

TAKE A GOOD LOOK

Hebrews

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assemblies Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "An Unshakeable Kingdom," by David Gooding, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England
- "Types and Shadows in the Epistle of Hebrews," by John Heading, Gospel Tract Publications, Glasgow, Scotland
- "The Epistle to the Hebrews," by William MacDonald, Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune, NJ
- "Hebrews," by M.R. De Haan, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

Hebrews 1

HIS MAJESTY: "THE SON"

The times were difficult for the new believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in a unique way for those who were Jews. Christianity that seemed like another sect of the Jews that was added to Judaism was not just another group of people following traditional Jewish thinking with a particular emphasis on some doctrine like the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and Zealots. The teaching of Christianity was changing the minds of people intellectually to think higher and greater thoughts of God. The hearts of people were touched emotionally and there was praise and worship that was spontaneous and very sincere. The will of people was changed spiritually, and those who followed Christ were living changed lives that reflected the life of Jesus. People who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ were radically different from those who followed traditional Judaism. Judaism followed ancient forms and traditions that were first designed by God to enable them to express worship and devotion in a way that was meaningful to them and acceptable to God. The rituals they followed were understandable, but they had added all kinds of details to suit themselves over the years that made it impossible for the common Jew to understand. A religious hierarchy had developed that included adding scribes and lawyers to the God-ordained priesthood. The commandments God had given had been interpreted to adapt to the culture that had developed and great volumes of writings had been given credence nearly equal to the laws of God. Now "the commandments of men" had a special place in Jewish thinking. The forgiveness and salvation God had promised to those who feared Him and obeyed Him, now became to the Jews a religious work of their own rather than based on the wonderful plan of God.

Judaism was not easy nor was it without real meaning. The wonderful heritage of the Jews and the holy scriptures that were read on the Sabbath Day were right. The writings of Moses, the law and the prophets as well as the poetic books from Job through the Song of Solomon were all inspired by the Holy Spirit. "Holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." The problem was they had reverted to carrying out that which was right by merely adhering to the forms and rituals rather than "coming to God by faith." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Ancient people of faith were written about in the book of Hebrews as examples to them - and us - of people of faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

It was into this religious scene the brightness of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ came, changing lives and forms into a living dynamic faith based upon the fulfillment of the law by our Lord Jesus Christ who "was sacrificed for us." The types and shadows of the Old Testament were fulfilled, and the present reality of an active faith was seen in those who had "believed in Jesus" who had "died for our sins according to the scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures." The Living Savior has been introduced to the nation of Israel as "The Lamb of God which beareth away the sin of the world." However, as a nation, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

Since the resurrection of Christ, Christianity, which Jews had thought of as a new unusual sect of Judaism, had spread out through the world to Gentiles as well as Jews, and they too were demonstrating the reality of "faith in Christ" apart from the deeds of the law. Added to the expanding universal dimension of Christianity, were the hard facts of persecution and serious opposition that were bringing a lot of suffering to those who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, there were Jewish believers whose "hands were hanging down" and whose "knees were feeble." They were beginning to turn again to Jewish rituals and a compromising type of faith to make things easier. The problem was, it wasn't working, and for some reason they couldn't figure out why.

The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote this remarkable, masterful epistle to, first of all, fill their minds with thoughts of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, His glory and the greatness of all He accomplished that has satisfied God and brought blessing to us. Secondly, the writer points out to them, all they had gained rather than

what they had lost. In doing that he points out how and why Christianity had done so much more for them than Judaism, and why it is better in every way. Thirdly, he made it plain to them the fact that others have suffered more than they had even to having their lives taken from them. He was not putting down the value of the old covenant in its original intention, but pointed out how much better in a superior way the new covenant was compared to the old covenant of types and shadows. The new is also better because it is the fulfillment of the old. The new is the real thing - the essence of which the old was a picture.

Believers today need to realize the value, the privilege of being associated intimately with His Majesty - the Son of God. When our life is focused on Him, we have a purpose and meaning to all of the activities in which we are engaged. When our lives are lived daily with our Lord Jesus, we see the past, present and future through God's eyes. Life lived from God's perspective makes sense out of all that happens, whether it seems bad or good to us. The practical outliving of following Christ makes sense of our faith and the reason for our being here at this time and in this place.

There is no question at all as to the superiority of Christ to angels, government leaders, religious leaders or organized religion that looks at a sanctuary as only a room in a building. The absolute superiority of the "one sacrifice for sins forever" that is sufficient to meet the need of every person who comes to Christ by faith, is obvious. Even the fact of being able to please God by believing in Him and putting our trust in Him alone instead of our works surpasses anything that men have invented to please Him.

The book of Hebrews when read properly in context and taken at face value, does "lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees." When we "Look off unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith," we can endure whatever obstacles and pressures that oppose, and can live by faith in the One who is His Majesty - the Son.

Hebrews 1:1. *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,"*

GOD SPOKE.

The voice in the silence is like no other
It was heard over all universe's vast space.
In the darkness and emptiness, united together
God began fulfilling His purpose for our race.

He began with light which came from His own person,
"Let there be light" and the light came to be.
Of all the kinds of light, each one has its place and season
All came from no other source but He.

He spoke words of instruction to our parents in the garden
Which they didn't obey but chose to ignore.
As a result, men's hearts all are hardened
Only a few, fear the Lord and His Word any more.

God used men He chose to bear messages for Him
That He would reach them with His messages of truth.
Sadly, men won't listen - His words escaping them
And the potential value of each one is only useless worth.

Because if one won't hear the Lord who spoke in many ways,
Turning deaf ears to entreaties from God's heart -
Then life really has no purpose, only thousands of useless days -
This ignoring practice condemned us from the start.

There still is some good news, if men to God will listen;
He does hear when we call to Him in prayer.
To those who in true repentance, come in faith He will bless them
Speaking peace now and forever His eternal life will share.

"Thanks, so much Father, for speaking to us in so many clear ways. If Thou wert silent to us we would have no way of know the way to Thee or the way even to life our lives now. Accept my appreciation I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 1:1-2

IN TIME PAST

Many people have wasted time, words and even their whole lives trying to define and explain God. How can mere men expect to explain the unexplainable or define that which is infinite. We are stuck in the limits of our

own experience to define things. Other wise we have to resort to the negative in which we have to say, "God is greater than..." (anything we know) or "Far beyond the limits of our knowledge and understanding or ability to express." If it were possible to do that, then God wouldn't be God anyway. He would be only an expression of man's opinion. However, there are those who think they are god in themselves, and because of their self-exalted opinion of themselves, they keep trying to do the impossible and then make the terrible mistake of saying, "There is no God." It was to Christian people who were living in a skeptical society in which people were worshipping the creature more than the Creator that this epistle was written - to Hebrew Christians. Like them, there are often things going on around us that will discourage us if we see only them.

There were many ways God used to send His messages to His own people in the Old Testament times. Isaiah "saw the Lord high and lifted up in a vision. Jacob saw the Lord at the top of a ladder that reached to heaven in a dream. In some way, both Abraham and Moses saw the Lord in a personal way. We know God is self-revealing. He is self-evident. His creation, our conscience, the circumstance of life and particularly the scriptures of truth in the Bible reveal God to us. God has no need of believers trying to validate His claims regarding Himself to other people. He doesn't need man to testify that He is real. In His own ways He spoke to the forefathers, and now He has spoken to us and revealed Himself, "In Son." These "last days" began when Christ was here and He who is the Promised Messiah has fulfilled God's revelation of Himself.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." He speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment and the final revelation of God. Jews found it difficult to believe that God was here "found in fashion as a man." They wanted a dramatic entrance of a mighty conquering hero coming to deliver them from Roman bondage and establishing the kingdom of Israel again by Him sitting on David's throne.

God has revealed Himself, "The Son," as the Creator. By Him the worlds have been created in all their amazing complexity. If He can create the universe, then anything that comes to pass in our lives is under His control. He controls all the laws of heaven and nature. Our health issues, financial and family problems are not beyond His wisdom and understanding as to how to deal with them. It is possible for us to find needed assistance from skilled people, but His wisdom is supreme. When we express our situation in words when we pray, and pay attention to what He says in His word, we can trust Him to take care of the stress we are under and He will sustain us.

In the ways God spoke in "time past," there was no complete revelation of God. There were partial types and shadows seen in the Tabernacle, the offerings, the ark as well as in the lives of people like Joseph. The great variety and differences that are in creation, give general evidence of the infinite wisdom of the Lord. When He speaks in our consciences to specific things going on our lives, we are made aware of the personal aspects of God toward us. His care towards us even when we are in times of trouble reminds us of the goodness of God. In each generation of people God has those who speak for Him as messengers. The spiritual and national fathers spoke to His people on God's behalf, and the prophets spoke as those who instructed and warned His people for Him.

The great variety of means God used then and now, speaks to us and people of all nations, creeds and religions. Every person is without excuse as to the reality of God's existence and being. When the eyes of our understanding are open to see all the evidence around us, any open-minded person is aware of the supremacy of God over everything that men can produce or do. His infinite wisdom and intelligence can be seen through both the microscope and telescope. His interest is experienced in our emotions and our daily living as well as through His word. God spoke in time past and He speaks today through His Son.

Hebrews 1:1-2. *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds."*

GOD HAS SPOKEN.

God has spoken, there is no doubt;
In many ways and times, with whisper and with shout.
He's warned, instructed, entreated, talked about
Those things that are fundamental; important to His heart.
In ancient past, before man's time began to start;
God spoke - He said, "Let there be light."

God has spoken, with call to missing man,
Who is hiding behind trees and leaves with wife - and,
Hurting conscience - innocence gone. No longer grand,
But cowering in fear and, for the first time - sin's demand.
It has happened: Inward darkness; separation by God's command.

God spoke - "Where art thou? What hast thou done?"

God has spoken, the warning is clear for us to understand.
When sin goes unchecked and wickedness stalks the land:
God sees and knows the inward thoughts of every man.
When we turn away with willful heart and mind,
To our own way: affects man, beast and land - we find,
God spoke - "It repenteth Me that I have made them."

God has spoken, Abraham heard His voice say, "Get out."
Again, He said, "...the land... I will give it thee" - no shout,
But promises on which God's friend can confidently count.
And then the day God sent him and Isaac to the mount;
There to be offered - Abraham's faith left no doubt.
God spoke, "Now I know thou fearest God."

God has spoken, to Moses from the bush;
And clearly from the mountain in Sinai, His truth
He clearly announced. Israel was to give proof
To nations all around: the law has holy worth.
But failure after failure came and went, and God stooped.
God spoke - "Call His name, Jesus."

God has spoken, every word that He who is the Lord,
Spoke - was the voice of God. Jesus is the eternal Word.
God has expressed Himself in the best way He could;
"In Son", not another but Him by whom we're loved.
So now, not sounds and voice and signs - but "Son."
God spoke - "For God so loved the world, that He gave
His only begotten Son..."

"O God of great expression and plain speech. It was such a move of grace on Thy part to condescend to speak to man, that to me I cannot understand the deaf ears and silent voices of those who have heard Thee but ignored Thee. Perhaps they do not realize that it really is the voice of God when they see the creation; or feel the prick of conscience; or enjoy the goodness that comes without rights. Maybe they do not understand the value of strong pain upon the bed; or the dreams in the darkness. Maybe they do not see the value of being able to observe the Lord's supper, or the walk of faith of believers they know. Help me to speak as often as possible of the virtues of Thy Son: of His worth, His work, His attributes, His love, His life, His death, His resurrection, His continual interest in them. Then they might listen. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 1:2. *"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;"*

IN SON.

Light came in human form to a world in darkness living -
To many: only a baby; to others, a Savior; to others, a King.
Moral light in a Man was seen in His actions, heard in His words -
Satan and all the powers of darkness at His heels - behind Him bruised.
Truth was here in every word spoken in many parts and places.
"In Son" was fulfilled all the truth-seekers waited for and wanted.

They saw the actions corresponded to the words in every case
Truth was "In Son" from "This day" ... to "Finished," and in "Go ye."
The Heir was here, the One the Father sent to be the Savior -
The cattle on the hills are His by designation -
The veins of riches deep in earth by His creation -
"In Son" - the Owner, Sustainer of all things - spoke.

The One with "All Power" was here to speak that men might hear -
Creating again, common things, instantly with a sense of history
Yet made and tasted and men were filled - but they doubted
The Messiah, the Word in flesh - not believing God - "In Son."

I do believe, O God, I know - I trust in Him - "In Son"
My God spoke, I listened and heard in my soul by faith -
I do truly trust His Word, His Work, His Person, His Promises -
And wait to see Him glorified in this place of His rejection.

“In Son, is a wonderful truth to me, O God, as I trace Thy Word and Work through even my lifetime. I have seen and heard and tasted that the Lord is good, and I worship before Thee today, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Hebrews 1:3-4

A BETTER WORK

Right at the beginning of this treatise on the Person and work of Christ to establish in the hearts and minds of believers the facts relating to the Savior, the first number of verses sum up the whole message. Christ has completed a better work than all before His coming and none can add to that work He has done because it is finished. The Spirit of God used the writer to briefly summarize the whole teaching of the book before going into the specifics of the teaching: that is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God. His role in the Godhead goes beyond being merely the exact representation of God - He is God. He is the full revelation of the eternal God. He is the Creator God for He "made the worlds." He is the outward, visible expression of God in a body. There is no view of God that is available to us that is clearer, than by looking at our Lord Jesus Christ.

God has spoken to us in Christ who is the eternal Word, the expression of God verbally and physically to us. God speaks to us and in us - "in Son." Jesus is the message of God to us and He is the reason for the message. The One who has all creative power to create "all things" is the One who alone has the saving power that delivers us from the condemnation of our sin. He has personally dealt with our sin problem and the judgment for sin we deserve. His own righteousness has provided the basis for our acceptance by a Righteous God. We are "in Christ" and Christ is "in us, the hope of glory."

Our Lord never compromised His purity, His deity, nor His dignity when He "by Himself purged our sins." He has always been, and will always be equal to the Father and the Spirit as a divine Person. The dignity of His Person remains unchanged even though He made purification for our sins. The dignity of His Place in relation to His personal glory was never lost because of His coming to earth to be a Man among men. The dignity of His Position remains because of His divine nature. He was always completely God, even when He was "found in fashion as a man."

The One who "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" has completed all that was necessary for the "purging" or "purification" that we needed because of our sin. The power that He has to create and maintain the universe is in the same Person who has power by means of His sacrifice "to cleanse us from all sin." God is satisfied to forgive us and accept us because the sacrifice He made by His death was final, and is complete. Nothing can be added to it and nothing can be taken from it.

The superior revelation of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ established the fact of His equality, for He is "the Son of God," the preeminent name given to Him by the Father. The superior Place He has of revealing divine glory, set Him apart over all the angels not only as their Creator, but also because of His preeminent name, "Jesus, the Lord is Savior," that was given to Him on earth. He is not an angel but the Creator of angels and as such angels worship Him and He only deserves our worship. Heretics in the time of the early church revered angels and taught that people could only approach God through angels. This heresy had created problems in the church at Colossae, and they had to be reminded again "That in all things, He might have the preeminence."

Angels are beings that were created by the Lord to do His service. Even though they are mighty and have power delegated by Him to do certain things that humans are not able to do, they are subservient to Him who created them. We as redeemed humans are "renewed after the image of Him that created him [us]." We have been predestinated "to be conformed to the image of His Son." Our Lord is the Creator of the "worlds," which includes the ages and the order in which things happen. He "upholds all things by the word of His power." No other hand nor power can add anything to maintain that which our Almighty Savior accomplished when He "purged our sins."

Prophets in the past, from Samuel to Malachi, taught great things, but greater than the prophets, was the Son whose teaching is greater and more life-changing than any they gave. Angels had God-given power to minister to God, but better and mightier is the ministry of the Son. Moses was a great leader who led God's people from bondage to freedom, but the on-going leadership of the Son extends throughout the world and the whole universe. Joshua was a mighty warrior who God used to bring victory over those who were enemies of His people, but the Son of God won greater victories over sin, death and hell. Aaron as the first high priest of Israel represented the people to God, and God to the people, but his priesthood came to an end. The Son of God is superior in His priesthood because He is the "High Priest forever," who has reconciled us to God by the great sacrifice He made and the great sacrifice He was.

There is no one who can compare with our Lord Jesus Christ who is preeminent in His revelations of God to us, is preeminent in His name "which is above every name," and in the offices He bears. He is preeminent in His Person as the "first-begotten," and is preeminent in His position as "Lord."

Hebrews 1:3. *"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;"*

BY HIMSELF.

Radiance mostly veiled from human eyes but morally seen
Where God in human flesh walked earthly roads where man had been
A brilliance of moral light - unmistakable as the rays are from the sun
Shining in a glory mostly hidden from men - the Christ, God's Anointed One
Was here, full of grace that flowed from lips that spoke God's truth
And truth in flesh gave for the first time, a vision of man's real worth -
Seen in human flesh by sin untainted and to it unresponsive -
As God in Christ moved visibly among those who mocked and taunted
The One who held in hand their breath yet graciously entreated
Them to come to Him for life abundant and all they really needed.

He was not a reflection of God, He was an exact representation of His being
Even though men doubted Him, it was the true and living God they were seeing.
Upholding all things, the world, the stars, the universe stayed in place -
This Living, Eternal God was here, they looked upon His face
And lived, for He who alone gives life - came here to die
For He knew we in our sins for ever on our own would lie
Without hope undone, never able to rise nor light to see
Nor ever able to accomplish lasting worth or ever be
What God intended - so by Himself He chose to purge our sins
That we through acceptance in His Person, might enter in.

Now, above - beyond the natural eyes of men - He's seated there
In glory, interceding - making our cause His own - He cares
And in His righteousness, we who were lost are now accepted
Not careless nor indifferent, no longer is salvation neglected
For in His moral worth we too are seen and before God represented
By His Majesty who after dying for us then His blood presented
That we too by the precious blood into God's presence enter
The Son Himself, our Lord and King is the true center
Of all we live for - He who at heaven's throne sat Himself down
Is the One we in our worship, praise and honor - our King crown.

"The Son of God, sent by Thee Father God, was willing to give the utmost, His utmost that I and others like me in sins bondage could be freed forever. Delivered me from the consequences of my own guilt because He loved and gave Himself for me. I give heartfelt thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 1:3. *"Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."*

HIS SON.

All things are His; the King-Son is the heir -
Such a wonder we as joint-heirs will share -
All the blessings of God, though we are adopted sons
Through eternal ages, all saints as one,
Will enjoy the nearness, members in God's family -
For one in Christ, we are as near as He.

The universe is His, He is the Creator of it -
From every enormous sun to the very smallest bit -
Created by His word, each set in a special place -
None were random acts, each part filling its own space.
Each atom and star - His glorious works display -
Yet He reminds us - all this will pass away.

The brightness of His Glory gives us a view of God -
Glimpses of this were seen when He, the earth, trod.
Glory shone from deep within - He loved His own unto the end.

They knew, and so do we, He is with us wherever He sends
His own into the world to tell of the glories of our King
Who will be seen in splendor, and all His own like Him.

His substance and His essence in every way divine.
All of the Godhead Persons in His own body shine.
How God appears in form, is only the visible part of Him -
Matchless love, abounding grace - all God's fullness from within
Are seen in our Lord Jesus, He is the exact expression
Of Deity given form and presented to human vision.

By the word of His power, He maintains every thing -
Each part of the universe held in place, as with invisible strings.
His spoken words control each element, also heat and cold
Are subject to His authority, He each with His word controls.
No careless accident or whim this universe sustains -
He is the Master of it all, in Him there is no change.

The Savior of sinners in Himself, for us made purification -
In His sinless holiness, His death brought our salvation.
Not just by a spoken word, but by dying for our sins -
He opened the way for us to God, made us acceptable in Him.
The Lord Jesus never overlooked a thing, but dealt with every one -
And we are legally cleansed from sin by God's eternal Son.

Now seated upon a throne in heaven, we are seated there in Him -
Not intruders where we should not be, but by Him we are brought in.
He sat Himself down having fully accomplished all that needs to be
Our Lord and King in His rightful place on the throne of His Deity.
Never again humiliated, He is higher than the high -
God spoke in Son, His atoning work done, now we through Him draw nigh.

**“What profound insights into the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, are seen in this verse
Father. How glorious He is in every way. This morning as I review His divine
characteristics, I marvel that these were all displayed in His life here on earth; how much
more will come before our eyes when we see Him. I wait here in anticipation, in the name
of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

Hebrews 1:4. *“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”*

EXCELLENT NAME.

They are before Him making their obeisance
With covered faces and feet, their will to Him submit
Even though their God-given power and ability is so great
There is One much farther and higher above them that they
Take His word and will so seriously, they would never
Again do, as some of their counter parts did, try to sever
Themselves from constantly, willingly, gladly Him obey
Knowing that His name and Person is far more excellent than they.

His name comes from His divine and eternal pedigree
Passed on by He Himself who was the Son eternally
Without a beginning, He who was there when all was made
Righteously claims everything there is by virtue of His name.
The “I AM” is personally supreme by virtue of His being -
To be found in fashion as a man, even by those occasionally seeing
Glimpses of His glory under which light men normally would die -
Has taken the name “Jesus” our Savior - God Himself came nigh.

Now, together with God's saints we come near to worship and praise
Him who is our Lord and Savior, the God-Man among us, though the Ancient of Days
Coming into His presence with trust, not fear or trembling trepidation,
But with grateful assurance we come, for He is the God of our salvation.
His name is more excellent than those who are of earth's highest birth,
Or those who by virtue of high office, their names have some great worth.
But simply, with holy boldness granted to us by God's exceeding grace
We come with Him of the most excellent name, into His holy place.

“The name of the Lord Jesus Christ, O God, is so far supreme above the name of Michael, Gabriel or any other name that there is no comparison. There is power in His name. There is fear in demonic hosts at the sound of His name. There is and will be the bowing of every knee before Him and every tongue confessing Him as Lord and the mention of His name, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Hebrews 1:5-14

GOD SPEAKS

There is no question at all as to the superiority of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory, honor and majesty over the "fathers," the "prophets" or any other human being - or angels. Even though there were wise and heroic men and women of faith, their inherent humanity made them susceptible to sin and subject to death. The human nature is such that we "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." How foolish, vain and irresponsible it is for mortal people to say that God is a creation of man's imagination to help keep people civilized. The limits of man's intelligence are reached long before we leave the consideration of the marvelous intricacies of the human body." The fullness" of earth, the limitlessness of space, the vastness of all creation in the universe and the heavens, all put us humans in a position of curious wonder as more and more the God's intelligent design of everything unfolds to us.

Even though angels are not under the same condemnation as we human being are, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," and they are higher in the divine order of the "families" in heaven and earth than we are as frail, mortal men, if they do not "keep their first estate," they have no opportunity to change. As messengers of God and spiritual created beings, they serve God by "ministering" to believers, by protecting the helpless, by declaring to men messages from God, and by executing judgment.

God spoke clearly in the scriptures as He made His declaration about the superiority of our Lord Jesus. "Thou art My Son" states a fact that has been true forever. "The first-begotten" would clarify to any Hebrew believer the superiority of His position above any of the angels who are called "sons of God," or even redeemed people who are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." The declaration by God as to His Person is followed by another biblical quotation as to the continuation of David's royal line. The One miraculously born "in fashion as a man," to continue the kingdom promised to David is both "Lord and Christ." The presentation of the Lord is that of One whose moral character and holy life, "loved righteousness and hated iniquity," gives explanation to His kingship both on earth and in heaven. He was, and is, Deity in His nature and as God His throne is forever, and will be "on earth as it is in heaven." The vindication of His authority is that as the Son of God, He is eternal in His being, and as the Creator-God, even His present creative work will be changed to being free from the pollution and consequences of sin.

Now the position He holds is seated in the place of honor where "all the angels of God worship Him." There was a time when He was here in the flesh fulfilling the divine purposes of God for our salvation and blessing. The waiting time is over. His authority is established on earth now among His people, so we do not worship anything or anyone but Him, whom angels worship, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the first born of all creation, of Mary, of the new creation in which people are born again by the Spirit of God, of many brethren, of the church and of the Father.

Our faith is solidly established on the changeless Person of our Lord Jesus. It is on this solid foundation we rest. He is the eternal Son of the eternal God. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever." His love is unaffected by all that happens around us. His mercy and justice are not carried out by manipulation of facts to suit a particular bias but are established on His unchanging word. His grace is forever sufficient to meet our need and satisfy our hearts. His forgiveness is granted on the easiest possible terms.

He is better than anything conceived by man's ideas. God has defined His uniqueness and preeminence for He "is the Son of God." Angels are His servants obeying His commands. His kingdom is forever and those He has redeemed will "live and reign with Him." "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." As the Creator and Sustainer of all things, Our Lord Jesus Christ is given unique honor by God. It is our high honor to be associated with such a Person who God sent forth to redeem us and bring us into a family relationship with Him. We can be thankful that He is changeless and is ready to help us, sustain us and forgive us when we need His grace in a special way to deal with our frail humanity.

Hebrews 1:5. *“For unto which of the angels said he at any time, “Thou art my beloved son, this day have I begotten thee?” And again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son?”*

GOD'S TESTIMONY.

It wasn't to an angel that God declared Christ's eternal Sonship. Not even to Michael was there direction given for us to worship angels. God pointed Him out as the Lamb of God and His unique eternal Son. Here in plain words from God Himself is the Son's manifestation. As the One who is above all others, He is God's express image. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only One to whom the universe owes homage. Better than angels in nature and in His Person. Angels themselves know they are His by creation.

Not able to be compared, He is "so much better than they "
They hasten when they hear - His command they do obey
For He is God, both the Father and Son are equal
Never in competition - with God there is no sequel
United in purpose - each one equal in power
Each personality is distinct yet working always together
The Father expressed affection and His delight in the Son
The Son honors the Father, yet declares both are One.

So it is plain to me there is not and never will be an angel
Who God will recognize or even consider as an equal
Lucifer tried, and others like him, to ascend
To the throne of the Godhead thinking he was equal to them
But in spite of his position and strength God gave him to use
He made a fatal decision when "like the Most High," he sought to choose.
Men now make the same mistake thinking themselves to be a god
When God has plainly stated, all will acknowledge Jesus is Lord.

"I thank Thee Father, for sending the Son to be the Savior of the world. And I am thankful the Lord Jesus was willing to come and pay the cost of salvation. The unity of the Godhead is an example of how things should be with us who are Thy children. Please help me today to promote this. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 1:6. *"And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him."*

FIRST BEGOTTEN.

He is the first begotten - not in being, but in His inheritance over all creation
He has priority and preeminence of every creature and every nation
He has the right of sovereignty because He created all the earth
And when He comes in His glory, all will recognize His royal birth.

He is the King over all the kings and Lord over every lord
Every angel will acknowledge Him - will hang on His every word
The adoration of the Son will not only come from man
Angels too will worship Him as only angels can.

At His entrance to the realms of earth as a baby in a manger
The angel hosts glorified His name, to them He was no stranger
From time to time while He was here on earth in fashion as a man
The angels came to minister to Him - strengthening His hand.

At His empty tomb that morning when Christ rose from among the dead
Angels were there performing a service - where His body had been laid
As messengers they had the joy of declaring He was indeed risen
As worshipers looked, angels appeared when Jesus went to heaven.

Looking ahead I see a role they fill that will be of great importance
When Christ returns to earth to reign, all will tremble at His presence
The angels of God will worship Him when on earth He reigns
They with all families on earth and in heaven will glorify His name.

"As the firstborn, all of creation on earth and in heaven will honor Him as the supreme authority. He has every right to receive worship from the highest angel to the lowest of men. I worship Him and pray He will be glorified by every thought and word. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 1:7-8. *"And of the angels he saith, who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."*

HIS ANGELS... HIS SERVANTS... HIS THRONE.

As Creator of all - all must be subservient to Him
Everything of nature - whether the storm or the wind
And the fires of lightning causing devouring flame
All give us a plain message - He is superior to them.

The messenger of the wind declares supremacy of power
And that message from the fire - He is able to devour
Every thing He has created and starts creation over again
For the Lord our God is greater than any thing compared to Him.

