanctuary” a superior one! As one contemplates the meaning of Christ’s death in its relation to the heavenly sanctuary, there is much to consider, and the author proceeds to explain further why...]

III. ITS MINISTRY NECESSITATED A COSTLY SACRIFICE (16-22)

A. TO INITIATE A NEW TESTAMENT... (16-17)

- 1. A testament, or will, requires the death of the one who makes it
- 2. It does not become of force until the testator dies
 - The New Covenant with its heavenly sanctuary is like a testament, then, requiring Jesus’ death for it to become of force

B. TO DEDICATE A NEW COVENANT... (18-23)

- 1. Consider what was done with the first covenant...
 - a. It was dedicated with the blood of calves and goats
 - b. Its tabernacle and furniture were purified with the sprinkling of such blood
- 2. Should the new covenant require any less?
 - a. The first covenant contained only “copies of the things in the heavens”
 - b. Therefore the heavenly things required purification by “better sacrifices” (i.e., Jesus’ own blood)
 - c. Exactly what is meant by “heavenly things” is unclear
 - 1) Some point to passages like **Co 1:20**, where even “things in heaven” are reconciled to God by Jesus’ blood
 - 2) Some believe it has reference to the church, of which the Holy Place in the earthly tabernacle was typical

- 3) **B. W. Johnson** comments: “By the heavenly things are meant all of which the tabernacle was typical. The holy place was a type of the church, which is cleansed with the blood of Christ. Perhaps, too, there is a reference to the redeemed church above, in the heavens, which eternally praises him who cleansed it with his blood.” (The People’s New Testament)

[It was the “better sacrifices” (i.e., Jesus’ blood) that initiated the new covenant and made the heavenly sanctuary superior to the earthly one. More will be said about Christ’s sacrifice in chapter ten, but we finally note concerning “**The Superior Sanctuary**” that...]

IV. ITS MINISTRY IS FINAL AND COMPLETE (24-28)

A. CHRIST IS NOW IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOR US...

1. No longer is a high priest serving in a tabernacle “made with hands”
2. No longer is one serving in what was only a “copy”
- In God’s presence, Jesus is ministering as High Priest in that which is the “true” holy place!

B. HE ONLY NEEDED TO OFFER HIMSELF ONCE...

1. The all-sufficiency of His sacrifice is seen that He only needed to offer Himself once
 - a. Otherwise, He would have needed to “suffer often from the foundation of the world”
 - b. Like the high priests of old, who entered the Most Holy Place each year
2. Therefore, at the “end of the ages”, He came to put away sin once for all!
 - a. The phrase “end of the ages” is equivalent to the “last days” - **He 1:2**
 - b. I.e., the final period of the world’s history - cf. **1 Co 10:11; 1 Pe 1:20**
3. Just as man dies only once, so Jesus needed to be offered for sin only once

C. WHEN HE COMES AGAIN, IT WILL BE FOR SALVATION, NOT SIN...

1. With His first coming, He was primarily the “sin-bearer”
 - a. He came “to bear the sins of many”
 - b. Which He did by dying on the cross for our sins - cf. **1 Pe 2:24**
2. His second coming will be “apart from sin”
 - a. To bring salvation (from the wrath of God to come - **Ro 5:9**)
 - b. To those who eagerly await for Him - cf. **1 Th 1:9-10**

CONCLUSION

1. How is the sanctuary of the New Covenant superior...?
 - a. By virtue of its **nature**: heavenly, not physical
 - b. By virtue of its **ministry**: dealing effectively with sin, providing complete and final deliverance
2. Why should we be interested in the ministry of “**The Superior Sanctuary**”...?
 - a. Because death is our appointed lot (unless Christ comes first) - **He 9:27**
 - b. And then comes the judgment - cf. **2 Co 5:10**
 - The ministry of Christ prepares us for that coming judgment!
3. Are you prepared to stand before the judgment seat of Christ?
 - a. Preparation involves obedience, for Jesus is “the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” - **He 5:9**
 - b. Preparation involves allowing the blood of Christ to “purge your conscience from dead works

to serve the living God” - **He 9:14**

Through obedience to the precious gospel of Christ, we can “eagerly wait for Him”, knowing that for us He is coming to bring salvation and not condemnation! - cf. **1 Th 1:10**

The Superior Sacrifice

Hebrews 10:1-18

INTRODUCTION

1. In showing the superiority of the New Covenant, we have seen the author discuss...
 - a. The better promises - **He 8:7-13**
 - b. The better sanctuary - **He 9:1-28**
2. The author now reaches a climax in his discussion with a look at “the better sacrifice”...
 - a. Not that he hasn’t already made mention of it - cf. **He 7:26-27; 9:11-14,24-26**
 - b. But now there is a contrast to the Old Covenant sacrifices in the clearest of terms
3. In this section, we will find the author...
 - a. Bring together the main ideas he has alluded to earlier
 - b. Add a further thought not stressed before

[In the first four verses of chapter ten, then, we find...]

I. THE SUPERIOR SACRIFICE: ITS NEED (1-4)

A. ANIMAL SACRIFICES DID NOT PROVIDE TRUE REMISSION OF SIN...

1. The Law was only a “shadow” of “the good things to come” - **He 10:1a**
 - a. Its gifts and sacrifices were a “copy and shadow” of the heavenly things - **He 8:4-5**
 - b. They symbolized what Jesus would actually do - **He 9:11-12,24**
 - c. The “good things” included such things as:
 - 1) His better sacrifice
 - 2) The better hope
 - 3) The eternal redemption and the eternal inheritance
2. The sacrifices did not make the worshippers “perfect” - **He 10:1b-2**
 - a. Perfect in regard to the conscience - **He 9:9**
 - b. The repetitive nature of the sacrifices prevented this

B. ANIMAL SACRIFICES PROVIDED A REMINDER OF SIN...

1. Every year there was the constant reminder of sins - **He 10:3**
 - a. In addition to the daily and monthly sacrifices, there were the annual sacrifices on the Day of Atonement
 - b. The constant sacrifices reminded them of their sin and need for cleansing
2. It was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins - **He 10:4**
 - a. The blood of animals could not really take away sin
 - b. Their purpose was to impress upon the people their need, and to foreshadow what would one day be accomplished in Christ

[The sacrifices of the Old Covenant accomplished their purpose; they served as “a shadow of the good things to come”. Those “good things” involved the sacrifice found in the New Covenant, of which we now read...]

II. THE SUPERIOR SACRIFICE: ITS PROVISION (5-9)

A. IT WAS PROVIDED BY GOD...

1. Quoting **Psa 40:6-8**, we see the attitude of Christ when He came into the world
2. Burnt offerings and sacrifices did not meet His Father's ultimate desire - **He 10:5-6**
3. But what did meet God's desire, God provided Himself: a body - **He 10:5**
- This reminds us that propitiation for sin was provided by God, not man - **1 Jn 4:10**

B. IT WAS OFFERED FREELY BY CHRIST...

1. Christ came as prophesied to do the will of God - **He 10:7-9a**
2. Here is a striking difference between Christ's sacrifice and the animal sacrifices...
 - a. Animal sacrifices were offered against their will
 - b. Jesus freely offered Himself in accordance with His Father's will! - cf. **Jn 6:38**

C. IT ESTABLISHED A NEW COVENANT...

1. In doing the will of His Father, Jesus has taken away the first covenant - **He 9:9b**; cf. **Co 2:14-17**
2. Making it possible to establish the second covenant, of which He is the mediator - cf. **He 9:15**

[So what animal sacrifices could not accomplish, God did by the sending of His Son who freely accepted the task of offering Himself for sin. But was His sacrifice adequate? Read on...]

III. THE SUPERIOR SACRIFICE: ITS ALL-SUFFICIENCY (10-18)

A. IT PROVIDES TRUE SANCTIFICATION...

1. We have been sanctified through the offering of His body - **He 10:10**
2. Its sufficiency is seen in that He only had to offer it "once"
 - a. The repetition of the daily sacrifices illustrated their inadequacy - **He 10:11**
 - b. But with Jesus, it was "one sacrifice for sins forever" - **He 10:12-13**
 - 1) Illustrated by His sitting down at God's right Hand - cf. **He 1:3; 8:1**
 - 2) Where He waits (and reigns - cf. **1 Co 15:25-26; Psa 110:1-2**) till all His enemies are made His footstool
3. Thus "by one offering" He has provided true sanctification - **He 10:14**
 - a. "He has perfected forever" (doing what animal sacrifices could not - **He 10:1**)
 - 1) Note the present tense - sanctification is an ongoing process - **He 2:11**
 - a) In one sense we have been sanctified - cf. **1 Co 1:2; 6:11; He 10:10,29**
 - b) In another sense we will be sanctified - cf. **1 Th 5:23**
 - 2) Made possible by the one-time sacrifice of Christ - e.g., **1 Jn 1:7-9**

B. IT PROVIDES TRUE REMISSION OF SINS...

1. As the Holy Spirit bore witness through Jeremiah in **Jer 31:31-34** (quoted earlier in **He 8:8-12**) - **He 10:15-17**
2. With true remission of sins, there is no need for repeated sacrifices for sin - **He 10:18**

CONCLUSION

1. By providing complete sanctification and remission of sins, the sacrifice of Jesus is truly "**The Superior Sacrifice**"...!

- a. Why would anyone want to return to sacrifices...
 - 1) That did not make the worshiper “perfect”?
 - 2) Were there is the constant reminder of sin that weighs heavy upon the conscience of man?
 - b. With the sacrifice of Himself, offered freely keeping with the will of God, Jesus provides what the Law could not!
2. With **vs. 18**, we come to the end of **the two main arguments** in this epistle...
- a. That **Christ is superior**, for He is:
 - 1) Better than the prophets, as a much better Spokesman - **He 1:1-3**
 - 2) Better than the angels, by virtue of His Deity and humanity - **He 1:4-2:18**
 - 3) Better than Moses, for He is the Son who provides a heavenly rest - **He 3:1-4:13**
 - 4) Better than Aaron, as His priesthood is a superior one - **He 4:16-8:6**
 - b. That **the New Covenant is superior**, for it is:
 - 1) Based upon better promises - **He 8:7-13**
 - 2) Based upon a better sanctuary - **He 9:1-28**
 - 3) Based upon a better sacrifice - **He 10:1-18**

The purpose of the author has been to encourage his Hebrew brethren to remain true to Jesus Christ. Though one may not be a Hebrew by race, the same arguments should encourage all Christians to remain true to Jesus and abide by the conditions of the New Covenant of which He is the Mediator...

A Gracious Exhortation

Hebrews 10:19-25

INTRODUCTION

1. To this point in **The Epistle To The Hebrews**, doctrinal arguments have been presented to encourage faithfulness and steadfastness...
 - a. Demonstrating the superiority of the Son - **He 1:1-8:6**
 - b. Illustrating the superiority of the New Covenant - **He 8:7-10:18**
2. With **He 10:19**, the author begins making application based upon these premises...
 - a. Which he does through a series of exhortations and warnings
 - b. Such composing the remaining part of this epistle
3. In **vs. 19-25**, we find a threefold exhortation...
 - a. To draw near to God
 - b. To hold fast our faith
 - c. To stimulate one another in love and good works
 -- All based upon what Christ has done and will do for us!

[I have entitled this lesson “**A Gracious Exhortation**”, for certainly each aspect of the exhortation is based upon God’s wonderful grace bestowed upon us through Christ, and it reflects the tone of the author as he makes his heartfelt appeal. Beginning with...]

I. LET US DRAW NEAR IN FAITH (19-22)

A. WE ARE EXHORTED TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD...

1. To “enter the Holiest” - **He 10:19**
 - a. That heavenly place where Christ has entered! - **He 9:11-12**
 - b. Into the presence of God Himself! - **He 9:24**
2. To so enter:
 - a. “having boldness” (with great confidence) - **He 10:19**
 - b. “with a true heart” (with all sincerity) - **He 10:22**
 - c. “in full assurance of faith” (without doubt) - **He 10:22**
 -- Though not expressed explicitly, this is a call to draw near to God in prayer! - cf. **He 4:16**

B. THE BASIS FOR THIS EXHORTATION...

1. We are able to “enter” God’s presence because:
 - a. Jesus has consecrated “a new and living way, through the veil” - **He 10:19-20**
 - 1) There is now a new way to approach God in heaven, through One who lives!
 - 2) It is made possible by “the blood of Jesus...His flesh” (His death on the cross)
 - b. Jesus now serves as “a High Priest over the house of God” - **He 10:21**
 - 1) Who is able to come to our aid - **He 2:17-18**
 - 2) Who sympathizes with our weakness - **He 4:14-16**
 - 3) Who ever lives to intercede in our behalf - **He 7:24-25**
2. But we are also able to “enter” God’s presence because:
 - a. We have had “our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”

- 1) This is an allusion to the Old Testament practice of taking blood from the altar and consecrating the priests by sprinkling them with it - **Exo 29:21**
- 2) It is the blood of Christ that is truly efficacious in purging our conscience of sin - **He 9:14**
- b. We have had “our bodies washed with pure water”
 - 1) Another allusion to the manner in which priests were consecrated - **Exo 29:4**
 - 2) The author likely has reference to baptism...
 - a) For baptism is referred to as a “washing”- cf. **Ac 22:16; Ep 5:26; Ti 3:5**
 - b) Though the stress is on the inner cleansing, not the outer - cf. **1 Pe 3:21**

[With Christ as our **High Priest**, and our own consecration as **priests** through the blood of Jesus, we should not hesitate to draw near to God in prayer and worship, looking forward to that day when we literally enter “through the veil” into God’s wonderful presence! For similar reasons we should also heed the next part of “**A Gracious Exhortation**”...]

II. LET US HOLD FAST OUR HOPE (23)

A. WE ARE EXHORTED TO HOLD FAST THE CONFESSION OF OUR HOPE...

1. In Christ we have a much “better hope” - **He 6:19; 7:19**
2. But there is the danger of apostasy - **He 3:12-13; 4:11**
3. For which reason we must “hold fast” the hope which we confess- **He 3:6,14; 4:14**
- Indeed, we need to “hold fast...without wavering” - **He 10:23**

B. A GOOD REASON TO HEED THIS EXHORTATION...

1. The faithfulness of God: “for He who promised is faithful”- **He 10:23**
2. God will not fail us (**He 13:5**); therefore we need to emulate the faith of Sarah, who “judged Him faithful who had promised” - **He 11:11**

[We can depend upon God to keep His promise. But will we remain faithful to Him? To help ensure that we will, we need to heed the final part of “**A Gracious Exhortation**”...]

III. LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER (24-25)

A. IN ORDER TO STIR UP LOVE AND GOOD WORKS...

1. As we “draw near” to God and “hold fast” our hope, we are not to do so alone
2. We are to be mindful of each other and how we are doing (“consider one another”)
3. With a view to incite or spur on (“stir up”) both “love and good works”
- This is reminiscent of the exhortation in **He 3:12-14**

B. ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH FREQUENT ASSEMBLING...

1. An important purpose of our assembling is to “stir up love and good works”
 - a. Yes, we do come to worship and praise God
 - b. But we also come to edify and exhort one another! - **He 10:25a**
2. Therefore we must not become guilty of “forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”
 - a. The word “forsake” means “**to abandon, desert**”
 - b. I.e., to stop assembling with the saints altogether
 - c. Some evidently had done so (“as is the manner of some”)
3. Exhorting one another through assembling is even more imperative “as you see the Day approaching”

- a. Some commentators believe the “Day” referred to the **destruction of Jerusalem** which occurred in A.D. 70
 - 1) Which was impending at the time this epistle was written (ca. 63-65 A.D.)
 - 2) Certainly such an event would call for encouragement through frequent assembling
 - b. Others suggest that the “Day” refers to the **Judgment Day** at the Second Coming
 - 1) It certainly fits the context of **He 9:27-29; 10:27,37**
 - 2) And while one might not know the “day and hour” of His coming, we were given some general signs of His coming - cf. **2 Th 2:1-8**
- The main point is to appreciate the value and necessity of our assemblies, and that forsaking them is indicative of apostasy!

CONCLUSION

1. With “**A Gracious Exhortation**” before us, we are encouraged to...
 - a. Draw near to God in full assurance of faith
 - b. Hold fast the confession of our hope
 - c. Consider one another to stir up to love and good works
2. As motivation to heed this “exhortation”, we are reminded of...
 - a. The “new and living way” now open to God, made possible by Jesus’ death
 - b. The High Priest who now serves for us over the house of God
 - c. How we have been “consecrated” through having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water
 - d. How He who has promised is faithful
 - e. How we have each other to encourage us along
 - f. The approaching Day, in particular the Day of Judgment

If we truly appreciate the blessings we now have in Christ, we will do all that we can to draw closer to God, hold fast that hope which we confess, and utilize the opportunities we have to encourage one another in love and good works!

A Warning Against Willful Sin

Hebrews 10:26-39

INTRODUCTION

1. Immediately following a gracious exhortation to draw near to God and hold fast the confession of our hope, we find an ominous warning...
 - a. It is a warning against “willful sin” - **He 10:26-39**
 - b. It speaks of reaching a terrible state in which:
 - 1) “there longer remains a sacrifice for sins”
 - 2) There is “a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation”

2. Is this a warning for Christians? Some would say no...
 - a. They believe in the doctrine “**once saved, always saved**”
 - b. Who hold that true Christians:
 - 1) Cannot so sin to point of being eternally lost
 - 2) If they begin to sin to the point where they might be lost, God will intervene and take their life to prevent it from happening

3. Does the Bible teach “**once saved, always saved**”?
 - a. It teaches **the security of the believer** (i.e., those who remain faithful are secure)
 - b. But it also teaches that a **believer** can become an **unbeliever**, at which point a person has every reason to fear for his or her salvation! - cf. **He 3:12-14**

4. The possibility of apostasy is taught in the Bible, especially in **The Epistle To Hebrews**...
 - a. We have already seen several warnings that imply this possibility:
 - 1) A warning against **drifting** - **He 2:1-4**
 - 2) A warning against **departing** - **He 3:12-14**
 - 3) A warning against **disobedience** - **He 4:11**
 - 4) A warning against **dullness**, leading to apostasy - **He 5:11-6:6**
 - b. But perhaps now, with “**A Warning Against Willful Sin**”, we learn the real danger of losing our salvation if we **despise** what we have received! - **He 10:26-39**

[To see if that is really what the Bible teaches, let’s begin by considering...]

I. WHAT IT MEANS TO “SIN WILLFULLY” (26)

A. COMPARE OTHER TRANSLATIONS...

1. “If we deliberately keep on sinning...” (NIV)
2. “For if we willfully persist in sin...” (NRSV)
3. “For if we go on sinning willfully...” (NASB)

B. THE SENSE OF THE GREEK IS ONE OF REPEATED ACTION...

1. Implying not an “**act**” of sin, but a “**state**” of sin
 - a. All Christians have moments of weakness, or ignorantly sin - **1 Jn 1:8-10**
 - b. It is not “inadvertent” sin, but “deliberate” sin that is under consideration
2. A “state” in which one...

- a. Knows the truth - cf. **He 10:26b**
- b. Yet chooses to deliberately and continuously persist in sin!

C. CAN A TRUE CHRISTIAN EVER REACH THIS POINT? YES...

- 1. Note the pronoun “we” (the author includes himself in the warning) - **He 10:26a**
- 2. He later describes one who was sanctified by “the blood of the covenant” - **He 10:29**
- This warning is directed to those who have been sanctified by the blood of Jesus!

[When one persists in sin with “a high hand” (i.e., presumptuously, cf. **Num 15:30-31**), they are in grave danger. This is especially true when one is a Christian! What sort of danger? Consider...]

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF “WILLFUL SIN” (26-27)

A. THERE NO LONGER REMAINS A SACRIFICE FOR SIN...

- 1. What sacrifice is under consideration here? Christ’s sacrifice!
- 2. What sacrifice no longer remains? Christ’s sacrifice!
- The blood of Christ is no longer available for one who persists in “willful sin”!

B. THAT WHICH DOES REMAIN...

- 1. “a certain fearful expectation of judgment” - **He 10:27a**
 - a. One can expect a judgment that is **certain!** - cf. **He 9:27; Ac 17:30-31**
 - b. One can expect a judgment that is **fearful**
 - 1) For we must answer to Christ Himself - cf. **2 Co 5:10-11**
 - 2) And we will be in the hands of the living God! - **He 10:30-31**
- 2. A “fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries” - **He 10:27b**
 - a. A judgment involving **fire** (figurative, but torment just the same) - cf. **Re 21:8**
 - b. A judgment involving **indignation** (the wrath of God) - cf. **Ro 2:5-11**
 - c. Such a judgment will **devour** (not annihilate, but destroy) - **Mt 10:28**

[Such are the consequences of “willful sin”, and the warning is directed to Christians! Is God just to bring such a punishment upon His children who have been redeemed by the blood of His Son? Evidently so...]

III. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR PUNISHING “WILLFUL SIN” (28-31)

A. WHAT WAS REQUIRED UNDER THE OLD COVENANT...

- 1. Death without mercy! - **He 10:28**
- 2. Such was the punishment for a particular kind of sin:
 - a. Sin that was **deliberate**
 - 1) In which one “rejected Moses’ law” (NKJV)
 - 2) In which one “despised Moses’ law” (KJV)
 - b. Sin that was **open**
 - 1) It had to be seen by two or more
 - 2) For death was not rendered unless there were “two or three witnesses”
 - Again, it is sin with “a high hand” that is under discussion
- 3. While there was mercy for sins of weakness or ignorance, there was none for open and deliberate sin under the Old Covenant!

B. WHAT IS REQUIRED UNDER THE NEW COVENANT...

1. One is worthy of “much worse punishment”! - **He 10:29**
 - a. What could be worse than physical death?
 - b. Only “fiery indignation”! (i.e., hell)
2. Why? Because a Christian who “sins willfully” has...
 - a. “trampled the Son of God underfoot”
 - 1) The word “trampled” comes from **katapateo** {kat-ap-at-eh’-o}
 - 2) It “denotes contempt of the most flagrant kind” (**Moffat**)
 - Such a person treats Jesus who died for him like dirt!
 - b. “counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing”
 - 1) The “blood of the covenant” clearly refers to Jesus’ blood - **He 9:14-22; 13:20**
 - 2) It is by this blood one is “sanctified” (i.e., made a Christian)
 - Such a person consider Jesus’ blood a “common thing”!
 - c. “insulted the Spirit of grace”
 - 1) Perhaps a reference to the Holy Spirit
 - a) Through Whom the message of salvation was given - **Jn 16:13-14**
 - b) Through Whom our sanctification takes place - **1 Co 6:11; Ti 3:5-7**
 - 2) Or perhaps referring to the spirit (disposition) of God’s unmerited favor
 - Whichever, a person who openly and deliberately sins “insults” God’s grace!
3. This passage clearly teaches two things:
 - a. That a Christian can so sin as to reach this point of open rebellion against Jesus!
 - b. That the punishment reserved for such is “worse than death”!

C. THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH GOD’S NATURE...

1. Isn’t God a God of love? Of course! - cf. **1 Jn 4:8**
2. But He is also a God of justice, One who judges His people - **He 10:30**
 - a. To who much is given, much is required - **Lk 12:47-48**
 - b. Those who despise His love, set themselves up to be recipients of His wrath - **Ro 2:4-6**
3. Therefore it truly is “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” - **He 10:31**; cf. **He 12:28,29**

[What can we do to ensure that we do not become guilty of “willful sin”? In the remaining verses of chapter ten, I believe we find the answer...]

IV. THE SOLUTION TO AVOIDING “WILLFUL SIN” (32-39)

A. REMEMBER YOUR EARLY CONFIDENCE...

1. The writer reminds his Hebrew readers of their “former days”...
 - a. Those days after they were “illuminated” (enlightened) - **He 10:32**
 - 1) I.e., shortly after their conversion
 - 2) In the days of Justin (ca. 167 A.D.), this term was a synonym for baptism
 - b. Those days in which they were “made a spectacle” - **He 10:32-34**
 - 1) By their own sufferings
 - 2) And by sharing in the sufferings of others, including those of the author
 - a) In whom they had compassion in his chains
 - b) In which they “joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods”
 - Knowing that they had “a better and enduring possession” in heaven!
2. It is such confidence they must be careful not to “cast away” - **He 10:35**
 - a. To “cast away” is the opposite of “hold fast”
 - b. Only in “holding fast” our confidence is there “great reward” - cf. **He 3:6,14**

- Likewise, we need to rekindle the fire of that newfound faith we had when we first responded to the gospel! - cf. **Re 2:4-5**

B. ENDURE TO THE END...

1. Endurance is needed to do God's will, if we wish to receive the promise - **He 10:36**
 - a. For the Lord is coming - **He 10:37**
 - b. And the just lives by faith - **He 10:38**
 - If we draw back (become unfaithful), the Lord will not be pleased!
2. The author speaks of his own confidence - **He 10:39**
 - a. He is not of those "who draw back to perdition" (who cast away their faith)
 - b. But of those "who believe to saving of the soul" (who remain faithful to the end)
 - We too need to "believe to the saving of the soul", or to put it in the words of Jesus, "be faithful unto death" - cf. **Re 2:10**

CONCLUSION

1. We can look forward with great anticipation to the "saving of the soul", if we...
 - a. Remember (and rekindle) that confidence early in our conversion
 - b. Endure to the end with the faith that saves
2. But with "**A Warning Against Willful Sin**", we must never forget that one can...
 - a. Fall from grace!
 - b. Fall into the hands of the living God!
 - Which is a terrifying thing!
3. How much better, though, to be "upheld" by the hand of God, as the Psalmist wrote:

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand." - Psa 37:23,24

Such is the case of those who remain strong in their faith and trust in the Lord. Are we believing to the saving of the soul...?

Faith That Pleases God

Hebrews 11:1-7

INTRODUCTION

1. A key concern in this epistle is that Christians remain strong in **faith**...
 - a. There is the danger of developing “a heart of unbelief” - **He 3:12**
 - b. It was the lack of faith that destroyed Israel in the wilderness - **He 3:16-19**
2. In **chapter ten**, we saw...
 - a. An exhortation to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” - **He 10:22**
 - b. An admonition to have that faith which endures to the end - **He 10:35-39**; cf. **6:11-12**
3. But one might ask...
 - a. What is this “faith” which leads “to the saving of the soul”?
 - b. How does this faith manifest itself in the lives of those who possess it?
4. In **chapter eleven**, we find the answer to such questions...
 - a. With a definition of faith - cf. **He 11:1**
 - b. With a mention of how necessary faith is to please God - cf. **He 11:6**
 - c. With examples of Old Testament saints who demonstrating saving faith - **He 11:3-40**

[In this lesson, we shall focus our attention on the first seven verses as we examine the “**Faith That Pleases God**”. In **verses 1-3**, we see...]

I. FAITH EXPLAINED (1-3)

A. FAITH IS CONFIDENCE AND CONVICTION...

1. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for...” (NKJV)
 - a. The Greek word translated “substance” is **hupostasis** {hoop-os'-tas-is}
 - b. Literally, it means “to stand under”, i.e., to be a foundation
 - c. As translated in **He 3:14**, it means “**confidence**”; i.e., firm trust, assurance
 - d. Other translations illustrate that the main idea is “confidence”...
 - 1) “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for...” (NIV)
 - 2) “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for...” (NRSV, NASB)
2. “...the evidence of things not seen.” (NKJV)
 - a. The Greek word translated “evidence” is **elegchos** {el'-eng-khos}
 - b. It means “**conviction**”
 - c. How other versions translate this phrase...
 - 1) “certain of what we do not see.” (NIV)
 - 2) “the conviction of things not seen.” (NRSV, NASB)

B. PERTAINING TO THINGS HOPED FOR AND NOT SEEN...

1. Faith is confidence about things hoped for, such as...
 - a. The coming of our Lord - **Ti 2:13**
 - b. The resurrection of the dead - **Ac 24:15**
 - It was this kind of confidence possessed by the OT saints that pleased God - **He 11:2**

2. Faith is conviction about things we have not seen, such as...
 - a. The existence of God: “whom no man has seen or can see,” - **1 Ti 6:16**
 - b. How the world began: “the worlds were framed by the word of God” - **He 11:3**
 - Yet faith is that strong conviction that such matters are true

[As expressed in **verse 2**, the “elders obtained a good testimony” because of their faith. The rest of the chapter is filled with illustrations of the faith possessed by these “elders”. The first three mentioned were “antediluvians” (living before the flood), and in them we see...]

