



BOLDLY ENTER

Legend has it that when the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple in AD 70, they left one wall – the Western Wall – standing. To this day, Jews gather in prayer at the crumbling wall, taking heart that this is where God once lived.

The book of Hebrews, written a year or two before the fateful destruction of the temple, tells that, in fact, God had made some kind of exit from these walls some decades before – on the very day Jesus breathed his last, when the veil to the Inner Sanctum tore in half.

Hebrews declares that centuries of ritual symbolism had anticipated Somebody. The priestly ceremonies, sacrificial rituals and restricted-access places were all replaced and fulfilled by something (or should we say Someone) substantial and spiritual, to which they were all mere signposts.

Remarkably, Jesus has now blazed a path for us right into the Most Holy Place – the very presence of God.

We are welcomed to boldly enter.





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THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Writing to a weary, persecuted and discouraged community of Jewish Christians who were being tempted to return to Judaism instead of publicly holding to the Messiah Jesus, the unknown author urges them to think twice before doing so.

The book of Hebrews can be divided into 3 parts – the ascent, the peak, and the descent.

THE ASCENT:

Chapters 1:1-10:18 highlight the gospel of Jesus Christ: his unique identity, his unparalleled qualifications and his unmatched spiritual achievement, namely the salvation and renewal of sinners through his death, his resurrection and the gift of his Spirit.

THE SUMMIT:

Chapter 10:19-21, a mere 3 verses, is the apex. Here we have the heart and summary of what has been said before.

THE DESCENT:

Chapters 10:22 onwards then tell us the practical implications of the gospel for the way we live. In the shift from ascent to descent, we also see a shift from creed to deed, from precept to practice, from elucidation to exhortation. At this point, the writer becomes very explicit about how we should live in light of our possession of Jesus Christ. He appeals to us to actually make use of what we have been given in Jesus.

This devotional study spends 2 days on the summit, and then descends in a 30-day action-packed adventure into the riveting and massive implications for the way we live.

WHY NOT ALL 13 CHAPTERS OF HEBREWS?

It would simply be too much to cover in 30 days. Hebrews towers like K2 (second only to Romans, which is like Everest). Limited to a 30-day devotional, we needed to choose either the ascent or the descent. Given that the descent reverberates the key themes of the ascent, and is more diverse in content, more applicable to life, and shorter, we decided to helicopter lift to the peak on day 1, and then embark towards the final verse of the book – step-by-step, day-by-day, verse-by-verse.





HOW TO USE THIS BOOK



COMMIT TO A DAILY TIME AND PLACE.

Set aside at least 10 minutes, but more if you can. Be alert, the devil doesn't want you to do this, so make this time a commitment to yourself, in dependence on the Spirit's power.



COME WITH EXPECTATION AND OPENNESS.

Pray before reading: *'Open my eyes so I can see the wonderful things in your word'* (Ps 119:18).



TAKE YOUR TIME.

If it's too much to take in, do a 'day' over 2 or 3 days. But remember to re-read the biblical text each time.



READ WITH A PEN OR PENCIL IN HAND AND JOURNAL YOUR JOURNEY.

While you read, mark what impacts you most. Then also, at the end of each day, flip over until you find the related fill-in Journey Journal page. Write something down.



PRAY ABOUT WHAT YOU WROTE DOWN.

God has spoken to you through his Word, now speak to him in response. He doesn't only want to speak to you. He wants to hear from you.



WHATSAPP WHAT YOU WROTE DOWN TO OTHERS.

Make it a community experience. Perhaps form a WhatsApp group with one or more people who are also journeying through this devotion. Share what you wrote in your journal box each day. Not only does this encourage everyone in the group, it is also a form of accountability to daily honour God's Word.



COME BACK TO THIS BOOK IN THE FUTURE.

But until then, pass it on to someone else.

The people in the WhatsApp group I will share this journey with:

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WEEK ONE

HEBREWS 10:19-31





DAY 1 **BOLDLY ENTER** (10:19-21)



19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God...

THESE VERSES CLIMAX THE BOOK OF HEBREWS.

For nearly 10 chapters, Hebrews has highlighted the greatness of Jesus. 1:1-10:18 provides front row seats on Jesus' unrivalled status and achievements. We discover he is superior to everything else: creation, angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron. Not only because of who he is as the divine Creator and Son of God, but also due to what he has accomplished as Saviour of the world.

Today's verses summarise all that was said before. As we will see in day 3, they are also the hinge-point in the book, where who Jesus is and what he has done (1:1-10:21) leads into what this means for the way we live (10:22-13:25).

THE MOST HOLY PLACE HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN INACCESSIBLE.

This book was written to Jewish Christians just before the Romans destroyed the Jerusalem temple in AD70. The temple strongly entrenched in the mind of Jews that God is inaccessible and unapproachable. It consisted of 3 parts: the outer courts, open to Jews; the holy place or inner courts, open to the priests; and the Most Holy Place on the other side of a thick curtain, accessible only to the high priest, and only once a year, at the risk of his life.

God's presence was said to be manifest in this inner chamber, which also represented God's Heavenly Throne Room, the place where God lives and rules the universe from. When Adam fell, God exiled him out of the Garden and placed angels and a flaming sword to guard the entrance (Gen 3:24). In effect, Adam was shut out from God's presence and from a close fellowship with him. The veil did something similar: it was a 'No Entry' sign for fallen, sin-stained human beings. It said, 'Which sinful human can stand in the presence of the One who is a consuming fire?' Even the high priest, after purifying himself, with sacrifice in hand, entered with fear that this might be his last minute of life.

NOW 'WE HAVE CONFIDENCE TO ENTER' (V19).

The temple has been destroyed, but the heavenly throne room still stands. And amazingly, we – despite all our sins and failures – have been granted authorised entry! The Greek word for confidence (*parresiai*) speaks of an objective fact, not simply an emotion. Imagine someone in prison for decades being released. He may be authorized to enter the world-at-large, but he may not feel free. He has





been in prison so long. In the same way, many believers may not feel confidence to enter the very presence of God, but in fact we are authorised to do so. The freedom to come close to the God who is a consuming fire is ours – whether we feel it or not. Remarkably, we may now stand with holy boldness where angels veil their faces with their wings in ceaseless adoration (Isa 6:1-4). When we understand the *'parresiai'* we're given, it will feed the feeling of confidence we can have in approaching God, and in sharing our faith more boldly with others too. But on what basis do we receive this gift of boldness and authorised entry? Today and tomorrow we will unpack 5 reasons for this confidence:

1. WE BOLDLY ENTER THROUGH 'A WAY OPENED FOR US THROUGH THE CURTAIN, THAT IS, HIS BODY' (V20).

The writer to the Hebrews makes an analogy between the veil that stood between God and us and the crucified body of Jesus. Jesus' body was 'torn' and so was the veil – each indicating that now, we can come to God, boldly.

This analogy gets its weight from a miraculous coincidence: when Jesus died on the cross, the foundation of the nearby temple shook, and *'the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom'* (Mark 15:38). A coincidence? It would be better to call this a God-incidence. It was God's way of saying: 'What Jesus has just done on the cross means that sinful people can now come up close and personal with the Living God. The sword of judgment will not fall on you. It has fallen on Jesus who has borne the sins of the world. I have made a 'way' where there seemed to be no way. It doesn't matter what you've done. Faith in Jesus and his cross grants you authorised entry.'

2. WE BOLDLY ENTER THROUGH A 'NEW WAY' (V20).

Following the flow of thought in Hebrews, the Inner Court can represent the Old Covenant while the Most Holy Place is the New Covenant. Seen this way, the arrival and death of Jesus ushers in a new era of God's dealings with people. It is a new way that departs from, and is in every way greater than, anything that was known in Old Testament times. Christ has pioneered a way into God's presence – he has passed *'through the heavens'* (Heb 4:14) on our behalf. He gives us access to the very heart of God.

3. WE BOLDLY ENTER THROUGH 'A LIVING WAY' (V20).

In the Old Testament, people approached God through attention to a ritualistic system of sacrifices and purifications that was in essence, lifeless. But now we approach God on the basis of a living person, Jesus Christ. He died to grant us access, but he was raised from the dead, and now takes us hand-in-hand into Heaven's Throne-room. *'There is one God and one mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus'* (1 Tim 2:5-6). What a privilege to trust in Christ and his cross, God's only provision of a way into closest fellowship with himself. In him *'we have boldness and confident access'* (Eph 3:12).





DAY 2 OUR HIGH PRIEST (10:19-21)



19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God...

THESE VERSES CRYSTALLIZE WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE IN HEBREWS.

They are also the turning point in the book – the remainder (10:22 onwards) will move from doctrine to life-application. The key idea is that, despite our feebleness and failure – we have authorisation to confidently enter into God’s very presence. Yesterday we looked at the first 3 reasons for this confidence, let’s look at 2 more:

4. WE BOLDLY ENTER ‘BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS’ (V19).

The ‘blood’ refers to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, where he took the guilt of, and punishment for, our sins upon himself, securing our acceptance with God. *‘Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness’* (Heb 9:22).