Winds will come and go, and fire will finally run its course
They do what God intended, their activity is the Creator's choice
Compare the short-lived fleeting power of elements uncontrolled by man
Realize they each one, are controlled by the Master's hand.

He uses omnipotent power with a view to a reasonable purpose
When the Throne-Sitter raises the scepter, it is with a view to real justice
His might and His dominion are not carelessly dispensed
The authority of King Jesus is beyond angels or human sense.

He has eternal purposes planned far beyond our day
From before the beginning of earth's foundation that Himself did lay
Were designs far beyond the physical or things we just can see
His plans contained things unseen that last for eternity.

So evidence of His great Person have purposely been on display
And when we look beyond the incident or the role His servants play
We see glimpses of His glory and much more He will yet unfold
If I could express all I can see, I'll still say, "Half has not been told."

"What wonders are to be found in the Savior, O God: no angels or men or both together can ever describe the moral, physical and eternal glories to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is enough that I can worship Him and know I am accepted by Thee through Him. I give praise, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 1:9-12. *"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And thou Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."*

ANOINTED.

There is no question of His superiority, of His kingdom there will be no end
Every other king anointed has failed some way in the role to which he was sent
This One is the King of Righteousness judging in purity without alloy
He is higher also in His person for He alone is the King of joy.

Go back as far as you can and this Sinless One was there
He unfolded His great design - His likeness even humans bear
Perfectly in order with the motions He arranged
The universe itself He created - He also does maintain.

Foundations of this earth have never been known by man
Yet they were laid by Him who holds everything in His hand
The heavens apparently, He framed to be just the way He wanted
Each star in place, each galaxy, His Holy Person exalted.

Even earth itself shall pass away and the heavens rolled as a scroll
And He who designed it for a reason will with His power them fold
The reason for earth and heaven was that all might know
The Lord is superior to every thing, but is more concerned about man's soul.

For placed within rational beings such as angels and men
Is a part of Himself that should respond to the joy coming from Him;
That anointing oil of gladness He desires that we will share
Will produce the sweetness of fellowship we'll enjoy with Him up there.

Even now in this fading scene, the Lord is waiting for
Those who in appreciation will also share His joy

When I consider Him, who is so much higher than all else
I do rejoice in my spirit and soul, and His holy name I bless.

“The joy of the Lord in my soul, O God, is the kind of joy that is lasting and satisfying. I am thankful that in a measure that joy can be shared with others too and I hope I can do so today in some way, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Hebrews 1:13-14. *“But to which of the angels said he at any time, sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”*

BETTER THAN ANGELS.

There is no question, no angel that has been created
Can share the glory that is His - their role is to serve
A coming day will see fulfilled - the defeat of every foe
His glory will not be compromised - the universe will know
He has triumphed - the Conqueror has prevailed
Hosts of angels - messengers sent to testify of Him
Publicly the world over the message is given - to mankind
“Whosoever will, may come,” and they have come - will yet come!

Amazement comes over the face of every angel
Mighty in strength dispensed by the Stronger One
Able to defy human laws of nature imposed
They move about the universe serving Him
And they watch to see from a small blue place
From the obscurity of the highways and byways
They come - and gather unto Him
The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind - frail mortal men!

Encircled about Him who is higher than the highest
Composing an inner circle - as a bride
Loved, cared for - and loving Him back, anxious to please Him
Are chosen - His Bride chosen before the world
As one holy, redeemed, loved and loving person
All as one respond to Him that loved us and washed us
And they rise past watching, worshiping angels
To be seated at His right hand - strong angels worship - “This is right!”

“There is not jealousy Father; just the facts that have been planned and carried out by divine purpose. The Lord Jesus is high and lifted up. The bride of His choosing that will sit at His right hand will be such that honors and appreciates Him and the redemption price He paid for them. I join that band of the relieved and redeemed and worship Him, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Hebrews 2:1-8

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

As a conclusion to the message of chapter one dealing with the truth of the deity of Christ, the first few verses of chapter two is a call to the Hebrew believers to pay attention to what they had heard about the Lord Jesus Christ. He is superior to all others in His majesty as the Son of God. It is quite easy to fall into the snare of false teaching just by not paying a lot of attention to what is taught according to the word of God. If our minds and senses are not focused on what the Lord says we may drift into disobedience and being hearers of the word only, rather than careful “doers of the word.” The early Hebrews had heard the Gospel but not all who heard it believed it. Even some of the believers were in danger of falling away from the truth of God. Some people today who were raised in Christian homes and attended scripturally gathered assemblies are in danger when they pay attention to things that raise questions regarding the scriptures, and sound interesting and persuasive because they are quite unusual compared to biblical teaching they have previously heard. There are those who have taught children in a Sunday School class or even publicly preached who have let the things they heard “slip.”

Truth “spoken by angels” is a reference to the law that was given to Moses. The “great salvation” taught in chapter one deserves our careful attention and commitment. If we truly listen to it we will hear with understanding and obey it enthusiastically from our hearts. Salvation is spoken of often in Hebrews to those who were “heirs of salvation” and it is called “so great salvation.” It is “eternal salvation” and there are things that “accompany salvation.” “Salvation to the uttermost” is our experience now as we wait for the Lord to “appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” The messages angels gave in the law were reliable, but now the Gospel message is the fulfillment of the law which is to be received by faith in Christ who is the object of our “great salvation.”

It is possible to hear the Gospel and not do anything about it. To neglect it means to let it drift away, quite often gradually, because people want to wait until later to do something about its message and the claims of the Gospel. We must believe the Gospel and act upon it instead of being like a boat adrift from its moorings. There are real dangers when we do that. There are pressures from other people to conform to their way of religious activity, and that is a serious drift away from the truth of God. Business life and the social pressures of the world may not seem serious at first, but the end result is "no escape" from the consequences of that subtle sin. It is not a trivial matter to "neglect so great salvation."

"God also bearing them witness" means that God testified to that which was preached and taught to the Hebrew believers by giving signs and wonders, miracles and "gifts of the Holy Ghost." Those who heard the Lord Jesus speak and passed on what they were taught by Him, had their words confirmed by God Himself. Their message built up the church of God, strengthened the Lord's people and served to bring them to spiritual growth and maturity in their spiritual life. This testifies to the superiority of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of Man.

The Glory of His Person indicates the great distance between the Creator and the creature. "What is man?" is a question people often ask of themselves when they want to think about who we are, why we are here and where we are going. Idolaters think man is inferior to the birds, beasts and creeping things he bows before. They make images themselves out of wood, stone and metal, and then bow down before symbols of human imagination. Materialists think man is a chance product of the natural forces which have evolved him so he will eventually evolve away into some strange creature.

Man as God made him at first was able to do and be what God intended. Sin has changed all that. Really, man seems insignificant compared with the grandeur all around us – life is as a breath and we are like a small bug in a forest. Our character is sin-stained and we seem to defile every scene with discord. [Ps.144:3; Job 7:17-20; Ps.8:4; Heb.2:6]. But God is "mindful" of us: Our God thinks about us unceasingly because of His love and interest. When we read that God "visiteth him," that indicates there is no place so solitary that He does not draw near to visit and make a connection with us. God created man in His own image [Gen.1:27] with certain characteristics that He has so we are able to mentally and morally share with God. God intended for us to share with Him and "have dominion", like a king crowned with glory and honor.

Because of man's sin, the crown is in the dust, honor is stained, and the provision of creation is man's, only after hard labor. Man has become degraded and has lowered himself to where he considers himself no more than a beast or a tree or an insect. The slavery of sin has bowed man's head and lowered his neck to the yoke of slaves and fearful creatures. Man as Christ made him in the beginning had a unique glory. Christ, the perfect Man, has an acquired glory because of His stoop into humanity – not His inherent glory as deity [1:3].

The greatness of God's salvation in its life-changing power demonstrates the glory of His Person as the "Son of Man who came down from heaven." He came down past the archangel, angels, cherubim and seraphim to become a true Man among men. "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedience unto death, even the death of the cross."

The Lord Jesus has been put in charge of everything and has been revealed to us as believers by faith, but He is not yet reigning on earth as He is in heaven. By faith we see Him in His glory in heaven and know He will one day rule on earth as well. The decisions we make in our daily lives need to be made with a view to this coming glory we will share with Him. When our Lord came here the first time, He came "full of grace and truth." He came into this world "to save sinners." He also "suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." This lowly appearing was hard for the Hebrew believers to accept because they did not want a servant. They wanted a conquering king. We learn from Him and His lowly stoop to earth that we too are here to serve Him and others, that we might bring them to God.

Hebrews 2:9-11. *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man."*

WE SEE JESUS.

Salvation is one of the keywords of the book of Hebrews. We have been made heirs of salvation [1:14]. Because we are children of God, we are heirs. Salvation is one of His greatest gifts and is a blessing beyond measure to everyone that has received God's salvation. The salvation of God is a great salvation [2:3]. Under Moses' law, any who transgressed it would die without mercy if two or three witnesses were to testify. The Lord Himself began to teach of His salvation and the eye witnesses who followed Him, were those now testify of this "great salvation." It is far superior to anything the Hebrew people ever had before.

In an act of unparalleled grace, the Lord Jesus Christ “was found in fashion as a man” that He might be the “Captain of our salvation.” He couldn’t do that from a distance, but now, as the Pioneer, Pathfinder and Leader of our salvation because He drew near to us; He can understand and experience our humanity. We needed Him. He knew that and acted to meet that great need. He wasn’t half a man but was fully God and fully man. His humanity was real. So now, because He is the Son who learned obedience through suffering, He has originated the eternal salvation we have. He passed through suffering and death as a man that His experience might be absolutely complete. In that capacity, He has authored eternal salvation [5:9]. There is a counterfeit Christianity that puts Christ to an open shame. That is far removed from the reality of God’s salvation. Things that accompany salvation [6:9] are consistent with a life lived by one who is in love with the Lord Jesus Christ, and who finds no greater joy than to bring Him glory and pleasure. Their appreciation of salvation is obvious and never would bring dishonor to their Lord. The perpetual priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ has done away with all uncertainties of acceptance that would plague those who always wonder if they “have done enough.” They would be wanting to be assured that the failures they were aware of would have been dealt with in a satisfactory manner. How would a dying priest be able to assure such a concerned soul? We however, have a Priest forever and His office is unchanging. So because of that, He is able to save to uttermost [7:25] any and all that will come to Him in faith. He is alive forevermore; He is one of our own kind and yet absolute in His perfection. The sacrifice He made for our salvation was made once for all. It does not have to be repeated.

But the story is not yet completed. The salvation of our souls is completed and we are secure in our Lord Jesus Christ. His on-going priesthood on our behalf gives us daily and hourly confidence that we are accepted by a Holy God. We are accepted in the Beloved. In the past He appeared to put away sin as a Sacrifice. In the present He appears in the presence of God for us as a Priest. In the future He will appear without sin unto salvation [9:28]. He will appear with outstretched hands in welcome. He will save these bodies of clay that need to be changed from present vileness. He will claim by resurrection power, the body of every sleeping saint and save it to be like unto His own body of glory. The grace of God led Him to taste death for us that we might enjoy His great, eternal salvation for ever. In Jn.17:5 there is the glory He had with the Father before the worlds were made. In Jn.17:24 there is the glory as a result of His suffering and death. (See also Phil.2:7-8). Now as the Pioneer/Leader of our salvation, He can understand and experience our humanity. We know He is not ashamed of us because in His humanity, He is of the same family as we are. We have the same Father. He has come down to where we are. He has experienced what we have as humans, apart from sin.

To think the eternal Son wanted to become a man is beyond our comprehension
To leave the highest place in heaven and come to earth is such blessed condescension
To know the purpose behind such a stoop was to provide for us redemption -
Surely such a Person as our Lord Jesus Christ has full claim to our attention.

Down past the archangel, angels and all families in the heavens the Savior came
The Eternal Son of the Eternal God was in fashion as a man, and Jesus was His name
Everything we mortal men had done, and the dishonor to God is our shame
But by the grace of God, He tasted death for every man making propitiation for all sins’ claim.

we who had been lost and condemned by sin, have now been raised with Him on high
We who were subject to death because of sin, will live because He was willing to die
We who were at an unreachable distance from God, have been now, by grace, drawn nigh
We who could never please God ourselves, now in our Beloved’s acceptance fully rely.

At present we have foretastes of the blessings that in the future will come
At present we enjoy the fullness of the forgiveness His victory on the cross has won
At present we live by faith and experience the blessed fruits of what our Lord has done
At present we live in the positional place where God’s Son and we as joint heirs are one.

“O God of my salvation. I am offering You now some thoughts of adoration and praise for the salvation that has been given for such an unworthy person as me. I cannot express verbally what I want to say, but these rolling thoughts have much about Your Son in them, and I present them here to You. I don’t know what to say because I am really overwhelmed. All honor, glory, praise and thanksgiving to Your holy Name and Holy Person. Amen.”

Hebrews 2:12-13. *“Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee, And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.”*

REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE.

In God’s ways of grace, He begins with us by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. By the divine operations of the Holy Spirit and the Word, we are not only convicted of our sin, but convinced as to the Person and

redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In placing our faith in Him for salvation from our sins, forgiveness of our sins and acceptance by God; we then become "children of God by faith in Jesus Christ."

As children we come into a family relationship with Him. We have His eternal life, the family characteristic because God has now sent His Spirit, the Spirit of His Son, into our hearts. We are children – His children. We have been brought into family relationship by Him. No longer are we servants to sin.

When we become children, we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. All that is His is ours. His possessions, His positions, His place, His purpose, His plans – He shares with us. The placing of us as sons (children) gives us the place with Him that enables Him to call us brethren. Brethren share the same objectives, same family interests and same inheritance. [Ps.22:22] We have been adopted as God's children and He identifies Himself with us as brothers. This takes us to praise beyond the night of darkness we are in now. to the proclamation of God's righteousness in the future. Darkness of suffering and death is now the brightness of justification for us and glory for Him. [Isa.8:18] The nation of Israel was far away from God. God had given to the Lord disciples and He would be revealed to millions through them. So even though they seemed like children at the time, Isaiah could see down the road to where Messiah would come.

Servant-hood is demeaned by men because, to many, it implies an undignified, surly, resistant, humiliated person who does not want this work he has been given. But the Lord Jesus Christ, the Servant of the loving God (Jehovah), is the greatest example of the blessed slavery to our God – the slavery begotten by love.

When first saved, we have very little understanding of who we are and where do we go from here. Our service may be like a "work"; a job we have to do; an occupation to fulfill our time in a significant manner. As our maturity increases, the work or occupation we do for God, goes beyond a desire for accomplishment, to a sense of ownership. Then the progression continues to where we begin to appreciate all God has invested in "the work" and we become more than participants, to investors. Paul came there when he said, "for me to live is Christ." He wasn't just a laborer, though he labored continuously; he wasn't only serving although the effects of his service continue to this day. Paul had personal satisfaction in the work in which he was involved because he had an investment in it.

"Lord Jesus, I am not trying to be familiar in a bad sense, I'm sure You know that; but I am so grateful You were willing to become one of us - a real Man among men. You know what I mean when I complain about being misunderstood because You were misunderstood too. You had way more criticisms laid against You that I ever will, but in a way, I am glad You had them so You know how it may affect me. You know the unspeakable joy of seeing a lost soul saved, a child come and trustingly ask You questions. Did You play with the kids like I do? I know how You took the death of a real good friend even though You were going to raise him from the dead. You cried openly. I try to keep it private - but thanks for letting us know You were a real Man among men. Amen."

Hebrews 2:14-18

PERFECTLY HUMAN - HUMANLY PERFECT

There was only one way that deliverance from the consequences of sin could happen. Jesus had to become human so He could die and rise again, and destroy the power of the devil. Only Christ could do this. Human sin had given Satan's power of death (eternal separation from God) a free rein to control, deceive and destroy us and our whole reason for existence. The fear of death and the consequences of sin that follow death has left people by nature in bondage and constant fear of the future. When we come to God by faith in Jesus Christ, we belong to God and the fear of death is removed because "Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and He was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures." For those who believe in Him, they can say, "My sin is gone, my fear is over, I shun God's presence now no more."

Because He could and did, defeat death, we have been set free from the fear of death. Death is not the end but the door to new life. When a believer is called home to heaven by way of death, it is absent from their body (soul and spirit is gone from the body) and that person is with Christ which is far better [Phil.1:23]. To be absent from the body doesn't mean we cease to exist [2Cor.5:6-8]. A new body will be given to us that is suited to our eternal future, at resurrection [Phil.3:20-21]. Death will be done away with [1Cor.15:26] when we are changed in an instant to be like our Lord. "When we shall see Him, we shall be like Him, for we shall see him as He is." He didn't come to help the angels, even though they are superior to us in many ways. They do not have this place we have been given by God's grace.

We needed a high priest who could reconcile us to God in order to *make* us right and *keep* us right. We needed the atonement He alone could make. He couldn't lower God's standards but He could be merciful to us. We were

fallen into sin that had been passed on to us by our sinful nature. But by the grace of God, this was removed from us by His death. Christ has restored human dominion that was intended by God at creation, by becoming a man. However, He didn't just become a man as an example to us. but through the *suffering of death* [v.9], He took our place at Calvary. He became the perfect leader or pioneer of our salvation *through sufferings* [v.10], the sufferings of His life in which He experienced what we would go through in our time. His perfect obedience to His Father led Him to suffer reproach, humiliation, rejection and all the other experiences of a human who lived a sinless life among sinful people. That set Him apart from all others and established very plainly the "Superiority of the Son of Man", our Lord Jesus Christ. That dominion was withheld from angels. At the creation of Adam that dominion was given to men but that dominion was lost by men because of sin. Now dominion has been regained by Jesus, the perfect Man, but that dominion was reached by His humiliation and death when He fully satisfied all of the righteous claims God wants in those with whom He shares His glory.

So He came and took hold of us to help us, and was made like us. He fully knew what it was like to be one of us. In His manhood, Christ took part of the same [incarnation]. In relation to His people, not only the Hebrew believers of a past day, but for our learning and understanding today, He who was God and far superior to angels came down past them to "Be found in fashion as a man." Four reasons for His humanity: first of all for the glory of God. In every way He was "Qualified through sufferings," to take our place. He did that willingly that He might destroy the works of the devil and also make propitiation for the sins of the people. God's justice has been satisfied and every legal claim against us has been met. As a Perfect Man among men He has the right, and the capacity for priesthood because He was humanly perfect.

Perfect in His manhood, yet His deity still kept fully intact
He came as the Son of Man to bring God's straying people back
To where they once again will be able with enlightened eyes to see
What, and who God intended, them and us today to be.

Not struggling saints with feeble hands and knees too weak to walk
Not with saddened hearts and songless lips, or those afraid to talk
But with gracious words and countenances bright and voices lifted to praise
The One higher than all angels and men, who us from the pit did raise.

His redeeming work on earth He finished, as His loud cry did testify
Now His work is on-going through those for whom our Lord did die
Even when we fail or forget, our High Priest in heaven does intercede
Before the righteous throne of God where on our behalf He there does plead.

He was one of us as a Perfect Man it's true, now we are one with Him
By the priestly position He holds, through Him we can enter in
To the presence of Almighty God, and with Him to take our place
And know we are accepted in the Beloved, by our God of matchless grace.

"Father God, may Thy servant be able in some way today to bring honor, praise and glory to Thee. As I speak Thy word privately and publicly, and pass on what is in my heart, may it be acceptable to Thee and to those who listen. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 3:1-6

GREATER THAN MOSES

We who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are participants in the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The people of God are set apart for Him as those who are united in Christ Jesus. Jewish believers would have had a unique link to the writer of the Hebrews who was probably a Jewish Christian and charged them to fix their thoughts on Christ. In the Jewish culture the high priest was the person of highest authority. What he said and did affected what all the people said and did. We as believers, both Jews and Gentiles, are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." In the church, the basis of authority is the apostles. Our Lord Jesus Christ is "The Apostle," the ultimate, supreme, unequalled authority in the church of which He is "The Head." He is also "The High Priest," the link we have with divine Persons. It is by His high priestly ministry we have continual access to God.

When we "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," or "consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself," we focus our attention on Him, we "fix our thoughts" on who He is and all He has done and is doing on our behalf. The attraction of the Jews had been angels, prophets and people of old times - particularly on Moses, the law-giver. Next to him the high priest was the most important man to them. The Hebrew believers needed to be reminded first of all of who they were. "Holy brethren" set them apart from all others in their culture as Jews. It was made clear to them they were set apart and sanctified to God because of

the Lord Jesus Christ. This went way beyond their nationality. This goes beyond being consecrated to an objective, to being those who have received a "calling" from heaven.

They were charged, as we are, to think of the superiority of our Lord in His position. His position was not that of a servant as was Moses. Our Lord Jesus is the Son. His dignity and holiness was superior to Moses who failed occasionally to carry out the directions God gave him. In contrast, our Lord Jesus did "always those things that pleased the Father." The Apostle (Sent One), was sent by God with a higher purpose than that of leading Israel out of Roman bondage like Moses led them out of Egypt. Our Apostle was sent to be the Redeemer of mankind who made provision for all who will come to God by Him. He is superior in dignity and authority to the highest of all human leaders including Moses.

There are some safeguards in the book of Hebrews to which we should pay attention even though we may not have the same difficulties in our lives as Christians today that those early Jewish saints had.

Heb.2:1. "Take heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

LISTEN AND OBEY TRUTH: Pay attention to truth so as not to drift away into false teaching. The mind, body, and senses are involved in paying attention. Paying attention is hard!

Heb.3:12. "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief."

BELIEVE AND ENCOURAGE: Our hearts turn away from God when we refuse to believe Him. We need to not only have confidence in God and His Word ourselves, but we need to encourage our brethren.

Heb. 3:13. "Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

EXHORT AND BE ON GUARD: The heart gets hard when it gets used to sin. Talk to one another; stay connected; stay in fellowship to prevent this tragedy.

Heb.4:11. "Labor to enter into His rest, lest you fall by disobedience (margin)."

STRIVE AND APPRECIATE: Do not take salvation for granted. Appreciate God's rest by decision and commitment.

Heb.12:3. "Consider Christ, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds."

LOOK UP AND TAKE COURAGE: Keep your eyes on the big picture. We are not alone. Suffering is our training ground for maturity. It develops patience.

Heb.12:13. "Be straight in your life, lest you turn aside the weak."

BE RESPONSIBLE AND LEAD RIGHT: Draw on Christ's strength and then help the struggling ones around us.

Heb.12:15. "Look and see that you are holy, lest you fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you..."

BE ALERT AND BE OPEN: Bitterness never brings anything but trouble and defilement.

We may think we are immune to those pressures which were causing discouragement and spiritual weakness to those believers who were under pressure to conform to the religious groups around them. But in our day popularity of some religious groups and the methods they use to attract people to their church activities, can easily move us to compromise what we know to be scripturally right, and adapt to that which is socially accepted. It is incumbent on us to be reminded of what sanctification really is and how important to God obedience to His word is.

The Lord Jesus Christ was superior to the Jewish priesthood in that His priesthood extends to all humanity in its provision as our way to come to God. There is a dignity associated with His office as the "High Priest" that not only establishes that position, but the superiority of that office which He holds. Our "profession" as Christians who are identified with Him, is greater and higher than that of those who were linked with a failing nation on earth. When we "consider" all that means, it should purify our thoughts, stir us to faithful service for Him from the heart, make us committed to righteous living in deeds and holiness in our walk in this world.

Moses was a great hero to the Jews. He served the Lord God faithfully and with fidelity to all that was entrusted to him. Like Paul who served God "with all good fidelity," and was used by God to write down a number of epistles (perhaps even Hebrews), he wrote the first five books of the Bible as he was "guided by the Holy Spirit." He was the greatest of the prophets and he spoke for God to the people he led. Yet he was still a mere man - a human servant. He prepared the way for the Messiah, Christ, to come, but he was subservient to our Lord Jesus who was, and still is, the faithful Son over God's own house. God is the Builder and the servant works under His authority. The Lord Jesus Christ as the builder of the house is worthy of more honor than the house He is building.

Every house has a builder and the greatest builder of all is our Lord Jesus who is God over "all things." As such He has a glory and honor in character and rank that exceeds all persons, even one who was so faithful as Moses. He who created all things certainly has the authority over His own house. Moses did not originate the truths he taught the people of Israel. He was a public witness to that which God spoke to the people through him. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Word, the expression of God. He is the Builder of God's house and as such has

superior authority because of His Person, His Position and His Possession - of which we are a part. A warning is given to the nation of the Jews in general to not think they are part of God's house just because they are Jews.

Our position in God's house comes by faith in Jesus Christ and nothing else. When we are in Christ, we have a confidence that is not timid nor fearful as if our hope is based on ourselves or some other person. We can live with joy and "full assurance of faith" because our hope is based in the One who is superior to angels and to the famous leaders of men and nations. We can live our lives right to the end with this same hope. Our confidence is in an unchanging Person who will keep us to the end as He promised.

Hebrews 3:1. *"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;"*

APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST.

A mission lay before Him - long since planned
He knew full well the cost - the full amount to be paid
The day had come - first steps to be made - a lowly place
The Father loved Him, but redemption could not wait - a high price

A Son becomes a Servant - doing His Father's will - omniscient
Each act of mercy - each evidence of divine authority - omnipotence
From Judea to Egypt; Galilee to Jerusalem - under a tree - omnipresence
Never avoiding - meeting needs large and small - suffering - obedience

He came, the Sent One - under divine compulsion - a work to do
He came, the Anointed One - no other person would do - a will to obey
He came, the Christ - the Messiah - long awaited by His own - a walk to follow
He came, the Apostle - a message to deliver - a witness to declare

A King and High Priest - heaven and earth connected - unique in His coming
Made a High Priest by God - divinely appointed - unique in His calling
A merciful High Priest - made like us - unique in His compassion
A faithful High Priest - always pleased the Father - unique in His consecration

A Sovereign High Priest - chose the seed of Abraham - like His brethren
A Suffering High Priest - suffered as a man, even death - for His brethren
A Son-High Priest - makes us sons, members of God's family - are His brethren
A Superior High Priest - represents a holy nation/peculiar - separates His brethren

As our High Priest, He made atonement - making His people acceptable
Continually on our behalf, He intercedes - making our prayers acceptable
He hears our hymns and songs, as High Priest - making our praises acceptable
Our service is known by our High Priest - making our practices acceptable

"Even as I pray now Father God, I am conscious of the high priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Access to Thee through Him is possible because of His present ministry on my behalf. I need to be reminded from time to time that I have no right to make a casual, nonchalant approach into Thy presence. Thou art God - I thank Thee for the Great High Priest there making me acceptable to Thee because He is acceptable, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 3:7-19

HARD HEARTS

The believers in Christ who maintain a hopeful, meaningful and joyful attitude in life in spite of all the false teaching, opposition and temptation to compromise the truth of God, are those whose faith is real. They look beyond themselves and their own personal failing. They can see beyond the short-comings of others, because they are looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and to the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. Such people have a heart that is soft and sensitive to the ways and will of God. They also are aware of the needs of other people and are ready to meet their needs if possible. A soft heart doesn't necessarily mean they are a "soft touch" to everything that comes along. Nor does it mean they are easily led astray. Rather, such people are "easy to be entreated of" and are aware of the fact they do not know everything. They know that God is still working in them to "conform them to the image of His Son."

In contrast to these people, are those who are hard-hearted. The illustration used in this section of chapter three is a reference to the children of Israel who had been freed from Egyptian bondage by the mighty power of God. They had seen and experienced the miracles God had done for them in delivering and sustaining them. In spite of their personal awareness of God working in their past, when they got to the edge of the promised land, their hardened hearts

convinced them God could not deliver them from the giants in the land. How insulting it was to God for them to think He was unable to keep His promise and give them the inheritance He had promised Abraham and could fulfill through them. They had lost their faith in the promises of God and consequently in God Himself. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him," is not just a statement referring to the past. Faith is necessary for us to live and please God today and in the future.