II. FAITH EXEMPLIFIED (4-5, 7)

A. THE TESTIMONY OF ABEL (“FAITH WORSHIPPING”)...

1. By faith he “offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” - **He 11:4**
 - a. The reference is to **Gen 4:3-5**
 - 1) Cain’s offering was “of the fruit of the ground”
 - 2) Abel’s offering was “of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat.”
 - 3) It is said the Lord “respected” Abel’s offering, but not Cain’s
 - b. Why did God respect Abel’s offering, but not Cain’s?
 - 1) It may have been that God had specified an animal sacrifice
 - 2) It may be Cain offered “leftovers”, while Abel offered his best (the firstborn)
 - 3) Cain’s attitude may have been wrong; he certainly showed himself prone to display envy and hatred, capable of murder!
 - 4) Perhaps most likely, Abel offered his with “faith” while Cain did not
2. Through faith Abel “obtained witness that he was righteous” - **He 11:4**
 - a. God certainly testified of his righteousness in showing respect to his offering
 - b. Jesus also bore witness to the righteousness of Abel - **Mt 23:35**
 - c. The apostle John also - **1 Jn 3:12**
3. Through his faith, “he being dead still speaks” - **He 11:4**
 - a. His example of faith was written for our learning - cf. **Ro 15:4**
 - b. His example of faith continues to warn us in regards to worshipping God

B. THE TESTIMONY OF ENOCH (“FAITH WALKING”)...

1. By his faith, Enoch “was translated so that he did not see death” - **He 11:5**
 - a. The historical reference alluded to is **Gen 5:24**
 - b. Like Elijah, he did not experience death - cf. **2 Kin 2:1-11**
2. His faith was such that “he pleased God” - **He 11:5**
 - a. What God found pleasing is that he “walked with God” - **Gen 5:21,24**
 - b. His example of faith illustrates the value of walking with God throughout life

C. THE TESTIMONY OF NOAH (“FAITH WORKING”)...

1. By faith Noah “moved with godly fear” - **He 11:7**
 - a. The scriptural background is **Gen 6:1-22**
 - b. God warned him about “things not seen” (cf. **He 11:1**); i.e., the coming flood
 - c. His confidence (faith) in what God said would happen prompted him to act with reverence toward God
2. By faith Noah “prepared an ark for the saving of his household” - **He 11:7**
 - a. His faith moved him to build the ark
 - b. Through such faith working, Noah...
 - 1) “condemned the world”

- a) His own example of faithfulness stood in stark contrast to others
- b) His obedience magnified the lack of obedience in others
 - Just as Nineveh will condemn those who did not listen to Jesus - **Mt 12:41**
- 2) “became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith”
 - a) He received that standing of being right in God’s eyes
 - b) It was his faith that so pleased God!

[From the examples of these “antediluvian” saints we learn that the faith is a strong conviction that **worships** God properly, **walks** with Him in life, and **works** as He directs. That such faith is necessary to please God is evident as we go back to **verse six** and notice...]

III. FAITH EMPHASIZED (6)

A. WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD...

- 1. We have seen Abel, Enoch, and Noah “obtained a good testimony” by their faith
- 2. Of Enoch in particular it is said “he pleased God” - **He 11:5**
- 3. Whether we are worshipping, walking, or working, faith must be the motivating factor behind it all
 - **Without faith, then, there is nothing we can do that will please God!**

B. THE FAITH WHICH PLEASES GOD...

- 1. Includes conviction “that believes that God is”
 - a. We must believe there is a God, and He is the God of the Bible
 - b. Though we do not see Him, we have conviction in “things not seen” - **He 11:1b**
- 2. Includes confidence “that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”
 - a. We must believe that God acts on the part of those seek after Him - cf. **1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 16:9**
 - b. It is regarding such “things hoped for”, that we must have confidence - **He 11:1a**
 - **Such was the faith seen in the lives of Abel, Enoch, and Noah; one might ask, how do we develop such faith today...?**

C. HOW SUCH FAITH IS DEVELOPED...

- 1. It is not the result of “credulity”
 - a. A common misconception is that faith is “blind”
 - b. That there is no logic or reason to faith, one simply “believes”
- 2. But faith as described in the Bible is the result of “evidence”!
 - a. Faith in God is the result of evidence provided via creation - **Ro 1:20; Psa 19:1**
 - b. Faith in Jesus is the result of evidence provided via revelation - **Jn 20:30-31**
 - Certainly the “antediluvian” saints had such evidence, including God speaking to them directly!
- 3. Today, faith comes “by hearing the word of God” - **Ro 10:17**
 - a. The word of God presents evidence to believe in God and Jesus
 - b. Such as fulfilled prophecy, eyewitness testimony, etc.
 - c. Through God’s word, we can develop the kind of faith (conviction) which pleases God! - cf. **Ro 15:4**

CONCLUSION

- 1. The faith which leads “to the saving of the soul” is one that includes...

- a. A strong conviction that God is
 - b. A strong confidence that He will reward those who diligently seek Him
2. It is the same kind of faith that we see in...
- a. Abel, in how he worshipped God
 - b. Enoch, in how he walked with God
 - c. Noah, in how he worked for God
3. Do you have that same kind of faith today?
- a. If you do not, let the power of God's word create such faith in you...
 - 1) It will help produce faith in the existence of God!
 - 2) It will help produce faith in Jesus as His Son who died for you!
 - b. If you do, then let it affect the manner in which you...
 - 1) Worship God
 - 2) Walk with God
 - 3) Work for God-- As revealed through His Son Jesus Christ

With the right kind of faith, we can have the assurance that...

- ◆ God is pleased
- ◆ We are heirs "of the righteousness which is according to faith"
- ◆ We too might one day "obtain a good testimony"!

Faith That Embraces The Promises

Hebrews 11:8-22

INTRODUCTION

1. In the first **seven verses** of the **eleventh chapter**, we saw...
 - a. Faith **explained**...
 - 1) As confidence of things hoped for
 - 2) As conviction of things not seen
 - b. Faith **exemplified**...
 - 1) In Abel (faith worshipping)
 - 2) In Enoch (faith walking)
 - 3) In Noah (faith working)
 - c. Faith **emphasized**...
 - 1) Without which it is impossible to please God
 - 2) We must believe He exists, and rewards those who diligently seek Him
2. Another aspect of our faith pertains to **“the promises”** in which we hope...
 - a. We are warned not to fall short of what has been promised - **He 4:1**
 - b. Faith (along with patience) is necessary to inherit the promises - **He 6:11-12**
3. The faith which pleases God, then, is one that **embraces** God’s promises...
 - a. In **verses 8-22**, we learn of the faith of those who “embraced the promises”
 - b. Because of their faith, “God is not ashamed to be called their God”

[Do we have the sort of faith that makes God unashamed to be called our God? To answer this question, let’s use the text of our study to review...]

I. THE FAITH OF THE PATRIARCHS (8-12,17-22)

A. THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM...

1. By faith he “obeyed” - **He 11:8**
 - a. When God called him to leave his country, he obeyed the voice of the Lord
 - 1) Even though at first he did not know where he was going
 - 2) This is a good example of conviction in “things not seen”!
 - b. Here we learn that faith and obedience are not contradictory terms
 - 1) Indeed, Jesus is the “author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” - **He 5:9**
 - 2) Is our faith an “obedient faith” like Abraham’s? - cf. **Lk 6:46**
2. By faith he “sojourned” - **He 11:9-10**
 - a. His faith required him to live “as in a foreign country”
 - 1) Even though it was the “land of promise”, he and his descendants could not have it for four hundred years - cf. **Gen 13:14-17; 15:13-21**
 - 2) He therefore patiently waited for the city “whose builder and maker is God”
 - a) This suggests that the promises he embraced were more than just those pertaining to the land of Canaan
 - b) Later, we will confirm that he had a heavenly hope as well!
 - b. Our faith requires us to live “as in a foreign country”

- 1) For we too are “sojourners and pilgrims” - **1 Pe 2:11**
- 2) Is our faith a “sojourning faith” like Abraham’s? - cf. **He 13:14**
3. By faith he “offered up Isaac” - **He 11:17-19**
 - a. His faith required him to be willing to offer that which was closest to him
 - 1) His son, Isaac - **Gen 22:1-19**
 - a) Through whom the promises he embraced were to be fulfilled
 - b) He assumed that God would raise Isaac from the dead, if need be, in order to keep His promises
 - 2) Thus he illustrated that confidence “in things hoped for”!
 - b. Our faith often requires forsaking that which is closest to us
 - 1) Our loved ones, even our own life! - cf. **Lk 14:26-33**
 - 2) Is our faith an “offering faith” like Abraham’s? - cf. **Ro 12:1-2**

B. THE FAITH OF SARAH...

1. By faith she received strength to conceive a child - **He 11:11-12**
 - a. Though beyond the normal age of childbearing - **Gen 18:1-3; 21:1-7**
 - b. Though she laughed when she first heard of God’s promise, she later “judged Him faithful who had promised”
 - c. Through her faith, the promises of a great nation were fulfilled!
2. Our faith requires looking to God for strength, and trusting He will provide
 - a. We must look to God to “find grace to help in time of need” - **He 4:16**
 - b. Is our faith a “receiving faith” like Sarah’s? - cf. **Ph 4:13**

C. THE FAITH OF ISAAC...

1. He blessed Jacob and Esau regarding things to come - **He 11:20**; cf. **Gen 27:1-40**
2. This illustrates how Isaac by faith “embraced” the promises

D. THE FAITH OF JACOB...

1. Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph when he was dying - **He 11:21**; cf. **Gen 48:14-20**
2. His blessing involved the promises of God, showing how he embraced them also

E. THE FAITH OF JOSEPH...

1. When he was dying, Joseph:
 - a. Made mention of the departure of Israel out of Egypt
 - b. Gave instructions concerning his bones - **He 11:22**; cf. **Gen 50:24-26**
2. In so doing, he demonstrated that he had “embraced the promises”!

[Such was the faith of the patriarchs. I purposely skipped **verses 13-16**, for what is said there not only applies to Abraham and Sarah, but to Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. As we now turn to those verses, we learn in particular...]

II. HOW THEIR FAITH PLEASED GOD (13-16)

A. THEY EMBRACED THE PROMISES... - He 11:13-16a

1. They did not receive the promises during their lifetime
 - a. Yet with faith they could see them afar off
 - b. They freely confessed to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth
 - 1) This implies that they sought a homeland
 - 2) But what they desired was a better one, indeed a heavenly country

2. Therefore, they died “in faith” (i.e., holding fast to the promises)

B. THEREFORE GOD IS NOT ASHAMED OF THEM... - He 11:16b

1. He is not ashamed to be called their God
 - a. He is well pleased with them
 - b. It was their faith embracing the promises that pleased Him
2. He has prepared a city for them
 - a. What they waited for, He has prepared - cf. **He 11:10**
 - b. That which He has prepared is what we look for, too - cf. **He 13:14**
 - 1) I.e., the new heavens and new earth - cf. **2 Pe 3:13**
 - 2) In which will be the “New Jerusalem,” that “great city...descending out of heaven” - cf. **Re 21:1-3,10ff**
 - 3) Indeed, even now in a sense we have “come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...” - **He 12:22-24**

CONCLUSION

1. What kind of faith pleases God? Certainly a...
 - a. **Worshipping faith** like that of Abel
 - b. **Walking faith** like that of Enoch
 - c. **Working faith** like that of Noah
 ...but also a **Waiting faith** seen in the patriarchs (Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph)!
2. The faith that pleases God is one that “**embraces the promises**” made by God...
 - a. Patiently waiting for their ultimate fulfillment, even if it doesn’t happen in one’s lifetime
 - b. But with conviction and confidence of “things hoped for” and “things of unseen”...
 - 1) We will “obey” His calling
 - 2) We will “sojourn” here on earth
 - 3) We will “offer” up whatever He asks of us
 - 4) We will “receive strength” to do whatever He bids us
 - 5) And we will “make mention” of His promises from generation to generation!
3. This is the kind of faith...
 - a. In those “who believe to the saving of the soul” - **He 10:39**
 - b. In those of whom “God is not ashamed to be called their God” - **He 11:16**

May the Lord grant us grace and mercy to develop this kind of saving faith!

Faith That Overcomes The World

Hebrews 11:23-40

INTRODUCTION

1. What kind of faith leads “to the saving of the soul” (**He 10:39**)?
 - a. It is **“Faith That Pleases God” - He 11:1-7**
 - 1) That has confidence and conviction in things hoped for, in things unseen
 - 2) That believes God is, and that He rewards those who seek Him
 - 3) That worships like **Abel**, walks like **Enoch**, and works like **Noah**
 - b. It is **“Faith That Embraces The Promises” - He 11:8-22**
 - 1) Obeying God when He calls, even it means sojourning as a pilgrim, or sacrificing that which is most precious to you (**Abraham**)
 - 2) Receiving strength from God to do His will (**Sarah**)
 - 3) Declaring the promises of God from generation to generation (**Isaac, Jacob, Joseph**)
2. Saving faith is also **“Faith That Overcomes The World”**, concerning which...
 - a. The apostle John wrote in **1 Jn 5:4-5**
 - b. We have many examples in **He 11:23-40**

[In the last half of chapter eleven, then, we are reminded how in the Old Testament those with faith were able to “overcome the world”. How such faith overcame the world may vary. To see how, let’s begin by noticing...]