On the annual Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the high priest of Israel would seek forgiveness for the entire nation’s previous year worth of sins. After thoroughly cleansing himself, he would lay his hands upon a bull and a goat, symbolically imparting the guilt of his and his people’s sins to them. He’d sacrifice them, and then take some of their blood and enter into The Most Holy Place, sprinkling it upon the Golden Ark, which represented God’s throne in heaven. He would ask God for forgiveness for his own sins (using the bull’s blood) and for the sins of the entire nation (using the goat’s blood).

What was happening here? In short, the high priest was the go-between. He was the mediator between the people and God. The people could not approach God because of their sin, but the high priest dealt with that sin through sacrifice. Then, representing the people, he went into the deepest presence of God and, using sacrificed blood, sought to restore the broken connection between God and his people. Earlier chapters in Hebrews deal with this in detail. Jesus’ offering on the cross fulfilled Yom Kipper. However, there are some differences: *‘Unlike the other high priests, Jesus did not need to offer sacrifices... first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself’* (Heb 7:27). *‘Jesus did not enter by means of the blood of bulls and goats; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption’* (Heb 9:12). *‘For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every*





year with blood that is not his own. He has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb 9:25-26).

See that? Unlike other high priests...

- Jesus offered blood not once a year, but once and forever, his sacrifice eternally effective for all time, **'obtaining eternal redemption'**.
- Jesus did not need to offer blood for his own sins; unlike others he is **'holy, blameless, pure, and set apart from sinners'** (Heb 7:26).
- Jesus offered a sacrifice for the whole world, not just Israel; his death on a cross was an equivalent of a sacrifice on an altar.
- Jesus entered the heavenly throne-room, of which the Jerusalem temple was but a copy.
- Jesus did not offer the blood of another, but his own blood.

5. WE BOLDLY ENTER 'SINCE WE HAVE A GREAT PRIEST' OVER US (V21).

The previous point speaks of the blood-bought salvation Jesus has already achieved for us on the cross. This point speaks of the current ministry of Jesus toward us now that he is in heaven. What is Jesus doing now that gives us confidence to come close to the Living God? He is doing 3 things:

• Jesus sympathetically listens to our prayers.

'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.' (Heb 2:15-16). Jesus does not endorse our sin, but he is compassionate towards the circumstantial difficulties and personal frailties that make us more prone to sin.

• Jesus cleanses our consciences of shame.

'How much more will the blood of Christ cleanse our consciences so that we may serve the living God!' (Heb 9:14). Blood was not just sprinkled on the ark. Blood was also sprinkled on the people who needed forgiveness. These people had sinned, and were stuck. They did not know how to deal with the guilt that plagued their conscience. So the priest would sprinkle blood on them, allowing them to 'experience' forgiveness. Similarly, Jesus is ready to touch our conscience and cleanse it, liberating us from the whirlpool of introspection that our failure and shame tends to get us caught in.

• Jesus fervently prays for us.

'Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to rescue completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them' (Heb 7:24-25). Ever feel so alone? Like no one knows what you're actually going through? In that very moment, Jesus has you covered in prayer. Not only is he continually available, he is completely aware of your present situation.



**DAY 3**

HOLD ONTO HOPE (10:22-23)



22 Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

THE GOSPEL HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR LIFE.

Up until this point, Hebrews has explained all that we have in Jesus Christ. In the previous 3 verses, for example, we've learnt that we have blood-bought authorisation to enter God's very presence, as well as a High Priest who is able to cleanse, pray for and sympathise with us. Now comes the book's great turning point. From here on, the writer of Hebrews *appeals to us to make use of all that we have in Christ*. We see a shift from the gospel to life, from creed to conduct, from precept to practice – the writer now becomes very explicit about how we should live in light of our relationship with Jesus Christ. Today, we explore the first two implications..

1. 'LET US DRAW NEAR TO GOD' (V22).

Jesus has opened a door into the very heart of God, but now we must choose to enter in – every day, every hour. This is not only a call to times of prayer, but to a life lived in pursuit of God's closeness. Pour your prayers into his ever-open ears. Appeal to his mercy and grace. Remain in his love. Desire his presence above all. How easily children of God lose prayerful contact with God. We can draw close to God anytime, anywhere. The God who thirsts to be thirsted after welcomes us in! Nothing else can satisfy the deepest chambers of our heart.

- **Draw near 'with a sincere heart'.**

Put away religious pretence. God is not interested in your religious performance. He wants you. He desires that you pour out your heart to him. Come as you are.

- **Draw near with 'the full assurance of faith'.**

This speaks of a confident, conviction-filled trust, one that results from a Spirit-empowered insight into the gospel. The object of our faith, the awe-inspiring person and the finished work of Jesus, is so strong and assuring, that our faith is strengthened and assured as a by-product.

- **Draw near, aware of Christ's cleansing of your sin and shame.**

Nothing holds us back from coming close to God like the objective guilt of our sin as well as the subjective dregs of shame that follow. This is why we're reminded of our need to have our *'hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and our bodies washed with pure water'* (v22). These two pictures of sprinkled blood and pure water refer to the Old Covenant method of approaching God: First, the blood: *'Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people'* (Ex 24:8) – so doing, he let people 'experience', if only ceremonially, God's gift of blood-bought





forgiveness. Second, the water: God instructed the priests to *'make a bronze basin, for washing, and place it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it'* (Ex 30:18). Priests used to ceremonially wash themselves at the basin before entering into the holy place. But these were merely symbols that pointed to the spiritual reality that would be available in Jesus...

Jesus cleanses us by blood. *'How much more will the blood of Christ cleanse our consciences so that we may serve the living God!'* (Heb 9:14). Octavius Winslow in his old devotion Morning Thoughts, writes: *"In all true prayer great stress should be laid on the blood of Jesus. Perhaps nothing shows a loss in power and spirituality of prayer more than overlooking the blood. Where the atoning blood is kept out of view, not recognised and not made the grand plea, no words, no fluency of expression, not even fervour can compensate."*

The Spirit also cleanses us by water. It was prophesied that in the New Covenant, God would *'pour pure water over you and scrub you clean'* (Eze 36:25, MSG). Baptism depicts this cleansing (Acts 22:16), but the Spirit continues to give us this experience and sense of cleansing (Eze 36:26-27).

2. 'LET US HOLD... TO THE HOPE' (V23).

Many of the first century Jewish Christians who first received this letter were ready to throw in the towel. Being a Christian had disadvantaged them socially – persecution, demotion, exclusion, arrests, confiscations and even martyrdoms resulted from the professing and practicing of their faith. A few had bailed on their identification with Christianity as a result. These words urge them to hold on.

• **Profess your hope.**

What we have in Christ and the gospel is too good to keep to ourselves. Our commitment and enthusiasm to introduce others to Jesus must not wane.

• **Hold unswervingly to your hope.**

The Greek word for hold (*katecho*) means 'keep, occupy, retain, possess'. The word for unswervingly (*akline*) means 'that which does not bend or change'. As we consider God's unchanging grip on our lives (John 10:27-28), we're empowered to strengthen our grip on Jesus too, regardless of the unfavourable circumstances that come our way.

• **Trust in God's promises.**

The biblical word for hope does not mean 'stay optimistic' but 'future certainty'. Hope and faith have an overlap of meaning. Hope is faith looking forward, a trust in God's promises about the future. It is based on the fact that *'he who promised is faithful'* (v23). Listen to how Michael Eaton puts it: *"The God we get to know is one who gives promises and is faithful to what he says to us. For example, he promises our usefulness to others; achievement in the kingdom of God; enablement despite weakness, opposition or delay. It is because of the confidence by which we may come to God that we can maintain persistent hope for the future, a hope which grows as we grow in our bold acquaintance with the throne of God's grace."*





DAY 4 SPUR ONE ANOTHER ON (10:24-25)



24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

THERE ARE 3 PIVOTAL RELATIONSHIPS IN CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP.

The 3 great 'let us' statements of 10:22-25 correspond to them:

- 1) *Our worship of God – 'let us draw near to God' (v22).*
- 2) *Our witness to people far from God – 'let us hold to our profession of hope' (v23).*
- 3) *Our warmth toward fellow-believers – 'let us consider... one another' (v24).*

We focus on the third 'let us' today. It contains 4 practical ideas...

1. GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER.

The Greek literally says, 'let us consider one another to see how we may spur one another on.' The Greek word for 'consider' (*katanoeo*) means to pay attention to and look closely at. We are meant to get to know each other and be known by one another.

In Genesis 4, God asks Cain if he knows where Abel is. Cain replies, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' This means, 'Am I responsible for him?' The above verse answers definitively: yes! We **are** to take responsibility for each other's well-being. In the context of relationship, we need to know each other's unique weaknesses and struggles. As Sam was to Frodo in the Lord of the Rings, so we need to be alert to those times our brothers and sisters in Christ get caught in the lair of discouragement or compromise.