Hard-hearted people are stubborn, and "stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." It is setting one's self up as knowing what is right and wrong without considering God's will and word. There is a pattern that is followed leading to this dry clay, hard clod of dirt, hard-hearted attitude. For some reason when a person is attracted to what they know is wrong, and they go ahead and do it anyway, they excuse themselves and stifle their conscience. Then instead of "confessing and forsaking" that sin, they try to cover it with denials and seek to minimize its seriousness. Then they seek to convince themselves it really isn't too bad because "others do it and it works for them." But a series of consequences follow in which Bible reading loses its attraction, prayer becomes perfunctory or is forsaken all together. Gathering with the Lord's people is not as important as it used to be and then it becomes an embarrassment to come after being away so long. The pursuit of business and pleasure then takes all of one's time and the result of a long series of choices to disregard God's will leads to a hard heart.

Those who resist God's will and ignore their own increasing hardness will be cast aside from God like a worthless cake of hard bread that has no use for anything positive in the things of God. Human rebellion against God's provision in Christ, provoked God when Israel was in the wilderness. They tested God many times and yet He remained faithful to them as a nation. A hard heart of unbelief will assure a person they will not be accepted by Him because they have departed from the living God. Those who will not trust the Lord will not enter into His rest. Those who are believers can experience that spiritual rest now when they live in faith presently and in view of the future rest.

God rested on the seventh day, the Sabbath, after creating a finished work. We rest in a finished work He has done for us. That was the rest of satisfaction. Israel could have found rest in Canaan, but because of "an evil heart of unbelief" missed the rest of a promised inheritance and died in the wilderness in unbelief. We can find rest in our souls today when we take our yoke of identification with Christ upon us. Our relationship with Him gives us the rest of confidence. There is ahead of us an eternal rest as a result of the eternal life God gave us as a gift. The rest of full salvation past, present and future provides rest for us body, soul and spirit. Those Hebrews who would not put their faith in Christ would never enter into rest in Christ, even though they were privileged people.

Believers in Christ have been given by our Lord a new heart, a new spirit-life, new desires, and a new nature because we are a new creation in Christ Jesus. To maintain our courage, hope and joy in a believing heart, we need to be conscious of the fact that around us, our enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil are actively at work to harden our hearts. We need the help and fellowship of the Lord's people. We need to live by faith and testify as to the reality of our faith. We need the concern of other people and need to constantly nurture our souls from God's word and specific prayer.

We learn from the example of Israelites who failed to enter into their inheritance because of their hard-hearted unbelief and attitude toward their faithful God. Unbelievers in Christ will never experience the rest God promises to those who trust Him. They feared what was ahead even though God had blessed them, delivered them, and preserved them, even performing miracles on their behalf. They saw giants instead of a conquering God. Consequently, they died in unbelief. There are a number of lessons we can learn from exhortations in Hebrews that relate to our response to God.

We need to "Give heed" - of earnest attention [2:1], lest there be unbelief [3:12]. We need to give heed to the teaching, to the word of prophecy [2Pe.1:19], to yourself and the doctrine [1Ti.4:16], and to the ministry we have received of the Lord [Col.4:17].

We also need to "Consider" - the offices Christ holds for us [3:1]. That means to pay attention, or fix our eyes on "your ways" [Hag.1:7], on the ravens and lilies [Lu.12:24,27], on the Apostle and High Priest of our profession [Heb.3:1], on one another [Heb.10:24], and most of all to "consider Him" [Heb.12:3].

We need to "Hold fast" - to God's things in consecration [3:6; 4:15], to "my righteousness I hold fast" [Job 27:6], to hold fast that which is good [1Th. 5:21], hold fast the confidence [Heb.3:16], hold fast our profession [Heb.4:14], hold fast that which I have received [Heb.10:23].

We need to "Hear" - God's voice and to obey His Word [3:7,15; 4:7], hear His voice (Holy Spirit) [Heb.3:7], hear His voice, harden not [Heb.3:15], hear My voice and open the door [Rev.3:20], hear the voice of the Son of God [Jn.5:25].

We need to "Take heed" - watch the heart lest it harden; cultivate [3:12].

We need to "Exhort" - to prevent defeat in life [3:13], lest we be hardened by deceitfulness [3:13], to earnestly contend for the faith [Jude 3], exhort young men to be honorable [Ti. 2:6], exhort by preaching the word [2Ti.4:2], exhort in prayer [1Ti.2:1], exhort as how to live and please God [1Th.4:1].

We need to have reverential fear. "Fear" - godly fear stimulates faith, incentive to love, prevent failure [4:1], godly sorrow that produces repentance [2Co.7:11], and godly fear in our service [Heb.12:28].

REST

Moses did what Moses could, but he was still a man
For Israel's unbelief to be so strong is hard for me to understand
Until I realize that faith isn't magic, it depends upon my choice
Will I follow what I know is right and listen to God's voice.

It would be wrong for me to miss the lessons God intends
Those things happened to Israel so that I might apprehend
The ways of God with me today, not just to compare myself with them
But to make sure I know how to act in situations life does send.

If I only looked around today, I would probably give up in despair'
Because increasing darkness in men is seen just about everywhere
Morally and spiritually compromise seems what people like the best
But nothing around attracting most people, gives my spirit rest.

Even though some of God's people seem to live in fear and doubt
Far be it from me to lose my joy, or on doubt's waves be tossed about
Because my rest is where God does rest, His promises are "Yea and Amen"
What he began in grace to do, He will bring to a glorious end.

God rested after six days of creation, in Christ's redemption I do rest
Even when in the turmoil of life, in His accomplishments I am blest
I can rest in faith knowing that the end of life brings a restful eternal day
All that God thinks I need to know, I'll understand when shadows flee away.

"Loving Father, I know by observation the decline and descent of modern society into darkness is continuing and getting more obvious day by day. My concern for this day is that both Thy servant and those to whom I speak this day, will live high enough above all of this darkness, that we will see people as Thou dost see them, and events as they really are in Thy sight. Give me compassion for the people, faith for daily living, grace in speaking and love for Thee, Thy word and mankind. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 4:1-11

COMING SHORT

There are some people who when they first hear the Gospel and begin to understand the blessings of salvation and the deliverance from the wrath to come, from hell and the lake of fire by the sacrificial work of Christ, seem to have become believers. Then the opposition that comes against the Christians, and the pressures of social life and sometimes family life, reveals they have no power to resist sin because the Holy Spirit is not within. Reforming one's life and forsaking bad habits does not make a person a Christian. Jewish people who read this letter were not all true children of God. Some had turned back to Judaism and others were in danger of following that same path.

Those who trust in their own works, their religious affiliation or are hoping to make themselves acceptable to God by their own efforts, have not put their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Salvation by grace alone, it "is not of works, lest any man should boast." God has promised rest that comes from Him, not a pinnacle of achievement we receive by self-effort. There is a danger of people thinking they can add to the finished work of Christ. It is taught in some places that "we have to do our part" and if we are sincere and try our best, God will give us rest. Unfortunately, some of God's dear children remain in doubts about their salvation because they are never sure if they have done enough. They think they should be doing more or have some miraculous experience, some ecstatic emotion that takes them out of themselves as an assurance of the rest God gives.

The illustration of the children of Israel not entering the promised land because of unbelief would have been well known by the Hebrews. There are those today who know a lot about Christ because they have studied the Bible and read books about Him, or have been taught about Him by other people. They have a knowledge about Him but have never put their personal faith in Him. They do not know Him in a personal way. The Gospel they have

heard is not "mixed with faith." We must believe in Him and then the works we do supports the confession and reality of faith which we profess. We trust Christ first for salvation and then do what He says with the motive of love making us want to please Him.

God rests when there is a work in which He has been involved is completed to His satisfaction. He looked at the creation He made and it was "good," so He rested in that finished work. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is a "finished " work to which nothing can be added or taken from it. Those who truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, rest where God rests - in the finished redemptive work of Christ. The future joy of God, and consequently of those who believe on Jesus will be experienced when the new heavens and new earth are in place in their perfection, and those who have been made a "new creation in Christ Jesus" will enjoy the blessings of a sinless society, a world free from any evidence of sin and a spiritual rest in which everything that will be done will be to the glory of God.

The Israelites could have entered Canaan under the leadership of Moses and later Joshua, but they did not act in faith. They disobeyed God and died in the wilderness. Our Lord Jesus has promised the rest of a perfect relationship with God based on His acceptance because of satisfying the righteous claims of God by His finished work on the cross. We do not create the situation nor do we have the criteria to produce true rest. We rest in our Lord Jesus for that privilege and the basis of it. It is up to us to trust and obey Him "to be happy in Jesus." The time and opportunity for that to happen is "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

God desires us to know that rest and peace now. We have been given eternal life now that fits us to enjoy the rest God gives now, and we will have forever in our eternal state. The gift of eternal life gives eternal rest of soul, spirit and fellowship with God. with that all before us, we labor earnestly for the Lord to accomplish the work He has given us. Our efforts are not to earn that rest, but to claim all that the gift of God has provided right in this present time. There is joy in laboring for the Lord that accompanies the "yoke" of Christ that gives rest to restless spirits. There is satisfaction of a work well done when we have put every effort into furthering the kingdom of God. When we have committed ourselves to do His will and the decision has been made to "glorify God in our body and spirit which is His," there is the rest of satisfaction that makes living for our Lord a great joy to us.

Hebrews 4:12. *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the heart."*

KEEP IT SIMPLE.

Precepts are truths that are stated. They are clear and uncomplicated. The wording is precise and easily understood. They included the "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" that are written in short concise statements. Precepts include the message of the Gospel so unchangeable that they are without debate to every honest soul that is seeking salvation. Perhaps the one short passage in the Bible that covers every aspect of our salvation in a succinct way is Romans chapter three, verses nineteen through twenty-six.

Romans 3:19-26.

- No one is declared righteous before God by observing the law [v.19-21].
- There is a righteousness from God that is apart from the law [v.21].
- The righteousness from God is received through faith in Jesus Christ [v.22].
- This righteousness is available to everyone on the same basis, since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God [v.22-23].
- All who put their faith in Jesus Christ are justified freely by God's grace [v.24].
- This justification is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." [v.24].
- God presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood [v.25].

Or you could put it another way:

- All have sinned.
- Be sure your sin will find you out.
- Christ died for our sins.

Principles are truths applied. There are things not specifically stated that we live by and know to be true because they work in harmony with all the other teaching of scripture. We learn to apply them to ourselves and know these principles by experience. Such are the "principles of conduct" in Romans from chapter 12 through chapter 15 or "principles of confrontation" in 2nd Corinthians.

Practices are truths lived. This process is called "perfecting" or "being made perfect" in various places in scripture. One of these many practices is maturing: the maturing of individuals - God's people; maturing by the word of God; maturing through the Church; maturing with suffering; maturing with the saints.

Progress is truth maturing. It leads to habits of holiness; rules for righteousness; plans for purity; and learning to love.

Peace is truth experienced. The source of this is God. The means of bringing it to me is the word of God. The experience of it is mine as I follow the progression of scriptural simplicity. If I try to change it by some other means, the process is complicated and the results are far less than satisfactory.

There are not only personal lessons to be learned here, but there are personal responses expected as a result of these exhortations in Hebrews. "Labor" means to be diligent. Leanness on the other hand comes from laziness [4:11]. Our heavenly inheritance comes because we have been raised up and seated with Christ in the heavens. Even though we are faced with opposition and challenges, we must give up the temptation to settle down in this world.

When we "Come boldly," we find grace and mercy from the throne of grace [4:16], and in our confidence we do not need to feel uncertain and insecure. We certainly do not want to come flippantly, but we must come with reverence and respect, and we come believing in Him and resting in Him.

Another exhortation, "Go on," is for us to not stop and miss God's desire and goal for us [6:1], which is our maturity. Those people who had stopped at the foundational things were both Jewish unbelievers and Christian believers. There is no mention of the Lord Jesus Christ in that verse. For us there is the necessity of going beyond the basics to the understanding of faith. This is the responsibility of older Christians when teaching new believers.

"Be not slothful," or lazy in divine things, can be because of weak faith, heart, spirit and soul [6:11-12]. Our commitment at the beginning of our Christian life is usually enthusiastic. God will not overlook the evidence of a life lived for Him even though there is failure. There is no reason for letting ourselves get slack. Train hard and run well. We must keep pressing forward toward all God promised and the rest we have now, is a foretaste of that which is ahead.

It is our privilege to "Draw near" with a true heart, full assurance of faith, and a clear conscience, and purity of life [10:22]. We have personal access to God through Jesus Christ and can draw near to Him. We may grow in faith, overcome doubts and deepen our relationship with God when we draw near. Our clean consciences allow us to come in boldness, and our cleansing, once cleansed, means we can approach God in confidence.

We are to "Hold fast without wavering," the confession of our hope, and confidence in the promises of God [10:23] because of our faith. We may grow in faith, overcome our doubts and we may deepen our friendship with God, so we can "Ask in faith, nothing wavering" [Jas.1:6].

In our relationship together we are to "Provoke" to love and labor [10:24]. That is our motivation when we need to remind each other where we came from. We need to remember who we are now, and we need to remind each other of the Lord's coming.

"O Author of all truth and Finisher of faith: it is with gratitude I thank You for giving me the Bible containing the scriptures of truth. I need these to be indelibly impressed on the pages of my mind. I need them to be living in the responses of my heart. I need them to come to life in me daily, that they may truly be 'The man of my counsel and my guide.' Amen."

Hebrews 4:13-16

THE GREATEST PRIEST

The word of God does not leave unsaid all that God wants us to know about Him, ourselves and all that is happening around us. Any additions to the word of God that men might make is a serious matter because God has given us a warning as to the consequences of any such action. The media dramatically reports on events and people making it seem like there is nothing as important as what they say or write at this moment. However, in a very short time even the most impacting of events or subjects are forgotten in the unrolling saga of history. God's word is different. It is not just the dissemination of the thoughts and words of God in a collection of letters, sayings, poetry and historical accounts of events on earth. More than merely communicating ideas, it is a living, inspired breathing out of God's mind to us. It is a living word. There is a dynamic in the word of God that works in us as we read it and pay attention to its message. Through its pages God exposes us for who we are and what we are not. The scriptures examine us as to whether we are spiritually alive or dead. Our morality, integrity and

honesty are exposed as to what they really are. Our faith or lack of it is put into proper perspective. Good and evil are investigated and the motivation behind the decisions we make are put under the searchlight of God's holiness.

There is nothing hidden from God and the scriptures shape our lives so we don't deceive ourselves into thinking God doesn't know everything about everyone. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." It is impossible to keep secrets from Him or hide anything from Him. What I do, what I think, "the thoughts and intents" of my heart, He knows. He is present in every place (omnipresent), knows everything (omniscient), and has unlimited power (omnipotent). And still He is interested in us, cares for us and loves us.

With that understanding of our Lord, we can see why He is the Great High Priest. Christ is a real priest of a superior priesthood that is greater than the priesthood of Aaron. The earthly high priest of Israel was limited as to what he could do, and when and where. The Lord Jesus Christ is superior in His priesthood because He has no limitations as to time, place, authority and access to God. His place at the right hand of God is that of an active priesthood that lasts forever. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

Not only is Christ a real priest [4:14], He is also the rightful priest [5:4-6:20]. The choice of Christ as our priest was made by God [5:4-10]. The challenge of our High Priest is to represent people who are genuine believers even though we often fail [5:11-6:20]. The explanation and description of His priesthood is further given when we learn He is a royal priest, "a priest forever" [7:1-8:5].

Our Lord Jesus Christ took the lowest place in His incarnation when He was "made a little lower than the angels." But now He is the highest of the high by His ascension into heaven and there seated at the right hand of God "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." As a Man, He was *made* a little lower than the angels [Heb.2:7]. As a Kinsman, He is *made* like unto His brethren [2:17]. As the Sufferer, He was *made* perfect through suffering [Heb.5:9]. As our High Priest, He is *made* a high priest after the order of Melchisedec [Heb.6:20]. As our Surety, He is *made* surety of a better covenant [Heb.7:22]. As Inheritor, He is *made* so much better than the angels [Heb.1:4]. As the Exalted One, He is *made* higher than the heavens [Heb.7:26]. During His time here on earth, all of these offices He now bears were added to the "great offices He bears, and bright His character appears, exalted on the throne." He went back to heaven with glory added to glory.

Where do I have to go to get the guidance I need?
The word of God is before me full of wisdom for me to read
What will the results be when I study to learn?
God reveals Himself to me and His truth I discern.

Who will help me that I will be preserved from mistakes?
Our Great High Priest is ready my interests to personally take.
Who pleads my case when inevitable failings do come?
Our High Priest in heaven is Jesus, God's Son.

Where can I go when I need to be strengthened in faith?
I am bid to come boldly to God's throne of grace.
Where will I find grace to help and the mercy I need?
At that throne above the High priest for me does plead.

"I thank Thee Father, for the on-going intercession and advocacy of our Lord Jesus Christ as my Great High Priest. Each day I press my case before Thee in His name, and I find Thy "answers in peace" are just what I need. I am so grateful. Thanks so much in His worthy name, Amen."

Hebrews 5

CHRIST'S PRIESTLY MINISTRY

Both the divine and human aspects of our Lord's nature are emphasized in this chapter as the immature Hebrew believers were reminded of the purpose and person of a high priest. The priests at Jerusalem at that time may have been political appointees, but however they came to the office of a priest, they were obviously not doing what God intended. God chose Aaron and his descendents to be high priests for the nation of Israel. Christ, like Aaron was "called of God" as the legitimate high priest. His priesthood was superior to that of Aaron's in that He was sinless, He was a priest forever and He was the Son of God.

Those who were priests were to be gentle and compassionate with those who they represented, because some were ignorant and others went astray. The priest himself was prone to do the same and had to offer sacrifices for himself as well as for others. The Lord Jesus Christ when He was here on earth could deal gently and compassionately with the needs of others because that was what He was like in His perfect sinlessness. He

made intercession for the sins of the people because He knew their sins, and also knew everything about them personally. He could understand and take their place on the one hand, and on the other He was reverently submissive to the Righteous God.

His priesthood was also superior because it was without a beginning or an end like Melchisedec's, who was "without beginning of days or end of life." Melchisedec was only a man who beginning and end was unknown, but the Lord Jesus Christ is eternally without beginning and end. He knew what it was like to totally identify with us in His humiliation, His suffering and His death on the cross on our behalf. There was never a question on His part as to what God's will was, so He did not have to consult with the Urim and the Thumim as the Old Testament high priest did, to get a reply from God as to what to do. There are, and will continue to be, times when we will pass through "deep waters" and "dark valleys" in our commitment to obey God. The knowledge of the high priestly ministry of our Lord enables us to rest in faith and go forward in courage and obedience, confident of His presence and intercession.

The Lord Jesus Christ obeyed the will of His Father in His life here under circumstances similar to ours, only His went farther to physical suffering and death. In our desire to know and do God's will, we too need to pray in submission and reverence to our heavenly Father and be willing to obey and submit with true hearts to His divine guidance. That doesn't mean that we obey with a grudging attitude and passive obedience, but with a willingness and desire to please and serve Him acceptably. Our Lord was not forced to obey the will of the Father even though it led through the greatest possible suffering.

He did not become morally perfect. He was, is and always will be morally perfect. When He was here, by the suffering He experienced, He entered into our human experience completely. "Being made perfect" meant that by being a participant as a human in the human experience, our Lord Jesus is able to be our acceptable substitute completely. He knew what it was like to live here, to pass through the sufferings of humanity and die an excruciatingly painful death. He knows all about our human situations because He has "been there and done that."

There are a number (at least seven) "eternal" things in the book of Hebrews. The first of these is "eternal salvation" mentioned here in chapter five and verse nine. This salvation has eliminated our condemnation because of our sin. Now there is no judgment passed on us because "there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." We have been placed as children in God's family, been given the assurance of being with Christ forever, given a sure hope, and have had the fear of death and its "sting" removed. We began a new life of following Him when we received "eternal salvation." Our rest is in our Great High Priest for our living and dying because He has loved us and we are His.

The "eternal" things in Hebrews are eternal salvation [5:9]; eternal judgment [6:2], eternal perfection (margin) [7:28], eternal redemption [9:12], eternal inheritance [9:15]. Eternal Spirit [9:14], and an eternal covenant."

Unfortunately, many believers like the Hebrews who read this letter were remaining spiritual children who wanted the things they had always claimed for themselves. They wanted the doctrine of legalism, "dos and don'ts" to excuse them from the consequences of their behavior. They wanted the traditions of men that people who lived before them had, so they would be excused for their unbelief by putting blame on what they had been taught by others. For these, and perhaps other reasons they did not get past the basics of Christianity. They apparently couldn't understand how Christ was their high priest because they hung onto Judaism and wanted to blend in with their past culture. When God saves us, we move out of the sinful condition in which we were comfortable, onto higher ground of a new life in Christ.

Spiritual discernment is necessary to progress from spiritual infancy to maturity as adult sons and daughters of God who share our lives with Him. Our minds must be opened intellectually to grasp deeper truths of the faith. Our consciences must respond morally to the appropriate conduct of mature believers who are disciples of our Lord. Our senses need to be honed to sharpness emotionally so we can empathize with others and still give them guidance from our own experiences with God. Our bodies need to be taken control of physically so that we do not yield to temptation when it comes. When we are mature in Christ, we will be able to know false teaching of scripture when we hear it and avoid it - or correct it when possible.

It is important for us to go beyond mere spiritual survival to spiritual growth. As we practice what we learn, our divine instructor gives us the deeper truths of God that we may understand more of who God is and what He is doing. The more we understand of that, the more able we are to be participants in the growing work of the kingdom of God. Then we are more able to help others who have newly come to faith in Christ, and aid them, and lead them, to mature and develop to the place where they too can become teachers of others. The multiplying principle is the way the work of God grows. The use of God-given gifts, and the understanding of

divine truth gives us the ability to discern what is good and bad. The on-going priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ makes all of this an actuality in them who are exercised to "trust and obey."

Hebrews 5:7. *"Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared:"*

STRONG CRYING AND TEARS.

God was not deaf to the cries of His Son
When He knelt down on the ground to pray -
The Father's was listening, love never ceasing,
To all His Son had to say.
But there was a work before Him He alone had to do,
No one else was qualified -
The awful work to pay sin's penalty lay just before Him,
That's when in prayer He cried.

Words from deep in the depths of His soul,
"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."
If that had happened none of us would
Or ever could from sin and its consequences be freed.
Even though in His humanity, He was willing to go,
He knew there was no other way -
He had to drink that cup to the full,
For the wages of sin to be paid.

The Servant of God, an obedient Son,
Absolute perfection in manhood - He;
Yet not in the least, with never a wrong step,
Did He compromise His Deity.
Grace so amazing that though He was rich,
Yet for our sakes He Himself became poor -
He was not saved from death - He suffered and died -
Therefore, death now reigns no more.

There may be people alive, maybe even me,
Who death's sting never will taste -
By His strong crying and tears; His vicarious death,
Has given us in heaven a place.
Such an offering He made, not coerced when He gave -
Life by dying instead.
Now exalted on high, our High Priest is there
And on our behalf, He intercedes.

"What a faithful Servant, what an obedient Son, O Father, was the Lord Jesus Christ when He was here among men. Even in the extremity of strong crying and tears so intense that His sweat was as blood, He never turned aside from what He came to do. When He was sent until He ascended on high as our Great High Priest, He was the essence of perfect manliness, with compassion, tenderness and humility. At the same time, He was strong in holiness and willingness to become obedient to death, even the death of the cross. I worship with bowed heart here before Thee as I consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners, and the death of the cross, Amen."

Hebrews 6

REALITY OR COUNTERFEIT

There are some truths that are fundamental to Christianity. It is possible for believers to not go beyond the very basics of the faith, and in essence they remain spiritual children whose growth in Christ is stunted. They are not willing to go from their "need of milk" to "strong meat" or truths that strengthen their faith in Christ and commitment to His word. It is not that basic truths are not important or are not true, but maturity as a child of God doesn't come when we just look back to where we started. It is important that our faith in Christ is appreciated and reviewed to see if there is evidence of growth.

Repentance took place when we were awakened to our spiritual condition before God as one who was "dead in trespasses and in sins." There is no way or reason to try to add more repentance to real repentance. We move forward. Genuine faith in God grows to a more complete understanding of who we have placed our faith in that moves us to "live by faith." The confusion of various definitions of baptism leads to useless speculation as to which one is right when we ignore "the principles," the first teaching of baptism. The fact of what baptism is and

why it is important has already been clarified in the scriptures. The resurrection of the dead has been plainly taught and the fact of eternal judgment as to what and where it is leaves no room for mistakes or honest questions. There is no reason to question, add to or further define that which has already been made clear.

Mature Christians are responsible to pass on to new believers the basics they have already experienced rather than simply discussing in a questioning way that which is plainly the truth. Their maturity is a motivation for others following them to "go beyond" the foundation of our faith. When they understand the work and value of the Great High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ, then their understanding of the Old Testament scriptures in the light of the New Testament makes sense. There is no need to spend time comparing Judaism with Christianity. One is the fulfillment of the other and Christ's intercession for us enables us to live effectively for Him.

By going farther than just the first principles, we are made conscious of that which leads to apostasy in those who claim to be Christians but reject the truths of Christianity. Instead of reverting to the old covenant, we press on in the doctrines and principles of the new covenant. The use of the words "we" and "they" or "those" clarifies the fact that there were those Hebrew Christians who were genuine believers in Christ, and there were Hebrews who had experienced some of God's blessings, and had a measure of understanding of the doctrine of salvation, but who were not saved. Even though they knew what was taught and had been moved by the Holy Spirit in conviction and instruction, they were not truly saved by grace alone. "This will we do," refers to those who were real believers in Christ. "Those who were once enlightened," and "They shall fall away" are references to those who were yielding to apostasy. In refusing to accept what was taught, and deliberately rejecting God's truth, they were exposed as unbelievers.

Believing Christians persevere and go on for God in difficult times as well as the good times. Unbelievers may act like they are children of God as far as their conduct but when they are brought into the light of salvation and deliberately reject Christ, they are rejected - they are lost. Those who reject Christ will not be saved. The sacrifice of Christ was once for all and does not have to be repeated for any reason. Repentance will not happen again when one's heart is hardened. A person may be enlightened by the word of God; they may experience some of what it means to be a Christian (tasted); they may even have been partakers (influenced) by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps they have even participated in activities that Christians do. But this does not mean they are true children of God.

The Gospel seed may be sown and its potential is not affected as to its power and ability to produce fruit, but when "thorns and briars" (temptations) are yield to, the harvest is ruined. True believers bear witness to things that accompany salvation. God does not overlook any work of love we do for Him as those who serve Him because we love Him. Ministering to God's people is ministering to God. No matter what those who profess to be Christians may do, God Himself knows who belong to Him and who does not.

Believers are not bored or lazy when we remember who we are and the promises of God as we think of what lies ahead. Abraham had to wait twenty-five years from the time a son was promised him until Isaac was born. Our lives need to reflect our faith in God in spite of what others may do. God's promises are established by the fact that they are His promises, and are true because that is His nature. Those two things ratify His oath and assures us that our hope is secure. Even though other people may "fall away" God always does what he says. Christ, our Great High Priest is continually in the presence of God for us to intercede for us and assure us that we are safe in Him.

Hebrews 6:9. *"But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."*

THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION.

When a lost soul who has been awakened by God to their need of deliverance from sin, and by the words of the Gospel, has come to repentance of sin to God and put their faith in Christ alone for salvation; a real relief comes to the soul – that relief accompanies salvation.

When a person has tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and has experienced the deliverance from sin that is linked with God's work of saving grace; that person is not looking back to see what the sinful world has to offer – he has a satisfaction that accompanies salvation.

When the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned as the Savior and Lord of a believer who has newly come to faith in Christ; the heart of that person is filled with gratitude to the One who gave Himself on the cross in his place. That appreciation for the Lord Jesus, is one of the evidences of reality that accompanies salvation.

When the conversation turns to talking about the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done and who He is; one does not try to change the conversation but is interested to hear more about the Savior – that interest accompanies salvation.

When one hears of another person who has shown some interest in the Gospel and desires to hear more of how to be saved; he is glad and will seek to lead the seeker to the Savior or find someone that will – that concern for others accompanies salvation.

When a subject comes up that is new and interest develops in the hearer who has come to faith in Christ; he or she wants to learn more and understand better the ways of God – that desire to learn accompanies salvation.