I. FAITH IN THE GENERATION OF THE EXODUS (23-31)

A. THE FAITH OF MOSES’ PARENTS... (23)

1. They hid Moses for three months - cf. **Exo 2:1-3; Ac 7:20**
 - a. They saw he was a “beautiful” (“good”, “proper”, “not ordinary”) child
 - b. They were not afraid of Pharaoh’s command - cf. **Exo 1:22**
2. It was their faith that gave them courage to withstand the king’s edict

-- **With such a small beginning, by faith they “overcame the world” of Egypt**

B. THE FAITH OF MOSES... (24-28)

1. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter - **He 11:24-26**
 - a. He chose to suffer affliction with God’s people rather than enjoy sin’s temporary pleasures
 - b. He esteemed the reproaches of Christ more valuable than the treasures of Egypt

-- Through faith “he looked to the reward” (he had confidence in “things hoped for”, i.e., that heavenly reward)
2. He forsook Egypt - **He 11:27**
 - a. It was not the wrath of the king that he feared
 - b. It was the invisible God he feared - cf. **Mt 10:28**

-- Through faith “he endured” (he had conviction in “things unseen”, i.e., God)
3. He kept the Passover and sprinkling of blood - **He 11:28**
 - a. He believed in God’s warning regarding the death of the firstborn- **Exo 12:1-30**
 - b. He had Israel sprinkle the blood of the lamb on the lintels and door posts

-- **By faith, Moses “overcame the world” of Egyptian bondage!**

C. THE FAITH OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL... (29-30)

1. They passed through the Red Sea - **He 11:29**
 - a. They walked through it on dry land - **Exo 14:21-22**
 - b. The Egyptians who followed them perished in the sea - **Exo 14:23-28**
2. They destroyed the city of Jericho - **He 11:30**
 - a. They walked around the city for seven days - **Josh 6:1-20**
 - b. Thirteen times they encircled the city, showing their faith in God rather than in their own military might

-- **By faith, Israel “overcame the world” of Egypt and Palestine!**

D. THE FAITH OF RAHAB THE HARLOT... (31)

1. She had received the two spies from Israel with peace - **Josh 2:1-24**
2. Therefore she did not perish with the unbelievers - cf. **Josh 6:22-25**

-- **By faith, Rahab “overcame the world” of sin and unbelief!**

[Through faith, Israel receive the promised land as God had told Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (**Josh 21:43-45**). In the process, by faith they overcame what obstacles the world placed before them. Even a Gentile sinner like Rahab became a recipient of the promise by her faith. But the need for faith did not stop there. As we continue, we see examples of...]

II. FAITH IN THE LAND OF PROMISE (32-40)

A. A SAMPLE LIST OF HEROES OF FAITH... (32)

1. There is not enough time for the author to describe the faith of others in detail
 2. Such as:
 - a. Judges like Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah
 - b. A king like David
 - c. A prophet like Samuel, and the rest of the prophets
- But what the author does provide is that which follows...

B. A SUMMARY LIST OF WHAT FAITH ACCOMPLISHED... (33-37)

1. Through faith, people such as these...
 - a. “Subdued kingdoms”
 - 1) Joshua, in conquering Palestine - **Josh 12:7-24**
 - 2) David, in conquering neighboring nations - **2 Sam 5:4-25; 8:1-14**
 - b. “Worked righteousness” (administered justice)
 - 1) Samuel, as judge - **1 Sam 12:4**
 - 2) David, as king - **2 Sam 8:15**
 - 3) Solomon, as king - **1 Kin 3:28**
 - c. “Obtained promises” -The nation of Israel, receiving the promised land - **Josh 21:43-45; 23:14**
 - d. “Stopped the mouths of lions”
 - 1) Samson - **Judg 14:6**
 - 2) David, protecting sheep - **1 Sam 17:34-37**
 - 3) Daniel, in the lions’ den - **Dan 6:21-22**
 - e. “Quenched the violence of fire” - Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego, in the fiery furnace - **Dan 3:23-25**

- f. “Escaped the edge of the sword”
 - 1) David, fleeing King Saul - **1 Sam 23:19-29**
 - 2) Elijah, fleeing Jezebel - **1 Kin 19:8-10**
 - 3) Elisha, whom the King of Israel wanted murdered - **2 Kin 6:31-32**
- h. “Out of weakness were made strong”
 - 1) Samson, after his hair was cut - **Judg 16:29-30**
 - 2) Hezekiah, who was given fifteen years of life - **Isa 38:1-8**
- i. “Became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of aliens”
 - 1) David, in defeating Goliath - **1 Sam 17:50**
 - 2) Jehoshaphat, in defeating Edom - **2 Chr 20:1-30**
 - 3) Hezekiah, whose faith led to the slaughter of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers- **2 Kin 19:1-36**
- 2. Also through faith...
 - a. “Women received their dead raised to life again”
 - 1) The widow of Zarephath, via Elijah - **1 Kin 17:17-24**
 - 2) The Shunamite woman, via Elisha - **2 Kin 4:8-37**
 - b. “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, to obtain a better resurrection”
 - 1) Eleazar, in the Maccabean period (between the Testaments) - **2 Macc 6:30**
 - 2) Also, seven brothers and their mother tortured by Antiochus Epiphanes - **2 Macc 7:9-36**
 - Such events would have been well known by the Hebrew readers
 - c. “Others had trials of mockings, scourgings, chains and imprisonment”
 - 1) Micaiah, the prophet - **1 Kin 22:24-28**
 - 2) Jeremiah, the prophet - **Jer 20:1-3; 37:11-21; 38:1-13**
 - d. Some were:
 - 1) “Stoned” - Zechariah, son of Jehoida the priest - **2 Chr 24:20-22**
 - 2) “Sawn in two” - the prophet Isaiah, according to tradition
 - 3) “Tempted” - Daniel, as a youth - **Dan 1:8-21**
 - 4) “Slain with the sword” - Uriah the prophet - **Jer 26:20-23**
 - e. Some wandered about:
 - 1) “In sheepskins and goatskins” - Elijah - **2 Kin 1:8**
 - 2) “Being destitute, afflicted, tormented” - Elijah - **2 Kin 17:2-6; 18:9-10**

C. WHAT THESE PEOPLE RECEIVED BY THEIR FAITH... (38-40)

- 1. Certainly not the praise of the world! - **He 11:38**
 - a. Many had to wander in deserts and mountains, live in dens and caves (Elijah)
 - b. But in truth, the world is not worthy of them!
- 2. They did obtain a good testimony... - **He 11:39a**
 - a. As stated regarding the elders in **He 11:2**
 - b. As stated regarding Enoch - **He 11:5**
- 3. Yet they did not obtain “the promise” during their lifetime - **He 11:39b-40**
 - a. They did receive some of the promises, such as the promised land - cf. **He 11:33**
 - b. But they did not receive “the” promise
 - 1) They did not live to see the coming of the promised Deliverer (Christ)
 - 2) Nor did they experience the “perfection” which Christ now offers
 - a) The Law could not make them “perfect” - cf. **He 9:9-10; 10:1-4**
 - b) But Christ can! - cf. **He 9:11-14; 10:11-14**
- 4. What they did not receive during their lifetime, they did with the coming of Christ!
 - a. For Christ died to redeem them as well as us! - **He 9:15**

- b. They are now made “perfect” just as we are - **He 11:40**; cf. **10:14**; **12:22-24**
 - 1) Note the phrase “the spirits of just men made perfect” in **He 12:23**
 - 2) Those who in the past “should not be made perfect apart from us” are in Christ “made perfect”!

CONCLUSION

1. Through faith, they truly overcame the world...
 - a. Sometimes their victory was miraculous; often it was not
 - c. Their ultimate victory was that they “died in faith” - **He 11:13-16**
 - And now, they enjoy the fruit of faith: bliss in the presence of the Lamb! - cf. **Re 7:9-17**
2. Through faith, we can also overcome the world...
 - a. Faith in Jesus as the Son of God will give us the victory! - **1 Jn 5:4-5**
 - 1) Victory over the world’s temptations
 - 2) Victory over the world’s persecutions
 - b. The victories we win may not be as impressive as those listed in this chapter, but if we are “faithful until death”, the reward will be the same! - cf. **Re 2:10**

May this great chapter with its heroes of faith, serve to motivate us to grow in the faith which...

- ◆ **Pleases God!**
- ◆ **Embraces The Promises!**
- ◆ **Overcomes The World!**

We may not win the praise the world, but we will receive the praise of God, for such is the faith which leads “to the saving of the soul”!

Running The Race Of Faith

Hebrews 12:1-3

INTRODUCTION

1. Throughout our study, we have noted the emphasis on being steadfast in our faith...
 - a. The warning against developing unbelief - **He 3:12-15**
 - b. The need for a faith that endures - **He 6:11-12; 10:36-39**
 - c. In **chapter eleven**, we were reminded of many who had this kind of faith

2. This emphasis continues, with our own life of faith described as a race...
 - a. In which we are “surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” - **He 12:1**
 - 1) The “cloud of witnesses” refers to those mentioned in the previous chapter
 - 2) I.e., those Old Testament saints like Abraham, Moses, etc.
 - b. In what way are they “witnesses”?
 - 1) While the word can mean “**spectator**”, it is not likely so used here
 - a) That would suggest they are now “looking down” on us from heaven
 - b) But there is no indication the dead know what is going on earth - cf. **Ecc 9:5**
 - c) While they may have “memory” of what happened (cf. **Lk 16:28**), their attention is focused upon their present condition - cf. **Re 7:9-17**
 - 2) The word can also refer to those who “**bear witness**”
 - a) By their lives, they have borne witness to the value of faith - cf. **He 11:1-40**
 - b) By their exemplary lives, they encourage us in “**Running The Race Of Faith**”!

[As we seek to follow in the footsteps of others who have successfully “run the race of faith”, there are three things necessary as presented in our text. The first one is...]

I. WE NEED TO LAY SOME THINGS ASIDE (1)

A. NOTE THE COMPARISON TO RUNNING...

1. The runner who seeks to win:
 - a. Loses as much weight as possible without hurting performance
 - b. Wears clothing that is light and allows freedom of movement
2. Excess weight, chafing clothing, etc., can be the difference between victory or defeat!

B. WE TOO MUST LAY SOME THINGS ASIDE...

1. “every weight”
 - a. I.e., things which would slow us down in our spiritual progress
 - 1) Such as “carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life” - **Lk 21:34-36**
 - 2) Also, “anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language...” - cf. **Co 3:8; 1 Pe 2:1-**

2;

Ja 1:21

- b. Such things make “running the race of faith” difficult, if not impossible!
2. “the sin which so easily ensnares us”
 - a. Any and all sins should be laid aside
 - b. From the context, I understand “the” sin to be the “sin of unbelief”
 - 1) The epistle was written to encourage faithfulness to Christ and His covenant

- 2) We've seen warnings against unbelief - **He 3:12-13**
- 3) When one no longer believes, the race is lost! - cf. **He 10:26-39**

[With a full assurance of faith, and with every hindrance laid aside, we can **“Run The Race Of Faith”** as God intended. But as we comprehend the true nature of the “course” set before us, we can appreciate the need for the element of endurance...]

II. WE NEED TO HAVE ENDURANCE (1)

A. THE RACE OF FAITH IS A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT...

1. It does not require one quick burst of energy, in which the race is soon over
2. This “race” requires a sustained effort over a long period of time

B. ENDURANCE IS A NECESSARY QUALITY...

1. Jesus often taught His disciples concerning the need for endurance (i.e., patience)
 - a. In the parable of The Sower - **Lk 8:12**
 - a. In preparing the disciples for the Limited Commission - **Mt 10:22**
 - b. In His discourse on the Mount of Olives - **Mt 24:13**
2. The writer to the Hebrews had stressed this virtue earlier
 - a. In which he appealed to the example of Abraham - **He 6:11-15**
 - b. In which he quoted from the passage in Habakkuk - **He 10:36-39**
3. We can develop such patience with the help of the Scriptures - **Ro 15:4**
 - a. As we read of the faithfulness of God Who fulfills His promises
 - b. As we read of the ultimate end of those persevered in faithfulness

[Paul wrote that eternal life would be given “to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality” (**Ro 2:7**). Therefore, endurance is required for successfully running this “race of faith”! Equally important is where we have our mind focused as we run the race...]

III. WE NEED TO FOCUS ON JESUS (2-3)

A. WE MUST “LOOK UNTO JESUS”...

1. Our focus must be upon the Lord as we “run the race”
 - a. We might “glance” at others (cf. **He 11**)
 - b. But we are to “gaze” upon the Lord Savior (Believers’ Study Bible)
 - c. As suggested by this “Formula For Spiritual Success”:
 - 1) If you want to be distressed -- look within
 - 2) If you want to be defeated -- look back
 - 3) If you want to be distracted -- look around
 - 4) If you want to be dismayed -- look ahead
 - 5) If you want to be delivered -- look up! - cf. **Co 3:1-2**
2. For Jesus is “the author and finisher of our faith” - cf. **He 2:10**
 - a. He is the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega - **Re 1:8,11**
 - b. He has blazed the trail for us...
 - 1) By having run the race Himself
 - a) As a forerunner He has entered the heavenly sanctuary - **He 6:19-20**
 - b) He has opened a “new and living way” for us - **He 10:20**
 - 2) And now He helps us to finish it ourselves - cf. **He 7:25**

3. He succeeded in running the race by looking at “the joy set before Him”
 - a. The “joy” that inspired Him was likely that privilege of being seated at God’s right hand - cf. **Psa 16:9-11; Ac 2:25-31**
 - b. With the anticipation of such “joy”, Jesus...
 - 1) “endured the cross” (the physical pain)
 - 2) “despised the shame” (the emotional and spiritual agony)
- **Just as Jesus looked at the joy set before Him, so we must look to Jesus!**

B. WE MUST “CONSIDER HIM”...

1. We must consider how He endured, not only on the cross, but even before! - **He 11:3**
 - a. How He “endured such hostility from sinners against himself”
 - b. This hostility is something He experienced frequently - cf. **Lk 4:28-29; 11:15-16, 53-54; 16:14**
2. Meditating upon our Lord will prevent us from becoming “weary and discouraged in your souls”
 - a. We cannot run with endurance if we become weary and discouraged
 - b. But as we consider the Lord and His example (in itself a form of “waiting upon the Lord”), we shall not grow weary nor faint - cf. **Isa 40:31**

CONCLUSION

1. **“Running The Race Of Faith”** requires both negative and positive elements...
 - a. Negatively, we must lay aside things which would hinder us
 - b. Positively, we must keep our focus on Jesus who has made our salvation possible
2. In both cases, the Word of God (the Bible) is crucial...
 - a. For in it we learn what sort of things we must lay aside
 - b. For in it we learn about our Lord, what He endured, how His example should inspire us
3. Have you lost your endurance? Have you grown weary in **“Running The Race Of Faith”**?
 - a. Let the Bible help you examine what “baggage” should be left aside!
 - b. Let the Bible help you learn about Jesus whose own example can encourage you to continue on with perseverance!

Remember what we read earlier...