2. CHALLENGE AND INSPIRE ONE ANOTHER.

Our principle responsibility to fellow-believers is to '*spur one another on toward love and good deeds*' (v24). Henri Nouwen writes, "*Christian community is the place where we keep the flame of hope alive among us so that it can grow and become stronger in us.*" Flowing out of our personal knowledge of each other, we're to thoughtfully challenge and inspire each other to be changed from one degree of glory to another. Jesus gave himself to '*redeem for himself a people, eager to do good works*' (Tit 2:4). We too should find ways to stimulate spiritual progress and life-change in each other. The Greek word for 'spur' (*paroxysmoi*) means 'outburst'. It was used in the ancient world to refer to outbursts of anger (see Acts 15:29), or even high fever. But here it is used positively. We are to provoke each other to bursts of demonstrated love. It is, after all, God's desire that our love will '*increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else*' (1 Tim 3:12). We should desire the same for ourselves and each other.





3. COMMIT TO MEET WITH EACH OTHER.

We must *'not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing'* (v25). If neglecting or abandoning church gatherings is a bad habit, then prioritising them is a good habit. There are all kinds of reasons that Christians start to or fully back off from their commitment to gather with other believers. In the case of the first recipients of this letter, their identification with the church elicited persecution. Also, many of them were discouraged, which self-sabotagingly led them to avoid the thing they needed most. What gatherings does the writer have in mind? The book of Acts shows the early church gathering weekly in worship and word *'on the first day of the week'* (Acts 20:6). Additionally, Christians committed to regularly meeting together more informally in their homes to break bread and eat *'together with glad and sincere hearts'* (Acts 2:46).

The strongest biological families are not built upon haphazard gatherings, but regular rituals of togetherness. The same applies to a spiritual family. Like the early church, we need larger weekly worship gatherings, and smaller, more informal fellowship gatherings. Michael Eaton says it like this...*"It is God's will for us that we meet together often to help each other. Sometimes we do it in small groups. Whenever there is spiritual revival it leads to Christians meeting often in small groups, for spiritual talk and prayer. Then the larger public meetings are important as well. When Christians abandon meeting together in this way they will soon be in deep spiritual trouble."* Outside of the reach of others, we are so easily 'hardened by sin's deceitfulness' (Heb 3:13). Isolated, we're as vulnerable to Satan's schemes as the wandering herd-animal is to the predator. Together, however, your strength, given to you by God, becomes the strength of others too, and their joy, given to them by God, becomes your joy.

4. ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER.

The church is to be an army of encouragers. The world has enough critics already. The shortage is encouragers. Determine to *'encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today'* (Heb 3:13). Every day, ask yourself, 'Who needs my encouragement today?' We don't only gather for what we can get. We gather for what we can give to others. For example, in a weekly public meeting, our presence, our service, our warmth, our welcoming of new people and our enthusiasm for God has a way of encouraging others. Conversely, our absence leaves a void, either adding nil to others, or perhaps even unwittingly draining some of their fervour. In small groups, our encouragement can be far more focused. Here we can get to know each other, and become more intentional about challenging and inspiring each other. Instead of offering general encouragements, we can hone in on the particular vulnerabilities and challenges individuals are facing. We are to live in anticipation of *'the Day approaching'* (v25). When Jesus returns, the church militant will become the church triumphant. But the battle wages on. Satan seeks to destroy the church through disunity and distraction. We must get connected, and stay connected – and encourage others through our prayers for them, our examples to them, and our words to them.





DAY 5 MUCH TO LOSE (10:26-31)



26 For if we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

DOES THIS PASSAGE WARN GENUINE CHRISTIANS THAT THEY CAN LOSE THEIR SALVATION?

I doubt it. The writer has already told us that the blood of Jesus provides *'eternal redemption'* (9:12) and that we are *'perfected'* once and forever (10:10). He mentions in verse 29 that these people have been *'sanctified'* – the same word used to refer to being positionally made perfect in Christ (10:14). It would hardly be an eternal gift, if it lasted only 3 months or 3 years.

DOES THIS PASSAGE ALERT PEOPLE WHO DABBLED IN THE CHURCH, BUT NEVER REALLY BELIEVED, THAT THEIR SITUATION IS EVEN WORSE FOR IT?

That can happen, of course. But it's not what's on the table here. Look carefully. The author includes himself in these people with the word *'we'* (v26). Our writer is dealing with something that might happen in the lives of genuine Christians, himself included. Is it possible that the author himself might not be a genuine believer? Not at all.

DOES THIS PASSAGE WARN REDEEMED, HEAVEN-BOUND BELIEVERS THAT THEY MUST BE ALERT TO SERIOUS DANGER NONETHELESS?

That's exactly what it does. They have not just heard the truth, they have *'received the truth'* (v26), a term for genuine conversion. But they are in danger of *'deliberately'* (v26) sinning. The word *'deliberate'* implies not an accidental moral slip, but a flagrant present-tense sin that repeats itself and is without repentance. In the case of the first recipients of this letter, it included moral compromise, succumbing to discouragement and withdrawing from the Christian community so as to avert persecution.

WHY IS IT SO SAD WHEN BELIEVERS GIVE IN TO COMPROMISE, DISCOURAGEMENT AND APOSTASY?

1. It refuses God's easy-to-access grace.

Verse 26 starts with *'for'* connecting it to what has just gone before in verses 19-

16





24: we have blood-bought access to God (v19-21) by which we can boldly draw near to God (v22); we have a high priest who is ready to give us sympathy and help as we come to him (v21); we have hope in a faithful God (v24). Why would we choose sin and unrepentance over relying on a merciful and approachable God?

2. It tramples ‘the Son of God underfoot’ (v29).

It spurns the one who alone has the right to put everything under his feet.

3. It treats the blood as ‘an unholy thing’ (v29).

It treats Jesus’ blood as having no more power than the blood of any other, including the criminals crucified by his side.

4. It insults ‘the Spirit of grace’ (v29).

It hardens itself against the Spirit who both leads us away from sin in the first place, and who lovingly convicts us when we do sin.

WHAT RESULTS FROM GIVING IN TO THESE THINGS?

1. We lose some of the effects of the blood.

Here is Eaton’s commentary:

“In the Greek, verse 26 does not say, ‘the sacrifice for sins is cancelled’, rather that it is ‘no longer effective.’ The blood has achieved something up to this point, but in future it will fail to do what one might expect it to do. The point is not that God’s past gift of eternal redemption is reversed, but rather that the future blessings of the blood of Christ will not come into our lives. In Hebrews 9 the blood of Christ is said to do 3 things: It gave eternal redemption (v12) – past tense. It will give daily cleansing of conscience (v14) – future tense referring to what is future day by day. It may bring us to God’s unique plan for our lives, his inheritance (v15) – a ‘subjunctive’ tense referring to what may happen. It is the second two that are lost by a Christian’s sinning – temporarily or maybe permanently.”

We will still go to heaven, but we will not enjoy the liberating experience of spiritual cleansing that only repentance can bring. We will also damage, if not destroy, God’s unique plan and inheritance for our lives.

2. We will encounter God’s chastisement.

Verses 27 and 30-31 speaks of the dreadful experience of God’s judgment. We are his children, yes, but our sin puts us at enmity with him. It is not just unbelievers who will experience God’s judgment. Flagrantly sinning Christians will also. We will suffer for our sins in this life. There will be natural consequences – we will reap what we sow. But there also may be supernatural consequences – God may step in on any day and act in his own way to chastise us. As for Judgment Day, we will still be saved and be lovingly accepted into God’s eternal kingdom, but we will first be purged through fire (1 Cor 3:15) – an experience of the profoundest regret, agony and the loss of eternal reward. M De Haan in his commentary on Hebrews summarizes today’s warning: *“By all means, preach, ‘Grace, grace, free grace!’ but it’s dangerous to never also preach the counter-balancing truths of 1) our responsibility to rely on God’s grace in the face of temptation and 2) the terrible consequences of choosing sin over grace.”*





DAY 1-5 JOURNAL YOUR JOURNEY



After each day, flip here and write down:

- *a highlight verse or*
- *an insight you want to hold onto or*
- *something you want to apply or change in your life*

DAY 1: BOLDLY ENTER IN (10:19-21)

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DAY 2: OUR HIGH PRIEST (10:19-21)

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DAY 3: HOLD ONTO HOPE (10:22-23)

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DAY 4: SPUR ONE ANOTHER ON (10:24-25)

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DAY 5: MUCH TO LOSE (10:26-31)

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THINGS I AM GRATEFUL FOR OR ASKING GOD FOR THIS WEEK:

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Don't forget to pray each entry back to God, and maybe WhatsApp it to those you are sharing this journey with.





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DAY 6 REWARDS AT STAKE (10:32-36)



32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. 35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

WE'RE IN A 'WARNING' PASSAGE.

Hebrews is one of the most encouraging books in the Bible. Verse after verse rivets us with what we have in Christ and the awesome privilege of trusting in and being faithful to him. But it's not syrupy encouragement – it's written for people in difficult times, and there are five reality-check 'warning' sections interspersed (see 2:1-4, 3:7-4:13, 5:11-6:20, 10:26-39 and 12:25-39). Even these are sprinkled with encouragement. Consider the one we're in: after soberly telling us what can be lost (v26-31), it firstly encourages us with an inspiring example of faithfulness (v32-34), and secondly coaxes us to pursue the reward God desperately wants to give us (v35-39)...