When a concern arises that seems hard to understand or a problem comes with a question that is hard to answer; a believer is led by the Holy Spirit to pray and seek answers from God – that longing for God accompanies salvation.

When one hears of an acquaintance who is going through a hard time and perhaps is in a hospital and is in danger of dying; the hearer is wanting to be of help if they can and meet any need they can – that love for others accompanies salvation.

When a need is made known to a person, and it is within the power or ability of the person to rise to the occasion to meet that need; there is a willingness to find out more information in order to help meet the need – that involvement accompanies salvation.

When discouragement sets in because of disappointments in a situation or a person and there is really no ready answer to the cause of the problem; the believer turns to the Lord and presents the situation to God – that trust in God accompanies salvation.

When it seems like there is no answer to some request one may make in prayer to God and the concern goes on and on; there is a recognition that God knows and cares and will answer in His time – that faith accompanies salvation.

“O Righteous Father: I have no doubt that it is Thy desire to bring the needed blessing to each of Thy children at the appropriate time. Doubt and anxiety are not really things that show evidence of a saving work. I do trust Thee without question. Amen.”

Hebrews 7

A GREATER PRIESTHOOD

The subject of discipleship is introduced in Hebrews 7-9. The Hebrew believers were to move on now to becoming mature disciples who would be able to take in the Word of God and then pass on to others what they had received themselves from the "meat of the word of God." The sacrifice they had to make was great because it meant separating from Judaism -- the feast days, the temple, the sacrificial lambs, and the religion they had adhered to as a nation. The old which was shadows and types, had passed on now that the reality had come. Christ is superior to, and better than, the priesthood of Aaron is the theme of chapter 7. The first six verses of chapter 8 teaches that Christ is superior and of far more significance than the Tabernacle in the wilderness which was the most complete and perfect type of the Lord Jesus. The old covenant of the law made nothing perfect because it was given as a "schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ." Christ fulfilled the law and is greater than the law [8:7-13]. All the sacrifices under the law that were offered on the altar were foreshadowing the "one sacrifice for sins forever" that Christ made. He was greater than all the sacrifices that were made on Jewish altars [ch.9:1-15].

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ that was given, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanseth us from all sin," was of greater value than all the blood of all sacrificial animals [9:15-28].

Why is the Melchisedec priesthood introduced and how does it relate to the high priestly ministry of Christ? The Melchisedec priesthood was a unique priesthood because of Melchisedec himself [7:1-3]. He held two offices: king of Salem, and priest of the Most High God which was never in the Aaronic priesthood. In his relationship to Abraham, he was the blesser when he met Abraham returning from the battle when he freed the king of Sodom and brought Lot back. Melchisedec was also the receiver of tithes, one tenth of all that Abraham brought back. The "blesser and receiver" is greater than the one who receives the blessing and gives the tithes. Melchisedec's personal character was that of high morals. He was the king of righteousness as well as the king of peace. Like our Lord Jesus who was from eternity to eternity, there is no record of his genealogy. The record of Christ's genealogy links Him with Israel through both Joseph and Mary. As to Him being the Son of God, there is no recorded genealogy because He was the eternal Son. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all eternal Persons

who have no beginning of days or end of life. There was no birthday nor death day recorded for Melchisedec and in that way he was a type of the Lord Jesus. We remember Christ's birth at Bethlehem and His death at Jerusalem, but we know He was eternal in His existence. At His birth He came from heaven as "God manifest in the flesh." At His death, the grave could not keep Him. He rose from among the dead after three days and three nights. Melchisedec's priesthood was perpetual like our Lord's who is a priest forever.

Abraham had a legal right to take all the spoils of war from the four kings for himself. But it would have ruined his testimony if he had enriched himself through the misfortunes of others. This was a great temptation for him. He could've justified his actions but his moral testimony would've been ruined. God knew Abraham's weakness and so sent help in the person of Melchisedec, the priest of the Most High God. Abraham is reminded that he does not need help from the world. God is his patron and provider. Melchisedec reminds him that God is the "possessor of heaven and earth." Melchisedec also reminds Abraham that he did not win the battle of the kings but God did when He delivered Abraham's enemies into his hand [Gen.14:20]. Abraham gained a victory over the four kings but also over *himself* when he surrendered himself to God.

This is how it is with our High Priest. He reminds us we do not need the help of the world, to cooperate with the world or to compromise with the world. We must separate from that and not touch it. The priest hood of Christ is a necessity for us because of our human infirmity and need. We also need Him as our Intercessor because of the holiness and majesty of God. The present work of Christ, His atonement and intercession, is not now to appease an alienated God nor to overcome divine reluctance to bless a sinner. He makes it possible for God to bless us consistently with all that He is. He allows us to "come near" to God in the view of all the heavenly host. The principalities and powers in heavenly places find in this redemption the "manifold wisdom of God."

Melchisedec's priesthood [7:4-25] gave him the right to accept tithes because he was greater than Abraham. Levitical priests were able to collect tithes also but their rights were limited to Israel. Melchisedec's priesthood reached past racial barriers to extend to all nations. As the blessing, his position was superior to Abraham's so he accepted the tenth Abraham gave him. His priesthood is perpetual and in essence he received tithes from the Aaronic priesthood through Abraham because Abraham was representative of all Jews when he gave tithes. We owe our High Priest everything because of what we have received from Him. Our proportional giving to the Lord indicates the degree of our gratitude.

A change in the priesthood was made in Christ. There were blessings that came by the Levitical priesthood, but Christ's priesthood is a perfect priesthood because of a perfect Priest. There was a legal, structural change. The Lord Jesus belonged to the tribe of Judah so there was a tribal change. Jesus is priest because the law is changed. He has fulfilled all the requirements of the law and we live in the blessings of righteousness imputed to us by the righteousness of Christ. The qualifications of the priesthood are changed because the priesthood of our Lord extends to all who "come unto God by Him." He is a priest forever because His life is eternal. His ministry as priest will never cease because His life will never cease. The law is disannulled because it was weak and unprofitable, partial and temporary. Nothing was ever made perfect by the law. Our Greater High Priest has a permanently established priesthood so that we have a better and sure hope. God's oath is the way the new priesthood is introduced. The Aaronic priesthood had no oath. Our Lord Jesus is the guarantee of the new covenant of grace. There were 84 high priests in Israel and interruptions made it fail. The priesthood of Christ is in perpetuity and there will be no interruptions in the priesthood of Christ.

All previous priests had personal failings because of their limited humanity and the fact that they were born sinners. The personal excellence of our Lord Jesus Christ and the kind of life He has, His eternal life, guarantees eternal security and makes it a superior priesthood. Christ's holiness characterizes His priesthood making it a superior priesthood. Christ needs no sacrifice for Himself thus making it a superior priesthood. Christ, God's Son is perfect for ever by His nature, His practice and His life. "He knew no sin," "He did no sin," in Him is no sin." His service is never interfered with by anything men might do or any laws men might make, making it a superior priesthood.

Hebrews 7:24. *"But this man (priest) because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."*

THIS MAN.

"Man" does not always say what the word does really mean.
Sometimes it is for one man. Other times - men unseen.
Whether it is one or more isn't the real point;
The context of the sentence makes clear the writers' voice.

When God wants us to understand truths about His Son;
He speaks to us as the men we are, in spite of what we've done.
And in that way Christ is set apart, from all men everywhere.

He was unique from the very start, that men His life might share.

He is the Source of life indeed, and life as man He took,
He set aside His glory bright, and in the judgment stood;
That other men cursed by sin's blight, might have cleansing by His blood.
This Man: the surety of a better law is truly the Son of God.

In every part of the life He lived, He proved on every hand;
That He was one of us as man. Yet so we'd understand,
He who made the world with a word and separated sea from land,
Was sometimes hungry, thirsty too - He was a real Man.

As God-Man, here among men He made, this Priest- Man from above;
Came here to earth, of lowly birth; His motivation - total love.
His Priesthood sure, forever pure, eternally will fully prove;
Because of who He is and what He did, will never be removed.

"Father, I thank Thee for the fact of the incarnation when Thou did send the Lord Jesus to be the Savior of the world. I am thankful He was willing to become one of us. The lowliness of that stoop is beyond my comprehension because of my limited view of His glory. I know, to a measure, what I am and for Him to come so far and go so low is a reason for my devotion. For Him to be now at so high a place and assume the role of priest on my behalf brings praise from my heart to Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

In Hebrews we learn a lot about the eternal glory of Christ and the eternal nature of His work: His throne is *for ever and ever*... 1:8. His deity has obtained even more glory because He is the Sin-Purger on our behalf and now is the resting Servant who has accomplished the divine will of His Father. He is the Cause of God's *eternal* salvation for us ... 5:9. The Savior who suffered for us, "The just for the unjust that He might bring us to God," has fully satisfied God's righteous justice on our account. Now He is God's High Priest *forever* for us ... 6:20; 7:21,24,25. As High Priest He has a priestly ministry on our behalf making intercession for us continually. He has obtained *eternal* redemption for us... 9:12. Christ, the Redeemer has paid the purchase price for our redemption with His "precious blood." Nothing can be added to that nor can anything be taken from it. We have received the promise of *eternal* inheritance... 9:15. As the Provider of every "good and perfect gift," we share in God's inheritance with Him as "heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus." He has become the One Sacrifice for sins *forever*... 10:12. The Substitute who satisfied God on our account has made an end of the necessity of innocent substitutes. He has "made propitiation for our sins" and nothing else will do. By His one offering He has perfected *for ever*, them that are sanctified... 10:14. The Sacrifice God has accepted is the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." God provided the suitable offering and we are set apart for Him forever because of His sacrifice of Himself. His *eternal* glory will never be diminished. It will be the theme of the song of men and angels because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and *forever*... 13:8. The King will reign in righteousness and under His rule there will be peace. "Of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Hebrews 8:1-7.

THE NEW COVENANT MEDIATOR

"The sum," the chief point of all that has been written is that we have a High Priest as has been described for us. He is carrying out that ministry on our behalf constantly. He is so acceptable to God, so holy, so one with God that He is set down on the right hand of the majesty on high. Our Lord Jesus Christ is there engaged in an on-going ministry on our behalf. His ministry is in the true tabernacle. The priests in the temple at Jerusalem were still carrying out that which was symbolic of the "True Tabernacle." We have this High Priest who is eternal. Those who are represented by Him are represented in heaven, not in a figurative place. "Somewhat to offer," reminds us that He gave Himself an offering and a sacrifice for sin. He completed the work of "suffering the just for the unjust to bring us to God." He was brought again from the dead with the blood of the everlasting covenant. He presents this before God on behalf of those He represents.

The ministry of our Lord is in heaven. If He were on earth, He could not be a priest because He was of the tribe of Judah, not of the tribe of Levi from which the Israelite priests came who offered sacrifices according to the law. Daily sacrifices were offered for the priests and the people for the forgiveness of sins. The perfect sacrifice of Christ, of which the others were types, finished forever that need of further priests and sacrifices. The book of Hebrews must have been written before 70 AD, when Titus destroyed the city and the temple. The Levitical priesthood which apparently was still functioning in Jerusalem, was a copy and a shadow which only could serve the shadow, not the substance. The excellence of Christ's ministry over the Levitical priesthood is proportionate to the excellence of the second covenant (better) over the first. The tabernacle of which each part had typical teaching regarding the Lord, was a copy and a shadow of heavenly things. It looked forward to the reality of heaven in the future. The tabernacle in heaven is not a copy of the one that was on earth.

The first covenant was ineffective because Israel failed to fulfill the conditions. The new one is effective because our High Priest is the mediator of this new covenant. The perfections of His Person make this new one satisfactory to God. The new one is effective because it is not conditional upon the obedience of men to meet the requirements of the law. Christ has intervened as the Perfect Man who became the Perfect Substitute as the Perfect Sacrifice. We are able to be accepted in Christ who "loved me, and gave Himself for me," and the ground of the covenant is everlasting forgiveness on God's part, and the new birth by the Holy Spirit on our part.

The New Covenant blessings have now been granted to us because of the finished work of our Great High Priest. This "Better Covenant" has brought to pass that which God wanted from His earthly people. God wanted Israel to be a people for Himself; a peculiar treasure; a nation of priests; a people near Himself. The condition of law wasn't that they would acquire their own righteousness and a title into heaven, but that they would be preserved among the nations, for God. The law was weak because Israel was too weak to fulfill the conditions. The quotation from the book of Jeremiah 31:31-34 compares the old covenant with the new covenant of grace, God's offer of forgiveness through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. God announced through Jeremiah a new covenant that would not depend on human faithfulness, but would be unconditional and would depend only on God to be carried out.

It is new for several reasons. It goes to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. It is written in the minds and hearts of those who enter into this covenant relationship with God. God originated all of this because of His mercy, grace and love toward us. He is the One who said, "I will make a great change; give a new nature; give new power; make a new creation. I will reveal Myself to them and they shall be My possession, treasure and delight. They will know, have a personal acquaintance and experience with Me. I will deliver them from being under the guilt of sin. I will not pass sentence on them because I will pardon them." He does this for us all now; Jews and Gentiles alike who are all one in the body of Christ. This will be a fulfillment of national promises for the Jews in the millennium reign. The introducing of the new covenant makes the old vanish and cease to have any place. Dependence on the sacrifice and priesthood of Christ will always be new.

The Holy Spirit gives to those in whom He dwells a new desire to want to obey God. With the new hearts He gives us, we want to please Him and we find our greatest joy is to know that we have pleased our Lord. Rather than being unpleasant to live in the way God wants, we find it a blessings and joy to follow "where He leads me." This happens because the law of God is in us. It is not a lot of rules and regulations in some thick book full of instructions. The Bible is our means of hearing God's personal communication with us. Our consciences are activated to gladly respond to God's will. When we look for the legal ways of the old covenant, or are wanting to "cross-pollinate" with the ways of the world, that which could give us joy and all the blessings of life lived in fellowship with God, becomes boring and growth stops.

Growth in Christ is a constant that will not be completed, at least not until we get to heaven. We don't really know whether we will be continually growing in the Lord in the future. But until the time we get there, growing is the normal thing in the life of a child of God. When that slows or stops, we know it. Joy either decreases or stops and we become critical and bitter people who defile others. We become ineffective in our Christian testimony and our spiritual life. We lose interest in the reading of the Bible and prayer fades away to being only a habit. Or it becomes obsolete to us. It is incumbent on us, when any signs of spiritual deterioration show up in our lives, to consider what I must do to regain that spiritual momentum, and what I must stop doing or thinking that has caused this dryness of soul and spirit. How gracious and good of God to assure us that when we fail, He will be "merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more."

Hebrews 8:1-2. *"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: we have such an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."*

SUPERIOR.

He is not the same as those in the past -
Far superior in Majesty is He.
Not only as the priests who came before -
But He is superior in ministry.

Provision was made in the sacrifices of old -
But each sacrifice was only temporary.
Our High Priest was the offerer and offering -
A final perfect sacrifice was made at Calvary.

Covenants of men are important to them -
More important are the ones made with God.
Our new covenant made is established since then -

A better covenant ratified by our Lord.

A better atonement made by the blood of God's Lamb -
Didn't just cover, but put sin away.
Into the good of that covenant I came -
It established for me eternal security.

Our royal High Priest in heaven sat down on the throne
By virtue of the blood that He willingly shed -
We are seated with Him by no claims of our own,
But based on the completed new covenant He made.

Superior in every way, our Savior-King-Priest -
Now presents to God all that we give.
In the better sanctuary we sit, forgiven and blessed -
We live there with Him because our Savior lives.

“O Holy God in heaven: I give thanks to Thee for the blessings of the Greater One, the Lord Jesus Christ who is King, Priest, Mediator and my own Savior. I praise Thee today for the fullness and completeness of His sacrifice. The new and living way into Thy presence allows me to come to Thee in this way. I thank Thee for this. It is my desire to live consciously in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus enjoying all the time the blessings of the new covenant and the “better things” the Lord has provided. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Hebrews 9:1-14.

THE PLACE (The True Tabernacle)

The first covenant had the best type of Christ in the Tabernacle where God dwelt with His people near Him. Divine service was in the hands of the appointed priesthood. The regulations for worship and the various kinds of offerings were clear and happened at the place. In the sanctuary there were types of spiritual truths that represented God's fellowship with His people. The lamp stand that lit the sanctuary reminded those priests of the holiness of the testimony they represented. The table of show bread typified the people of Israel and their oneness as a people consecrated to God. The altar of incense would speak of the value of worship to God and the necessity of His people being continually conscious of His presence with them. Then in the Holiest there was the ark, the mercy seat, the tables of stone on which was written the law, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, all contained in the ark. The Aaronic priesthood was there as a shadow of the reality which was to come. This was all temporary. Even the earthly high priest could only enter one day a year with blood for an atonement for him and then again with blood for an atonement for the people.

To the Jews as a nation this was the most holy spot on earth. Now as Hebrew Christians they needed to remember this was all figurative of the reality they now had. There was a new, and living way for them to enter the presence of God themselves. To carry out the types and shadows did not deal with the problem of sin. They were simply looking forward to that which was to come which was real and would actually solve the sin problem. They had to look beyond the shadows to Christ. "Eternal redemption for us" has been provided through the death of Christ who has delivered us from the bondage and consequences of sin.

Rules and traditions do not cleanse the conscience. They expose what is wrong even though one may work as hard as possible to try and make themselves clean before a holy God. In the old covenant and tabernacle blood was sprinkled or poured out at the altar; once a year on the mercy-seat; on occasions sprinkled on individuals -- on the priests, and on the lepers [Lev.8::30; 14:25]. Ashes of the burnt heifer were sprinkled on an unclean person [Num.19:18-19]. This cleansing made it possible for a person who had physical contact with a dead body or such to again have access to the Tabernacle courts to participate in the service and worship of God. Now the blood of Christ addresses the sin of defilement of the spirit and gives access to the Father. Christ was the Anointed of God, the Son of man, the Son of God, equal with the Father, of infinite worth and dignity. The value of Christ is infinite. The conscience is cleansed -- no condemnation.

The "blood of Christ" should always move our hearts. "Purge" (cleansing) has a view to our worship in priestly service. That gives high motivation to not allow defilement. Our consciences are able to be cleansed by Christ's blood. We are freed from the sting of death and are made alive unto God so we can serve Him acceptably because of the blood of Christ. The power of sin has no dominion over us because of the blood of Christ. It is foolish for a forgiven sinner to try to earn forgiveness when it has already been granted to us. When the conscience is awakened because of sin, we must come to our heavenly Father in confession and accept the forgiveness He has provided. Those who brought innocent animals in the past as substitutes for sin would look beyond the animal in faith and see that God accepted the sacrifice they made when they acted according to His

word. They were ceremonially accepted on the basis of the coming sacrifice Christ would make. When they understood that as they looked ahead in faith like Abraham did, they "rejoiced to see My (Jesus') day, and were glad."

For us the knowledge that Christ's sacrifice has been made and accepted by a Righteous God, transforms our lives into one that sincerely desires to please God. The cleansing of the heart and life gives us joy when we appreciate Him. What He did is of infinite satisfaction to God and our inability to please God in our own strength does not create a barrier between us and Him. On the other hand, any attempt to reach God by our own effort would be an insulting reflection on God Himself. People today honor and glorify self-achievement and self-effort. They think they are a successful person if they have a lot of money, are physically strong and fit, have become famous because of some effort they have made in sports or become of some invention they have made. In the scriptures, success is not measured in that way. When we have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our own Savior from sin because of His sacrifice on the cross, and the blood of Christ has purified our conscience, then we understand in the kingdom of God the way up is down, the way to win is to lose, the way to get is to give, and the way to live is to die.

Hebrews 9:15-22.

THE PROOF (The Shed Blood)

Old Testament sacrifices didn't save those who brought them. Those people were saved by the sacrifice of Christ that was yet to happen and the sacrifices they brought were in anticipation of the true sacrifice yet to come when Christ would "offer Himself without spot to God." The innocent substitutes without any blemish was accepted by God in view of the coming of Christ to die for their sins. The first covenant required priests going into the Tabernacle day after day, and the high priest to go into the Holiest one day every year. The new covenant has one High Priest who passed through the tabernacle and entered once for all into the Most Holy presence of God. He entered with His own blood of offering Himself without spot to God. All on whose behalf it was offered are accepted. There is no point in returning to a sacrificial system that was symbolic of the real. Christ has come. Christ's blood was effective and by offering Himself, He Himself is the Mediator of the new covenant. Because of His mediation, not only are we accepted, but are able to participate in the blessings of the new covenant. All these blessings depend on the fact that the death of Christ took place.

After a person dies, the will can be read when a death certificate has been produced. The will does not have any effect as to distributing its benefits while the "testator" is still living. Where a covenant is made, each participant in the covenant dies to themselves. When passing on an inheritance, there must be evidence of the covenant victim; for a covenant is only of force over dead bodies, for it is not binding as long as the covenant victim lives. The first covenant which we know as "The Old Testament," required sprinkling of the book and the people, which satisfied the fact that a holy God could only deal with those who are holy. It did not come into effect without blood. Everything that was used had to have evidence that an innocent death had taken place and that blood sprinkled made it holy, separated to God. Anything to be used for God had to be cleansed by blood. This satisfied God's holiness and He esteemed it cleansed. It is God's prerogative to declare on what basis He can bestow remission. The person under the value of the blood is not charged with his sins. We can partake of the blessings of the new covenant by believing on Christ absolutely.

The greatest symbol of life to us is blood. Without blood we die. The use of blood in consecrating people and things for God's use wasn't because God finds a kind of glory in blood or in seeing something die. Rather the point of the shedding of blood was to symbolize the giving of life. When Jesus gave His life for our sins, that was so we wouldn't die (be separated from God) eternally, and so we would live with Him forever. He is the source of life and so gave His life on the terms of satisfying the new covenant. God could accept us and give us life because the innocent Substitute shed His blood. What a blessing it is for us that He who died for us has the "keys of life and death," and though He "lay down His life, [He] had power to take it again." When Christ rose from among the dead, He was the Victor over sin and death.

Hebrews 9:23-29.

THE PRESENTATION (The Priest)

The sprinkling of blood accomplished the cleansing or consecrating of those things that were "a pattern" of that which was real. The consecrating of heavenly places required "better sacrifices." There must be some things in heaven beside our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, of which the Tabernacle was a picture. That final and fully acceptable offering that satisfied a Righteous God is the blood of Christ. Now He appears before God for us. He presents our service and needs as well as our worship and praise to God for us. His work of salvation by His own blood is accomplished so He is not there to remind God that we are forgiven. By His death for sin on our behalf, we do not have to die spiritually even though physical death lies before us. For a believer in Christ physical death is a door through which we pass into heaven.

The high priest of the past had the names of Israel on his shoulders and on the breastplate. Our High Priest appears before God with our names and our eternal redemption. The sacrifice does not have to be repeated. His saving work for us does not have to be repeated because He has dealt with our sin of the past present and future. His sacrifice for us was once for all. Only once has He been made visible as a man among men to offer this sacrifice because He put away once for all. He carried, "bare our sins" once for all. That was the purpose of His coming "in the end of the world," or "the culmination of the ages" when He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning Himself. The "end of the ages" will be completed when He comes again.

At the return of Christ there will be judgment. Even though people do not like to think that God will not deal righteously with every person, there will be judgment for everyone who is not in Christ. For the many whose sins He carried, there is no judgment, but salvation. God's righteous judgment that should have been on us, was put on Him when He "suffered, the just for the unjust to bring us to God." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." The highest place of appeal to which an unsaved person can appeal is the cross. God's righteous judgment dealt with human sin there. Each person can either accept that offer of free and full salvation by accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as their own Savior without adding anything of their own effort to that "blood sprinkled way," or refuse to come on the terms of salvation "by grace through faith" and be condemned because of their own inability to please God and fulfill His righteous demands.

There are three "looks" at "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever" [13:8] in chapter nine of Hebrews. The first is A LOOK BACK at THE CROSS: [Heb.9:26]. *"he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."* It was there He was once offered to bear the sins of many. Like Aaron the priest did in type as written in Leviticus 16:21, all the sins of the people were dealt with by the blood although there it was temporary. Now, according to Romans 5:12, "By one man, sin entered into the world and death by sin," so grace "by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded to many." That has happened as John the Baptist declared in John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world

The second is A LOOK UP at THE LIVING SAVIOR who is OUR PRIEST: [Heb.9:24]. *"He appears in the presence of God for us."* At this present time our Lord who "ever liveth" [7:25] for us is working on our behalf as the high priest we need. His present life assures us that because He lives, we shall live also, and He is "alive forevermore" [Rev.1:18]. He promised shortly before He died that those who believe in Him shall "see Me" [Jn.14:19]. At this present time "we see Jesus" [Heb.2:9] who is "the Apostle and High Priest of our Profession" [Heb.3:1]. It is well for us to "consider Him" [Heb.12:3] and keep "looking unto Jesus" [Heb.12:2].

There is also a third look, A LOOK FORWARD to THE COMING ONE: [Heb.9:28]. *"He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation."* We look forward into the future and appreciate His promise in John 14:3, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." Messengers from heaven told the disciples at the time of His ascent into heaven that "He will come again in like manner as ye have seen Him go" [Acts 1:10]. Now we are daily "looking for that blessed hope" [Titus 2:13]. In Philippians 3:20, "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus." What a joy it will be when we see Him. *"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is far extended."* Isa.33:17

Hebrews 9:11-12. *"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building: neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."*

ETERNAL INHERITANCE.

People watched the yearly ritual as the priest moves behind the veil
With the blood in hand he enters, life or death in this entailed.
A Holy God with holy people, here are met to deal with sin.
If the blood is there accepted, a year will pass, then it's done again.

Angels watching, all the hosts of heaven, as the King-Priest enters in.
Not a ritual, this is greater, once for all He has dealt with sin.
Blood of His own shed - full remission - eternal redemption's price is paid.
Access we now have to the holy place, by the sacrifice He made.

There the Mediator of the new covenant appears in the presence of God for us.
Now not impossible but a reality, with an eternal inheritance we are blessed.
Once for all, when our Lord appeared, He dealt with sin in a legal way.
All that was needed, He has provided - sin cannot demand another price to pay.

Settled in heaven, full and complete, nothing more for sin's remission demanded.
There He appears in the presence of God, not enemies now - in Him accepted.

Continually there on our behalf, what a comfort and joy to know He is there.
Physically separate but joined in the Spirit, in heaven for us He does appear.

Of the eternal inheritance we now are partakers, a little foretaste of what is to come.
We wait Christ's appearance in the air to receive us, gathered to Him around the throne.
O glorious future, salvation complete a kingdom of priests with the Great High Priest -
Fellow-heirs of the Lord Jesus gathered around Him, worshiping at His feet.

“Father, death and its inevitability doesn't seem to hold a grip on me because I know the Lord Jesus Christ appears in the presence of God for us. The inheritance we have as believers is an encouragement to look off unto Jesus and know that He who appeared to put away sin, will appear again and call us to Himself. I anxiously wait for the day to come. But until that time, I would like to be about Thy work in the way that is most acceptable to Thee and to truly be “occupying until He comes. Amen.”

Hebrews 10

THE POSITION (Right Hand)

A shadow like a sketch of a house is obviously not the real thing but has the outline of reality. The law in the beginning of this chapter is looked as a very limited portrayal of what it means to come in faith to Christ and be accepted by God. The shadows did not make perfect those who saw the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement each year. As they waited for the high priest to emerge from behind the veil there would have been a certain anxiety. Are we accepted? Can we draw near to worship or is our sin keeping us separate from God so He will not hear us? The sacrifices made did not provide cleansing from sin once for all and so the sense of guilt was not removed completely. There would have been a temporary consciousness of relief because of forgiveness on the basis of a sinless sacrifice of an innocent animal. That annual Day of Atonement reminded them of their need of forgiveness and they would look beyond the offering to the Lord wondering if He would be satisfied.

The forgiveness we have in Christ because of His sacrifice once for all is permanent. There is no need of another being made or anything added to it because of the perfections of His Person and the total identification with us in our need. He was an innocent, sinless, perfect sacrifice of the same kind. He was a spotless Man and so was separate from sinners, yet was "made sin for us, He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Our forgiveness is powerful in that it enables us by virtue of the Holy Spirit within to overcome sin, and "If we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." When we confess it, it is gone forever.