“For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise...” (Hebrews 10:36)

The Chastening Of The Lord

Hebrews 12:4-11

INTRODUCTION

1. In encouraging his readers to “run the race that is set before us”, the author of **The Epistle To The Hebrews** mentions the need for endurance...
 - a. Suggesting that the “race” will not always be an easy one - **He 12:1**
 - b. Indeed, our “forerunner” Himself had to endure hostility from sinners and eventually the cross - **He 12:2-3**

2. They were reminded that they had yet to endure as much as the Lord...
 - a. They had “not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” - **He 12:4**
 - b. Though they had earlier endured “a great struggle with sufferings” - **He 10:32-34**
 - Because persecutions were likely to intensify, they needed “endurance” - **He 10:35-36**

3. To help them in this regard, he reminds them of “**The Chastening Of The Lord**”...
 - a. By quoting a well-known passage in the book of Proverbs - **He 12:5-6**
 - b. By expounding upon the purpose of the Lord’s chastening - **He 12:7-11**
 - Understanding how the Lord might use hardships, even persecutions, to “chasten” them for their good, would serve to encourage them to endure

4. What does the word “chasten” mean?
 - a. The Greek word is **paideia** {pahee-di’-ah}
 - b. In the KJV, it is variously translated as “chastening, nurture, instruction, chastisement”
 - c. **Thayer** defines the word in this way:
 - 1) “the whole training and education of children (which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals, and employs for this purpose now commands and admonitions, now reproof and punishment)”
 - 2) “whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, esp. by correcting mistakes and curbing passions”
 - a) “instruction which aims at increasing virtue”
 - b) “acc. to biblical usage chastisement, chastening, (of the evils with which God visits men for their amendment)”

[In this lesson, I wish to focus on “**The Chastening Of The Lord**”, using this text in Hebrews as the basis for our study. To begin, let me stress...]

I. THE “FACT” OF THE LORD’S CHASTENING

A. SOME DENY THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD...

1. Believing that a loving God would never bring suffering to His children
2. Believing that any suffering is solely due to the influence of Satan
 - a. As some have so interpreted the Book of Job
 - b. Yet because Satan himself could not do anything unless God allowed it, Job’s adversity came ultimately from the Lord - cf. **Job 42:11**

B. THE BIBLE CLEARLY TEACHES THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD...

1. In the Old Testament:
 - a. “You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.” - **Deu 8:5**
 - b. “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.” - **Pro 3:11-12**
2. In the New Testament:
 - a. “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” - **1 Co 11:31-32**
 - b. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” - **Re 3:19**
 - c. And of course, our entire text under consideration - **He 12:4-11**
 - 1) Especially **verses 7-8**
 - 2) Which state that all of God’s children must experience chastening!

[The “fact” of the Lord’s chastening cannot be questioned by anyone who accepts the Bible. At this point, let’s consider “how” God might chasten His children...]

II. THE “HOW” OF THE LORD’S CHASTENING

A. CHASTENING IN THE FORM OF “INSTRUCTIVE DISCIPLINE”...

1. There is both “instructive” and “corrective” chastening (discipline)
2. “Instructive” chastening is designed to prevent the need for “corrective” chastening
3. Instructive discipline is seen most often in the form of “teaching”
 - a. In the form of warnings, admonitions
 - b. Thus Jesus could “clean” (purify) His disciples through His teaching - **Jn 15:2-3**
 - c. Through His words Jesus sought to chasten the Laodiceans - **Re 3:15-19**
 - One way, then, that God chastens us is through His Word!
4. But instructive discipline can also be in the form of “tribulation”
 - a. In the case of Job...
 - 1) His suffering was not because he needed correction - cf. **Job 1:1,8**
 - 2) Yet God allowed it, knowing it would make him a better man
 - b. In the case of the early Christians...
 - 1) Persecution was looked upon as a form of chastisement - cf. **He 12:4-6**
 - 2) Their persecution for the cause of Christ was not because they were wicked
 - 3) But God allowed it, knowing that it would make them stronger - cf. **Ro 5:3-4; Ja 1:2-4; 1 Pe 5:8-10**
 - Another way, then, that God chastens us is through persecution for Christ’s sake!

B. CHASTENING IN THE FORM OF “CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE”...

1. When “instructive” discipline is not heeded, “corrective” discipline follows
2. Note the example of Judah and Israel:
 - a. Failure to heed God’s word would bring judgment upon Judah - **Amo 2:4-5**
 - b. God made repeated efforts to bring Israel back to Him - **Amo 4:6-12**
 - c. Such efforts included famine, drought, pestilence, plague, war, earthquakes
 - 1) These were not miraculous or supernatural events
 - 2) But acts of nature brought on by the providential working of God!
 - d. Some understood the value of such affliction - cf. **Psa 119:67,71**

3. What about “corrective” discipline today?
 - a. If God would use Providence to encourage Israel to repent before it was too late...
 - 1) Would not the same God use Providence to chastise His erring children today?
 - 2) Does He love us any less?
 - b. I know of no scriptural reason why God would not use Providence to bring about events in our lives which serve to:
 - 1) Wake us up
 - 2) Cause us to reflect on our lives and our relationship to God
 - 3) Encourage us to repent and turn back to Him if we are straying
 - c. There are several passages which suggest that God might bring some form of “corrective” discipline if we do not heed His “instructive” discipline...
 - 1) Some of the Corinthians had already begun to experience God’s chastisement, which they could have avoided if they had “judged” themselves (by heeding His word) - **1 Co 11:30-32**
 - 2) Jesus spoke of some way in which He would punish some at Thyatira that would be evident to all - cf. **Re 2:20-23**
- I therefore have no problem with the idea that God may choose to employ corrective discipline in the form of national and even personal affliction

[My understanding of a loving God chastening His children is tempered by my understanding of “why” He does this...]

III. THE “WHY” OF THE LORD’S CHASTENING

A. CERTAINLY NOT BECAUSE HE DELIGHTS IN DOING SO...

1. God found it necessary to bring judgment upon Israel - **Lam 1:3-5**
2. It was not something He wanted to do - **Lam 3:31-33**

B. WHEN NECESSARY, IT IS FOR OUR GOOD...

1. To correct us - **He 12:9**
 - a. Our human fathers do so, and we respect them for it
 - b. Should we not expect the same from the “Father of spirits”, and submit to it?
2. That we may be partakers of His Holiness - **He 12:10**
 - a. Our human fathers do it for what seems best to them
 - b. Our heavenly Father does it for a reason that far excels any earthly purpose!
3. That we may yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness - **He 12:11**
 - a. In the short term, the experience is unpleasant
 - b. But in the long term, we benefit by such “training”!

CONCLUSION

1. Whether “corrective” or “instructive” chastisement, it is always for our good...!
 - a. It may be grievous - **He 12:11a**
 - b. But it will produce “the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” - **He 12:11b**
2. “Corrective” chastisement can mostly be avoided...
 - a. By correcting ourselves - cf. **1 Co 11:31-32**
 - b. Which we can do by taking heed to God’s Word - cf. **Jn 15:2-3**

3. But even when we heed the “instructive” chastisement through the Word of God, we may still experience some form of tribulation...
 - a. Such as persecution for the cause of Christ
 - b. Brought on by Satan, working in and through the world - **1 Pe 5:8-9**
 - c. Not because we are wicked, but because we are righteous! (like Job)
 - Yet God can use even that to provide a form of “instructive” discipline, in which the good are made even better!

May the prayer expressed by Peter help us to endure should we experience such tribulation...

“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

(1 Pe 5:10-11)

The Pursuit Of Peace And Holiness

Hebrews 12:12-17

INTRODUCTION

1. In **“Running The Race Of Faith” (He 12:1-3)**, we saw the need to...
 - a. Lay aside things that would hinder us, especially the sin of unbelief
 - b. Have endurance, even as Jesus endured hostility and the cross
 - c. Focus our gaze on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, whose own example should encourage us not to become weary and discouraged
2. After reminding his readers of the value of the Lord’s chastening, the author of Hebrews returns to the metaphor of “running”...
 - a. With a call to “run with style” - **He 12:12-13**
 - b. With instructions to pursue peace and holiness - **He 12:14**
 - c. With a word of caution, appealing to the example of Esau - **He 12:15-17**
3. One way to describe the Christian “race”, then, is **“The Pursuit Of Peace And Holiness”**...
 - a. How well are you doing in your pursuit?
 - b. Do you know what it is you are to be running after?
 - c. Are you aware of the possible pitfalls that can hinder you?

[To encourage excellence in regards to our pursuit, let’s take a closer look at the passage, beginning with...]

I. MAKING PREPARATION FOR OUR PURSUIT (12-13)

A. A CALL TO “RUN WITH STYLE”...

1. We are to “strengthen”...
 - a. “the hands which hang down”
 - b. “the feeble knees”
 -- A common figure of speech (**Job 4:3-4; Isa 35:3**), calling us to shake off all weariness, to be firm and strong
2. We are to “make straight paths” for our feet, so that...
 - a. “what is lame may not be dislocated”
 - b. “but rather be healed”
 -- Another common expression (**Isa 40:3-4**), encouraging us to remove all that would hinder our progress (especially if we are weak)

B. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS CALL...

1. First, we must respond to this call to action
 - a. This is something “we” are being called to do
 - b. We can’t expect God to do it all!
 - c. While God will certainly help us, we must make the effort - cf. **Ph 2:12-13**
2. This call to action is not limited to strengthening just yourself
 - a. Certainly there is the personal application

- b. But as concerned Christians, we should seek to:
 - 1) “strengthen the hands...and feeble knees” of others
 - 2) “make straight paths” for others - cf. **1 Th 5:14**
- c. Just as those who are “spiritual” should be concerned for the weakness of others - **Ga 6:1**

[In a way, this call is similar to the one the Lord gave to Joshua (**Josh 1:6-9**), which Joshua later gave to Israel (**Josh 23:6,11**). Shall we not heed the call to “be strong and very courageous”, i.e., to “run with style”? Now, for some thoughts about...]

II. THE GOAL OF OUR PURSUIT (14)

A. PEACE WITH ALL MEN...

1. We should not be surprised to read that we are to “pursue peace...”
 - a. Jesus is “The Prince of Peace” - **Isa 9:6**
 - b. He died to make peace possible: with God, and with man - **Ro 5:1; Ep 2:13-17**
 - c. He taught that peacemakers will be called the children of God - **Mt 5:9**
 - d. A key element of the kingdom of God is peace - **Ro 14:17-18**
 - Therefore, we are to pursue peace with all men - **Ro 14:19; 12:18**
2. How does one “pursue peace with all men”?
 - a. By seeking peace with God first - **Pro 16:7**
 - 1) We must first make our relationship with God what it ought to be
 - 2) Through Jesus, we can be at peace with God - **Ro 5:1**
 - b. Letting the peace of God rule in our hearts - **Co 3:15**
 - 1) The Lord is able to “give you peace always in every way” - **2 Th 3:16**
 - 2) How the Lord imparts peace:
 - a) Through His Word - **Psa 119:165**
 - b) Through prayer - **Ph 4:6-7**
 - If one is not at peace with himself, it is unlikely he can be at peace with others
 - c. By doing things that make for peace - **Ro 14:19**
 - 1) Such as being considerate of their conscience - cf. **Ro 14:13-21**
 - 2) Seeking unity with compassion, love, tenderness, courtesy, and willing to respond to evil or reviling with a blessing - cf. **1 Pe 3:8-11**

B. HOLINESS, WITHOUT WHICH NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD...

1. As God is holy, so His children must be holy - **1 Pe 1:14-16; 1 Th 4:7**
2. How can one “pursue holiness...”?
 - a. True holiness (sanctification) comes through:
 - 1) Faith in Jesus - **Ac 26:18; cf. He 10:10,14**
 - 2) The work of the Holy Spirit - **1 Co 6:11; 2 Th 2:13; cf. Ti 3:5**
 - 3) The Word of God - **Jn 17:17,19**
 - b. We cooperate with God in pursuing holiness by:
 - 1) Offering ourselves as “slaves of righteousness” - **Ro 6:19-22**
 - 2) Perfecting holiness in the fear of God - **2 Co 7:1**
 - a) Which includes cleansing ourselves from all “filthiness of the flesh and spirit” - **2 Co 7:1**
 - b) Also putting on the “new man...in true righteousness and holiness” - **Ep 4:24; cf. Co 3:9-14**

[In many respects, this is what the Christian life is all about: pursuing peace and holiness! How successful we are will depend on how diligently we avoid...]

III. PITFALLS THAT HINDER OUR PURSUIT (15-17)

A. FALLING SHORT OF THE GRACE OF GOD...

1. Without God's grace, none can be saved, pursue peace, or have the holiness necessary to see God!
2. But do Christians need to concern themselves with falling from grace? Consider...
 - a. The warning not to neglect our great salvation - **He 2:1-3**
 - b. The warning not to be hardened by sin - **He 3:12-14**
 - c. The warning to be diligent - **He 4:1,11**; cf. **2 Pe 1:10**
 - d. The warning against willful sin - **He 10:26-31**
 - e. The warning not receive God's grace in vain - **2 Co 6:1**
 - f. The warning not to fall from grace - **Ga 5:4**
 - g. The warning to "look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for..." - **2 Jn 8**

-- Indeed, if there were no possibility for one to "fall short of the grace of God", then there would be no need for us to be "looking diligently"
3. For the Christian, however, God's grace can be just a prayer away! - cf. **He 4:16**

B. LETTING A ROOT OF BITTERNESS TO SPRING UP...

1. Bitterness can be a stumbling block in our pursuit of peace
 - a. It destroys the peace within the person who harbors it (modern medicine has shown that emotions like bitterness and anger can cause problems such as headaches, backaches, allergic disorders, ulcers, high blood pressure, and heart attacks, etc.)
 - b. It can destroy the peace in the congregation where it becomes manifest
2. It also becomes a stumbling block in our pursuit of holiness, for the problems it creates cause many to become "defiled" (unholy)

-- If we are going to "make straight paths for your feet", then we need to clip any root of bitterness "in the bud"!