1. WHEN IN A TRIAL, REMEMBER HOW TRIALS CAN PRODUCE UNITY, LOVE AND EVEN JOY.

Most of the first readers of this letter had been following Jesus for some time. Although many were tempted to throw in the towel from the decades-long opposition from outsiders, the author reminds them of a golden period of joyful perseverance soon after many of them *'received the light'* (v32) when they experienced *'a great conflict full of suffering'* (v32). Responding to an officially sanctioned attack on the church, many had publicly experienced verbal abuse (*'insult'*) and physical abuse (*'persecution'*). Unlike Jesus' disciples, who fled upon Jesus' arrest, they had stayed put and stood *'side by side with those who were so treated'* (v33). Some went to prison, and some were driven from their homes, which were also looted (v34). Remarkably, they did not shrink back in fear and self-preservation. Instead their love-levels for each other soared to new heights. As did their joy-levels in the *'better and lasting possessions'* (v34) such as new birth by the Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, adoption into God's family and the guarantee of a glorious life beyond this one – none of which can be plundered by our enemies. Can you remember a time when you endured a trial with love, joy and perseverance? Well, if God helped you to respond like that before, he can and will help you with all subsequent trials.





2. WHEN IN A TRIAL, REMEMBER THAT REWARDS ARE AT STAKE.

Verses 35-36 clearly teaches on rewards: *'So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.'* What is meant by 'reward'?

- **All Christians are equally accepted and loved by God, but not all are equally rewarded by God.**

His love and acceptance of us is based on Jesus' perfect life, but our reward is based on what we do with Jesus' gift of life. Salvation comes by Spirit-born faith in a moment, but Spirit-empowered faithfulness takes a lifetime. There are degrees of reward – the writer here speaks not just of being rewarded, but of being *'richly rewarded'* (v35).

- **Our salvation cannot be lost, but rewards can be gained or lost.**

Once we have *'received... the truth'* (v26) and *'received the light'* (v32), we receive *'eternal redemption'* (9:12). We are sanctified forever (10:10,14). However, if we *'throw away our confidence'* (v35) in Christ – shrinking back in self-pity, intimidation, discouragement or quitting – we damage or forfeit our reward. Much better to persevere and faithfully do God's will – a long, slow obedience in the same direction in reliance on the support and grace of God (4:14-16).

- **Our salvation cannot be lost, but rewards can be gained or lost.**

Hebrews teaches us that it's only as we diligently, faith-reliantly and patiently do God's will that we will *'inherit God's promises'* (6:12) – another term for 'reward'. Also, reward comes as we refuse to shrink back from publicly identifying ourselves as a follower of Jesus (10:39). Reward is everywhere in Scripture. Matthew's Gospel, for example, mentions 10 things that attract God's reward:

- > *being reviled and persecuted for Jesus' name* (5:11-12)
- > *loving not only friends and family, but enemies and strangers* (5:46)
- > *doing good things, often secretly, before the audience of One* (6:1)
- > *giving with a motive to glorify God* (6:4)
- > *secretly seeking God in prayer* (6:6)
- > *fasting because of a hunger for God* (6:18)
- > *recognising and receiving ministry from people God sends to you* (10:41)
- > *small acts of kindness* (10:42)
- > *leaving things and people we love when God sends us out on mission* (Matt 19:29)
- > *humbling ourselves before God and others* (23:12)

What is this reward?

This reward essentially is the honour, affirmation and praise that Jesus gives us. Elsewhere the Bible speaks of this reward as our *'crown'* and our *'prize'*. It comes partially in this life, in the form of God's direct affirmation to our hearts, or the thrill of eventually achieving what God calls us to do. But in the main, it will come fully when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. We will hear the words, *'Well done, my good and faithful servant'* (Matt 25:21). Jesus tells us to make an effort to obtain God's praise rather than the fleeting, fickle praise and applause of people (John 5:44).





DAY 7 DON'T SHRINK BACK (10:37-39)



*37 For, "In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay."
38 And, "But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back."
39 But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.*

These verses, like the ones before them (v26-36), continue the concept of reward and punishment. As for the idea of reward in these verses, the NIV translation of **'are saved'** (v39) is unfortunate. The rare Greek phrase is *'peripoiesin psyches'*, which means *'to preserve, obtain or possess soul or life'*. This seems to be an equivalent term to **'take hold of the life that is truly life'** (1 Tim 6:19), which refers to laying hold of reward not salvation. The ESV more accurately translates it, **'preserve their souls'**.

Still, we must take heed that there is the danger of being **'destroyed'** (v39) which, given the context, refers not to hell but to the great damage that compromise and unbelief can bring into our lives – first in this life, but also in the next.

SO WHEN WILL THIS REWARD OR CHASTISEMENT COME?

The answer is given: **'In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay'** (v7). The author combines 2 biblical quotes (Isa 26:20-21, Hab 2:3-4). How long will we wait? Not long at all. If you're persevering, and wonder how much longer you can, be encouraged that your reward is on its way, closer than you imagine. If you're compromising, and feel like you will get away with it, be aware: the consequences are on their way, closer than you realise. The Lord is on his way. He will act soon.

HOW MIGHT HE COME? THERE ARE 3 LAYERS TO THE ANSWER...

1. Jesus will come to us in his return.

In the Bible's final chapter, we're told that he will come not only with salvation, but to deal with his people based on their levels of faithfulness: **'Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done'** (Rev 22:12). We might argue that 2000 years of waiting is hardly 'a little time'. But we forget: **'With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day'** (2 Pet 3:8).

2. Jesus will come to us when we die.

'Each of us is destined to die once and then face judgment' (Heb 9:27). If Jesus doesn't return before we die, one's coming to him in death coincides with his coming to us. Even if we live to a ripe old age, our lives are much shorter than we realise: **'The span of my years is as nothing before you. Everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure'** (Ps 39:5).





3. Jesus may come to us in the form of sudden events and interventions.

Listen to Eaton make this point:

“The second coming is a model of all the sudden interventions in our lives in which God chastises us or rewards us (see Obadiah 1:15). At any moment Jesus can say, ‘Well done’. If the second coming does not actually come very giving promises and then sending anticipations of those promises. This is why something can seem to be promised immediately and yet at the same time be a long way ahead. Either the thing itself will come or an equivalent. Whichever way it happens, Jesus will come to us very, very soon.”

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF US?

If we are to attain our reward and stay clear of his judgment, there are 3 things required:

1. Live by faith.

‘But my righteous one will live by faith’ (v38). In this context, the verse speaks not of initial saving faith, sometimes called ‘passive faith,’ the moment we first received *‘the truth’ and ‘the light’* (10:26,32). Rather it speaks of the continuing active faith that grows out of our salvation. We’re saved by passive faith, but then we follow Jesus by active faith. Succumbing to a temptation or fear always involves a failure to trust in God’s goodness and promises.

2. Do not shrink back.

‘I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back’ (v38). The first readers of this letter were being tempted to revert to the Judaism they grew up in, either in full apostasy or going ‘under cover’. Similarly, the Israelites, after being delivered from oppressive Egypt, were tempted to give up on God’s promise and return to what they once knew (see Ex 14:12). Following Jesus is future-focused in nature, but when we lose sight of the promises, the past that Jesus called us out of starts to beckon us back. We must not turn back. Not only will it incur God’s displeasure, it will make us shrink. When our backs are to God and his radiance, we become smaller and shadows seem larger.

3. Remember we’re part of God’s people.

‘We do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith’ (v39). The moment we trusted in Christ, the Holy Spirit placed us (1 Cor 12:13) into a spiritual family of people whose lives have been marked by persevering faith. We belong to this steady, growing long-march of faith-filled and faithful people. Which people might the author be referring to? This is the final verse in chapter 10; the author is setting us up for Hebrews 11, which parades before us the heroes of the faith – our brothers and sisters in God. They are our heritage. Their blood is our blood. To shrink back is grotesquely not true to who we are as God’s people.





DAY 8 WHAT IS FAITH? (11:1-2)



11:1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

We have arrived at the famous 'faith chapter'. Verses 4-31 will list about 20 Old Testament *'ancients ... commended for'* (v2) their faith. They were commended by God – not only did they bear witness to him before a watching world, but he bore witness to them – honouring them for their faith. **So what is faith? There are 2 aspects alluded to in verse 1:**

1. FAITH IS THE PRESENT-TENSE POSSESSION OF THE FUTURE GOD HAS PROMISED.

'Faith is confidence in what we hope for' (v1). The Hebrew Christians were tempted to throw in the towel. God had made them promises many years before, but a long span of suffering had made them wonder if God's promises would ever come to pass. They have been reassured that God will fulfil his promises soon enough (10:37), and thus they should not shrink back but rather expectantly endure (10:38-39). Likewise, even though the promised future has not been realised yet, it will be. Already now we can draw confidence from it. The Greek word for 'confidence' (*hypostasis*) is 'substance, firmness, a guarantee, a proof'. It was also used in ancient Greek for 'a title deed' – a legal document that proved ownership of land even if it was not yet physically occupied. When God gives you a promise, it's as though you already own it. 'What we hope for' refers not to what we desire but may not get, but to what we can be certain of. What has this title deed granted you possession of?