In Old Testament times believers followed God's command and brought an animal without blemish or fine pure flour. Those symbolic things looked forward to Christ's perfect sacrifice that He would make when He "offered Himself without spot to God." Those sacrifices of old times pointed to what Christ would do to take away sins forever. God in grace, looked at their willingness to obey Him by bringing the sacrifices He designated. On that basis He forgave them when they demonstrated their faith in Him. The scripture quotations indicate that God desires obedience and a true heart in order to be satisfied with the one who brought the offering. We didn't meet that requirement but our Lord Jesus did in His love for the Father and His obedience to His will.

People have an idea that there are some sins that are serious and others are not. They pick and choose which ones they will allow in their lives. The fact that a life was forfeited for sin even in the Old Testament sacrifices, shows how serious sin really is. Every sacrifice a person brought was costly. The sacrifice of Christ when He gave His own life for us, demonstrated His love for us and should call from us faithful service and whole-hearted devotion as expressions of appreciation. The cost of His sacrifice is far beyond our capacity to evaluate. The elimination of the ceremonial law didn't mean the moral law as contained in the Ten Commandments was eliminated. That standard of righteousness had to be fulfilled for our acceptance by the Holy God, and Christ did that once for all when He died for us. The system of sacrifices and ceremonies was no longer needed after Christ died, was buried and rose again. Even the moral law which was given as a "schoolmaster" to bring us to God, is beyond our ability to fulfill. But our Lord Jesus did fulfill that for us. He has become the "One Sacrifice for sins forever..." [10:12]. As the Substitute for us, by His one offering He has "perfected *for ever*, them that are sanctified..." [10:14]. The Sacrifice He made has effectively cleansed us.

Priests in the Old Testament were always standing because their work was never finished. Christ finished the need of sacrifices once for all so He is able to be seated at the "right hand of God." The crucified Christ has *sat down* in perpetuity because of the perfection of His sacrifice. The crucified Christ is now the crowned Christ. His sacrifice, His blood, "cleanseth us from all sin." Those who add in any way, any thing to the work of Christ are rejecting Christ. That would deny the validity and value of all that He did.

He has already made us complete in Him in regard to our standing in Him. We are being made holy as to our state. He is "expecting" or waiting for the end of the age when all opposition to the effects of His grace in redeemed people will end. Now we need His daily intercession for our lives to be holy because we are still in the growing process as we apply the truth of the scriptures to our lives. He guides and disciplines us as we pass over to Him the control of our ambitions and goals for which we are striving.

It is a cause for wonder and great joy that God will not remember our sins again. When we confess and forsake them, He is "faithful and just to forgive" us. And then God does what only God can do - He forgets them by virtue of His infinite will. Now we can come to Him in true fellowship. Let us draw near with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith. We don't go into God's presence casually but with pure and sincere worship as individuals who know we are accepted in Him. We go without doubting because our conscience and hearts are cleansed when we apply the principles of the word of God to our lives. This confidence is because of our acceptance in Christ

Now it is our privilege to "Draw near" with a true heart and in full assurance of faith. With a clear conscience in our minds and purity of life in our bodies, we have personal access to God through Jesus Christ and can draw near to Him. We are able to grow in faith, overcome doubts and deepen our relationship with God. Our clean consciences allow us to come in boldness to God and by virtue of our cleansing, once cleansed we can approach God.

With our faith, we "Hold fast without wavering," the confession of our hope, the promise of our acceptance. Because of that assurance we may grow in faith and overcome our doubts. We may deepen our friendship with God and "Ask in faith, nothing wavering" [Jas. 1:6]. Our motivation to "Provoke" to love and labor is that our High Priest is always there for us. We need to remind each other where we came from. We need to remember who we are now and we need to remind each other of the Lord's coming. Because of our great High Priest, we have access to God through Christ. As we grow in faith and our relationship with God deepens, we are able to respond to the charge to "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." We need to look for ways to encourage fellow-believers to love and get involved in good works. That kind of love gives itself for others. Love is the root and good works are the fruit. We need to stir up each other to live a life of love.

"Not forsaking" the gathering of the Lord's people together, is a warning to us that to neglect the means of grace means to miss the grace we minister to each other *"As the day approaches."* To neglect Christian meetings is to give up the encouragement we can give others and miss out on the help of other Christians. In our meetings we share our faith and strengthen one another in the Lord when we worship, learn and pray together. Spiritual struggles and persecution will increase as time passes and we will need the support we can give each other. Anti-Christian forces will grow in strength and we need to resist the pressures of apostasy. Difficulties should never be excuses for missing the gathering of the saints.

There were Jewish believers who were attracted still to the practices of Judaism. But it is made plain there is no other acceptable sacrifice for sin, only the sacrifice that Christ made by His death on the cross. Any person who rejects the Savior even though they may know the Gospel clearly and what it means to them, will not be saved. "There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." To reject the strivings of the Holy Spirit, the sacrifice of Christ and the love of the Father, leads to a greater punishment than those in the Old Testament days who despised the law and the sacrifices that were only shadows of the reality we now have access to. To reject God and His mercy is to go into eternal punishment as the consequence of that choice of "counting the blood of Christ" as an unholy thing.

"Call to remembrance" was an appeal to the Hebrews to press on in spite of opposition and pressure to conform to the opinions of others who are not believers. A short memory is a long loss. Remembering former days and former afflictions helps us to persevere in faith when facing persecution and pressure. Suffering can be used to build and patience. It is often in times of great stress we may sense God's presence and appreciate the help of Christians in a way we never thought we would. We need to remind ourselves that *"Ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance."* There is a reality to what we have already been promised.

"Cast not away" our confidence in God and His promises is our anchor. We have two roads to choose from. Take the high road of confidence and reward because life can be treacherous and danger is always near. There are not many who commit to living for God, but there are more than you think all over this world who are keeping focused on the Lord and His grace. *"After ye have done the will of God, ye might (will) receive the promise."*

"Believe" is not a one-time thing because to keep believing is to reach the goal of salvation. This separates real believers from apostates. We separate from those who draw back from faith in Christ alone. Apostates are not

true believers. True believers go ahead in faith. The life of a believer is one "lives by faith." This leads us into the challenge of remembering those who are in the hall of faith in the account of chapter eleven.

We need to persevere in faith and conduct when facing pressure and persecution. Suffering can build both our character and patience. In great stress we may feel our need of God more keenly. The Bible gives us a clear choice between two directions in life. Take the high road even though it looks more difficult and treacherous. That road gets steep in places and it takes a toll on our energy. It gets lonely. It may not seem like many are on it, but there are more than you imagined. Some are there because of your example. It gets slippery on the high road. Satan makes the narrow parts icy, but go for the high peaks of life's experience. God has a lifeline around you. When you are tempted to falter in your faith or turn aside to something easier or stop going ahead, keep focused on what God has done for you in the past and what He offers in the future - and keep on climbing. For the time being those believers needed patient endurance and to hold firm to the faith they professed. The Lord Jesus gives us that perseverance in persecution, in trials and when pressured by false premises of fair-weather Christians. This isn't speaking of salvation, but is evidence of our commitment to Christ.

Hebrews 10:22. *"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.

The High Priest is in His place - the veil is rent - the blood has been shed
We are not pressing into a place we don't belong - consciousness of evil and guilt lifted
Cleansing has been made by the Spirit and the Word - to give new life - to be holy
"Let us draw near" to Him - to His people - to His house - to our God in faith.

Confession has been made with the mouth - "Jesus is Lord" - He is our Hope
There is no need to look back, except to give thanks - to remember where we came from
Look ahead - the promises of God are "Yea and Amen" - sure promises - unfailing
Our Lord is on High - "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith" - do not waver

Others are watching and learning - from me to see if I am real - real in my living for God
"Let us consider one another" is not just observation but participation - with them
In their need for love, for help, for fellowship, for assurance and guidance - from me
I must come to meet with my brothers and sisters - I need them - they need me.

Too much baggage is a problem - in an airplane - in traveling - too much to carry
Lighten up - drop the non-essentials - some things have to go - the weights
"Let us lay aside the weights" - look at that the great company that have already run
The race is too important to let unnecessary weights hinder progress to the goal.

Their eyes are on the distant horizon - measured pace matches known ability
Endurance is the key to winning because the goal is out of sight - beyond - at the throne
Don't get panicky as others pass you by - keep the pace - some may be fast at first
The race isn't over until we see Jesus - "Let us run with patience" - looking unto Jesus.

"Let us go forth unto Him" - the leper is outside the camp - the ashes of the sacrifice
The place of separation is there - Christ is there - we are to be there even in reproach
We go to the Person who is rejected now - we leave anything contrary to His will
There is where strangers and pilgrims belong - unto Him - with Him - for Him

Offering praise glorifies God - offering praise exalts Christ - offering praise testifies
"Let us offer the sacrifice of praise" - even when we may not feel like it - anytime
At all times He is worthy to be praised - the cost is in the time it takes and the choice
A hymn, a psalm, a spiritual song - words of the scripture - offer praise - He is worthy!

"There is no doubt Father, that many of these relative duties are overlooked when I get busy or involved with lesser things. I desire to meet these requirements but at times I fear I have made excuses. Forgive me, Father, and create in me a sense of responsibility to meet these duties. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 11—13. THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIANITY.

Hebrews 11:1-3. Exposition of faith.
11:4-32. Examples of faith.
11:33-34. Exploits of faith.
11:35-40. Experiences of faith.

Hebrews 11:1-16: Who. The natural descendants of Abraham.

When. The temple work was still in progress.
Why. To present Christ; the writer wants people to focus on Christ

In Hebrews chapter eleven we have examples of the aspects of faith that pleases God. Faith is confidence based on past experiences, and assurance based on God's promises for the future. Our faith is in God who created and maintains the universe. His power is limitless. Faith is the assent of the understanding to any truth. True faith is an essential grace and is a mainspring of the Christian life. Faith in Christ frees us from condemnation and justifies us before God [Rom.5:1]. The hope of righteousness is by faith in Jesus Christ and that faith works by love that He produces in us. We live and act on the promises of God even though we don't see them or even the results yet. Faith makes them real in our mind. The Christian believes God and acts on what God says. We are convinced that what God says is so. God's integrity, His truth, His wisdom, His promises motivate us and directs our lives because even though we don't see at the present time all that He promises, we know He will bring them all to pass. Our children, friends and our spouses depend on our word the same way we depend on God's word. Christians are to persevere in spite of setbacks and disappointments that may come. We know the Lord will preserve us in the trials of life to which we are exposed. God will do what He promised.

In the first three verses of chapter 11 we have three fundamentals of our faith given. Its basic nature is being sure of what we hope for [v.1]. Its honor is that it is certain. A good report [v.2] is that which can be counted on. The manner of faith is in the way we view the universe and our role in it [v.3]. From verse four through verse sixteen we are assured of God's acceptance of faith. We are living by faith even though we are dying. We know the promises of God are realities and renounce any opportunity to go back to the types and shadows. God will not be ashamed to associate with those people of faith who demonstrate the reality of their trust in Him.

Those who lived before the flood [4-7] are called the antediluvian faithful. **Each person was doing something others were not doing.** Abel worshipped God in the way God intended with the appropriate sacrifice. Our worship justifies our faith. It makes plain to God that we know Him and believe in Him. Enoch "walked with God" after his son was born and God took him without going through death. A Christian who "walks in the light as He is in the light" has fellowship with God and fellow believers. Our walk sanctifies our faith. Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" amidst an increasingly ungodly world in which iniquity was abounding. He worked 120 years building an ark to save his house. Our work testifies to our faith "for where sin abounded grace does much more abound."

After the flood [8-23] **each person was looking for something the rest of the world wasn't looking for.** Abraham "went out" from Ur of the Chaldees "looking for a city whose Builder and Maker is God. When we move out from the world system of ungodly living, we are separated **to God**, not just **from the world**. Sarah "received strength" for childbirth by faith even though she was beyond the years of her strength, because she was promised a son. We "can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Abraham "was tried" as to his confidence in God's promise. We may find ourselves in times of testing with an assurance that God is in control of everything that is happening. Isaac "blessed" the next generations in his old age because he could see beyond that which was merely visual. Jacob "worshipped" leaning on his staff, when he realized God was keeping his promises all along even though he was grieving. To worship in times of grief is beyond what is normal. Even though four hundred years would pass before God's promise to bring Israel back to the land promised Abraham was fulfilled, Joseph: gave commandment to his people to take his bones with them when they went and bury them in that place of his fathers. They all had confidence in the promise of God as it related to the future of God's people.

There is a group of people of faith who are written about here and **each one was choosing what the rest were not choosing.** Moses' parents, Amram and Jochabed, "hid" their son Moses, when they "saw" he was a "proper child" and they "were not afraid." They saw the value of a child [24-31]. Moses "refused" that which others would want. Pleasure and ease, fame and riches are still the things people seem to want most. He "chose" to suffer affliction with God's people who were his own people. He "forsook" Egypt because he looked beyond the present circumstances by faith. He was not turned aside by fear. He was separated from the world. He persisted in proper worship. The basis of his choice was his maturity of faith. The timing of his choice was when he faced a crisis in mid-life. The content of his choice was the people of God, the Person of Christ, not the power of the king. Rahab chose to "receive the spies with peace." She identified with Israel's victories over their enemies even though they were still a moving tribe. What she heard, "We have heard..." - about the Red Sea, Sihon and Og, she believed and chose what the other people in Jericho did not.

The other people of faith listed in this hall of faith [32-38] were those who **each was taking action when the rest were inactive.** By its very nature faith is active. Not even death can defeat faith. Those who died in faith were still putting their confidence in God. What seemed like defeats to the natural eye, were actually triumphs of faith.

THE NATURE OF FAITH. Hebrews 11:1-2. *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.”*

It seems remarkable that things unseen
Can be known to be true with full certainty.
I may not know all that much about them,
Or why and how they came to be -
But to truly believe without any doubt,
Depends on how that truth came to me.

In itself true faith is being positively sure -
Resting upon its statements with absolute conviction
On the One who tells the truth
And is the Source of all the information.
By its very nature, true faith involves
Hearing and receiving without any hesitation -
Because the Object and Source of faith
Is the Lord God of my salvation.

Accepting without question truth
That must be received by faith -
Means I give honor to the One
Who gave it, by believing all He says.
The words I hear and the Person I trust,
Even though I have never seen His face -
Directs the witness I give to be a good report,
Of the Lord Jesus and His saving grace.

Faith gives understanding as I look
Back into the distant ancient past.
It tells me how God did what He did,
How it started and how long it will last.
Much of what I read is beyond me -
Faith assures me of the things I can't grasp.
The manner of faith is simple -
My confidence is in God, the Source of all my trust.

“O Eternal God, my Gracious Father: to be speaking to Thee today with full confidence is not strange, because Thou hast spoken to me already. Daily learning of Thee and Thy ways and purposes, does strengthen my faith and reinforces all that I have learned and experienced of Thee down through the years. May I never overlook the value of being daily made stronger by the exercise of faith in Thee through Thy Word. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Hebrews 11

THE HALL OF FAITH

This chapter has well been called the "Hall of Faith," which has a far greater value than names written on the walls of various other halls of fame. The practical implications of understanding the superiority of Christ over angels, human leadership, the priesthood, the old covenant, the tabernacle and any sacrifices made or brought by men, leads us to truly learn what it means to follow Christ. The practical section of Hebrews, chapters 10 through 13, are full of exhortations to live by faith, exhort and encourage one another as believers in view of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are consequences for the rejection of Christ and rewards for faithfulness to Him.

The character of people of faith is written about in this chapter that doesn't contain any mention of their failures, even though they were people, who like us, had shortcomings and failures. This is a reminder of how the lives of God's people will be reviewed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. These illustrations of faithful men and women teach us how to live by faith. Each one has a unique area of testimony that the spirit of God gives for our instruction and encouragement. The first three give us an overview of our history. Abel's sacrifice reminds us of Calvary and the day of our salvation. Enoch brings before us lessons regarding the rapture and the coming of Christ of which he preached to the people of his day. Noah living in the dark days of increasing ungodliness, reminds us of the coming Tribulation in verse seven preceded by the day of reward in verse six in which our lives on earth as believers will be reviewed before the Lord. It is an interesting fact that grace and warnings go together in these accounts. Preparing and preaching also go together.

ABEL was a man of faith in his worship [v.4].

His offering was accepted by God and he was commended for the sacrifice he brought. His understanding of the purpose of a sacrifice was acknowledged, and his righteousness was approved. His gifts were accepted and his testimony was perpetuated. The faith of a righteous man is remembered. A principle to recognize right at first is that, *it is faith that justifies*. There are a number of facts about Abel that help us understand what leads to worship in God's people. His name means "exaltation; that which ascends; breath". There was an awareness of God in him. He was the second child born into the world, but the first one to obey God [Gen.4]. He was the first shepherd (keeper; feeder) and so was conscious of the fact that every moving thing has a time of birth and death.

By observation and faith, he could see the difference in an innocent creature that moved about similarly to him, but was not responsible for its own death by willful sin. It must die in his place because of human sin. He presented acceptable sacrifices to God [Gen.4:4] who was the One who introduced the doctrine of substitution when He used animal skins to cover Adam and Eve, Abel's parents. He probably heard that story often from them as they would teach their sons how to communicate with God. He was hated and slain by his older brother, Cain [Gen.4:8] who had not heeded the teaching he received from the same source, but instead wanted to connect with God on his own terms rather than God's. To try to equate an Infinite God to us mere mortal men is still being attempted by humanists today.

Abel is remembered for his obedience in bringing a "more excellent sacrifice," and for his faith [v.4] in simply doing what he knew was right. He was the first martyr and is called "righteous" [Mat.23:35; Lu.11:51]. It is a notable fact that he is the first one in the Hall of Fame of people of faith [v.4]. Adam and Eve are known as those by whom "sin entered into the world and death by sin." Abel's place was filled by Seth [Gen.4:25] who apparently followed in Abel's footsteps as far as obedience to God. For all the appropriateness of Abel's sacrifice, Christ's blood is superior to Abel's sacrifice [Heb.12:24]. The sacrifice Abel made was for himself. The blood of Christ established the terms of the new covenant by which all can be saved.

It is of interest that in Genesis 4:2, the reading of the text means literally, "she added to bear his brother." On the face of it, it appears by the wording these boys could have been twins with Cain the first-born of twins. The three original employments mentioned in the Bible are: Adam, a gardener; Cain, a farmer; Abel, a shepherd. These three occupations are the best calculated to prevent strife. Each one works by himself. In verse 3, the "process of time", means "the end of the days." This probably means the Sabbath. Abel's offerings seem to be in two parts: [1] thanksgiving to God as the originator and dispenser of nature's bounties and this sacrifice would indicate gratitude. [2] sacrifices to God in regard to His justice and holiness, implying a conviction of his own sinfulness, confession of transgression and faith in the promised Deliverer. [Heb.11:4]. In verse 4, "Abel, he also brought," would better read "he brought it also," that is, a thank-offering first (Cain would have brought his too); but also Abel brought the first-born of his flock and by this alone, he acknowledged himself a sinner and professed faith in Christ. He offered a "more excellent"; "greater" sacrifice – implying he brought two offerings: one for thanksgiving and the other one representing the Lamb of God. In [v:4], God testified "of his gifts" (plural). Cain didn't testify as to his need personally; only his thanks. Abel "obtained witness that he was righteous (justified) and had faith in the promised seed.

When we read in Genesis that "The Lord had respect unto Abel to his offering" (received with favor; looked at with a keen, earnest glance; kindled into fire), that meant that He accepted Abel's sacrifice because it looked forward to the atoning blood of Christ. Abel's faith was fixed on God as Creator, but more importantly as a Redeemer. His offering was accompanied with a sense of sin and guilt, trusting in the redemption and recovery God provided. The outward form of worship is not the rule of acceptance by God. God Himself gave witness that he was righteous. Our *persons* must be justified before our *performance* can be accepted. God has respect first to the person; then to the offering. The person recommends the gift; not the gift recommends the person. By their lives and works, the dead still speak. What Abel did by faith was he offered a more full and perfect sacrifice. God had opened an new way for men to return to Him and that was by the sacrifice of a sinless substitute. Sacrifice carries in it a confession of sin and a profession of faith in the Redeemer.

We learn from Abel that there is a difference in true worship and a form of worship. What Abel gained by faith was God had respect first to his person; then his gift. His faith witnessed that he was righteous, justified and accepted. Because he was accepted his gifts were accepted. He still speaks to us in instruction: [1] Man has the privilege to worship God. [2] Our persons and offerings are accepted by faith in Christ. [3] Acceptance with God is a divine favor. [4] The world will bear malice to this divine favor. [5] God will vindicate His people. [6] God raises up others to obtain faith. In Gen.4:10, Abel's faith was demonstrated in his worship. His offering was for repentance to God and respect for God. He was the [1] 1st worshiper: saw the need of making an offering [2] 1st shepherd: a picture of the Lord Jesus [3] 1st martyr: his witness was obvious.

There are three things we do by faith. We understand spiritual things, we worship God and we serve God. None of these is an means of getting or meriting God's grace. His grace makes all of these possible and real to a worshipper. There are three things that make a sacrifice "more excellent": When the object of the sacrifice is Christ alone, when the sacrifice costs us something and when the appropriateness of the sacrifice is obvious. There a number of

sacrifices mentioned in scripture that we are able to give God that meet all of these criteria. Some may wonder why is there no mention of failure in Hebrews 11 where we read of men and women of faith? Faith itself cannot fail. Faith pleases God. "Faith is victory that overcomes the world," and the confidence that the believer lives by. To have absolute confidence in unseen things is not our choice by nature. To have such a conviction (evidence) in the value of a Person who we have not seen and yet would die for, is the basic nature of faith.

I think I understand a bit why faith, to God, is so important
Faith takes us beyond ourselves to believe what we cannot see
Faith in an unseen Person, affects my mind and my deportment
It goes farther than the bounds of the limitations of mere humanity
Faith opens up many vistas beyond the normal experiences of man
Inventions, innovations and explorations begin in the dimension of our thought
It makes possible what was never done, as by thinking vision does expand
And we are amazed at all the things human intelligence has wrought.

Faith in a Person is more important with life and destiny at stake
By faith we trust in One whose audible voice we have never heard
Faith in God as revealed in scripture, affects the paths of life I take
It removes darkness from my mind and the clouds that once my life had blurred
Faith is not unreasonable because there are evidences my eyes can see
That leaves me clear impressions that what I see is not by chance
It belies common sense to think that without a Designer, things came to be
Faith in one way or another is used in even a casual glance.

My faith is in a Living God as a Person of intelligence so supreme
That all of man's great inventions are really discoveries of what has been
Faith in God who knows and loves me is much more than just a dream
For through our Lord coming here to earth, God in human form was seen
By His great stoop of condescension, it became possible for men to know
The motivation behind God's great creative acts, was that in the universal space
There would be willing responses to Him of fellowship, and love to God would show
By means of personal faith in Him, the exceeding riches of His grace.

"This morning Gracious Father, I have been impressed with the value of intelligent worship such as Abel had. I want to be able to worship Thee in spirit and in truth, and also demonstrate in some way my appreciation of all the blessings Thy grace has provided me, beginning with salvation and then keeping me through all these years. I offer Thee my praise, adoration - and I trust I honestly mean it - myself. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ENOCH was a man of faith in his walk. [v.5]

The name, Enoch, means initiated, dedicated and instructed [Gen.5:21-24; Lu.3:37; Heb.11:5; Jude 14-15]. We don't know too much about his early life except he was "the seventh from Adam" and his father was Jared. He would have known Adam likely and perhaps had become used to the teaching he had heard and certainly had seen the deterioration of morality and spirituality in the society in which he lived. For 65 years before the baby boy was born to him, Enoch's life is summed up in the word, "lived." A change came in his life when he had a son named Methuselah. His name now becomes significant because he was made aware in a special way of God and His plans for the future. He initiated prophetic teachings that challenged the lifestyle of the world in which he lived. He realized his son was going to die and when he did, judgment would come on the world because of sin. When we reflect on our sons and daughters and understand that much of what they will believe and do in life depends on what they are taught when they are young, then we are moved in our spirit to get in fellowship with God and stay that way. For the next 300 years of Enoch's life he "walked with God"

When Methuselah was born, things changed. Now as he looks ahead to the future of his sons and daughters, he learns what really counts in life. To walk with God, even for a short time, makes a person stand out. To do this for 300 years, day in and day out, is a wonder that would leave a person with the perfume of God about him. Noah is the only other person we read about in scripture of whom it is said, "he walked with God." Levi did for a short time in Mal.2:6, but he "departed out of the way." We find Enoch walking with God in Genesis 5:25, pleasing God in Hebrews 11:5 and witnessing for God in Jude 14-15. Two can't walk together, unless they agree – one well-pleasing to the other. A walk with God can only be maintained by perfect reliance upon God and His word. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." We learn God when we habitually walk and talk with Him. You don't really know a person, until you live with him. Enoch knew God in a special way; not in a vague, general way. This is not sitting in silent contemplation but performing our duty in faith as one given a direct commission, with his eye on God throughout the activity. Every act at home or in business can be service to the Lord when we walk with Him and do it for Him. "He pleased God" indicates there was a state of friendship between God and

him. The greatest testimony of our faith which we could ask for, is that we pleased God In an age of wickedness. Enoch spent his life reproofing a sinful generation and in warning them of the approaching judgment.

Enoch's removal from the world was unusual. The word used means in Hebrew, "to take" with the idea of taking to oneself as in "taking a wife." It also means to transpose, to put in another place, transfer, translate. His removal from earth in this unique way, occurred only also in the case of Elijah and the Lord Jesus being translated to heaven. Enoch's walk of faith led to his miraculous translation in which he was "taken up." He had a marvelous deliverance. He would not see death. The missing patriarch was not found because, perhaps when he was out walking with God maybe in a physical walk, by His mighty power, God took him right into heaven without dying. What a magnificent walk it is when a testimony is given that he or she, "pleased God."

Some lessons we can learn from Enoch are that we should walk with the Lord in spite of the day and age in which we are living. Also, God recognizes the man or woman who stands against sin and is willing to warn of coming judgment. Of even more significance is the known fact that there is a future with God for every believer. This life is not the end of our existence. God is pleased with those who are willing to "walk the walk" in spite of the dark days and whatever other people are doing.

WALK WITH GOD

I wonder what he thought about the day that he first held,
In his arms that small baby boy God had given to him.
Did Enoch acknowledge to God just how inside he felt?
Did his walk with God start because he turned from some sin?
Did the thought that a child is going to learn how to talk,
And use the same words that his or her father would use?
Did the places he went when alone he would walk,
Now change because his boy, like his father would choose,
To walk now with God instead of walking his way?
Did his whole life change for fear his son he would lose?

I know for myself when I held our first child,
My first thoughts were that this child forever will live.
Heaven or hell depends on whether I was willing to yield
Myself and my family to God; was I willing to give
My pledge of honor to God that day, that the choices
I make that affect them will challenge them to grow
In a way that both they and their God can rejoice?
The family God gave me will find it easy to know,
Whether I'm just a fake or if my faith is for real -
Because in my life and my walk - the real me shows.

After the first son was born God was willing to trust,
His companion, Enoch with a heritage from Him.
As each child was born, he would realize he must
Never take for granted that God had given him them.
God has blessed Linda and me with some wonderful daughters.
Their husbands and families are to us a great joy.
When around us in fellowship our children all gather,
We bless God in prayer, letting our gratitude show.
God has made us aware that all that really matters,
Is they will all be ready when the Lord calls us to go.

"Father, sometimes I wonder if my family knows how much I appreciate them. I rejoice in them because You gave them to us. I am proud of them because they have chosen to honor You in their lives. I intercede for them because I know Satan will try to trip them up. I commit them into Your care and keeping because I know You care for them even more than I do. They are Yours; please use them to honor You. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

NOAH (rest): a man of faith in his work [v.7].