C. BECOMING A FORNICATOR OR PROFANE PERSON...

1. Fornication is certainly a pitfall to avoid...
 - a. Fornication is a generic term for any sort of sexual immorality (including premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, etc.)
 - b. It is contrary to God's will regarding our sanctification - **1 Th 4:3-8**
 - 1) Later, we will read in Hebrews where God will judge fornicators - **He 13:4**
 - 2) It will keep one out of the kingdom of heaven - **1 Co 6:9-10; Ga 5:19-21**

-- Therefore, let us heed Paul's admonition: "Flee fornication!" - **1 Co 6:18**
2. We must also not become a "profane person"...
 - a. "A worldly person who profanes holy privileges by placing on them a worldly estimate." (**B. W. Johnson**)
 - b. One does not have to overtly wicked; they can displease God by simply devaluing that which is important to Him!
 - c. Such was the case with **Esau**... - cf. **Gen 25:29-34**
 - 1) There is no indication that he was a fornicator
 - 2) But he was a profane person because he did not properly estimate the value of his birthright

- 3) Though he later wanted the blessings of the birthright, it was too late; despite his tears, it was too late to change his father's mind ("he found no place for repentance")
- d. We can become "profane" by devaluing our spiritual blessings...
 - 1) In Christ, we have a spiritual birthright (redemption, fellowship with God, the hope of eternal life)
 - 2) But we can let careers, hobbies, friends, even families, come between us and the things of God
- Are we willing to "sell our birthright" for "one morsel of food"?

CONCLUSION

1. As we run the race of faith, peace with others and holiness before God should be our goals
2. To run the race with "style", we need to...
 - a. Get in the proper form (lift the hands, strengthen the knees), helping one another to do so
 - b. Watch out for the pitfalls that can hinder us in our pursuit, such as...
 - 1) Not utilizing God's grace to help you in your race
 - 2) Allowing bitterness to become a stumbling block
 - 3) Becoming a fornicator or profane person

As we run this "race", the words of the apostle Paul are very appropriate...

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." (1 Co 9:24-27)

Are you running in such a way as to obtain the imperishable crown?

Heeding The Voice From The Mountain

Hebrews 12:18-29

INTRODUCTION

1. In encouraging Christians to run the race that is set before them, the Hebrews writer has instructed them to...
 - a. Lay aside things that would hinder them - **He 12:1**
 - b. Run with endurance - **He 12:1**
 - c. Keep their focus on Jesus - **He 12:2-3**
 - d. Remember the value of the Lord's chastening - **He 12:4-11**
 - e. Run with "style" - **He 12:12-13**
 - f. Pursue peace and holiness - **He 12:14**
 - g. Look diligently lest one fall short of God's grace, stumble because of bitterness, or become a fornicator or profane person - **He 12:15-17**
2. Further encouragement is now provided in the last half of chapter twelve...
 - a. With a reminder of the "mountain" to which they have come
 - b. With a warning to heed "Him who speaks"
3. As we "run the race of faith" today, we need this same reminder and warning...
 - a. Do we appreciate the significance of the "mountain" to which we have come?
 - b. Are we "**Heeding The Voice From The Mountain**"?
 - How we answer such questions can reveal how well we are running the race of faith!

[With our text before us, let's take a look at...]

I. THE MOUNTAIN TO WHICH WE HAVE COME (18-24)

A. IT IS NOT MOUNT SINAI... (18-21)

1. The mountain described first is Mount Sinai, to which Israel came following their deliverance from Egyptian bondage - cf. **Exo 19:12-19**
 - a. It seems to have been much like a volcano - **Exo 20:18; Deu 4:11**
 - b. It frightened the people - **Deu 5:22-26; 18:16**
 - c. Even Moses was afraid - **Deu 9:19**
2. We have not come to such a mountain, that forces us to stand "afar off"

B. IT IS MOUNT ZION... (22-24)

1. The "mountain" to which we have come is one that encourages us to "draw near"
2. We have come to "Mount Zion"
 - a. Zion was originally the stronghold of the Jebusites in Jerusalem that became the "city of David" - cf. **2 Sam 5:6-10; 1 Chr 11:4-9**
 - b. The term "Zion" came to be used to refer to:
 - 1) The city of Jerusalem - **Psa 48:2; 84:7; Am 6:1**
 - 2) The heavenly Jerusalem where God dwells - **Isa 28:16; Ps 2:6 Re 14:1**
3. In coming to "Mount Zion", we have also come to...
 - a. "The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem"

- 1) The heavenly city longed for by Abraham and the others - cf. **He 11:10,13-16**
- 2) The heavenly city longed for by Christians today - cf. **He 13:14**
- 3) The heavenly city we will one day experience - **Re 3:12; 21:1-7; 22:14**
- "This heavenly city is where our Lord dwells and is our eternal home. In coming to Christ we have come into the covenant which gives us the right to a place in that city." (**B. W. Johnson**, People's New Testament)
- b. "An innumerable company of angels"
 - 1) The heavenly servants of God, of which there is a great number - cf. **Re 5:11**
 - 2) Who also minister to those who will inherit salvation - **He 1:14**
- c. "The general assembly and church of the firstborn registered in heaven"
 - 1) The church in the universal sense, made up of all who are saved - **Ac 2:47**
 - 2) They are the "firstborn ones", who enjoy special privileges of their birthright
 - 3) Their names are in "the Book of Life" - cf. **Ph 4:3; Re 3:5**
- d. "God the Judge of all"
 - 1) The Judge of all the earth - cf. **Gen 18:25**
 - 2) He is the One to whom we must give heed, as we shall note shortly
- e. "The spirits of just men made perfect"
 - 1) Those who died in faith, such as the Old Testament saints - **He 11:39-40**
 - 2) **Note:** They had not been made perfect apart from us, but now they are made perfect; they were redeemed by the blood of Christ! - cf. **He 9:15**
- f. "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant"
 - 1) As we have seen, He is the Mediator of "a better covenant" - **He 8:6**
 - 2) As we have seen, this "new covenant" is by means of His death - **He 9:15**
- g. "The blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel"
 - 1) Abel still speaks through the example of his faith - **He 11:3**
 - 2) But in comparison, the blood of Jesus speaks volumes! - **He 10:11-14**

[In coming to Christ, being redeemed by the blood of the New Covenant, we have drawn near to this wonderful "mountain"! It is a place that offers many wonderful blessings, both now and with promise for the future. But the author's purpose is not just to review the blessings we have in coming to this "mountain"; he is warning us: "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks." (**He 12:25a**). To appreciate the need for his warning, let's now consider...]

II. WHY WE SHOULD HEED THE VOICE FROM THE MOUNTAIN (25-29)

A. THOSE AT MOUNT SINAI DID NOT ESCAPE... (25)

1. We have seen from our study that...
 - a. "Every transgression and disobedience received a just reward" - **He 2:2**
 - b. Those who sinned, their "corpses fell in the wilderness" - **He 3:17**
 - c. Those who rejected Moses' law died "without mercy" - **He 10:28**
2. Thus the argument is again one of comparison, from the lesser to the greater...
 - a. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation..." - **He 2:1-4**
 - b. "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy..." - **He 10:26-31**
3. As Jesus said in **Lk 12:48**...
 - a. "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required..."
 - b. "...and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."
- **In Christ we enjoy so much more; dare we refuse to heed Him who speaks, not from Mount Sinai, but from Mount Zion (i.e., heaven itself)!**

B. THE ONE WHO SPEAKS WILL SHAKE HEAVEN AND EARTH... (26-27)

1. When God spoke at Mount Sinai, the earth trembled - **Exo 19:18**
 2. The day is coming when both heaven and earth will be shaken, even removed!
 - a. As promised in **Hag 2:6**
 - b. Which refers to “the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made” - cf. **2 Pe 3:10-12**
- **Dare we refuse to heed Him who speaks with such impact?**

C. WE ARE RECEIVING A KINGDOM WHICH CANNOT BE SHAKEN... (28)

1. While everything made will one day perish, we “are receiving” a kingdom which cannot be shaken!
 - a. Note the present tense (“are receiving”)
 - b. Thus we are in the process of receiving this “kingdom”
 2. It is a kingdom both present and future...
 - a. In one sense, we are now “in” the kingdom - cf. **Co 1:13; Re 1:9**
 - b. In another sense, we have yet to enter the kingdom - cf. **2 Pe 1:10-11**
 3. It is a kingdom...
 - a. **Inaugurated** when Jesus ascended to sit at God’s right hand on David’s throne - **Ac 2:30-36**
 - b. To be **culminated** when Jesus returns to deliver the kingdom to God - **1 Co 15:23-26**
 4. Thus it is a kingdom...
 - a. “which shall never be destroyed...it shall stand forever” - **Dan 2:44**
 - b. Of which “there will be no end” - **Lk 1:33**
- **Receiving such a kingdom, dare we refuse to heed Him who speaks?**

D. THE ONE WHO SPEAKS IS “A CONSUMING FIRE”... (29)

1. We’ve read of a “fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries” - **He 10:27**
 2. We’ve seen “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” - **He 10:31**
 3. Even Jesus taught us to “fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” - **Mt 10:28**
- **Dare we refuse to heed such an awesome God?**

CONCLUSION

1. God has indeed spoken...
 - a. He has spoken through His Son - cf. **He 1:1-2**
 - b. He has spoken from Mount Zion, that heavenly city, the New Jerusalem...
 - 1) To which we have come through an obedient faith in Jesus - cf. **He 5:9**
 - 2) Where we can enjoy the fellowship of angels, the redeemed in heaven and on earth, and of Jesus and God Himself!
 - 3) Where we can enjoy a New and better covenant, based upon the better sacrifice of Jesus’ blood!
2. But with such wonderful blessings come the responsibility of giving heed...
 - a. Not to neglect our great salvation
 - b. Not to refuse Him who speaks from the heavenly “mountain”

Therefore our goal should be that as expressed by the author himself:

“...let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” (He 12:28b)

With God’s grace to help us (cf. **He 4:14-16**), we can serve Him in a manner well-pleasing to Him. Are you **“Heeding The Voice From The Mountain”**?

Exhortations To Manifest Love

Hebrews 13:1-3

INTRODUCTION

1. When we began our study, we noted that **The Epistle To The Hebrews...**
 - a. Began like an **essay** - cf. **He 1:1-2**
 - b. Progressed like a **sermon** - cf. **He 2:1-4**
 - c. Ended like a **letter**
 - With the final chapter, we see the tone of the epistle taking on the characteristics of a personal correspondence
2. As with many epistles in the New Testament, this letter ends with various exhortations...
 - a. The first of which regarding the objects of their love - **He 13:1-3**
 - b. Here we find the author practicing what he preaches; seeking to stimulate love and good works - cf. **He 10:24**

[As Christians, toward whom should we manifest our love? Certainly toward all men, even our enemies (**Lk 6:32,35**); but in our text our attention is focused upon manifesting love first...]

I. TOWARD BRETHREN (1)

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF BROTHERLY LOVE...

1. It is a mark of true discipleship - **Jn 13:35**
2. It is an indication of true spiritual life - **1 Jn 3:16**

B. THE HEBREWS HAD MANIFESTED BROTHERLY LOVE...

1. Note the text says their love was to “continue”
2. They had demonstrated brotherly love in the past...
 - a. In their ministry to God and His saints - **He 6:10**
 - b. Even in their service to the author - **He 10:32-34**

C. THE NEED FOR BROTHERLY LOVE NEVER DIMINISHES...

1. Just as Paul wrote...
 - a. For the Thessalonians to excel in their love - **1 Th 4:9-10**
 - b. For the Philippians to abound in their love - **Ph 1:9**
2. Just as Peter wrote that our love should abound - **2 Pe 1:7**
- **Even now, the author of Hebrews says “Let brotherly love continue”!**

[No matter how much we may have manifested love towards one another as brethren in the past, it is imperative that such love continues! Equally imperative is the manifestation of love...]

II. TOWARD STRANGERS (2)

A. THIS IS A CALL FOR “HOSPITALITY”. ..

1. The Greek word is **philoxenia** {fil-ox-en-ee'-ah}
 - a. Lit., a love of strangers

- b. It involved receiving a stranger (sojourner) into one's home as an honored guest and to provide the guest with food, shelter, and protection (**Holman Bible Dictionary**)
- 2. In many ancient cultures, hospitality was a solemn duty
 - a. It was regarded as a sacred obligation by the ancient Greeks and Romans, one that was approved by Zeus, the god and protector of strangers
 - b. The Egyptians claimed it as a meritorious deed in life
 - c. For the Bedouins, it was an expression of righteousness (**Holman Bible Dictionary**)
 - d. "Hospitality is one form of worship" (**Jewish Proverb**)
- 3. In the early church, it was an important ministry...
 - a. Christians were often displaced by persecution; public inns were scarce, costly, and sometimes dangerous
 - b. Traveling evangelists were to be supported through hospitality - **3 Jn 5-8**
- 4. Thus hospitality was to be manifested by...
 - a. Those men who would serve as elders (bishops) - **1 Ti 3:2; Ti 1:8**
 - b. Those widows who would be "taken into the number" - **1 Ti 5:9-10**
 - c. All Christians - **Ro 12:13; 1 Pe 4:9**

B A REASON TO PRACTICE HOSPITALITY...

- 1. "For by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels"
 - a. The example of Abraham - **Gen 18:1-8**
 - b. The example of Lot - **Gen 19:1-3**
- 2. The point is not that we should expect angels to literally come our way
 - a. Though some we entertain may serve as His "messengers" ("angel" means "messenger") in a providential sense
 - b. The key idea is that "You never know what hospitality might bring" (**Lightfoot**)
 - 1) One often receives unexpected benefits from his or her guests
 - 2) There is always the "blessedness" of giving - cf. **Ac 20:35**

[The physical need for hospitality today may not be as great as it was in ancient times, but the spiritual need (e.g., the strengthening of spiritual ties) is just as important. Therefore we need to "be hospitable to one another without grumbling" (**1 Pe 4:9**). The manifestation of our love should also extend...]