• A promised future.

In the 3,573 promises in Scripture, we are assured that God will never abandon us, but rather strengthen and guide us, protect and provide for us, fill us with joy and peace, bless us and use us to bless others. He will preside over circumstances beyond our control and, come what may, use them for his glory and our highest good. Over and above the Scriptures, the Spirit may alert us prophetically to his unique promises and purposes in our own lives, church and generation.

• A promised eternity.

Jesus will visibly, triumphantly return to wind up history as we know it. The world will be purged of its unbelief, wickedness, hatred, injustice and tyrant oppressors. Jesus will usher in the New Heavens and Earth. We will receive immortal resurrection bodies. We will worship Jesus forever alongside millions from all tribes and tongues in a restored cosmos, pervaded by beauty, justice, peace and joy. Our reward, partly experienced here, will be fully revealed there. All momentary suffering we have faithfully endured in Christ's cause will be more than compensated for.





• A good God.

'God is not man, that he should lie or ... change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?' (Nu 23:19) Seeing the future through the lens of God's promise is not a leap in the dark, wishful thinking or optimism. It is a certain assurance of the future based on a Spirit-confirmed knowledge of God's faithfulness and promises. Our faith is only as good as its object, and the object of our faith is our good God.

2. FAITH IS A KIND OF GOD-GIVEN SIXTH SENSE.

'Faith is... assurance about what we do not see' (v1). Faith is the opposite of sight. If you can see something, and everybody can see it, what use is there for faith? Faith is needed for what we can't see and can't touch. Yet. As Andrew Murray wrote over a century ago in *The Holiest of All*:

"Just as we have our senses, through which we hold communication with the physical universe, so faith is the spiritual sense or organ through which the soul comes into contact with and is affected by the spiritual world. Just as the sense of seeing or hearing is a dormant power till the objective reality, the light or the sound, strikes it, so faith in itself is a sense with no power beyond the possibility or capacity of receiving the impressions of the eternal. It is as an empty vessel which wants to be filled with its unseen contents.'

Faith is perceiving as a real fact that which has not been revealed to the natural senses. It rests on that fact, acts upon it, and is upheld by it in the face of all that seems to contradict it.

3. FAITH TAKES AS REAL THE UNSEEN PRESENT REALITIES REVEALED IN GOD'S WORD.

By faith, we worship an eternal God who is all-powerful, infinitely wise and eternally trustworthy. By faith, we believe in a Triune God, a heavenly realm, angels, demons and the Holy Spirit's indwelling of the believer and the church. The 1563 Heidelberg Catechism states:

"True faith – created in me by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel – is a deep-rooted assurance that not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation."

Along with Paul we can declare by faith, 'Praise God... who has blessed us in the heavenly realm with every spiritual blessing' (Eph 1:3).

4. FAITH GOES BEYOND INTELLECTUAL ASSENT.

The Greek word for 'assurance' (*elenchos*) implies a knowledge that is not static or complacent, but rather a lively, active, vital certainty and conviction which impels us to stretch out our hand and say of God's future promises and unseen blessings, 'I have them!' Perhaps J. Oswald Sanders, decades ago, summed up the insights packed into verse 1 best: *"Faith treats the future as present and the invisible as seen."*



**DAY 9**

SOMETHING FROM NOTHING (11:3)



3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Hebrews 11, the 'faith chapter' starts with 3 verses that introduce the theme. Today we complete the last part of an opening definition of faith in verse 3. The second part of verse 1 (*'faith is... the assurance of things unseen'*) makes the point that faith takes as real the unseen realities revealed in God's Word. Now in verse 3, the author illustrates this idea by referring to how Genesis 1, the Bible's first chapter, makes statements that cannot be proven or disproven. The belief in a Creator is, at heart, a belief based on God's revelation, not necessarily a scientifically provable fact. His point is that faith takes God at his word even when we cannot, for the time being, find confirmation outside of God's Word to us.

We could stop there and move on to verse 4, and I doubt the author wanted his original readers to look much deeper than this. However, the modern context we find ourselves in commonly (and wrongly) purports that science has eclipsed faith in God. This message is loud in the 'new atheism' circles. To equip believers to respond to modern atheism, and to better reconcile faith and science, let's plough more deeply into verse 3, especially as it highlights aspects of Genesis 1. From these verses, we learn that:

1. THE UNIVERSE CONSISTS OF TIME AND MATTER.

The Greek word translated 'universe' (*aionas*) is an interesting word. It is plural not singular, and it has two possible meanings: times and worlds (earth, moon, planets, sun, stars and galaxies). In one word it captures the fact that the universe consists of time and matter.

2. THE UNIVERSE HAD A BEGINNING.

For centuries scientists believed in an eternal, steady state universe, which contradicted Genesis 1:1: 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.' In the 20th century, new discoveries caused scientists to converge around the Big Bang Theory, the belief that the universe began 13,7 billion years ago. Science and biblical faith are compatible at this point.

3. GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE.

The corollary of 'what is seen was not made of what is visible' is *'what is seen was made by the invisible God.'* The God who exists pre-existed the universe. Had there been no Creator, there would be no creation. This cannot be proven. But it is highly plausible: the law of cause and effect states that nothing happens unless something causes it to happen. Rick Warren playfully, says, *'If we have*





a Big Bang, it's very likely there was a Big Banger. Even if the multi-verse theory (the belief that there are many universes, not just ours) proves true, the follow-up theory that some of those universes might be eternal will always be speculative. The Christian should always put revelation over guesswork. If there are many universes (and the word '*aionas*' would be compatible with the idea), we are to believe that they also began. Moreover, verse 3 implies that God created *ex nihilo* (Latin for 'out of nothing'). As humans we are only able to create from existing materials, but God does not have that limitation.

4. GOD FASHIONED THE UNIVERSE FOR US.

The Greek word 'formed' (*katertisthai*) includes the idea of create, but also means 'fashion, adjust or prepare'. Referring back to Genesis 1, creation is not only a demonstration of God's greatness, but also a demonstration of his goodness. Days 1 through 5 of creation prepare for day 6 – the day of animals and humanity. Paul Davies, an astrophysicist, marvels that the chances of our universe being one that could sustain life, even just on our planet, are 1 in 10 to the power of 60. He says, *"That's like aiming an arrow at a square-inch target at the other side of the universe – and hitting bull's-eye!"* Or in the words of astronomer, Fred Hoyle, *"It's as though the universe knew we were coming."* The world is God's gift to us, and what we do with this world is meant to be our gift to our progeny, the rest of creation and back to him.

5. GOD SPOKE THE UNIVERSE INTO EXISTENCE.

Even if scientists agreed that the universe was created by some invisible Force, it would not be able to tell us much about that Force. Yet God's word tells us what science never can: a personal God spoke the universe into existence. Nine times in Genesis 1 we find the words '*Let there be*' or '*Let the...*' followed by '*and it was so.*' Whatever God says, goes. Not only is he powerful, he is personal. A force does not speak, only a personal Being does. As we read on in Hebrews 11, let's remember that creation is proof of just how mighty God's words are.

6. APART FROM FAITH IN GOD'S WORD WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND LIFE'S MEANING.

'By faith we understand.' The Hubble telescope may affirm that there is beauty and order pervading the cosmos. Science can tell us how the universe unravelled to this point. But what it cannot do, is tell us why any of this is the case, why there is something rather than nothing, why there is order rather than chaos. Peter Medawar, Nobel Prize winner, writes:

"There is indeed a limit upon science. This is made likely by questions that science cannot answer, and that no conceivable advance of science would empower it to answer, such questions as: How did everything begin? What are we all here for? What is the point of living?"

Science unveils mechanics, God's word reveals meaning. Science demonstrates what a marvellous universe we live in, Scripture affirms what a marvellous God made it.





DAY 10 THREE LIVES OF FAITH (11:4-7)



4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. 5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. 7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

So begins our study of the 20 faith heroes, starting with 3 mentioned in the early chapters of Genesis: Abel, Enoch and Noah.

ABEL'S FAITH CAUSED HIM TO PIONEER THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM (V4).

Genesis 4:1-7 tells of the contrasting offerings of Cain and Abel. Cain brought a crop-offering, while Abel brought an animal-sacrifice. What was the difference? The crop-offering represented Cain's hard work (see Gen 3:18-19). It was Cain's way of saying, 'Look at all my hard work, God. Accept me, based on my performance.' The animal sacrifice, however, said, 'God, here is a substitute. I am corrupt like my parents. You slayed an animal and covered them with the animal's skin (see Gen 3:21). Since animal sacrifices cover our guilt, put my sin and shame on the animal, and accept me based on its blood?' The point is that Abel had a revelation about himself (a sinner needing a substitute to die for him) and of God (a God ready to accept us based not on our performance, but his own mercy and grace). His sacrifice was an act of faith, because it acted on this message he had received from God. Later, Moses' law would ritualise the sacrificial system, which itself would be fulfilled in Jesus, the Passover 'Lamb who takes away the sins of the world' (John 1:21). The faith of Abel is an early foreshadowing of the gospel.