The story of Noah is written in Genesis 5:29 through 10:32. He is mentioned in various other places in scripture in accounts of genealogy and also regarding the times in which he lived and the faith he demonstrated [1Chr.1:3-4; Isa.54:9; Ez.14:14, 20; Mat.24::37-38; Lu.3:36; 17:26-27; Heb.11:7; 1Pe.3:20; 2Pe.2:5]. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord and he walked with the Lord, but perhaps the verse that best described the value of the man and his testimony is [Gen.6:22]. "Thus, did Noah; according to all that God commanded, so he did." That was evidence of his faith in the Lord. Likely he had learned the value of faith from his great grandfather Enoch, and

his grandfather Methuselah who was a testimony to the prophecies of Enoch. Not much is known about his father and his sons except that his sons were saved through the efforts of Noah and they were used by God to begin the repopulating of earth. He was called by God to build the ark, a ship 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 50 feet high. He also was a preacher and ultimately a farmer.

When we read about Noah's life, we learn that he was one of two (the other was Enoch) mentioned in scripture who walked with God. He would have been in a position to hear what the Lord said and to learn to live by faith in Him. Noah found favor with God [Gen.6:8] even though he was living in a time of moral and physical corruption [Gen.6:1-13]. He did what would seem an impossible task to us. When he was instructed to build the ark, [Gen.6:13-22] he did it. During that time, he was also a preacher of righteousness [2Pe.2:5] who would have warned the people of judgment for their sin that was coming. When the ark was completed, he entered the ark with his family and animals [Gen.7:1-24] where they were preserved during the flood [Gen.8:1-17].

There were two floods in his day, a flood of evil and one of water. Of all the people of the world who remembered the God of creation, perfection and love, the number had dwindled to one. Only Noah did God see righteous. God's response to the evil of the world was a 120-year-long last chance. The building of the ark on dry land for 120 years, day in and day out and preaching righteousness at the same time, was a graphic illustration of the message of his life. He obeyed God in his work in spite of what others did. A 450-foot boat on dry land, certainly made a point. The point of Noah's obedience was contrasting and condemning to the disobedience of his generation.

The only long-term project that compares with this, is the work of our lives. The challenge of Noah's life to us is – live in acceptance of God's will, God's grace, God's right to direct us; and be grateful and obedient in it. Noah experienced rejection because he was different from his neighbors. Obedience makes disobedience stand out. If God asks you to do something, He will give you the strength to do it. There quite a number of lessons we can learn from this man who did a work of faith. "Just and perfect" indicates Noah's love and obedience to God rather than sinlessness. We either influence others or are influenced by them. God is concerned over people and what they do to themselves. Sin grieves God, [Gen.6:3,6-7] and it should grieve us.

A few faithful men (ark builders) who believe God and obey Him, are able to change the outcome of the greatest problem. A covenant is a special kind of a promise. God established a covenant with Noah consisting of three parts: [1] never again will the earth be totally destroyed by a flood. [2] the seasons will always come as expected. [3] the rainbow will be visible when it rains as a sign to all that God keeps His promises. People, for the most part, will not readily believe warnings of inevitable judgment. Most don't believe it will ever happen. People will not welcome or accept the message of God's judgment on sin.

Don't worry over details over which you have no control. Noah was to build the ark, not herd the animals in to it. Concentrate on what God gives you to do and leave the rest to Him. Trust God's timing in the difficult times when we must wait. Noah's salvation *through* water, indicates that it is faith in Christ's death and resurrection (the ark) that saves, not the water. Justice must be carried out. Forgiveness is an individual choice. The responsibility of the law of nations is to carry out justice, not grant forgiveness. The coming of the Lord is sure; the time is not known; preparation must be made ahead of time; the effects are lasting. [Mat.24:37-38; Lu.17:26-27] We cannot save our family by our own righteousness. We must teach it to them. [Ez.14:14, 20] God always keeps His promises. [Isa.54:9]. We need to pass on to the future generations, the value of their heritage.

Noah was a man who was righteous before God and his work of faith was just what God commanded. In his character, he was righteous [Gen. 6:9]. In his life he was obedient to God [v.7] and lived in fellowship with God [Gen.6:9]. He is one of the most notable in history as a result of his willingness to do what God said and built the ark that affected the whole world [Ez.14:14-20]. When the flood was passed, he built an altar on which to offer burnt offerings of appreciation to God [Gen.8:18-22] and God formed a covenant with Noah [Gen.9:1-19] of which we are reminded often each year in the rainbow. He did plant a vineyard and on one occasion became drunk [Gen.9:20-21] to his embarrassment. He pronounced a curse and blessings on his sons before he died at the age of 950 years [Gen.9:22-29]. It is well for us to remember strengths and accomplishments of those who live by faith, and not dwell on their weaknesses as we may be prone to do. He was the only follower of God left in his generation and was really the second father of the human race. Perhaps that was the cause of him getting drunk and embarrassing himself in front of his sons. To think of all those people he knew, who he had preached to, and now were gone, and to have the understanding that the second chance for the human race is on my shoulders, may have been the real testing time for this man of patience, consistency and obedience.

A message came to this man alone
Regarding something that was before unknown -
"Take steps, start building immediately

The results of which later on you will see
Will bless you, your wife and family
And the whole world will again be conscious of Me -"
Said the unseen God of eternity.

One hundred twenty years of labor intense
Probably to most people didn't make any sense
Noah preached and labored each day
Based what the Lord to him did personally say,
"Make an ark according to these dimensions.
Follow precisely all of these My instructions -"
Said the God who everything does see.

By walking with God, he got clear directions
Even with the animal creation God made connections
When the job was done, full and complete
With natures changed, man and animals did meet
Two by two they entered and for a year lived in peace
And then the Lord God to Noah did speak -
"You and your family come in here to Me."

Noah's great work was entirely by faith
God delivered him from judgment because he found grace
God is Himself is the same Gracious God today
When those He speaks to will simply trust and obey
We too will know His great blessings sublime
Of knowing and doing what we know is God's mind -
And with Him forever will be.

"Father of mercy, I am aware of the wickedness in the world today, and I know that judgment is coming. I thank Thee for the ark, Christ Jesus, that is open for all who will enter. In a short time, I will be preaching the same as Noah did, to people who will be either saved or lost. Please give Thy servant a consciousness of being in fellowship with Thee in presenting the message of salvation and deliverance from the wrath to come. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ABRAHAM (father of a multitude): a man of faith in God's word [v.8-19].

What faith is and what faith does is described by the first three people mentioned in this chapter. Faith justified Abel's worship. Faith sanctified Enoch's walk. Faith testified to Noah's work. The practical aspects of faith are given to us when we read of Abraham to whom the "God of glory" appeared instructing him to leave Ur. Faith is a fundamental action in all human experience. Very little that we do is done purely by conscious, logical awareness. We are simply assured, often without thinking about it, that what we hope for, we are sure of. Things we do not see are real.

In the doctrinal sense we believe this universe and all in it was created by the word of God, not out of things that are visible to our eyes. The material world is not more real than the spiritual world. Even though we cannot see the spiritual world in which love, mercy, grace, truth etc cannot be seen, we know they are real because we have experienced them. It is not more complicated nor unreasonable to believe that things were made by the spoken word of God rather than by physical activity. Either way has to be believed by faith. It is more reasonable to believe that intricate and profound things were created by a supremely Intelligent Designer rather than by chance something came out of nothing without a power behind it. Physical matter and the way they are programmed to work is obvious to us. We know matter perishes and we know information does not. So where did the information come from?

We know the answer by faith. The Creator of all things has spoken through prophets in the past, and more importantly, in His Son. We believe Him and consequently have a real purpose in our lives. Our lives and activities of life have meaning now. We have full confidence of a full, useful and happy future for those who believe in Him by faith. It is by faith we understand the way of approach to a holy God by people who have fallen in sin "and come short of the glory of God," is by sacrifice. That acceptance is by the death of the innocent in the place of the guilty. In order for a sacrifice to be of any use, there can be no cover-up for sin nor any avoiding of its consequences. Divine justice has to be served. The reality of faith in the sacrifice is seen when one rejects sin and makes sure the sacrifice is the one God can accept. By faith we trust in the "one offering for sin forever," our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is by faith we learn that our salvation will be complete in the future when we are not only saved from the consequences of sin, and the power of sin, but from the presence of sin. The result of a life lived by faith is the commitment to live a pure life in "all godliness and honesty," knowing that our Lord is coming for us and then we shall be like Him. By faith we know of coming judgment and in love, seek to warn other people about this fact. Noah knew this and provided a place of safety for his family. At the same time, he preached the way of salvation to others to warn them. When Christ comes the political, religious, economic and social systems of the world will be destroyed.

It was probably near the end of the 350 years Noah lived after the flood, that Terah, Abraham's father was born. The world system had formed human governments to follow but people were again living without restraints. People wanted to build a tower to reach to God, but God's judgment came and the people were separated by the confusion caused by creating a number of languages. Abraham would have likely have learned something about the reason for the flood, and so when God appeared to him, he listened. Faith's first step [v.8], is obedience. He obeyed God's call, simply because it was God's call. Unreserved obedience is always the first step of faith. Faith is not blind. There is always plenty of evidence on which to base our faith [Jn.20:30-31]. The passing on of truth in oral and written forms leaves people with no excuse as to the existence of God and what is acceptable to Him. There is a law written on the heart of every person as to what is right and wrong. To practice wrong and continue in that practice is to put one's self in the place of authority. That is placing faith in one's self and ignoring the evidence of a Supreme Authority - the Eternal God.

Faith's ultimate goal [v.9-10] in the case of Abraham, was based on the promises of God when he obeyed God. He was promised the land of Canaan that was to be his through the descendants of his and Sarah's son, Isaac. Abraham was promised an eternal city whose Builder and Maker was God. Abraham kept his eyes on this promise and so lived as a stranger and foreigner. When a person gives up security to act in faith alone on the promises of God, you will probably be regarded as "old fashioned," "odd," "out of touch with reality" and too different to be included in all that goes on around us in the way of religion and social life. Never let being "different" keep you from acting in faith on divine directives. God always gives the needed ability and grace to do what He asks of us.

Abraham experienced personally faith's fruitfulness [v.11-12] in that Isaac, his son of promise was born to him and Sarah after many years had passed since he was told he would have a son named Isaac. From Abraham and then through Isaac and Jacob came the nation of Israel, an influential nation out of proportion to its size. Even today the nation of Israel considers Abraham the father of the nation. Abraham's faith was the result of his assessment of God's character. His name appears in twenty-seven books of the Bible as a man of faith. He knew, and trusted God even though he had his fears and failures. Because he had a fear of death, he failed to talk over his actions with God and get his directions from Him. Faith in times of failure [Gen.12:10] – "Abram went down into Egypt," from which he was "sent away" by the king's men. By failing to trust God for his protection he resorted to lying and deception. He also failed in his relationship to Sarah and took Hagar. There were other areas where his faith lapsed somewhat.

As a man of faith, he is an example to every Christian today. He is an example of faith in the New Testament; faith which is full commitment to God and one casts himself or herself upon God for life and death [Gal.3 and 4]. He is an example of justification by faith [Rom.4:3]. We learn from him the value of faith's consistency and compensation [v.13-16]. His behavior was consistent with his testimony as a stranger and a pilgrim. Abraham uttered no prophecy like Isaiah, wrote no book like Solomon, sang no song like David, gave no laws like Moses – but he is the only one called "the father of the faithful" and "the friend of God." The Lord Jesus used Abraham as an example to illustrate His teaching on the deity of Christ [Jn.8]. Like Abraham there are times when we must hold on to the promises of God and trust completely in Him, believing He has called us for a purpose.

It is to be expected that faith will be tested [v.17-12:2] with the purpose of determining reality in those who profess to be people of faith. True faith is justified by works [v.17-19]. Abraham was thrust out of Egypt and all that he had [Gen.12:20]; [Gen.13:1] – "Abram went up out of Egypt." He "went up" [13:1] and "went on" [13:3], glad to be out of Egypt. The most severe testing Abraham experienced, and perhaps the hardest test recorded that was given to any person of faith, was the offering of Isaac [Heb.11:17; Gen.22]. Abraham is a type (in Genesis 22) of God the Father who offered His Son on the cross of Calvary for our sins. By faith Abraham offered his son in whom the promises were given. It wasn't Isaac's life that God desired, it was Abraham's heart. Abraham didn't fail the test for he was willing to give God his son. He gave God everything. In his life there was no idol – nothing to break communion with God. This was demonstrated on Mt. Moriah. Abraham's faith was total commitment of all he had to God. This is what God wants from us today.

THE PRACTICE OF FAITH

Faith is not mere wishful thinking as we look forward to the unknown

Functioning faith moves one to be bringing lively action when we are shown
Evidence of the will of One in whom we have placed implicit trust
And it is our earnest desire to obey Him, doing for Him what we must.

To leave one's "comfort zone" and move far away is not just an adventure
If one has been called by his Lord and Savior, it is his responsibility thus to venture
And by taking careful steps of faith each day soon he is able to trace
The footprints of One who has gone before and guides him to this place.

Faith is not speculation, or just an anxious hope that that things will be right
Rather faith in our Lord assures us we are walking with Him in light
He knows the end from the beginning, the outcome is under His control
Faith on the part of a believer who is yoked to Him brings rest to a restless soul.

Practical faith is simply living with full confidence in God
Each action of faith is to be guided unerringly by God's unchanging Word
We experience the word of faith resonating in our soul
And when we move forward in faith, we can then reach the goal.

To live by faith is comforting when we are sure this is the way to go
Each action done according to God's will in a way we can know
Pleases Him in whom we put our faith, He is faithful to the end
We rest in quiet confidence He is with us wherever He us will send.

"Father, the faith of Abraham seemed to be continually growing during the course of his life. He made mistakes the same as I have, and yet he did not allow that to hinder his recovery to walking by faith. I have been having some doubts occasionally as to whether we did what was right in the past. However, I know Thou art fully aware of each action of faith, so I rest in the knowledge that past failures don't need to change this present walk of faith. Amen."

SARAH (princess): a woman of faith in spite of waiting. [11:11].

The faith of Sarah, the wife of Abraham [Gen.11:29-31] is necessarily tied to the faith of Abraham, because through her, God's promise to Abraham would be fulfilled. Her father was Terah and her half brothers, Nahor and Haran. As his wife she would be committed to the same actions as her husband. They apparently had a good relationship. We never read a word of complaint even though she was Abraham's half-sister [Gen.20:12], and he represented her before the king of Egypt as his sister [Gen.12:10-20] because they had the same father. True, she was barren [Gen.11:30] and she knew from the beginning of the promise she would need God to work the miracle of life in order for her to have a son. When everything is against us, we find it a time when we can trust God without any competition. "Is anything to hard for the Lord?" Jer.32:17,27; Zech.8; Lu.1; Mat.3:9; 19:26.

Even though it was her suggestion to Abraham that he have a child through her servant, and it was Sarah who gave Hagar, her maid, to Abraham [Gen.16:1-3], and she had a bad attitude toward Hagar and Ishmael, this is not charged against her in Hebrews 11. When she was promised a child [Gen.17:15-21; Rom.6:6] both Abraham and Sarah laughed in doubt. When the promised was fulfilled and she gave birth in old age, to Isaac [Gen.21:1-8] she laughed with joy.

The positive side of the faith of Abraham and Sarah is the message about them in Hebrews 11. As a woman of faith [Rom.4:19; Heb.11:11], being submissive to God and her husband was an act of faith. She is referred to as a type of the new covenant [Gal.4:21-31]. The promise of being the mother of the promised son, had not specifically named her as the mother. So, she turned to another alternative. OLD STANDARDS: Apparently God took into account the ancient standard of children by a concubine. He knows our fallen nature. SOCIAL REFORM: Changes don't happen over night. Revivals may happen quickly. However, when there have been lasting improvements in the ethical and social structures of a nation, this usually happens gradually.

There is nothing harder than waiting for a promise to be fulfilled. One way we cope with waiting is to begin to help God get His plan into action. Sarah was too old to expect a child so she must have thought God had another plan in mind. To give Abraham a son through another woman was not an uncommon practice. The plan worked well but the results have been disastrous. Often, we feel our life is on hold. We need to remember this is part of God's plan. Isaac was "born of God" to those two people who were beyond the normal time of child-bearing because of Sarah's age. Isaac's birth was a miracle that still has impact on the world today in the nation of Israel.

It is true that Sarah had trouble believing God's promises and she attempted to work out her problem without God. Then she tried to cover her faults by blaming others. This is not an uncommon practice today. People seek

to put blame on their father because he didn't say, "I love you," enough, or his expectations were too high for someone who isn't motivated to work hard. Weaknesses and mistakes are common to us all. How gracious it was of God to not enumerate Sarah's in this hall of faith. She was very loyal to her son and perhaps because of her age at his birth didn't expect too much of him. But she became the mother of a nation and through her son came our Lord Jesus Christ. That was her great accomplishment of faith; she had faith to conceive and deliver Isaac. God responds to faith even in the middle of our failures. He is not bound to doing things in the way we expect. He can make things we have never heard of happen in very unusual and uncommon ways.

How gracious it is of our God, to give us needed strength for each day
There are times when special strength is given to do a work in and unnatural way
When our faith is unwavering in God, by His power He can bring to pass
That which is far beyond the normal, because it is a God-appointed task.

To have a son in old age, is not normal, it calls for unnatural strength
By faith Sarah delivered the son of a promise that was twenty-five years in length
She believed God would do what He said, and she trusted Him for strength to deliver
Through that son of promise born to her, spiritual blessings are passed on forever.

When the challenges of life are so great, that we are tempted to throw up our hands in despair
If we are willing to rest in the Lord, we will find the strength each burden to bear
Nothing is too hard for the Lord, neither His strength nor His grace ever fails
In faith we can trust Him to accomplish, His work through us whatever that task entails.

"Father of those who trust Thee and know Thee: there may be things before me this day that I do not know how to deal with. Please give Thy servant the wisdom to know what is right, the courage and incentive to not wait to act upon Thy leading, and the strength to do the work properly and effectively. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ISAAC (laughter; he laughs): a man of faith in spite of weakness. [v.20]

The early men of faith each recognized the perspective of faith as it was appropriate to the situation in which they were found. Faith looks beyond the immediate and present, and can look at trials in view of the future. One worshipped by faith, another walked by faith and another worked by faith. Faith persists, faith perseveres and faith dares to act. Those who understand the power associated with faith are not satisfied with a little faith. They want faith that conquers, and overcomes obstacles. People of faith need to keep their eyes on the future glory that is promised. Those people live by faith and died in faith even though they had limited light and opportunities compared to that which we have. Faith determines salvation. Faithfulness determines reward. The doctrine of faith is taught from verse one through verse sixteen. The remainder of the chapter has to do with the testing of faith.

When we read in the scriptures about Isaac, the story of his life makes us realize that God's power makes His promise a reality. He was a miracle child, his birth was promised, [Gen.17: 16-18] and he was the first descendant of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah [Gen.21:1-3]. He was the heir of the covenant God made with Abraham [Gen.17:19,21], and shortly after he was born he was circumcised [Gen.21:1-8] as a testimony to his separation to God that only he and God could see. In his early life we do not see much evidence of faith on Isaac's part, but in Abraham we see the vision of faith and in Sarah the conviction of faith. Abraham wasn't running away by faith from that which was evil. He was going forward in faith toward that which was right. He left Ur on his own initiative to become a lifetime pilgrim. For generations after him, starting with Isaac, his descendants were pilgrims. Our future is not here in this world. We do not commit ourselves to settling down and being like everyone else around us.

The test of Abraham's faith was a grim task on his part, and it must have been a surprising awakening to Isaac when he learned he was to be offered up as a sacrifice [Gen.22:1-19]. Abraham knew by faith that Isaac would have children even though he wasn't yet married. The logic of his faith was that even if Isaac died, God would raise him up from the dead. The test of his logic of faith was simple, sound and often scary to the extent that his action overwhelms us. Isaac's life for many years was to follow the direction of his aged father who secured Rebekah as his wife under the obvious direction of the Lord Abraham's servant [Gen.24:1-67]. God's covenant with Abraham was confirmed to Isaac [Gen.26:2-5].

The character of Isaac was he was obedient, peaceable, devout and prayerful. Isaac was the quiet, mind-my-own-business type. He found it easier to lie and compromise under pressure to avoid confrontations. He played favorites. His father modeled faith which Isaac would have learned at the altar. God works through people in spite of their shortcomings and sometimes through their shortcomings. The significance of Isaac: He was a child

of promise, Gal.4:22-23. He was a man of faith, Heb.11:9,20. He was a type of Christ, Gal.3:16. He was a type of believers, Gal.4:28-31. He was an ancestor of Christ, Lu.3:34. He was a patriarch of Israel, Ex.32:13.

On the surface of the story of Isaac, we would think there isn't much about him that was evidence of faith. However, in the very fact of blessing his sons, we can see that he believed the great promises in regard to the future that was given to Abraham and his seed. In spite of Isaac's natural preferences and feelings, God mercifully overruled. God recognized that beneath the emotions, feelings and sensations that deceived, there was a genuine core of faith. When he buried his father, he was on his own, but Abraham gave him everything he had. When he became the father of Esau and Jacob, he preferred Esau over Jacob. When famine came, he went to dwell among the Philistines in Gerar. It was there the covenant with God was reaffirmed with him and it was there he called Rebekah his sister. In that lie, he went farther in the same kind of deception as Abraham did in Egypt.

He became prosperous and very great even in the land of the Philistines because the Lord blessed him there. He had trouble over wells in Gerar which led to making a covenant with Abimelech. When we spend time in the world, it is not long before compromises start taking place. We can understand his grief over Esau's behavior and the deception of Jacob. Even so, Isaac blessed his sons because, by faith, he looked into the future. It took a lifetime of discipline for Jacob to get rid of the effects of his deception when Isaac blessed him. We learn from him that patience often brings rewards. God's plans and promises are bigger than people. God keeps His promises – He remains faithful though we are often faithless.

Lessons for us from the life of Isaac are that patience often brings rewards. Put into words your willingness to be available to God, and you will discover He will use you. But playing favorites is sure to bring family conflicts that can hinder blessings that could be ours. This is a common mistake we may make. To think that the emotions, feelings and sensations that accompany or result from God's blessing, is the blessing, is a mistake. Our senses can easily be moved because of the things we experience. Some new Christians enjoy relief and elation and rest their assurance of salvation on that instead of pinning it to faith in God's word. Then when the feelings subside, their assurance is gone. Preachers can work up feelings and emotions that move people to decisions for Christ rather than the preaching of the word of God producing the feelings and emotions caused by true repentance. God is merciful to us too and recognizes genuine faith underneath and will credit that faith. We have a tendency to try to live by spiritual "highs" rather than by faith. To make decisions without convictions, moral judgments and human intelligence, can easily deceive people.

LOOKING AHEAD

Every parent wants to see their child living and doing what's right
But we all know that most of their lives are lived far removed from our sight
So by faith we still tell them the right way, hoping that in the future they'll see
That which we have learned in our lifetime, so that from heart-break they'll be free.

But realistically I know it is not likely they will pay much attention to us
About the best that I can hope for, is that we have earned and still maintain their trust
In a general sense we have set the course they will choose in integrity to follow
Knowing that if they choose not to, there will be some big and bitter pills to swallow.

Abraham and Isaac were different, though God saw evident faith in them both
The father lived by faith each day, the son in circumstances he chose
Yet God saw the faith of each one, and in great grace, each their faith commended
One was strong, the other weak, yet faith in both was seen before their life's journey was ended.

It is my prayer, Lord, that our children learn to live by faith right from the start
I know my influence is diminished, when each one's call in life leads us apart
Would it please Thee to strongly impress on their minds, that life is short, eternity's long
And move them to keep reading the Bible, so that by growing in faith they'll be strong.

“O God of grace and longsuffering, I pray for the generations of my family who are now grown people. May their interests be to live holy, righteous and godly lives in this world. Father, bring to their minds the positive value of living life by faith in Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

JACOB (Supplanter) : a man of faith with prophetic wisdom. [v.21]

The significance of the patriarchs is not based upon their character but the character of God. They tried to please God but often failed. God's plans succeed in spite of Jacob's methods. His scheming, planning, ruthless business dealings and outright lies (in each generation the lies became more deliberate) were not the blessing of

God. God met him four times at different stages in his life. At the first one God awakened a personal knowledge of himself. The second one had him wait for six years for permission to leave. The third one made him realize his dependence on God and he would not let God go without a blessing. At the fourth one, God lays hold on him to send him to Egypt. He wouldn't go without God's approval.

The life of Jacob is written about from Genesis 25 to Genesis 42 where as the son of Isaac and Rebekah born in answer to prayer, it reads like a fascinating story book. There is all kinds of drama from the human viewpoint as this youngest of twins becomes Rebekah's favorite. By subtlety Jacob got Esau's birthright, and in collusion with his mother, obtained Isaac's blessing. Bitterly hated by Esau, Jacob departed for Haran, from whence his mother came. On the way, one night he saw as a heavenly vision a ladder linking heaven and earth, and made a vow. It was in Haran where he met Rachel and Laban, and served seven years each for Laban's daughters and had many children born to him there. He requested departure from Laban, and as a result he had to flee from Laban. When he was overtaken by Laban, he made a covenant with Laban to protect his future.

As he continued his journey back to the land promised to him through Abraham and Isaac, he meets angels reminding him of the fact that God is aware of every move we make, whether it be good or bad. That meeting must have promoted his desire to set things right with Esau. So, he sent a message to Esau and prayed earnestly to the Lord that his brother would accept him and sent gifts to Esau. Up until this time in his life there didn't seem to be any real evidence of faith that affected his life.

Then came the scene when he wrestled with an angel through the night and became very conscious of God's concern about him and the future. He was named "Israel" that morning. "for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Faith becomes real to us when we are conscious of God's presence and His hand is laid upon us in some way. After Jacob was, to a certain extent, reconciled to Esau, he erected an altar at Shechem at Eloehe-Israel because God had become real to him in a special way. However, because he had become much more aware of God in his own life, that didn't preserve him from the fact that even believers have family problems like the trouble he had over Dinah. He finally got back to Bethel where he experienced renewal of the bit of faith he had. His twelfth son, Benjamin was born there but as a result of that birth he had to bury Rachel. Each one of his twelve sons were uniquely different but were not able to hide their personality traits. Jacob was able to get back to see his father and was there when he died. Both Jacob and Esau were there and buried Isaac. His favoritism towards Joseph led both him and his family into a series of consequences that can only be described as sovereign acts of God right until he sent his sons to Egypt for food.

When Jacob had learned that all his scheming contributed nothing to the blessing of God, God let him discover what that blessing was. The character of Jacob improved with age and he did well. His whole life was like living in a storm of intrigue, deception, selfishness and subtlety. At the end of his life he finally broke into the sunshine of living a life of faith. Joseph was alive. It was with a greatly purified faith, he blessed Joseph's sons as he "worshipped leaning upon the top his staff." The grace of God whose blessing he had already proved, enabled him to bless his grandsons in faith, knowing that their future was secure in the promise of God.

The refining of faith can be a costly experience when we try to reverse the orders that God gives. To think the blessing of God is measured by those things we possess is to misunderstand God and what is important to Him. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Jacob had sent his sons to Egypt twice. The second time they went back with Benjamin and when they returned, he was revived by the good news regarding Joseph. He went to Egypt with his family and saw Joseph and there met Pharaoh. He made Joseph swear to bury him in Canaan. While in Egypt he blessed Joseph's sons, then he blessed his own sons, died in Egypt and was buried in Canaan.

Lessons from Jacob to us are that when God gives the orders, do not try to reverse them. When we learn to trust Him, God makes Himself known to us when we read and study His Word. The experiences we have with God are what make the difference in life. Instead of making our own plans and mistakes, we need to look for God's approval before taking an action. Then we are able to truly worship, and then we are able to bless others around us. We too came be like Jacob who was a pilgrim living by faith - finally!!

He wasn't a perfect man, this man called Israel -
He schemed and plotted yet God loved him in spite of all.
His years passed in turmoil at home and abroad -
Yet he always remembered his God had called.

Honor was given him at the time of his death -
The man was named by God "A prince."
When such a one dies, we remember his best -
And "Israel" has been respected since.

It is appropriate to give honor to those,
Whom God has adopted, and called His own.
He had dealt with them in life, we must not suppose
He has restrictions when he calls each one home.