III. TOWARD PRISONERS AND THE PERSECUTED (3)

A. A CALL TO REMEMBER THEM...

- 1. Christians were often persecuted and imprisoned for their faith
 - a. Prior to his conversion, Paul often led the assault - **Ac 8:3; 26:9-11**
 - b. Later, he himself was a prisoner - e.g., **Ph 1:12-18; Co 4:18**
- 2. The Hebrews had already shown their love toward such prisoners - **He 10:32-34**
- 3. To remember and visit Christians in prison was an act of devotion to Christ Himself - **Mt 25:35-40**
- 4. Their provisions for the prisoners would be a "sweet-smelling sacrifice", well-pleasing to God - cf. **Ph 4:18**
- 5. They could also remember them in their prayers - e.g., **Ac 12:5; Ep 6:18-20**

B. THEIR LOVING REMEMBRANCE WAS TO BE INFLUENCED...

- 1. By their sense of fellowship in their brethren's suffering
 - a. "As if chained with them;"
 - b. The Lord intended such connection between the members of His Body ("if one member

- suffers, all the members suffer with it”) - **1 Co 12:26**
2. By their awareness of their own vulnerability
 - a. “since you yourselves are in the body also”
 - b. They would not be immune to persecution themselves, therefore they should be sensitive to the sufferings of others

CONCLUSION

1. In providing a “new and living way”, it is true that Jesus made possible a close relationship between man and God - cf. **He 10:19-22**
2. But the purity we experience through obeying the truth...
 - a. Is not just that we may fellowship with God
 - b. But so we may also have a fellowship with each other in sincerity and love! - cf. **1 Pe 1:22-23**
3. Thus it naturally follows that as we draw near to God, we should also draw near one another; this we can do when we manifest love...
 - a. Toward brethren - **He 13:1**
 - b. Toward strangers - **He 13:2**
 - c. Toward prisoners and the persecuted - **He 13:3**

May we all be diligent to heed the exhortation to “*Let brotherly love continue*”!

Fornicators And Adulterers God Will Judge

Hebrews 13:4

INTRODUCTION

1. In today's society, the honor and sanctity of marriage is under constant attack...
 - a. Divorce is acceptable, made easy through "no-fault" laws
 - b. Adultery is considered normal, faithfulness to one's spouse as unrealistic
 - c. Among religious and political leaders, many say that standards against sexual immorality are antiquated
2. Even in the church, sexual immorality is a major problem as evidenced by...
 - a. The high number of divorces among Christians
 - b. The frequent reports sexual failings among preachers, elders, and other Christians
3. This is not to say there are not those who still hold marriage in high esteem...
 - a. Many people still believe sex is for marriage, and marriage is for life
 - b. I've been blessed to have:
 - 1) The example of my wife's grandparents, married 77 years
 - 2) The example of my grandmother, widowed with six children when only 30 years old, remaining single for over fifty years
 - 3) Parents and in-laws who both were married over 50 years each
 - 4) Three brothers, who along with myself are still married to our first wives
4. In truth, our culture today is not that much different from the society of the first century...
 - a. Where divorce and remarriage was rampant (women were known to date events by their husbands; e.g., "Yes, that happened during husband #5.")
 - b. Fornication was acceptable, adultery barely frowned upon
5. But Christianity offers a true contrast of standards regarding morality...
 - a. Through clear and unequivocal teaching - cf. **1 Co 6:9-10; Ga 5:19-21; Ep 5:3-5**
 - b. The same sort of teaching is needed today, which is why we need to carefully heed the text of today's lesson:

"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." (He 13:4)

6. The verb "is" is not in the Greek, leading some to translate the first phrase as:
 - a. "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled;" (NASV)
 - b. "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure" (NIV),

[Why should we honor marriage, and keep the "marriage bed" (a euphemism for marital relations) pure? Because God will judge those who violate it! To see how, let's first define terms used in the last half...]

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

A. "FORNICATORS"...

1. The Greek word is **pornos** {por'-nos}, from which we get “pornography”
2. It is a general word unlawful and immoral sexual relationships (**Barclay**)
3. It includes any kind of sex outside of marriage: premarital, extramarital (adultery), homosexual, etc.

B. “ADULTERERS”...

1. The Greek word is **moichos** {moy-khos'}
2. It means to have unlawful intercourse with another’s wife or husband (**Thayer**)
 - a. This may be while they are still married...
 - b. Or even AFTER they are divorced if not for the right reason - cf. **Mt 5:32; 19:9**
3. So a person can be guilty of adultery either:
 - a. By having relations with another’s spouse
 - b. By marrying someone who either:
 - 1) Did not put their first spouse away for fornication
 - 2) Or was put away by their spouse for ANY reason

C. “GOD”...

1. The Supreme Being, eternal and holy - **Re 4:8**
2. Omniscient and Omnipresent - **Ps 139:1-12**
3. Loving, yet just - cf. **Jn 3:16; He 10:30-31; 12:29**

D. “WILL JUDGE”...

1. The Greek word is **krino** {kree'-no}
2. “the act of condemning and decreeing (or inflicting) penalty on one” (**Thayer**)

[Marriage should be held in honor, because the Bible makes it clear that God will condemn and somehow inflict penalty on those who are fornicators and adulterers who do not repent! But why will God judge fornicators and adulterers?]

II. WHY GOD WILL JUDGE FORNICATORS AND ADULTERERS

A. BECAUSE THEY DESTROY THE LIVES OF OTHERS...

1. They destroy marriages
 - a. Either their own, by their infidelity (trust is often destroyed)
 - b. Or others, by committing adultery with another’s spouse
 - c. Sexual immorality is a major cause of divorce, which God hates - **Mal 2:16**
2. They destroy families
 - a. Where divorce occurs, families are shattered
 - b. The children usually suffer the most, often with severe emotional problems throughout their lives
 - c. Jesus warned about despising the needs of children - **Mt 18:5-7,10-11,14**
3. They destroy friendships
 - a. Read carefully **Pro 6:30-35**
 - b. It is difficult, if not impossible, to restore good friendships after one has violated another’s spouse

B. BECAUSE THEY DESTROY THEIR OWN LIVES...

1. Read carefully **Pro 5:1-14...**
 - a. You lose your honor (your reputation is destroyed)

- b. You lose your wealth (ever hear of alimony?)
- c. You lose your health (via STDs, perhaps even AIDS)
- 2. Adultery and fornication is indeed a sin against your own body - cf. **1 Co 6:18**
 - a. There is emotional damage (wracking guilt)
 - b. There is social damage (ostracized by others)
 - c. There is physical damage (venereal disease)

C. BECAUSE THOSE WHO ARE CHRISTIANS ARE ESPECIALLY GUILTY...

- 1. They have taken members of the body of Christ and made them members of a harlot - **1 Co 6:15-16**
- 2. They have their body, a temple of the Holy Spirit, and given it to a child of the devil - **1 Co 6:19-20**
- 3. As Christians, who have been...
 - a. Made in the image of God
 - b. Redeemed by the blood of Jesus
 - c. Made a temple of the Holy Spirit
 ...they have allowed their lusts to bring them as low as animals!

[When God’s **highest creation**, because of purely selfish reasons, destroys marriages, families, friendship, even their own selves, we can understand why God **will judge** such, and why Paul wrote what he did to the Corinthians:

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Co 6:9-10)

But **how** will God judge fornicators and adulterers...?]

III. HOW GOD WILL JUDGE FORNICATORS AND ADULTERERS

A. HE WILL JUDGE IN THE FUTURE...

- 1. They will not inherit the kingdom of God - **1 Co 6:9-10; Ep 5:5-7**
- 2. They will suffer eternal torment - **Re 21:8**

B. BUT HE ALSO JUDGES IN THE PRESENT...

- 1. They become God’s enemies - cf. **Ja 4:4**
 - a. As such, they are estranged of God’s fellowship, care and love
 - b. True peace and joy cannot be theirs
- 2. They receive in their own bodies what they rightfully deserve - cf. **Ro 1:24-27**
 - a. Those who engage in such immorality do indeed “receive in themselves the penalty of their error” (e.g., syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, aids)
 - b. But such is only a **foretaste** of the torment fornicators and adulterers will receive!

CONCLUSION

- 1. There are many good reasons to honor marriage and keep the “marriage bed” undefiled...
 - a. The bond between a man and a woman whose relationship is built upon trust and love
 - b. The joy, peace, and love that children in a strong family enjoy, and deserve

- c. The value of strong families in shaping our communities in which we live
2. But we have focused on God's judgment on those who destroy this important fabric of our society, and how it gives new meaning to the phrase "be sure your sin will find you out" (**Num 32:23**)...
 - a. It is almost impossible to keep immorality secret
 - 1) Physical infirmities will more than likely bring it to the surface eventually
 - 2) Or loose lips will!
 - b. Even if one succeeds in hiding their immorality in this life, not so in the life to come!
3. To close on a more positive note, let's offer some hope for those who have been guilty of adultery and fornication...
 - a. You may not be able to escape the physical consequences of your actions
 - b. But you can be forgiven, and escape the eternal consequences!

As Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, a city known for its loose morals...

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.”

“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”
(1 Co 6:9-11)

Have you been “washed”, “sanctified”, and “justified” in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God? (cf. **Ac 2:38; 22:16; Ti 3:5**)

A Call To Be Content

Hebrews 13:5-6

INTRODUCTION

1. In this final chapter of **The Epistle To The Hebrews**, we have noticed exhortations...
 - a. To let brotherly love continue - **He 13:1**
 - b. To show love toward strangers - **He 13:2**
 - c. To remember those in prison and others who are mistreated - **He 13:3**
 - d. To hold marriage in honor, abstaining from fornication and adultery - **He 13:4**

2. We now find a warning against covetousness - **He 13:5a**
 - a. The previous verse was a warning against “the lust of the flesh” (immorality)
 - b. Here we have a warning against “the lust of the eyes” (materialism)
 - Both of which are contrary to the love of the Father - cf. **1 Jn 2:15-17**

3. Covetousness, a strong desire for material things, is strongly condemned in the Bible...
 - a. Jesus said it defiles a man, and that we should beware of it - **Mk 7:21-23; Lk 12:15**
 - b. Paul taught that covetousness...
 - 1) Will keep one out of the kingdom of God - **1 Co 6:9-10**
 - 2) Like fornication, should not even be named among us - **Ep 5:3**
 - 3) Is nothing less than idolatry - **Ep 5:5; Co 3:5**

4. The antidote to covetousness is contentment - **He 13:5b-6**
 - a. If we are content, then we won't be covetous
 - b. Contentment is therefore an important virtue for Christians to develop...
 - 1) But what is “contentment”?
 - 2) What is the key to being content?

[In this lesson, “**A Call To Be Content**”, we shall seek to answer these questions, using the text of our lesson (**He 13:5-6**) and other scriptures that deal with the subject of contentment...]

I. THE VIRTUE OF CONTENTMENT

A. CONTENTMENT DEFINED...

1. The English word “content” means “desiring no more than what one has”
2. The Greek word is **arkeo** {ar-keh'-o}, which means “to be satisfied”
- When one is content, they are satisfied with what they have; with no desire for more, covetousness no longer becomes a problem!

B. THE VALUE OF CONTENTMENT...

1. From the pen of uninspired men...
 - a. “He is richest who is content with the least.” (**Socrates**)
 - b. “He is well paid that is well satisfied.” (**William Shakespeare**)
 - c. “He who is content can never be ruined.” (**Chinese Proverb**)
 - d. “He who wants little always have enough.” (**Johann Georg Zimmerman**)
 - e. “If you are not satisfied with a little, you will not be satisfied with much.” (**Unknown**)

- f. “The contented man is never poor, the discontented never rich.” (**George Eliot**)
- 2. Paul wrote that “...godliness with contentment is great gain.” - **1 Ti 6:6**
 - a. Godliness, which is godly living expressed in devotion to God, is of great value only when accompanied with contentment
 - b. For as we have seen, covetousness (a lack of contentment) would render any service to God of no value

C. CONTENTMENT EXEMPLIFIED...

- 1. In **Fanny Crosby** (1820-1925), a blind songwriter who wrote:
 O What a happy soul am I!
 Although I cannot see,
 I am resolved that in this world
 Contented I will be;
 How many blessings I enjoy
 That other people don't!
 To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
 I cannot, and I won't.
- 2. In **Helen Keller** (1880-1968); blind, deaf, and mute, yet she wrote:
 They took away what should have been my eyes,
 (But I remembered Milton's Paradise)
 They took away what should have been my ears,
 (Beethoven came and wiped away my tears)
 They took away what should have been my tongue,
 (But I talked with God when I was young)
 He would not let them take away my soul,
 Possessing that, I still possess the whole.
- 3. In the aged prisoner, **Paul the apostle**...
 - a. Who saw how his imprisonment accomplished much good - **Ph 1:12-14**
 - b. Who had learned contentment - **Ph 4:10-12**

[The virtue of contentment richly blessed the lives of these and countless others. But as Paul indicated, contentment is something “learned”. How then does one develop contentment?]

II. THE KEY TO CONTENTMENT

A. TRUSTING IN GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE...

- 1. This is the reason given in our text for us to be content - **He 13:5-6**
 - a. God has promised never to leave nor forsake us
 - b. With the Lord as our helper, what can man do? - cf. **1 Jn 4:4**
- 2. This is the reason Jesus gave for us not to worry - **Mt 6:25-32**
 - a. We are of greater value to God than the birds or flowers
 - b. He providentially cares for them, will He not do the same for us?
 -- The key to receiving this care is to put God's will first in our lives - **Mt 6:33**
- 3. Contentment comes, then, when we trust God will provide what we need!

B. KNOWING WHAT YOU CAN'T TAKE WITH YOU...

- 1. As Paul discussed contentment, he pointed out certain truths - **1 Ti 6:7**
 - a. We brought nothing into this world
 - b. It is certain we can carry nothing out! (have you ever seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul

trailer?)

2. Why then become anxious or worked up over things...
 - a. That at best are only temporary
 - b. That will wear out, be stolen, or left behind (or burned up at the coming of the Lord - **2 Pe 3:10**)
3. Contentment comes, then, from knowing that material things are only temporary

C. REALIZING WHAT IS TRULY ESSENTIAL FOR LIFE...

1. Paul also revealed what are the only true “essentials” to sustain life - **1 Ti 6:8**
 - a. They are “food and clothing”
 - b. Anything beyond this is a “luxury”, for which we ought to be thankful
 - 1) That includes “shelter”, which many believe is a necessity
 - 2) But millions live without shelter, and such is possible with the proper clothing
2. Since God has promised to provide food and clothing (**Mt 6:25-33**), we can rest knowing that our “essentials” will be provided
3. Contentment comes, then, by realizing what is truly “essential” for life, for then we will realize how richly blessed we really are!