ENOCH'S FAITH CAUSED HIM TO WALK WITH GOD AND DEMONSTRATE GOD'S POWER OVER DEATH (V5).

Enoch is one of the mystery men of the Bible (see Gen 5:21-24 and Judges 14-15). At age 65 he came to know God and then walked with God for the remaining years of his life on earth. 'Walking with God' implies a daily relationship with God, that separated him from the surrounding corruption and caused him to live before the audience of One. Remarkably, he was physically taken up to heaven instead of dying – something similar happened only to Elijah. As a prophet, God would speak to him. It seems God had spoken to him about his not dying. Elijah took him at his word.





NOAH'S FAITH SAVED HIS FAMILY.

Noah also took God at his word, which led to him doing what God said. The reward was a saved family.

A PATTERN EMERGES WHEN WE LOOK CLOSER AT THESE THREE LIVES OF FAITH.

In all 3 cases – Abel, Enoch and Noah:

> *The life of faith involves God's word.*

Abel discerns that God accepts substitutionary sacrifice. Enoch seems to discern that he will not die. Noah is shown the future and instructed about the ark.

> *The life of faith leads to action.*

Abel makes the sacrifice. Enoch walks with God for a long time. Noah builds the ark.

> *The life of faith will face opposition by the surrounding culture.*

Abel's faith results in his murder. Enoch's faith contrasts the godlessness that surrounds him. Noah's faith is met with 120 years of utter disinterest, mockery and contempt.

> *The life of faith receives God's pleasure.*

God affirms and delights in Abel, Enoch and Noah, and commends each of them for it.

> *The life of faith is tailor-made for each of us.*

None of us need to repeat the actual deeds of these 3. Comparison of callings is futile. God calls us to express our faith in unique ways in response to unique situations and leadings by the Spirit.

In verse 6, the author momentarily breaks from the characters and impresses upon us 4 more things we need to observe...

1. The life of faith is the only way to please God.

Without faith it is impossible to please God – not difficult, but impossible. God is not pleased by our religious performance.

2. The life of faith involves that we 'come to him' and 'earnestly seek him'.

Faith receives a word from God, but we don't then withdraw from the God who gave us the word. Rather we pursue him in a life of prayer and devotion.

3. The life of faith must affirm God's existence and presence.

We must believe that 'he exists'. This can also be translated as 'he is there'. God may have made himself very real to us at a point, but then removed the signs of his presence from us.

4. The life of faith reaches out for God's pleasure and reward.

Take heart that God notices and delights in your persistent trust in him.





DAY 6-10 JOURNAL YOUR JOURNEY



After each day, flip here and write down:

- *a highlight verse or*
- *an insight you want to hold onto or*
- *something you want to apply or change in your life*

DAY 6: REWARDS AT STAKE (10:32-36)

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DAY 7: DON'T SHRINK BACK (10:37-39)

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DAY 8: WHAT IS FAITH? (11:1-2)

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DAY 9: SOMETHING FROM NOTHING (11:3)

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DAY 10: THREE LIVES OF FAITH (11:4-7)

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THINGS I AM GRATEFUL FOR OR ASKING GOD FOR THIS WEEK:

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Don't forget to pray each entry back to God, and maybe WhatsApp it to those you are sharing this journey with.





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DAY 11 OBEYING WITHOUT KNOWING (11:8-12)



8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

We're surveying 20 examples of faith in the order they appear in the Old Testament. Now we come to the 4th - Abraham - who is the ultimate ancient example of faith. It's not surprising that a full third of the chapter is given to him (v8-19). From him, we learn 9 things about faith, of which we will explore 5 today...

1. FAITH FOLLOWS GOD'S LEADING THOUGH WE DON'T KNOW WHERE IT WILL TAKE US.

'By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place... went, even though he did not know where he was going' (v8). In Genesis 12 God spoke to a childless man, and declared a glorious future over his life - he will receive land, descendants, a great name and universal influence. Scripted into this promise was an instruction to leave his own land and embark for another. Though already 75 years old, he embarked for Canaan, a land that he'd never been to and knew nothing about. Still today, when God nudges or directs us onto a path of action, though both the details of the path and destination might be unclear and unknown to us, we can follow Abraham's example, trusting the God who calls us. We might not know what the future holds, but since we can know the One who holds the future, we should go wherever he guides.

2. FAITH RELIES ON THE INTERNAL WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT, NOT EXTERNAL CONFIRMATION.

'By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents' (v9). Abraham, being sent by the Spirit, may have hoped that upon arriving in Canaan, there would have been a warm reception. But there were no waving flags upon his arrival. Having no idea where to settle, he wondered around the region (Gen 12:6). When he was in Shechem, the Lord spoke to him once again testifying that this land would belong to his descendants (Gen 12:8). He only had the internal witness of the Spirit. There were no external confirmations: the land seemed uninhabitable, a famine soon arrived (Gen 12:10) and the locals were not happy to see him. All he had was the internal witness of the Spirit that he was exactly where God wanted him. Still today, faith lives on God's word despite any immediate external confirmation.





3. FAITH COLLABORATES WITH GOD IN OVERCOMING SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE HURDLES.

Very old, *'Sarah ... was past childbearing age'* (v11) and Abraham, as for his fertility, was 'as good as dead' (v12). Yet together they were *'able to bear children because (they) considered him faithful who made the promise'* (v12). Though God had promised Abraham offspring, decades went by before he actually had a child. At one point Abraham spoke to God: *'Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless'* (Gen 15:2). *'Then the word of the LORD came to him: "A son coming from your own body will be your heir." God took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be"* (Gen 15:4-5). Still today God may limit his workings to our faith. God may, through his initiative, graciously speak and, through his power, fulfil a promise, but he dignifies us with a collaborative role.

4. FAITH CAN BE TRANSFERRED TO PEOPLE AROUND US.

Although God's promise initially came to Abraham, it seems that, like Noah, he was able to transfer his faith to his wife and children. Sarah's faith came more slowly to her than did Abraham's. She fell into skepticism when she first heard God's promise about a child, but she came to faith because she was able to hear God's voice when she was rebuked (Gen 18:12-13). Not just his wife, but also his son and grandson, *'Isaac and Jacob ... were heirs with him of the same promise'* (v9). Still today, one reward for trusting in God is that he may use us to bring more people we love into a life of faith. Faith is contagious. This is especially the case in families, where the people closest to us can be drawn to trust in God because of the way we trust him.

5. FAITH LEADS TO A DISPROPORTIONATE AND POSITIVE IMPACT ON OTHERS.

God's promise + Abraham's persevering faith = multitudes impacted. *'From this one man... came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky'* (v12). One believing life would impact millions! Out of Abraham came millions of Jews. The millions of Jews were the context in which Abraham's ultimate 'seed' – Jesus Christ – would come. And billions more would be blessed through Jesus. *'Those who have faith (in Jesus) are children of Abraham'* (Gal 3:7). Not only that, God's original promise to Abraham is echoed into every life that trusts in Jesus, the seed of Abraham. *'Those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith'* (Gal 3:9).

God promised Abraham and promises us, both that we will be blessed and be a blessing. In fact, God has already blessed us *'with every spiritual blessing in Christ: he chose us for... adoption to sonship... redemption... forgiveness of sins... and grace that he lavished on us'* (Eph 1:3-8). He promises us as the church that we will have a far-reaching impact on others – bearing fruit that will last forever (John 15:16), and doing good works that he has uniquely prepared for us to do (Eph 2:10).





DAY 12 FAITH THAT TRANSFORMS (11:13-16)



13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

'All these people' (v13) refers mainly to Abraham, but also to Sarah, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham is mentioned 312 times in the Bible. In addition to the 5 things we looked at yesterday, we learn 2 more things about faith from Abraham today, 'the father of all who believe' (Rom 4:16)...

6. FAITH SEES AND WELCOMES THE FUTURE THAT GOD PROMISES.

They 'saw (the things promised) and welcomed them from a distance' (v13). Faith sees the future as present, in a way that awakens a desire in us to 'welcome' and embrace it. God's promises grant us a glimpse of the future, and it grips our heart. There are 3 kinds of future promises that God grants us:

i. God promises us a future during our lifetime.

For example, God promised Abraham and his wife that they would have a child (Gen 15:4). Though they waited, eventually God delivered on his promise as Sarah delivered a child. Most of God's personal promises to us will fall into this category. He may pre-reveal some of 'the good works prepared in advance for us to do' (Eph 2:10).

ii. God promises us a future beyond our lifetime.

They 'were still living by faith when they died' (v13). Several of God's promises, such as 'descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky' (v12), being 'a blessing to the families of the earth' (Gen 12:3) and 'possessing the land' (Gen 12:7) would only come about long after they died.

For example, the only portion of the promised land that Abraham ever bought and owned was a cave near Hebron in which to bury his wife (Gen 23:19-20). It is humbling that only a portion of God's promises to us will unfold in our life, yet also exciting to think that some of our trustful obedience and prayers may cause a ripple-effect that will bless multitudes of people long after we have gone. Some of us will have a greater impact after we live than while we live. Not only Abraham, but Jesus is an example of this fact.





iii. God promises us a future in eternity.