Go over the life of the one who has passed -
Look for those places of victory.
Let us all respect those things that last
When the last chapter is written of their story.

God welcomes those who belong to Him -
We should honor our dead entering their "long home."
Grace has worked and failures dim
When we go back over all they have done.

JOSEPH (increaser; may Jehovah add): a man of faith in watching Israel's future. [v.22]

It is not uncommon when difficulties come on people for them to say, "Why did this happen to me? I trusted God and look what happened to me." Joseph throughout his life demonstrated his faith in God with a far better response by showing his attitude was "What do I do now?" He acknowledged in obvious ways that he knew God was with him in his trials. Perhaps the greater test of faith was the successfulness of the last part of his life. His faith survived the temptations of wealth, fame and the adoration of a nation from the Pharaoh down to the common people.

The circumstances of life have an affect on faith. Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and that favoritism was the cause of his brother's hatred that led him to being sold by them into Egypt. We all have weaknesses and failures like Joseph which, in his youthful pride, caused friction in his family. He must have appeared overconfident to his family. The hardships he endured at home led him to being betrayed and deserted by his family. In Egypt Joseph was exposed to sexual temptation and his faith was tested when he was punished for doing the right thing. Even in the long imprisonment he was forgotten by those he helped, but he maintained his confidence in God

Character traits affect our faith. Joseph was spiritually sensitive from his youth resulting in him being a wise and prudent man with strong emotions. Because he could see God's hand in human events his character allowed him to be a forgiving man of faith who can see far into the future. Our personal strengths and accomplishments also affect our faith. Joseph was esteemed even in a foreign country in which he rose from being a slave to a ruler who was known for his personal integrity. The quick rise from prison to the Pharaoh's palace happened because of the faith of Joseph who interpreted Pharaoh's dream by the power of God. This man of spiritual sensitivity was aware of the Person and Presence of God who used him to prepare a nation to survive a famine. Even hardships affect our faith. Joseph had experienced hardships personally and now know that God was able to preserve a nation like Egypt, and he would preserve the future of the children of Israel.

Even though Joseph was in a high position in Egypt, the greatest nation on earth at that time, he remembered God's promise to Abraham. He knew Israel would not stay in Egypt. Faith means trusting God and doing what He wants, regardless of the circumstances or consequences. Joseph didn't know when the children of Israel would get to the promised land, but he did know he was sent to Egypt by the Lord to preserve the whole family in view of the future and wanted to be sure he was buried with his fathers. Like Joseph, our responses to life's experiences affects our faith. The basic fundamentals of faith are learned early in life. What I believe and what I do are inseparable because each one affects the other. I can't realistically expect my brothers and sisters to understand all of my motives and actions, so I will often just have to make the best of whatever situation I am in and rest by faith in God. God has unknown reasons for allowing things to happen so I must keep the fact of the Lord's interest in what I do and am, before me at all times. Don't ever harbor bitterness. Bitterness brings no solutions to problems it has no good outcome. Every believer needs to keep a clear vision before them as to God's ultimate plans and purposes.

Unusual as it may seem to be living in a foreign land;
Even here it is God who provides every need from His own hand.
From His fullness have we received and for needed grace, there is grace.
The Lord who supplies our need from His storehouse, meets them in every place.

The work of God that has called us to do what we do and where -
Can be blessed by God Himself, His presence is felt even there.
The nourishment of soul and body comes from His supply.
He gives us more that we deserve from what we cannot buy.

When the life we live is hid with Christ in God, then we really know
It is God alone who has brought us here, we trust Him to clearly show
What His mind and will is for us when we seem so unproductive.
And the worldly system around appeals with invitations so seductive.

Sometimes the only thing we can do is wait for God to reveal His will.
And it is one of His ways to teach us to know Him; trust and just be still.
In His own time and way, He arranges to meet our every need.
We do not have to yield to the world's way of covetousness and greed.

The God who nourished His own people in famine times in the past -
Is the same God who works His will today in ways that are bound to last.
If I get jumpy and try to do what I think should be done and I run ahead -
Then I will miss out on that divine nourishment by which people of faith are fed.

By the grace of God, I will wait His time, and fill mine by learning of Him.
I can take His yoke upon me, that I might learn just how and when
He intends for me in His name to reach out to nourish others.
For Christian love and good works to all identifies us as Christian brothers.

MOSES (drawn out): a man of faith walking before the nation. Heb.11:23-30.

The genuine faith of parents who know the value of a child and live consistently before the Lord has a direct effect on the redemption of mankind. We learn the value of faith's ambitions, choices and motivation as demonstrated by Moses parents, who trusted God to find some way to preserve their son when he could no longer be hidden. May our children have parents whose ambition is to see their children be effective workers for God in the salvation of fellow men and women. The reproach of Christ was a real reproach. It testified there would be a coming Savior. It means the person of faith has made a deliberate rejection of a godless world system. The reproach of Christ calls for radical repentance in view of serious warnings of coming judgment. For Moses, such a reproach was more honorable and valuable than all of Egypt treasures.

Moses' personality was shaped by God. He took Moses' characteristics and molded them until they were suited to His purposes. God wants to take what He created in the first place and use it for His unfolding purposes. The life of Moses is defined by three forty-year periods. He was a descendant of Levi, the second son of Amram and Jochebed. His older brother and sister were Aaron and Miriam, and born under slavery. Because at the time of his birth there was a death sentence on all Hebrew boys, Moses was hidden by his mother in a "ark" from which he was taken by Pharaoh's daughter who claimed him as her son. Instructed in Egyptian wisdom for forty years, the time came when he refused Egyptian sonship. When he tried to defend his people and was rejected by the Hebrews, he fled to Midian.

Doubt is not uncommon when there is pressure from without.
Courage in times of fear is what the Christian faith is all about.
Even when we don't know what the outcome of faith will be -
We can go forward in God's work, acting confidently.

A few choices only affect ourselves but most also will affect others.
It is important that we act in faith, we are watched by our sons and daughters.
Faith and works balance each other when acted on in sincere love.
There comes results we can only explain as blessings from above.

When our children are at home, we may often take for granted
Their childhood will always be there to keep us so enchanted
We may forget that we only have a few years to prepare them for the future.
Our responsibility is not done until their souls we have well nurtured.

The world will beckon them to leave in order to be successful.
When they get the desire to go, then things get much more stressful.
Our hands have to let go when we see them go down the road.
The best we can do for them then is to let God take over our load.

Then we watch, and wait, and worry as God uses them without us.
Soon we are surprised to see, they too, in God do put their trust.
God begins to use them and through them, others get light.
We can, in a way relax when trusting them to do things right.

Out of sight but not out of mind our children both natural and spiritual -
Are never far from our mind when we pray, we know prayer is essential.
God is the One in whom we rest our hope, He has His plan for them.
The best I can do when they leave our home, is to commit them unto Him.

The second forty years of the life of Moses took place in the wilderness of Midian where he became Jethro's shepherd. He married Zipporah there and became the father of two sons. It is often in a place of obscurity where we have times of quiet reflection that one's character is developed. That happened to Moses in those forty years of learning what was right and unlearning that which was wrong. True, he was a believer in the Lord but there were other parts of his personality that had to be brought to maturity before he could be trusted to lead the people of God.

Leadership is responsibility of the highest value because the lives and destinies of others are at stake. Along with the need of faithfulness to be an integral trait of a leader, is the need to learn how to use power under control. One can learn meekness from the daily tending of sheep that are not easy to lead. As character develops, so does respect as one begins to think logically and reasonably. It seemed to be that by nature Moses was impatient and given to anger. Those years of discipline brought those weaknesses and failures under control. However, Moses failed to enter the promised land because of disobedience to God when he lost his temper. God does His greatest work through frail people and allows us to fail so we do not get to think we are independent from Him. Moses' Egyptian education and his practical training in the wilderness enabled him under divine direction, to be the greatest leader the Hebrews ever had when he led the exodus of the Jews from Egypt.

The strengths and accomplishments during the third forty-year period of Moses' life were in a large part formed by the eighty years of preparation. In the wilderness he heard God's voice when the Lord revealed His plans to his servant. He learned there much more of who God is than before. He tried to argue with God about his own inadequacies and learned that God's "strength is made perfect in weakness." He learned how to share leadership responsibilities with Aaron who was a better speaker but a weak leader. By the direction of God, he called for the Israelites to assemble and learned that God can do easily what we cannot do with the best of our ability.

By the time Moses had returned to Egypt he had learned how to deal with rejection without losing sight of the objective to which we are called. He was rejected by Pharaoh and even by the Israelites themselves but under divine authority and power, won the conflict with Pharaoh when the ten plagues had run their course. His command to prepare for and keep the Passover was acted upon by Israel as a fledging nation of disorganized slaves. Each event on the way out of Egypt strengthened his leadership as long as he did what God commanded. The crossing of the Red Sea, the healing of bitter water at Marah, the manna and the quails all were accomplished by God through the hand of his servant Moses who had learned to obey the voice of God. To be in the presence of God on Mt. Sinai and there receive the covenant with Israel and the Ten Commandments; to receive all the instructions in regard to building the Tabernacle; to learn and pass on the reasons for, and the way to, sacrifice indicates the faith and convictions of Moses, the lawgiver. As a prophet and lawgiver, he was the author of the Pentateuch.

After the events at Sinai where he was called to God's presence; received the law; confirmed the covenant with Israel; spent forty days on Mt. Sinai where he received the pattern of the tabernacle - Moses interceded for Israel's sins. Again, he went up the mountain and was recommissioned and encouraged. The tabernacle built exactly as God required; Aaron was consecrated; the people were numbered and they observed the Passover. Through all of these experiences Moses acted in faith. From the wanderings from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea and right to his death, Moses "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Seventy elders were appointed; Moses was rebuked by Miriam and Aaron; he sent spies into the promised land and pleaded with rebellious Israel. During those years of wandering in the wilderness he announced God's judgment; "lifted up" the brazen serpent; gave instructions concerning inheritance; gave farewell messages. He committed the written law to the priests; saw the promised land from Mt. Nebo and died in full strength at one hundred and twenty years.

To live by faith is a spiritual warfare. God redeemed Israel but used Moses to preach that redemption and lead the people out once they had been redeemed. God has told us of wrath to come but many do not warn their fellow man, as Moses did, to kill the lamb; to walk in faith across dry land with water piled up on each side (baptized unto Moses) and to expect food, flesh and water in the wilderness of this ungodly world. Conflicts seemed to find Moses. Reaction was his usual action. When things needed righting, he was the one to do it. Whether defending a Hebrew slave or trying to stop a struggle between two kinsmen; when Moses saw it, he acted. As years went by, he learned to react correctly. When he had to mediate between God and His people, deal with Israel's complaints or take unjustified attacks on his character; he reacted as a leader should.

To Moses, the phrase “people of God” was no empty words. He really believed Israel stood in a special relationship with the living God and had a significant role to play in the redemption of the world. He had to make a decision between culture, wealth and all that Egypt held, and the belief in a coming world Savior. Moses didn’t redeem Israel. God did. But Moses had a clear understanding of the principles of redemption, and faith strong enough to apply them and put them into action. Moses parents, by faith, saw him when he was a potential deliverer of his nation. Their prime ambition for their son was that he would be an effective worker for God in the salvation of their countrymen. Moses in turn, weighed the comparative value off things and made a calm, deliberate decision to go for the valuable.

The life of Moses contains valuable life lessons for us. If we want to react consistent with God’s will, we must develop habits of obedience to God. Consistent obedience to God is developed best when we are not under stress. If we are committed to obedience, when stress comes our natural reaction will be to obey God. Personal greatness does not make a person immune to error and its consequences. God did not reject Moses when he outright disobeyed. Moses simply disqualified himself to enter the promised land. We learn through this man of faith the value of walking in obedience to God in spite of obstacles, fear of the unknown, opposition from friend and foe and self-doubt.

Caring parents who knew the value of a child-
A mother who knew uniqueness when she saw it-
Quiet crooning in a far corner when the baby was awake-
But he grew, and so did his voice.
Holy Moses - set apart for God from his birth!

An act of careful calculation - slime and pitch applied -
Until waterproof - it really did float - the ark that is -
And in a safe watery place he lies
With watching eyes - now from a distance -
Holy Moses - set apart from the crowd!

Dark Egyptian eyes watch, and careful hands lift the lid -
A loud infant cry and hearts all around melt with love;
The child, pre-ordained is raised in the fear of God -
Then taken to “The Big House” and named, “Drawn Out.”
Holy Moses - set apart from his family!

An act in haste from a man well-grown -
The distance increasing in miles and culture -
A king-leader in training becomes a shepherd in learning.
Lessons are unlearned and learned, in God’s school.
Holy Moses - set apart to give form to and lead a nation!

“Be ye holy for I am holy,” God speaks to me.
A difference obvious to both eye and ear,
Is expected from all who march to the heavenly drum-beat.
Separate in morality, spirituality - even in culture -
A holy people, a holy nation, a holy priesthood; and I am one with them!

“Father, I know other people watch what I do, listen to what I say, make decisions sometimes on what I tell them. I am conscious of my weakness and inability in myself to meet the expectations others have a right to expect. May Thy servant be a useable tool in Thy hands to do that which is according to Thy will and word. May I by Thy power make decisions with wisdom, speak with gracious words, listen with an open mind and heart, be precise and compassionate, and Thy servant demonstrate love that is sincere and godly. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

JOSHUA (savior): a man of faith in his warfare. Heb.11:30

Even though Joshua is not named in the fall of Jericho, there is clear that he believed God would do just what was needed to bring the victory in this warfare. As far as the life of Joshua being a life of faith, this Ephraimite, the son of Nun, is notable as one who led God’s people in the battles of the nation. Under his military leadership, the children of Israel defeated Amalek by the power of God. He was a faithful minister to Moses and was willing to live in obscurity faithfully serving God by serving God’s servant. He was one of two spies who reported favorably assuring the Israelites of their faith in God to conquer the promised land, even though the other ten spies swayed the people. He was chosen by God as Moses’ successor and was empowered and inspired by God. He unified the people, sent out spies to Jericho, led the people across Jordan, and by faith in God alone,

was used to destroy Jericho. The remainder of his life was one of conquering faith clearly testified to in a well-known statement, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The forces of evil were barricaded in Jericho but in spite of what seemed impossible, Joshua had the faith to believe the walls of Jericho could be breached. The tactics God gave him were strange but he believed they would work. That was perhaps the biggest act of faith and it was daily tested for a week before the walls actually fell. We struggle against the strongholds of evil [2Cor.10:3-6; Eph.6:10-20]. These are demonic forces but we cannot lose our nerve or our faith, even though our methods and message seem foolish to the world [1Cor.1:18]. The Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth [Rom.1:16]. The walls of the enemy still can be breached [2Cor.10:4].

The character of Joshua is an example of that of a man or woman of God who He can use to reach beyond the forces of darkness to the light of truth and faith. He was courageous, but not full of foolish bravado [Num.14:6-10]. He was an emotional man but not sentimental [Jos.7:6-10]. He was a wise and experienced military man who had the sense to realize his need of God's guidance and power [Jos.8:3-29]. Apparently, he was easily beguiled [Jos.9:3-27] which seems a bit out of character. Yet in spite of all the battles he had fought and won he was sympathetic towards those who appear to be in need. There was a sense in which he was prophetic as he could see what was ahead [Jos.6:26-27] and his leadership went beyond only that of being a military leader to that of being a strong religious leader [Jud. 2:7].

There are a number of ways in which Joshua is a type of Christ even beyond the meaning of his name. Joshua was a Savior. He saved Israel from the enemies in the land and calamities. Christ saves us from all spiritual enemies both seen and unseen. Joshua led Israel into Canaan. Christ leads us into victory now and heaven soon. What Moses couldn't do, Joshua could. What the law could not do Christ did. Joshua was a mighty conqueror – so is Christ. Joshua overcame kings. Christ overcame [1] Satan [2] Sin [3] Death. The promises of God to Israel were fulfilled through Joshua. The promises of God to us are fulfilled through Christ. Joshua saved Rahab and her family because of the red cord. The Lord Jesus saves sinners by faith in His blood. Joshua accepted the Gibeonites who wanted peace, even though they didn't deserve it. So, Christ accepts all sincere sinners who seek for mercy.

The life of a believer who does not submit to the ways of the world is going to seem like an uphill battle. To live without compromising our faith in some way is not easy and we are not going to be accepted by those who have a secular world-view. Christian commitment and the consequences of it, results in us being out of step with the social, economic and religious world in whose territory we live. To be as strangers and pilgrims is not wrong, but it means we will need to be on guard against our three enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil.

It's here again but it is different this time
We are not in the wilderness but the promised land.
We left Egypt by blood; God brought us in by His power
All the way God led us; the strength was His not ours.

Now the old corn of the land has replaced the manna -
The spiritual food stopped after the Passover in Canaan.
Lord, please don't take the heavenly manna away!
I need the food from heaven each and every day.

There's a land to be possessed, we need to start right here -
The enemies are many and waiting - Jericho is near.
Thankfully we know the Lord of hosts is here to lead us -
He is the same One who from Egypt's bondage freed us.

There are times I stop to wonder at the passing of the years -
God certainly has maintained us through joy and our tears.
If it wasn't for His promises, I'd wonder what we've done -
But He has brought us into a land and He did it all alone.

During the years between our leaving and arrival -
By grace and power, He provides - maintained our survival.
Along the way He has allowed me the privilege to serve men -
And making me to understand, in serving them - I serve Him.

"The Captain the Host of the Lord, O God, has certainly preserved me on this journey to Canaan. I have appreciated in these last few days what Thou are doing in the land and are having us to be involved in. This land needs to be possessed and for some reason the desire to do that has ceased by many. Please stir these self-centered, complacent

people to reach out beyond the areas of their own self-interest. There is a lot that could be done if only the saints of God could see beyond where they are now. I make this intercession in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

RAHAB (wide; violence; pride; arrogance): a woman of faith in her welcome of the spies. [11:31]

A prostitute living in Jericho is a very unlikely person to be noted by the Almighty God as a person of faith. We do not know the origin of Rahab's faith but her faith was real. The things she heard about God's people in the crossing of the Red Sea and the victories of Israel, led her to put her faith in God. She had heard of the ways of God and the works of God for Israel all of her life. She would have been considered a traitor by the people of Jericho when she hid Joshua's spies into her house. However, it is not treachery to leave the world and stand with God and His people. When she received the Israelite spies with peace, she indicated faith in the true God and in the Gospel. It involved transferring her loyalties from her native people to the invading Israelites whom she had come to believe were God's people. This Gentile sinner who had been saved by grace through faith, believed God because of the past works of which she had heard. She testified to her faith in God in the present. She looked ahead in faith to the future promise of God. Peter said, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" [Acts 2:40]. We too, have to take up this challenge and proclaim it in our evangelism.

Because of her faith she was spared by the Israelites. Rahab's faith in God was the reason she received the spies, so that faith was confirmed by the works she demonstrated towards men. God alone knows the reality of a person's faith, but we, like her, show our faith by the works that follow. Rahab's house was in a vulnerable place on the wall. It was evident that Israel was about to invade. However, she was the only one who turned to the Lord for salvation. She could have been killed for hiding the spies, but took the risk because she knew the God of Israel was worth trusting.

God works through people like Rahab – whom we are inclined to reject. God remembers her faith, not her shady profession. Rahab rose above her situation through her trust in God. We are able to do the same. We will not be included among those in the hall of faith, but by faith we have learned our confidence is in a living God as we look into the past. In this present time, we find the blessing of living by faith from day to day, and as we look ahead by faith we know our Lord will come for His people and then with His people. Rahab is cited as an example of faith and works [Jas.2:25] and because of her faith, became an ancestor of Christ [Mat.1:5].

Hebrews 11:32-40

FAITH COMMENDED

In this summary of people of faith, the fact of the life of a believer being a struggle is confirmed. Some were victorious by faith in warfare and their faith was in God alone to defeat the foe. Some suffered and died by faith and yet never compromised what they knew was God's will and rested their souls in Him when their bodies were in great pain. Faith does not always seem to triumph in this lifetime. To suffer without evidence of victory and still believe God is real faith. "Our times are in Thy hand" has often been the word from the Lord to give inner peace to suffering saints when all seems dark around us.

Large numbers of people gathered for a common purpose, does not mean faith predominated there. Gideon sent those who were timid and those who wanted comfort home, along with those who thought only of themselves even when drinking water. His faith was in God to do what to natural man was impossible. Barak knew his own weakness and his need of Deborah's maturity. In fear and awareness of his inability, he still exercised faith in the Lord. He learned the principle we have learned if we are honest about ourselves. "My grace is sufficient for thee, and My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Samson's moral weakness to our thinking would have kept him out of such a list of people of faith, but on the occasions when there was nowhere else to turn, he must have remembered the power of God that was available to him as a Nazarite and put his faith in God to provide the strength to overcome. Jephthah was in a low social position and would have been overlooked by men as a deliverer. However, the Lord chose him as one who would not claim the victory was of his making because in fear and faith, he went forth to victory. The faith of David was demonstrated in many events in his life as well as in the words of praise and prayer he wrote. Samuel had been a judge who looked on the "outward appearance" at first, but the last judge became a prophet later in life as he looked ahead by faith to the future God promised.

The prophets were men of faith who endured struggles in life going from bad to worse as they followed the call of God, but they did not remain silent in spite of opposition. Being steadfast in faith does not mean we will have a carefree life in which there are no obstacles and persecution. Faith expects abuse and resentment because it goes opposite to popular thought and action. Mockery and scorn come from those who only believe what they can see or rationalize. Pain, fear and even death are often the times in which a vital faith is best experienced and

demonstrated. Real faith endures and continues without seeing the fulfillment of the promises that vitalize it. Many who lived by faith will not see the results of it until after they have passed on to glory.

The variety of personalities and the ways their faith was demonstrated in this list, teaches us that God uses who He will for His own purposes when they trust Him. Times of affliction are hard to bear. We may be tempted to escape the pressures imposed on us by faith through compromise or quitting. But faith is commended when we realize God has something better for us ahead. Obstacles, rough roads, opposition, pain and suffering lead us to the high ground of the divine will being fulfilled through us for the glory of God and our eternal blessing. Suffering for a little while will lead to glory and blessing forever. Commendable faith like those we read of here, brings us into a condition of maturity and the capacity to enjoy God and glorify Him.

The unseen things of our Christian life may be hard for us to explain
Faith and grace go together to bring victory when our bodies are in pain
They are there to give us power when outward pressure is applied
To make us conform to that which is around, instead of in our Lord confide.

For those who live by sight alone, they have imposed self-limitations
They have closed their minds to life by faith with divine illuminations
It is only possible for them to rise to the height of their finite minds
Never will they see beyond experiences, to the vistas true faith finds.

When we live by faith in God, our universal view expands
We are able to see by faith the glories of far and distant lands
Not only those that this earth contains, but glories that are unlimited
A person of faith in the living God is not by human flesh inhibited.

We know our Lord who we have not seen, but by faith we understand
Most of what is real even here, is not seen by mortal man
The inner human body, the galaxies, the emotions are no less real
Then those things that our eyes can see and our hands can touch and feel.

To faith the universe expands beyond the farthest star and sun
Faith sees the evidence of order that comes from the supremely intelligent One
Everything has its time and place, its plan and purpose to fulfill
Faith sees behind it all our Lord, who in us does faith instill.

"O God of grace and glory, I come carefully and reverently into Thy presence here having been made conscious of Thy greatness through Thy Word. I do believe in Thee with all my heart, and I know that 'all things work together for good, to them that love God.' Whether this day brings good or bad, I rest in Thee to do that which will bring the greatest glory to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

HEBREWS 12:1-11

AN INSPIRING HERITAGE

The people referred to in chapter 11, even though they were acting in faith, while the rest of the people were not, died before they saw the promised Messiah. Not even death defeats faith. They lived on the other side of the cross and yet triumphed by faith. What seemed like defeats were triumphs. They believed God but did not see the promise. In a sense they died without being vindicated. We have an inspiring heritage!!

Now on this side of the cross, the Jewish believers have better things because the living Messiah has come. Even though the faith of the Old Testament believers was so evident, they weren't made perfect without the blessing we have. In chapter 12, our attention is taken away from the army of witnesses and placed on the Author and Finisher of our faith. We must fix our sight on Christ and run for Him, not ourselves. If we look at the wrong things, we will stumble. The first four verses of the chapter are a look at the past where we are challenged to "consider Him" and what He has done for us and how He acted. His hands didn't hang down nor were his knees weak even in the worst possible suffering and opposition. We are challenged to look up and take courage.

In the section of the chapter from verse five through verse seventeen, the challenge is to "lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees." Look at the present and see what is being "down" in us. The hands we lift up may be true of others besides ours. The charge to "make straight paths" is important because others may be following our lead. That is why to "follow peace" and "look diligently" so we do not fail of the grace of God is to be obeyed. A look at the future what will be given us is the subjects of the last verses in the chapter. Three key subjects also are seen in the first half of the chapter" consideration, chastisement and consecration.

The writer addresses the Hebrew epistle to Jews who were showing signs of being discouraged in their warfare. A great cloud of witnesses who had walked, worked, worshiped and served in faith in earlier times amid opposition, held fast and persevered to the end. What they did, you can do. The success of predecessors, inspires those who come after. Weights are things that hinder progression such as material possessions, family ties, love of comfort - any kind of encumbrance, weakness and infirmity. For these problems we have the High Priest. "The sin" mentioned here is probably unbelief, but that is not the only one with which we need our Lord as the Advocate. Doubt, inward sins that no one knows about except God and you, hold us like cords that we cannot detach. "Let us lay aside every sin and habit of evil tendency, which does so easily beset us and so closely cling to us, although it be admired of many."

Many examples are given of those who ran and did obtain, but they all failed in some point. The Lord Himself ran the race before us and He is our best guide. He began and ended His life in faith. He ran the whole race from beginning to end with no failure. He is the "Perfector of faith." In suffering He demonstrated His perfection. His every moment was spent in absolute dependence on God. Every word and act were in response to the Father's will. No circumstance shook His faith, even when it led to hunger, scorn or death. If we run "looking unto Jesus", we will see how He acted, where His strength came from; the patience He had. He endured the cross, the shame, the mockery of sinners. He was derided, smitten, spit upon by creatures made by His power. He was dragged by them as a low malefactor, numbered among the transgressors, the song of the drunkards, a proverb to them, reproached. The pain He bore on the cross was greater than physical pain. It was the pain of the perfect, spotless One being made sin for us. Judgment fell on Him from God. Men forsook Him. But He endured "as seeing Him who is invisible." Four times in Hebrews, Jesus is seen on the right hand of God: [1:2] His work is accomplished - He is our Substitute. [8:1] As a priest - He is our Intercessor. [10:12] Awaiting the day of His power - our coming King. [12:2] As a pattern for those in the race - our Overcomer.

The Hebrews were growing weary, though they had "not yet resisted unto blood." The thought of yielding is unworthy of those who have such a glorious Leader. There is a special crown for those who are faithful unto death [Rev.2:11]. The Hebrews had forgotten that the afflictions they suffered were not only from the hand of man, but also used by the Lord for His own purposes. If we see only the human instruments and circumstances, we may think we are at liberty to rebel. No matter what the channel is through which it comes, it is the Father's will for us. Chastening is to instruct, to train, not to punish. This isn't the thought of anger, but of parental care and discipline. A true father trains his child to form better character. God takes us in hand and prunes, shapes and forms us as He desires. His design is to mold us to His likeness. Trials may be hard, but its perfect work will produce likeness to our Great Model who was "perfected through suffering." The trials of chastening increase our faith.

The purpose of chastening is not just to impose punishment but by that means to change inappropriate behavior through imposing some affliction for training purposes. By purging out that which needs chastening, it may include rebuke, punishment and scourging of some kind appropriate to the wrong committed. Chastisement from the Lord for our benefit is a way to express real love - tough love, not sentimental feelings. That sentimental love does not produce an exercise on the part of the children of God to change. The Lord is the authority behind true chastisement. It is God Almighty who is dealing with his children. As the Father of spirits, He applies the heavenly, spiritual view of life to those who belong to Him. This is for our profit - our advantage - to bring about holiness that we might be "partakers of God's character."