D. UNDERSTANDING THAT MATERIAL THINGS DO NOT SATISFY...

1. Solomon observed this inadequacy of material things - **Ecc 5:10**
 - a. Those who love silver (money) will never be satisfied
 - b. The same is true with those who love abundance (what money can buy)
2. Material things do not meet the true needs of the soul - **Ecc 6:7**; cf. **Isa 55:1-3**
 - a. C. S. Lewis suggested that God placed a longing in man, that man might seek for God - cf. **Ac 17:26-27**
 - b. Sadly, many people try to fulfill that longing with material things
 - c. They never succeed, for only one thing can fulfill it: God Himself!
3. Contentment comes, then, from understanding that material things will never provide lasting satisfaction

E. FINALLY, TRUE CONTENTMENT IS A GIFT FROM GOD...

1. Here is another observation Solomon made in his search for life’s meaning:
 - a. The ability to enjoy the fruits of one’s labor is a gift from God - **Ecc 2:24-26; 3:12-13; 5:18-20**
 - b. On the other hand, many are allowed to “gather” and “collect”, but will not enjoy the fruits of their labor - cf. **Ecc 2:26b; 6:1-2**
2. God has the ability to provide lasting satisfaction - **Psa 107:8-9**
 - a. He promises to give that which truly satisfies (makes one content) - **Isa 55:1-3**
 - b. And in Christ, He enables one to be content - cf. **Ph 4:11-13**
- Contentment comes, then, when God sees fit to bless us with that which truly satisfies: “the sure mercies of David” (i.e., the blessings promised through the coming Messiah)

CONCLUSION

1. The virtue of contentment is a wonderful blessing, one that comes from God Himself...
 - a. Whose Word reveals to us:
 - 1) The temporary nature of material things
 - 2) The inadequacy of material things to satisfy man
 - 3) The things that are truly essential in life

- b. Who has promised to us:
 - 1) To never leave us nor forsake us
 - 2) To provide the true essentials in life
 - 3) To fill our soul with that which truly satisfies
 - 4) To enable us to enjoy the material blessings we do acquire in life

2. But what God has promised is contingent upon what Jesus said...

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” - Mt 6:33

If you desire to be truly content, you must set as your priority the Will of God; have you made His Will the primary focus of your life?

Stability In Our Service To God

Hebrews 13:7-17

INTRODUCTION

1. Throughout his epistle, the author has exhorted his readers to “steadfastness”...
 - a. With a warning not to drift away - **He 2:1**
 - b. With a promise of becoming partakers of Christ - **He 3:14**
 - c. With exhortations to be diligent - **He 4:11; 6:11-12**
 - d. With a reminder of God’s faithfulness - **He 10:23**
 - e. With a promise of great reward - **He 10:35-36**
2. As the epistle draws near to its end, we find some final exhortations that appear to encourage such steadfastness...
 - a. They are sprinkled throughout **He 13:7-17**
 - b. They are given in view of the danger of “various and strange doctrines” - **He 13:9**
3. The need for such exhortations is no less today as it was then...
 - a. There are many various and strange doctrines today
 - b. It is easy for us to forget the simplicity that is in Christ

[If we are not to be carried about with various and strange doctrines, then “**Stability In Our Service To God**” is what we need. What can we glean from our text that will aid us in our steadfastness? First, there are...]

I. THINGS TO REMEMBER (7-14)

A. THOSE WHO FAITH IS WORTHY OF EMULATION... (7)

1. In the original context of the epistle...
 - a. The author here may have in reference those leaders who originally spoke the word of God to them
 - b. That may have included the apostles themselves - cf. **He 2:3**
 - c. “...considering the outcome of their conduct” may imply that they were dead, and that their faith served them well
2. But it would be appropriate to remember the faithfulness of our “leaders” today
 - a. Those elders who have spoken God’s word to us
 - b. Those elders whose faith enabled them to magnify Christ in both life and death
3. Not only remember them, but “whose faith follow”
 - a. We should seek to emulate all those whose faith has set a good example - **Ph 3:17**
 - b. Especially those whose faith sustained them to the end!

B. “JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER...” (8)

1. In what way is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever”?
 - a. Certainly not in every respect, for He was once “in the flesh”, but not today
 - b. The context must determine, and the context pertains to:
 - 1) The word of God which has been spoken - **He 13:7**
 - 2) Various and strange doctrines - **He 13:9**

- c. It is therefore the doctrine of Jesus, which is unchangeable
2. One may therefore rightly ask whenever they hear of some strange or new doctrine: “Did Jesus or His apostles teach this?” - cf. **Ga 1:8-9**

C. WHAT WE HAVE IN CHRIST... (9-14)

1. It is apparent the author has in mind the temptation to return to the Law
 - a. To the dietary restrictions found in the Law
 - b. To the altar and tabernacle of the Old Covenant
2. But what we have in Christ include:
 - a. Hearts that are strengthened by grace, not food - **He 13:9**
 - 1) An allusion to the dietary restrictions of Judaism
 - 2) While they served their purpose, did not provide what we really need - cf. **Co 3:20-23**
 - b. An altar from which those who serve in the physical tabernacle have no right to eat - **He 13:10-13**
 - 1) The “altar” is likely a metonymy for the sacrifice offered on it
 - 2) If so, then our “altar” is the sacrifice of Christ, which is of no benefit to those who hold to the Old Law - cf. **Ga 5:4**
 - 3) As our sacrifice (Christ), had to suffer “outside the gate” to provide our sanctification, so we should be willing to serve Him “outside the camp” (i.e., outside the physical religious community of Israel)
 - c. A “city” which is yet to come - **He 13:14**
 - 1) Like our father Abraham, we wait for the city “whose builder and maker is God” - **He 11:9-10**
 - 2) We are but strangers and pilgrims on the earth, desiring that city which God has prepared - **He 11:13-16**
 - 3) Therefore, it is not physical Jerusalem we long for, but “the holy city, New Jerusalem” - cf. **He 12:22; Re 3:12; 21:1-2,10-11**

[Dare we jeopardize these wonderful blessings in Christ? Then remember the word and faith of those who are worthy of emulation, and that the doctrine of Jesus Christ will not change! As we seek “**Stability In Our Service To God**”, there are also...]

II. THINGS TO DO (15-17)

A. OFFER TRUE SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES TO GOD... (15-16)

1. We may not “serve the tabernacle” of the Old Covenant (v. 10), but we do have “sacrifices” to offer - cf. **1 Pe 2:5**
2. One is the sacrifice of “praise” - **He 13:15**
 - a. That includes singing and prayer, which are the fruit of our lips
 - b. In which we praise God as we give thanks to His name
 - This we are to do “continually” (i.e., with stability in our service to God)
2. Another is the sacrifice of “doing good and sharing” - **He 13:16**
 - a. With such sacrifices God is pleased
 - b. They are like the “sweet-smelling aroma” of incense - cf. **Ph 4:18**

B. OBEY THOSE WHO RULE OVER US... (17)

1. Earlier he wrote of their previous leadership (v.7); now he writes of their present leadership
2. These are most likely their “elders” (also known as “bishops”, “pastors”)

- a. They were given the oversight of the local congregation - **Ac 20:17,28; 1 Pe 5:1-2**
- b. The souls of the congregation were “entrusted” to them - **1 Pe 5:3**
3. They watch over us, as those who must one day give an account - **He 13:17**
4. Therefore we should “obey” and “submit”
 - a. That their work will be one of joy, not grief
 - b. If we grieve them in their work, it will not be profitable for us!
 - Of course, this assumes they are leading the flock in the right direction (some elders do not, and may need rebuke - cf. **Ac 20:28-30; 1 Ti 5:19-20**)

CONCLUSION

1. Do you wish to remain steadfast in your faith, with stability in your service to God?
2. Then remember such things as:
 - a. Those worthy of emulation, and consider the outcome of their conduct
 - b. Jesus Christ, whose doctrine is the same yesterday, today, and forever
 - c. The blessings we have in Christ:
 - 1) Hearts established by grace
 - 2) An altar (the sacrifice of Jesus) to which some have no right
 - 3) A heavenly city whose builder and maker is God
3. And be careful to do such things as:
 - a. Offering the spiritual sacrifices of praise and doing good to others
 - b. Obeying those who have been entrusted to watch for our souls

With such “**Stability In Our Service To God**”, then by God’s grace we too will be “the same yesterday, today, and forever”!

Closing Words Befitting A Grand Epistle

Hebrews 13:18-25

INTRODUCTION

1. We now come to the closing words of what is truly “**a grand epistle**”...
 - a. One that has been described as:
 - 1) Beginning like an essay
 - 2) Progressing like a sermon
 - 3) Ending like a letter
 - b. In which we noted systematic arguments upholding:
 - 1) The superiority of Jesus Christ
 - 2) The superiority of the New Covenant dedicated by His blood
 - c. Where we have been exhorted to:
 - 1) Draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith
 - 2) Hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering
 - 3) Consider one another in order to stir up love and good works
 - 4) Run with endurance the race set before us, looking to Jesus as we do so
 - 5) Pursue peace with all men and holiness
 - 6) Heed the voice of Him who speaks from heaven
 - 7) Serve God with reverence and godly fear
 - 8) Love the brethren, display hospitality to strangers, and remember the prisoners
 - 9) Uphold the sanctity of marriage and avoid covetousness
 - 10) Avoid various and strange doctrines, obeying those who rule over us in the Lord
2. With the last eight verses, we find:
 - a. A request for prayer in behalf of the author - **He 13:18-19**
 - b. A benediction offered in behalf of the readers - **He 13:20-21**
 - c. A final exhortation, comment and farewell - **He 13:22-25**
3. I am suggesting that these verses serve as “**Closing Words Befitting A Grand Epistle**”...
 - a. For they touch upon themes developed earlier in the epistle
 - b. Therefore serving as a close worthy of such an epistle as we have studied

[As we take this opportunity to reflect upon these closing words, we first observe the author’s...]

I. REQUEST FOR PRAYER (18-19)

A. ONE REASON FOR HIS REQUEST...

1. He is confident of “a good conscience”, desiring to live honorably
 - a. The mention of a good conscience brings to mind several verses - **He 9:9,14; 10:22**
 - b. Through the blood of Christ, his conscience has made clean to serve God
2. Certainly their prayers in his behalf would be for a good purpose...
 - a. To bless a man whose has been cleansed by the blood of Christ!
 - b. To bless a man who desires to live honorably!

B. ANOTHER REASON FOR HIS REQUEST...

1. To be restored to them sooner
2. Thus he expresses his intention to come them

[Having requested their prayers, the author reciprocates with a prayer of his own...]

II. BENEDICTION OFFERED IN THEIR BEHALF (20-21)

A. MAY GOD...

1. Described as “the God of peace”
 - a. A description found often in Paul’s letters - **Ro 15:33; 16:20; 1 Th 5:23; Ph 4:9**
 - b. He is the source of peace (note the salutations in most epistles)
2. “who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead”
 - a. This is the only explicit reference to Jesus’ resurrection in the epistle
 - b. Though it is assumed in passages which speak of Christ at the right hand of God - cf. **He 1:3; 4:14; 9:24 10:12; 12:2**
3. Jesus is described as “that great Shepherd of the sheep” - cf. **Jn 10:11,14**

B. MAKE YOU COMPLETE...

1. “in every good work to do His will”
 - a. The author wants them to be complete in doing God’s will
 - b. Yet he recognizes that they cannot do it on their own, they will need God’s help!
2. How will God make them complete in every good work to do His will?
 - a. “through the blood of the everlasting covenant”
 - 1) This refers, of course, to the blood of Jesus
 - a) Which is able to purge our conscience from dead works - **He 9:14**
 - b) By which Jesus has become the Mediator of the New Covenant - **He 9:15**
 - 2) By this blood Jesus has “perfected forever those who are being sanctified” - **He 10:10,14**

-- Through the blood of Jesus, then, God is able to make us complete in every good work to do His will
 - b. “working in you what is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ”
 - 1) Not only are we cleansed by the blood of Jesus, but God works in us to do what pleases Him!
 - a) This is reminiscent of Paul’s comments in **Ph 2:12-13**
 - b) That as we “work out” our salvation, God “works in” us!
 - 2) Instrumental in God working in us is the role of His Spirit...
 - a) We are strengthened by God’s Spirit in the inner man - **Ep 3:16**
 - b) It is by the Spirit we can put to death the deeds of the body - **Ro 8:13**

-- It is by both the blood of Jesus and the work of the Spirit that we are truly “washed”, “justified” and “sanctified” - **1 Co 6:11; Ti 3:5-7**

[While we are admonished throughout this epistle to be steadfast, this closing prayer reminds that we are not alone. In His grace and mercy, God aids in our desires and efforts to do His will! And now at last, we notice a...]

III. FINAL EXHORTATION, COMMENT, AND FAREWELL (22-25)

A. HIS FINAL EXHORTATION... (22)

1. To “bear with the word of exhortation”

- a. This epistle has truly been one of exhorting them; we have exhortations against...
 - 1) Drifting from what they have heard - **He 2:1-4**
 - 2) Departing from the living God - **He 3:12-15**
 - 3) Disobedience to His Word - **He 4:11-13**
 - 4) Dullness of hearing - **He 5:11-6:6**
 - 5) Despising God's grace - **He 10:26-39**
 - 6) Defying Him who now speaks from heaven - **He 12:14-29**
 - b. While at times he has written rather strongly, he encourages them to bear with it
2. While one of the longer epistles in the New Testament, it was still "written to you in few words" (compare it with some of the writings of the "church fathers"!)

B. A COMMENT REGARDING TIMOTHY... (23)

1. "Our brother Timothy" - most likely he who was Paul's constant companion
2. Evidently just released from prison, and likely to join the author in coming to them

C. GREETINGS AND FAREWELL... (24-25)

1. Greetings from the author...
 - a. To "all those who rule over you", i.e., their elders (cf. **He 13:7,17**)
 - b. To "all the saints", i.e., the rest of the Christian
2. Greetings from "those from Italy"; this suggests two possibilities...
 - a. The author was writing from Italy, passing along greetings from those present
 - b. The author was writing to Italy, sending greetings from those with him who were from there
3. A simple farewell: "Grace be with you all. Amen"

CONCLUSION

1. So ends "the word of exhortation", that grand epistle known simply as **The Epistle To The Hebrews** (or "To The Hebrews")
2. Though written to Jewish Christians, with their particular need in mind...
 - a. It is of great value to all Christians
 - b. It tells us more about the intercessory work of our Lord as High Priest than any other book of the New Testament
 - c. Its warnings and exhortations are needed just as much today by Christians who are being tempted to leave Christ and go back into the world

Especially these words found in **Hebrews 10:19-25**...

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

I pray that our study has served the same purpose, to encourage us all to...

- ◆ **Draw near to God!**
- ◆ **Hold fast the hope we confess!**
- ◆ **Stir up love and good works!**