In the late AD80s, God gave the apostle John a vision of *'the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God'* (Rev 21:2). Yet Abraham was given a similar vision 2 millennia before. He was looking for *'a better country—a heavenly one'* (v16) and *'the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God'* (v10). The new Jerusalem is God's regeneration of our fallen world and humanity, in which all that our world and every culture cannot be because of sin and death, will finally be by God's direct cleansing, redemption, grace, power, life and creativity. The city is but a portion of an entirely renovated cosmos. This is our true homeland.

7. FAITH HELPS US TO LET GO OF THINGS THAT DISTRACT AND DIMINISH US.

As we see and welcome God's future by faith, things that once held sway in our lives begin to lose their hold on us. In these verses, we discover 3 distracting and diminishing things that faith helps us to let go of:

i. Faith helps us let go of the past.

'If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return' (v15) – this verse refers to Abraham in his old age being tempted to return back to the city of Ur that God had called him out of decades before. As an old man, it would be justified to want to retire in the land of his youth. But he didn't. By faith he was able to 'forget what's behind and strain on toward what is ahead, pressing on toward the goal' (Phil 3:13). No matter how old he got, his faith in God's promises meant there was always more to look forward to than to look back on.

ii. Faith helps us let go of earthly possessions, comforts and security.

Abraham lived like 'a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents' (v9). Although a wealthy man (Gen 13:2), he opted to not purchase land. Instead he lived in tents like a nomad who was ready to move at any time. Followers of Jesus today are also called to be sojourners, not settlers. This does not mean that we will not buy or build a house for ourselves – but that we won't hold onto 'our stuff' too tightly. Our trust and security is in the God who calls us, not the goods that so easily capture us. We should be ready to defy comfort and convenience in our pursuit of God's will.

iii. Faith helps us let go of our unhealthy concern for human approval.

Abraham's family had no problem 'admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth' (v13). Think of Abraham's speech to his neighbours: 'I am a foreigner and stranger among you' (Gen 23:4). Although Abraham sought good relations with his pagan neighbours, he was never overly concerned with their approval. He had learnt to 'walk before' (Gen 17:1) God – living for God's approval. 'Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God' (v16). Like Abraham, we can learn to look after our relationship with God, and let him take care of our reputation with others. As we honour God, he will honour us – in his own time and way.





DAY 13 FAITH'S GREATEST TESTS (11:17-22)



17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death. 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

Verses 17-19 mention 2 final things we can learn from Abraham's faith:

8. FAITH REQUIRES THAT WE TRUST OUR WAY THROUGH SEEMINGLY UNRESOLVABLE CRISES.

Abraham was about 40 years into his faith-journey when, in Genesis 22, God placed him between a rock and a hard place. On one hand, God had promised that his promise of multitudinous descendants would unfold through his son Isaac (v18). On the other hand, God was asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Although this must have been a gruelling experience for Abraham, he decided to both obey God's command and to trust God's promise. Abraham deduced, based on the fact of God's power (he had witnessed his 90-year-old wife give birth to his son), that he would probably raise Isaac from the dead (v19). This anticipation of resurrection is hinted at in the original story when Abraham, embarking to the place of sacrifice with his son, tells the servants: 'We will come back to you'. As we progress in our walk with God, he will sometimes allow us to get into very difficult places, where obedience to him may even seem contradictory to the direction we thought our lives were headed in. It might involve letting go of things, places and people that mean a great deal to us. Abraham's example for us illustrates Proverbs 3:5-6: *'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight.'*

This strange test is unrepeatable.

Scripture goes on to teach that parents should sacrifice for, not sacrifice their children (Deut 8:10). But there are 2 reasons God puts this unusual account in the Bible: it dramatically demonstrates that God should be our highest priority; and it prophetically points to the cross, where the Father sends Jesus, his *'one and only son'* (v17) to be a sacrifice. Like Isaac, Jesus is a willing sacrifice. Unlike Isaac, Jesus actually dies – God doesn't provide a substitute for Jesus, since Jesus is God's provision of a substitute for us (1 Pet 3:18).

Faith's greatest tests are followed by great blessing.

Take a closer look at Genesis 22. There we see the blessings that follow





Abraham's obedience:

- > **God's gracious intervention** - a ram is provided.
- > **A deeper knowledge of God** - Abraham names the place after his new discovery of God's nature: **'The Lord Will Provide'** (v14).
- > **Powerful confirmations of God's promise** - God upgrades his recurring promise over his life and future to the level of an oath, which is the most emphatic and final form of promise (v18).

9. FAITH EXPECTS THE GENERATION-BY-GENERATION UNFOLDING OF GOD'S PROMISE BEYOND OUR LIFETIMES.

After Abraham, the writer now lists in rapid-fire the 6th to 8th faith heroes. They are Abraham's son (Isaac), grandson (Jacob) and great-grandson (Joseph) - this is testament to the legacy of living faith Abraham and Sarah passed on. Fascinatingly, in the case of all 3 faith heroes, the author provides an example of faith from the end of their lives. Since God's promise is bigger than our life and moment in history, faith helps us to look far beyond our life and moment in history, and invest spiritually in the next generation.

'By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future' (v20).

Genesis 27 tells the story in detail. Although Esau, the firstborn, should have received the blessing, Jacob deceitfully intercepted it. Jacob receives the primary blessing, Esau the secondary one. The main idea is that Isaac anticipates that the promise given to his father, which has unfolded in part in his own life, will unravel further in the life of his children even after he is gone. Echoing God's promise over Abraham (Gen 12:2-3), Isaac declares by faith over Jacob, **'May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed'** (Gen 27:29).

'By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons' (v21).

Genesis 48 tells the story. Jacob who had thought Joseph was dead, is delighted to find that Joseph is in fact still alive and says, **'I never expected to see your face again'** (Gen 48:11). He is thrilled to pass on his blessing to Joseph's sons. His words over them reverberate yet again the same promise first granted to his grandfather, their great-great-grandfather, Abraham: **'May the God who has been my shepherd all my life... bless these boys... may they increase greatly upon the earth'** (Gen 48:15-16). Of interest is that he crosses his hands as he blesses the boys, as if to say, 'God has not worked like I expected in the past, so I expect that he will continue to do the unexpected in the future.'

'By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones' (v22).

Joseph, prime-minister of Egypt, had helped rescue God's people in Egypt, yet he knew - based on God's promises to his great-grandfather - that there would come a time when God would rescue them from Egypt back to the promised land. The last 3 verses of Genesis record his emphatic belief that they will yet inherit the promised land: he makes his brothers promise to take his bones back to Canaan when the Exodus happens.





DAY 14 FAITH TO REALLY SEE (11:23-27)



23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

The next hero of faith is the towering figure of Moses, who stands second only to Abraham as the quintessential believer in the Old Testament.

FAITH COMES AS WE DISCERN GOD'S DESTINY IN INDIVIDUALS.

By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict (v23). Threatened by the growing numbers of Hebrew slaves, Pharaoh created a terrible edict, enforced by soldiers, commanding the murder of all newborn Hebrew boys. Though non-cooperation was punishable by death, Moses' parents decided to disobey Pharaoh by hiding their newborn child (Ex 2:1-2). This was not only an example of love but also of faith, which is why it is listed in chapter 11.

That said, it is an **unusual** example of faith compared to the other characters in the chapter. In most cases, faith comes about when one receives a clear revelation from God. In this case, the parents of Moses had more of an **instinctive impression**. Looking upon their infant, they **'saw he was no ordinary child'**. They did not receive a word from God, but they did have a gut feeling that this child had an unusual destiny in God's purposes. This 'faith' led to courageously and riskily defying the king's edict. A modern parallel is God opening our eyes, if only by a sense of impression, to the God-given potential of another person. This is not classical faith, but it is a kind of faith – one that should lead us to take action to help that person reach their potential. So doing, **'faith expresses itself in love'** (Gal 5:6). We also note how faith can lead to civil disobedience when an earthly authority commands something that is clearly contrary to God's moral will.

FAITH COMES AS WE DISCERN THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God (v24-25). Moses grew up in the palace of Pharaoh as the adopted son of his daughter. They were the most powerful, wealthy and privileged family in the world. By





contrast, the family of Abraham, the Israelites, were a horde of mistreated, impoverished and powerless slaves. Yet there came a time in Moses' life when he could no longer pretend to be of Pharaoh's family. He had to decide which people he would identify with. God gave him eyes to see the greatness of the people of God. Instead of looking through the eyes of a societal pecking order, he could see through the eyes of God. At age 40, he threw his lot in with the people of God. Had he not escaped Egypt, it would have cost him his life. Still today, depending on the place and time in history, the church of Jesus may not seem outwardly impressive. Society may esteem governments and corporations far more highly, but when we see God's people as 'the people of God', this should lead us to see reality more clearly: that the church (the people of God) is not only great, but the single greatest hope of the world.