Chastening is evidence we are saved [v.6], it is for our profit and welfare [v.10], it is for our cleansing [v.11] and to prevent us from losing our crown [v.15]. By having these experiences of chastening, we go forth and comfort others in the way God comforted us. We are to be messengers of cheer - sons of consolation. Never [1] make light of (despise) the Lord's discipline [2] lose heart when He rebukes you. Don't get hard and cynical and let discipline pass without profit. Don't faint under it and give in. Remember, "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens." Correction includes the wide thought of general education in bringing up a child. God is prepared to use all means to educate us. We don't discipline a child to make life unpleasant but to develop abilities for the child to live a fuller life and be able to "live."

God gives us this preparation time of life to prepare for eternity. We have to learn to share His holiness and His behavior. We must submit to Him and trust His wisdom to bring about the desired result. He has a right to expect us to cooperate with Him and live by His grace. Righteousness and peace will result even though the discipline may be temporarily painful but brings ultimately good results. We can accept it [1] with resignation [2] with self-pity, thinking we don't really deserve it. [3] We can be angry and resentful toward God, or [4] we can accept it gratefully.

Hebrews 12:2. *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

“Look unto Him...” “Consider Him...” “Despise not Him”

Looking unto Jesus:

The Author: The Source, the Originator, the Cause, the Beginner, the Head Inventor, the Captain, the Leader, the Pioneer - of Faith.

The Finisher: The Completer, the Last, the Rewarder, the Perfecter - of Faith,

The Joy (His motivation): to bring glory to God, to honor God, to bring redemption to the world, to do the Father's will

Endured the cross (His endurance): endured patiently, endured personally, endured painfully - suffered to bring us to God

Despising the shame (His attitude): dishonor, disrespect to one crucified, disgrace, disgust, despised, infamy to one who was crucified, to put away sin

Sat down (His honor): in perpetuity, in dignity, in honor, in happiness, in triumph, to present a finished work

He begins it as the Author of (the) Faith, He carries it on as the Maintainer of (the) Faith, He concludes it as the Finisher of (the) Faith. I am reminded of mother, who during her daily reading, wrote her thoughts “Looking unto Jesus” as a form of challenge, praise and worship to her Lord. We look at the past, and see what He has done for us. We look at the present, at what is being done in us. We look at the future, and to what will be given to us – and I worship here before my Lord and Savior.

“O Gracious God, my eyes are looking off unto the Lord Jesus today as I review the faith He originated, the grace He manifested, the redemption He provided, the blessings He has presented by virtue of who He is and what He has done. All eternity will never be able to fully contain the value of what He has done. I look at Him in the past and thank Thee for what His work on earth has done. I look at Him in the present and see Him as the Great High Priest mediating for us today. I look at Him in the future and await the visible evidence of His glory put on display for all to see through the ages yet to come. I worship Him in all the worth of His Person. Amen.”

Hebrews 12:12-17

AFTER CORRECTION

Chastening has the purpose of making us more capable in divine service than previously because lessons have been learned that carry over into our own daily living, and also has an impact on those around us whose "hands are hanging down" and whose knees are feeble. Correction is not a bad thing - it is a good thing to bring us into line with God's will so we can serve our Lord with enthusiasm. We are in essence being urged to get up, get going, do something, it is time to get to work. Our heavenly Trainer is pushing us to stop feeling sorry for ourselves, to draw on the strength of our Lord and to press on to victory.

We are challenged to use the disciplined strength God has given us, not just for our spiritual survival, but to provide an example for others to believe and follow our Lord. The tendency is to leave out the weak ones and run after the strong ones. We have a responsibility to assist others so that they will not be confused or misled by trying to adapt that which is designed by the enemy to trip them up and injure them. A "lame" person will not be able to run the race until that lameness is healed. The Lord can bless us in ministry as well as receiving the ministry of others. Some Hebrews had lost everything. The charge is to help them.

Consecration is described in this context by the words, *“Follow peace with all men.”* We are to live peace with all men as much as possible [Rom.12:18]. It will not always be possible, for truth must not be sacrificed to peace. We should not give offense needlessly. Usually offense is through lack of considering one another – selfishness. If it is necessary, let reproof be given in love; if offense is taken, we should not respond with coldness. If one acts as an enemy, we should treat him as a friend [Rom.12:20]. That is living peacefully. If peace is fleeing, we can't help that, but we are to pursue it. “Follow after” implies positive activity; seeking the positive good of all and yet we cannot cease to testify against evil.

No one is allowed to receive salvation without the obligation to seek holiness. Salvation by grace is not permission to live an unholy life. Sanctification is to be pursued as we live unto the Lord, to keep the soul focused. Separation must be of the mind as well as the body. We can withdraw from the world, but if the mind is in it, it avails nothing. If the heart and mind are there, it won't be long before the body follows. The way you know whether it is of the world or not; the criterion is, “not of the Father.” It is not left to us to make the selection.

Growth in divine life is measured by separation. Some things are developed easily; others with great effort. The Lord was always a stranger when He was here [Jn.17:16]. "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth." The study of the word brings true separation. We are not saved *in* the world, but saved *out* of the world. Citizens of heaven on a mission to earth, are never content to be bogged down in earthly things.

The warning is repeated, not so much for the sake of the obvious unbeliever who will perish, but for the sake of the effect such a person will have on genuine believers among whom he lives under the pretense of being a believer. The true measure of separation *from* the world, is separation *unto*. Something is going to be in our hearts. Our *hands* are affected – what I write; our *feet* go only where the Father wants; our *ears* hear the right things. We are stewards of our *bodies* as well as our *gifts*. The blood and oil were put on the ear, thumb and the foot of the priest.

Beside correction and consecration, the care for others is our concern. There are those who are in serious danger of "failing" or falling short of the grace of God. We are responsible to reach out to those who fall short of the grace of God. Also, we need to care for them because of the result of the "root of bitterness." Those who are bitter produce enmity, false doctrine and other serious issues that affect many – and will cause trouble. The cause of bitterness may be small but it defiles many. [1Cor.5; 1Tim.1:20; Tit.3:10; Mat.18:17; Rom.16:17; 2Thes.3:6-14; 2Jn.10].

Then there are those with a form of godliness but are without power for whom we need to care. Associating with the people of God are those who are not children of God. They are not saved. Some may look like they are or even want us to believe they are. Esau, a son of believing parents, despised his privileges. He didn't value God's things. (Contrast with Moses – what he gave up). The human mind tends to become fixed in the direction in which it is most turned. The only thing that can change this is the power of God. Esau is among the apostates like Korah and Baalam who defined in human life what apostasy really is. [1] failure to obtain grace [2] root of bitterness [3] immorality [4] no appreciation for what God gives. Unbelievers act on what they want at this moment. Believers in Christ need to consider the long-term effects of our decisions and actions before we act.

It is not easy to have to face honestly the wrong
We do when we act on our own.
But we know when we have lost our strength and our song
Something quickly has to be done.
Our heavenly Father always knows what is best to do
To bring an undisciplined life into line.
When His chastening process of us is through
The light of acceptance can shine.

Then hands are "lifted up" and our walk is strengthened
As we look forward to the future instead of around.
Our steps again are firm and our influence is lengthened
To assist those who in faithlessness are down.
Healing comes, peace has gained a lasting hold in one's life
So that holiness finally becomes a reality.
The bitterness that defiles, and the potential strife
Ends when we act with grace, looking diligently.

There are dangers that come, and enemies who are obscure
That we may be inclined to overlook.
But care must be taken lest that of which we are sure
Be compromised by a wrong path we took.
"The Lord" is near, we are not left alone
He gives strength for each daily need.
The grace of God still comes from His throne
Where our Advocate for us does plead.

"Father of grace, these hands, these feet and this voice are getting older. But I am trusting in Thee to keep my hands uplifted, my steps sure and my voice clear. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 12:18-29

PRIVILEGES AND CHALLENGES

The contrast of law and grace is addressed. The writer had sought to help the Hebrew believers by pointing out the superiority of Christ to Aaron, Moses, Joshua and even angels. His sacrifice is superior to animal sacrifices. People cannot mix the old covenant and the new together. God does not give people an alternative choice. He loves us. He wants us to believe on, and love, Him. Believers are not brought to blackness, darkness and

tempest which was the mission of the law – to convince us of sin. It was sent to show us the need of life, not to give it [Rom.7:13; Gal.3:21]. We are brought to Mt. Zion, “the perfection of beauty” – the type of joy and peace; the heavenly Jerusalem. The Jerusalem above [Gal.4:26] reckons us among its citizens. Unnumbered hosts of angels; the Church of the first-born ones – sons of God whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life; and the spirits of those individual believers before the Church. All have distinct places in the heavenly Jerusalem. Above all these, we have been brought – to God, the Judge of all and to Jesus, the Mediator. This is what we are separated unto. This is our city – not a bad exchange for the world.

The blood of sprinkling is not a reference to the sacrifices the Jews were bringing as an offering. The blood of Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, our Lord Jesus, was brought into heaven by Himself. In the sight of God, justice has been satisfied and the righteous Judge cannot take vengeance. The blood of Abel cried for vengeance on his murderer. The blood of Jesus brings peace, because it is the basis of reconciliation between a righteous God and the one who believes in Jesus. If the blood brings peace, do we need to hear Him? Yes!! The greater the dignity of the speaker who is refused, the greater is the punishment of them that despise and reject Him [Heb.2:2; 10:28]. God has provided the means of salvation and has pointed out the danger and the remedy so all are without excuse.

When the law was given, the earth shook. The time is coming when both heaven and earth shake. Those who look for the new heavens and new earth shall not be shaken. We have “a kingdom that cannot be shaken”; an abiding kingdom. Don’t be weary or faint, but have grace – thankfulness, so our service is well-pleasing to God being constrained by the love of Christ. Don’t forget the majesty of God. Esteem and reverence Him. He is holy. He consumes all that is contrary to His nature. Our God is a consuming fire: and there is terror for those who despise Him; there is comfort and blessing in that fact for those who yield to God’s love and are open to Him. Fire does more than consume. Fire is warmth reminding us of God’s consistent and constant affection that motives us to live in and for Him. Fire is also light. When God comes in His light is obvious amidst all the darkness around. Fire is purity because God is the Refiner who brings reality out.

A sevenfold exhortation gives a good summation of Hebrews chapter twelve:
Stripped bodies, v.1. “*Lay aside every weight...*”: The simile used is the laying off of a garment, as the athlete who lays aside every encumbrance before he runs in a race.
Looking eyes, v.2. “*looking unto Jesus...*”: The figure indicates the looking away from one object to another. Christ is the Leader and Completer of faith. We have a Perfect Example of faith to follow, and a Perfect Indweller to impart the faith He requires.
Lifting hands, v.12. “*Lift up the hands...*” A loving heart to Christ in remembering how He lifts us up from sin to Himself, will prompt us to have hands for Christ in helping others to Him.
Straight paths, v.13. “*Make straight paths...*” The best way to restore others is to be perfectly sure we are right with God ourselves. We need to be straight ourselves if we would straighten others.
Pursuing feet, v.14. “*Follow peace...*” Peace is the place that is reached by traveling in the way of holiness.
Alert attention, v.15. “*Looking diligently...*” Not to take supplies is to lack what you need. To fail the grace of God is to fail to take God in His grace, who never fails.
Good service, v.28. “*Serve God acceptably...*” To be well-pleasing to God is the highest form of service. Acceptable service has love for its motive, truth for its guide, the Spirit for its power, and God’s glory for its end.

When faith works its way in the lives of God’s people
We look at the history of others and realize we are as equal
In the eyes of God as those who have gone on before -
And our spirits are lifted anticipating what is in store.

We are motivated by faith to lay aside weights that hinder
Also, we look above and see Jesus our perfect Mediator
The exhortation is not to waste our time looking deep within -
Rather listen to what He says whose blood cleanseth from all sin.

Raise up your hands in prayer and praise to Him who loudly speaks
When earth shakes by His power and the lost for shelter seek
Those of faith and hope in Him know we need not fear -
Rather we anticipate with joy, the time when He appears.

With out feet we follow the path that leads to separation
Holiness in life is what is the proper designation
Peace is not illusive when by faith peace we do pursue -
Serving and worshipping in reverence is what His children do.

“Father, I know that chastisement and correction are necessary in the lives of Thy children. It seems to me that when chastisement is exercised, consecration to Thee and Thy work is a result. I know I have experienced this on a number of occasions. Please help me to really learn the lessons Thou dost teach, and give me the grace to change, and the wisdom to do what is right. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Hebrews 13:1-8

A LIVING FAITH

Love and its actions are a visible demonstration of faith because it is seen in love for others. Kindness to strangers has a very far-reaching effect of which we may never fully be aware. Empathy for those mistreated and those in prison cannot be hidden because there are always those who look on and pass on what has been said and done. Respect for our marriage vows is displayed in words, actions, body language and facial expressions which cannot be obscured. Contentment with what we have expresses more than just our outlook on materialism. It reflects our faith in God's ability to "supply all your needs according to His riches in grace." There is an important lesson to be learned right at the beginning of this chapter, and that is true service for God includes our duty to His children.

Next to the direct service of God, is our duty to His children [1Jn.5:1; 3::23; Jn.15:17; 2Pe.1:7; 1Jn.3:14]. Evidence of fruit in the lives of God's people are seen in this chapter. The first in the list is brotherly love. We are to show love to the brethren. We are in the same war as our suffering brothers and sisters. Love in words and deeds is evidence of being brethren, and of a living faith. Hospitality to some people is an imposition on them that they are not willing to accept. A stranger's garments may cover an unlikely person. Abraham, lot, Gideon and Manoah all entertained angels. Kindness shown toward other people is never a wasted effort. Love for the unconverted may win their confidence. The character of the Lord and the message of the Gospel is often judged by the one bringing the message. Jews were not to treat strangers harshly because they were strangers once. Our aim should be to show the love of the Lord to us by showing His love to them through us. For strangers – we have benevolence and pity; for brethren kinship and appreciation. Hospitality simply means other people feel comfortable and at home with you. People who we can show hospitality to are visitors to your assembly; singles who are lonely; needs of visiting missionaries.

Love shows itself in sympathy for the suffering members of God's family. Concern and care for those who are being mistreated for the Lord's sake is evidence of our faith being displayed by the actions of love. The Lord said true followers would visit those in prison [Mat.25:36]. Some have been called to take the Gospel to unbelievers in prison and by His grace God has saved some in that situation. When we suffer with sympathy, we become partakers of others who suffer [10:33] unjustly. The Church suffered with Peter when they prayed together bearing his burdens. Paul longed to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. We are not always able to aid a sufferer emotionally or physically, but the throne of grace is always open to us. The Father is not limited.

Marriage is not a joke. It is honorable. God has honored it by identifying it as a type of His relationship with His people, the church. Suggestions of immorality, stories with sexual humor are not pure. Children are watching the models all the time. Sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, but don't think God overlooks such things. He may keep silence, but this class of sin most hateful in the eyes of God, God will judge [2Pe.2:10]. Purity in marriage must be maintained with conviction and sensitivity. The principle of honor for one's spouse by recognizing the depth of the covenant of marriage from the biblical view gives strength to the practice of an undefiled marriage. Faithfulness begins in the mind. Prayer for our loved one establishes a spiritual context for marriage. Deliberate words of encouragement and praise give meaning to the commitment that marriage demands. The third cords in a Christian marriage that tends to strength is God Himself. He is involved in marriage and He will judge that which is evil.

The love of money is a serious sin to avoid. Our manner of life must be without love of money. Idolatry is putting anything in the places which belong to God alone. Money can quickly become an idol. The possession of money is a trust from God, but there is always the danger of trusting it instead of God. Having a full pocket and forgetting God, are often linked in the scripture and in experience. If we look to money instead of God to meet our needs, we are not in a right state of mind. This is what leads to covetousness. Contentment is an attitude to cultivate. How can we learn to be content? Learn to live with less. Relish what you have; don't resent what you're missing. We become content when we realize God's sufficiency. Trust Him to meet your needs. Stewards are required to be faithful. Contentment is also a promise to claim and a confidence to confess.

The life of those who have a living faith by which they live, is a demonstration of Christianity to those in all areas of life. Our lives have two parts: the part that involves our contact with the world and the part that links us with believers in the body of Christ. Our social life, family life, business life, school life - even our sex life is a reflection of our faith. An open home and an open heart cannot be hidden and is evidence of our commitment to Christ.

Open eyes to avoid temptation and an open mind to avoid materialism when controlled by the Spirit of God, give proof to our testimony that we have found our joy in our Lord Jesus Christ.

You wouldn't have known just walking by, an angel was standing there
Some children were having great fun, without a worry or care
The guardian from God may not have been seen, but we are given assurance
The angel is keeping a vigilant watch, lest there be some terrible occurrence.

He showed up where the Lord's people were gathered, just looking like an ordinary man
However, he was sent with a task to lift up some believers fallen down hands.
It wasn't just the things that he said, but there was something special about how he said it
That made us understand, our blessings in life we didn't earn - God gets all the credit.

To a suffering prisoner in a cell enduring hardness for Jesus' sake
The visit from a caring believer, a good change in outlook he did make
No longer feeling forgotten, on the edge of the lake of "self-pity"
The laborer imprisoned unfairly, now looks higher, and by grace sees the "heavenly city."

He watches his wife with love, as she goes about her tasks of the day
Later she sits with her husband, and pays attention to what he does say
They see in each other acceptance, and a purity that comes from each heart
The love in this marriage is deeper and greater than it was right at the start.

Contentment comes as a choice, that money and fame cannot buy
When we view it as simply a means, and not a master on which we rely
Then we can appreciate all that God gives us, our contentment is not in all we possess
The promises of God fill our life, as contented stewards we our faith can confess.

"Gracious God my Father: how blessed it is to be able to be with Thy people in happy fellowship. What a privilege it is to be ministered to by people unknown. What a responsible service it is to meet the needs of those in bondage. What joy it is to be happily married. How glad I am to find full contentment in the riches of Thy grace. All praise to Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Hebrews 13:7, 8

REMEMBER - RESPECT

The admonition to the Jewish believers is the same as to us today. The elders who were appointed in every church in the early days [Acts 14:23] were to rule by giving *direction* rather than imposing *authority*. We owe them our respect and submission. Christians owe much to those who taught us and modeled the Gospel and the Christian life for us. Human leaders have a lot to offer us. So, we respect past leaders and remember their leadership; recall their instruction; consider their goal and imitate their faith. Leaders themselves are responsible to be sure their faith and works are worth copying.

Paul said, "Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy [2Cor.1:24]. "Neither as lording it over the charge committed to you (God's heritage), but making yourselves examples to the flock" [1Pe.5:3]. Elders are to feed the flock of God. This food is the Word of God. Shepherds are instruments in the Lord's hands and as such we honor them and "hold them in reputation." We observe their way of life and imitate their faith as they would imitate the Lord Jesus. It is not always safe to imitate a good man's life. But it is wisdom to follow the faith of others when their example is such that we know they are followers of the Lord. We are to submit to their authority and it will be to our benefit to listen to their counsel. The Holy Spirit has designated men to give direction to God's children, so the lesson to us is remember the word of God they have taught us and practiced themselves.

What the Lord Jesus Christ was to the people in the past, He can be and is to us today. He is changeless. He may do things differently sometimes but He is always the same. What would we do if the Lord Jesus Christ would change? What security would we have? If He could change, where could we go for refuge? The greatest comfort we have is that He does not change. He loves us forever; He is longsuffering and patient as ever; His power is the same as ever. Our changes make no changes in Him. Human leaders are worthy of our respect and we remember them with fondness and appreciation, but our eyes must be on Christ who, unlike human leaders, never changes. The world and people change, Jesus Christ is unchanging.

Hebrews.13:8. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

CHANGELESS.

There is a sense of security when, in a changing world, there are those that never change. Changelessness is assuring. Changelessness is stabilizing. Changelessness is comforting. When it is found in a Person, we are able to be confident that in spite of my ups and downs, He is the same. In times of sadness or joy, He is the same. In health or sickness, He is the same. When I am alone or in a crowd, He is the same. If there is tension, there's no change in Him. If there is unrest and warfare, He is not swayed by it. When death and despair come, He is still the way He always was in the past. Looking into the uncertainties of the future, He will never be changed. What great confidence we can have in Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, and today, and forever.

“O Unchanging God my Father and Lord Jesus Christ my Savior: the assurance that Thou art the same forever, is the cause of my gratefulness at this moment. I am able to exalt Thee here without hesitation even though I know what I say and think now, may not be appropriate later, for I am changeable. It is my true desire to always be able to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. I honor Thee now and know it will be the same forever. Amen.”

Hebrews 13:10-14

COMMIT TO SEPARATION.

New teachings have no place in Christianity because Christ does not change. People with itching ears fall for strange teaching but those that stay close to the Lord Jesus Christ will not be carried away by them. Judaistic teachers were occupied about meats. The book of Hebrews has shown that such ordinances have been set aside. Laws can influence conduct but cannot change the heart. Lasting change in conduct begins when the Holy Spirit lives in each person. There is stability in the lives of those who know the Lord Jesus Christ never changes, truth never changes, and a scriptural position never changes. There are false teachings to avoid – a fact attested to by a heart strengthened by grace. There are ceremonial fallacies exposed which have no benefit of any kind. A lesson to learn is when we follow the Lord, we will be in the place He wants us.

By way of personal application, the children of God have "an altar" to frequent in the sense of a "possession" which belongs to us and us to it. Those who serve the tabernacle are excluded from this altar because they have no part with Christ, the true sacrifice. In order to sanctify the people, Jesus suffered without the gate, outside the camp. No more does God want animal sacrifices, holy days, special garments, incense, foods and ceremonial washings. Christ has died outside the camp. We come out to Him bearing His reproach. Separation unto Him at the place where sacrifices were burned and where Jesus suffered, is the place to which we should go. The ultimate destination is to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything here is temporary. We have our hearts set on the heavenly city where the Lamb is all the glory.

Hebrews 13:15-19

LIVING FOR GOD

Hebrews chapter thirteen gives a good order for the life and testimony of those who are children of God. Spiritual fruits are many and varied and they are presented here with the silent and unseen characteristics of a vital living faith before the audible expressions. Love, hospitality, care, sympathy, purity and contentment need to be in place before praise, prayer and the presenting of our possessions really makes our testimony authentic. In our testimony to the Lord, the believer priest has sacrifices to offer of which there are quite a number (see list of sacrifices). Praise to God is a sacrifice we offer through our Lord Jesus Christ. The first impulse of a new believer is thankfulness and praise. The more we are separated to Him, and filled with Him, the more the joy of the Lord increases.

Service is a normal response of praise of an appreciative believer in Christ to God for His blessing upon him or her. With liberality we offer the sacrifice of our temporal and financial goods to Him. The enthusiastic giving of goods and sharing of what we have with others, are sacrifices offered to God through our fellowship-giving. The sacrifice of praise is given directly to God. It is a privilege to participate with our Lord in meeting the needs of others. We are not to be misers of our spiritual wealth any more than our possessions. It is a lesson we should remember: none of us are "free-lances" but have the privilege of giving of ourselves.

Respect is one of the main things we owe to those who lead and guide God's people. It is our duty and responsibility to obey and submit to them. Their care for us involves keeping watch for false teachers who will undermine our faith. Their solemn responsibility is to give account to the Chief Shepherd. Their sincere desire is to do their work for the Lord with joy. For us to create grief is no advantage to anyone. When the Holy Spirit "hath made them overseers", men whose object is the eternal welfare of the Lord's people, we are to respect them. Those who rebel against Church discipline, bring loss and grief to those who rule as well as to themselves. Those who profit by submission, both give and receive joy. They have a responsibility to watch over us - we have the responsibility to obey them.

Beside the sacrifice of praise, and beside giving liberally to meet the needs of others, and beside respect and obedience shown to those who lead us, is the need for earnest prayer as intercessors. The writer had learned the value of prayer. This one reason some think Paul wrote this book. He knew prayer was no empty form and didn't hesitate to ask prayer from the Romans, Thessalonians, Ephesians and Colossians. The first account of him after his conversion is "behold, he prayeth." When he went into missionary work with Barnabas, it was with prayer. He prayed at midnight in prison at Philippi. When he parted with the Ephesians, he prayed. If I don't live honestly, I can't be sincere in asking the Lord's help and guidance. When we pray, we count on God to do what He is able to do "exceedingly abundantly." Two conditions are needed when prayer is requested: [1] a good conscience – inward [2] good conduct – outward. Consideration for others and intercession for them is evidence of a mature Christian who truly believes God answers prayer. Again, we have a glimpse as to who the writer may be. He was probably imprisoned and was asking prayer for deliverance.

Hebrews 13:20-25

MATURITY IN CHRIST

In the midst of the tumult, stress and unrest in this world, our God is a God of peace. The wicked don't have peace. The calmness of His presence, is known to those who know Him. Some Christians don't have peace. If we are meek and lowly enough to take His yoke on us and learn of Him, we can know the meaning of peace. The same power that raised Christ from the dead, works in us [Eph.1:19-20]. With Christ's blood-shed, death has no dominion over Him; He has been raised by God. The title, Lord Jesus, is significant at the climax of this epistle which is devoted to His preeminence over everything. In the first chapter He is called – Lord; now it is the Man – Jesus, who is our Savior and Master who carries His lambs and leads the others. An everlasting covenant has been ratified by His blood.

Maturity comes as a result of doing God's will. There is a work to do by those whose spiritual maturity enables us to do His will by having proved it. Full and complete surrender to God is the way to prove His will. Because we are His workmanship, He works in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight. God looks not only at what we do, but at what we are. Maturity allows God to work in us and through us. What we do should be the result of what we are. God is pleased with obedience [Mat.3:17 – the baptism of Jesus]; with faithful stewards; with our care and sympathy for His saints [Phil.4:18]; with our devotedness to Him [Rom.12:1]. Maturity allows God to change us. We are never done growing and maturing in Christ.

We don't know everything, so we need to receive instruction. "A word of exhortation" in these important things is given so that "all may learn" [1Cor.14:31] – even those who teach others. Timothy knew what it was to be a partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel [2Tim.1:8]. He was now at liberty, and maybe bringing encouragement to Paul (if he was the writer) to hope for the same. God's people need to know what is going on. When they get some information regarding the work and workers, they are encouraged that their prayers and concern for the wellbeing of others has real value. Genuine affection exists in the family of God. The word "all" is a key word in the conclusion: "all" leaders, "all" God's people and grace to "all." These early believers who came from Judaism into Christian liberty, had their difficulties from which we can learn lest we fall into the same problems.

Hebrews 13:13. *"Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."*

LET US...

Sometimes the words "Let us" are an appeal on my part to someone else to bring some benefit to me. Here in Hebrews, it is an appeal to me. Am I ready to respond to these challenging appeals?

"Let us therefore fear...." the rest is there - don't stop short of claiming it in Christ.

"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest...." the struggle to appreciate God's provision is there - take what is yours.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace...." the welcome mat is always out - come right in with reverence and confidence.

"Let us go on unto perfection...." the basics are always in place - move ahead to a full understanding of what you have.

"Let us draw near with a true heart...." the High Priest is there - use your privileges and move into the Holiest.

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith...." the hope of acceptance is sure - don't doubt, but be thankful.

“Let us consider one another to provoke to love and good works....” the Lord’s people are the choicest there is - enjoy encouraging and worshipping together.

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin....” the power is there to do what is right - give up everything that endangers our relationship with God.

“Let us go forth unto Him....” the lepers are there, the strangers are there, the ashes are there, the Lord is there - declare your loyalty and move out there with Him.

“Let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually....” the only thing needed is willingness on my part - go ahead and offer because this is one that can be offered any time, in any place. It’s linked with doing good when God only can see.

“Father, sometimes I am timid and need a push to move ahead to where I should be. Thanks for the reminders of the things that are important to You. None of these challenges are impossible and yet I lay hold of them so seldom. Maybe I need someone to remind me of the stripped body; the looking eyes; the lifted hands; the straight paths; the pursuing feet; the alert attention and the good service You expect of me. No, I guess that is not true either - because You have already reminded me of these things. I give thanks, and am humbled before You. Amen.”