FAITH VALUES FAITHFULNESS TO GOD'S CALL OVER FLEETING PLEASURES AND MATERIAL POSSESSIONS.

Moses identified with God's people *'rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt because he was looking ahead to his reward'* (v25-26). Moses, schooled in the universities of Egypt, was heir to the throne – and along with it all the world's pleasures, riches and status. Yet he knew he was called to lead and rescue God's people (Acts 7:20-27). Doing so would forfeit all his earthly advantages and incur public disgrace in the courts of Pharaoh – much like the disgrace Christ would later bear. Nonetheless, he trusted and obeyed God. Faith gives us a clarity of mind, which helps us fix our eyes not on what is seen, now and temporary, but on what is unseen, then and eternal. Fascinatingly, just 40 years later God's judgments came upon the people of Egypt (see Ex 7-12), while God's people were rescued. A few years of disgrace as part of the everlasting people of God, followed by heavenly reward, is much better than a few years of sin followed by God's judgment.

FAITH 'SEES' THE INVISIBLE ONE.

'By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible' (v27). Moses was not just motivated to persevere by the future promises of a liberated people and the reward of being instrumental in their liberation. He was motivated because *'he saw him who is invisible'*. He was highly aware of God's presence, and this spiritual sense of God's greatness loomed larger than his natural sense of Pharaoh's greatness. Later, he would have far more vivid encounters with God – in a burning bush, on Mount Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting. Though our vision of God will only be physical in heaven, even in this life we too, like Moses, can *'behold the Lord's glory'* (2 Cor 3:18) – our spiritual senses triggered by the Holy Spirit to perceive God's greatness and goodness as described in Scripture. This spiritual awareness of God, juxtaposed against the awareness of even the greatest earthly realities, should be the central reference point by which we navigate our lives.





DAY 15 GREAT ACTS OF FAITH (11:28-31)



28 By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. 29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days. 31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

FAITH APPLIES THE SAVING BLOOD OF THE LAMB TO OUR LIVES.

'By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel' (v28). The author of Hebrews leaps over 40 years in the story of Moses, to when he returned to Egypt to confront the new Pharaoh. Devastating plagues only seemed to harden Pharaoh's heart. On the final, fateful night in Egypt, Israel observed the first Passover, as instructed by God through Moses (Ex 12:7). They sacrificed a lamb, smearing its blood on their doorposts. When the destroying angel visited that night, the Egyptians (without blood on their doorposts) lost their firstborns. However, all the Israelite children were spared. Moses had believed that this protection would work, and led the people to expect the same. And it did. This act of faith broke the back of Pharaoh's resistance, and the Egyptians begged the Israelites to leave. This blood-bought rescue commemorated annually by Jews in Pesach is also celebrated by Christians on Good Friday. Surely it is no coincidence that Jesus shed his blood on the very day that lambs were being sacrificed in Jerusalem. Moses trusted in a lamb's blood to bring about a one-time rescue. We trust in Jesus's blood for our eternal salvation.

FAITH LOOKS TO GOD TO MAKE A WAY WHERE THERE SEEMS TO BE NO WAY.

'By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned' (v29). The Egyptians then changed their minds and pursued the recently released Israelites with an army of chariots and soldiers. Sandwiched between formidable soldiers and a vast body of water, the Israelites called out to God. Moses said to the people, **'Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today'** (Ex 14:13). ***Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground'*** (Ex 14:15-16). By faith Moses obeyed, and the waters were driven back all night by a powerful east wind. Israel trusted God as they walked all the way through the water corridor. The presumptuous Egyptians tried the same thing – unsuccessfully. Still today, there are times when we face seemingly impossible





obstacles in our lives and ministries. We can trust that he will make a way where there seems to be no way.

FAITH CAN LEAD TO DRAMATIC VICTORIES WON.

'By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days' (v30). After Moses died and another 40 years had passed, Joshua had the privilege of leading God's people into the Promised Land. The reason for the delay was that the Israelites' faith had lapsed so badly and persistently that God waited for a new believing generation. The 40 year silence is perhaps the author's way of recalling what he has already mentioned in chapters 3 and 4: Israel's unbelief in the wilderness got them nowhere! The author then touches down in Joshua 6, the overthrow of Jericho. The army trusted in and followed God's orders. Without any outward encouragement, they marched around the fortress once a day for 6 days, and 7 times on the seventh day. By faith they acted in line with God's Word, and the walls dramatically fell. An inspiring story, which speaks of the breakthroughs that God can bring in our lives, ministries and circumstances as we persistently and patiently trust and obey him.

FAITH CAUSES US TO HELP GOD'S PEOPLE.

Joshua 2:9-11 tells how Israelite spies infiltrated and investigated Jericho. Rahab – a prostitute with an inn – took them in. When the king got word of their presence, he sent soldiers to find the men. But Rahab hid them, sparing their lives. When the spies were leaving she confessed her faith in God, and also her reason for protecting them: *'I know that the Lord has given you the land... for the Lord... is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath'* (Josh 2:9-11). She then asked that when they invaded her city, they spare her family. When Israel invaded the city, she hung a red cord out of her window, so that no harm would come to her family. Despite her Gentile origin, she was incorporated into God's people (Josh 6:20). Her faith was built upon her recognition of the true God, expressed by helping his people, and was rewarded by the preservation of her family. God's dealings with her illustrates a beautiful promise in Hebrews 6:10: *'God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.'*

EACH ACT OF FAITH IS UNIQUE.

Smearing blood on a doorpost, stretching out a staff toward the sea, marching around a city, hosting and hiding strangers – each of these leadings from God is unique and unrepeatable. In the same way, we each need to be open to God's unique directions and promises, and trust him accordingly. Angels passing over, water walling up, fortified walls collapsing under divine weight, a whole army being alerted to the red cord hanging from a window – God is infinitely diverse in his solutions. We dare not predict the manner of his interventions.





DAY 10-15 JOURNAL YOUR JOURNEY



After each day, flip here and write down:

- *a highlight verse or*
- *an insight you want to hold onto or*
- *something you want to apply or change in your life*

DAY 11: OBEYING WITHOUT KNOWING (11:8-12)

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DAY 12: FAITH THAT TRANSFORMS (11:13-16)

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DAY 13: FAITH'S GREATEST TESTS (11:17-22)

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DAY 14: FAITH TO REALLY SEE (11:23-27)

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DAY 15: GREAT ACTS OF FAITH (11:28-31)

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THINGS I AM GRATEFUL FOR OR ASKING GOD FOR THIS WEEK:

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Don't forget to pray each entry back to God, and maybe WhatsApp it to those you are sharing this journey with.





SUNDAY 3 SERMON NOTES



*Use this space to take down notes.
Underline what God is highlighting to you personally.*

Area with horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.





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WEEK FOUR

HEBREWS 11:32-12:12





DAY 16 THE HALL OF FAITH (11:32-35)



32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again.

FAITH CAN MAKE EVEN SINFUL PEOPLE GREAT.

'And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets' (v32). The writer, wanting to keep his letter a manageable length, starts to compress his list of faith heroes. Listing but a few more people, he prods us to review the biblical teachings about them, especially to see how faith was the active agent in their service of God. In the biblical record we are also shocked to find their sins, none of which stopped them from being listed in the hall of faith – an encouragement to all of us who count ourselves less than perfect.

- **Gideon**, though doubting God's word at times, overcame a sense of inferiority (having done nothing courageous before, he was the least in his family, and his clan was the weakest in his tribe) and received God's affirmation by faith: *'The Lord is with you mighty warrior'* (Judges 6:12).
- **Barak**, though hesitant, at the encouragement of the prophetess Deborah, defeated Sisera and the Canaanites (Judges 4:8-16).
- **Samson**, though defeated because of his susceptibility to the charms of a seductive woman, went on believing and achieved a final victory (Judges 13-16).
- **Jephthah**, despite being a son of a prostitute and a gang leader of scoundrels, and despite making a foolish vow that led to his daughter's death, did not abandon hope in being useful to God (Judges 11:1-12:7).
- **David**, who later committed adultery and murder, is also the man who saw Goliath not as an obstacle to God's people, but as an opportunity for God's glory (1 Sam 17).
- **Samuel**, first of the prophets and last of the judges, lived by faith from his boyhood to his final days, setting up David as the future king.
- **The prophets**, a host of stellar figures who, by their words and deeds, lived for the unseen God in mostly hostile circumstances.





FAITH CAN EMPOWER LEADERS TO LEAD BETTER

Having already mentioned 21 people or groups of people in the hall of faith, the author now lists 10 faith-enabled achievements (v33-35a). He starts with leadership victories (v33).

Faith conquered kingdoms.

We think especially of David's kingship overcoming a long period of Philistine oppression, but also of Joshua and kings such as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah.

Faith administered justice.

More than driving back enemy oppression, leaders need to lead the people into a flourishing state; we think of Queen Sheba delighting in the fact that God made Solomon *'king to maintain justice and righteousness'* (1 King 10:9).

Faith gained what was promised.

We think of Deborah who prophesied Barak's victories; and Samson's parents who prophesied his. These promises encouraged their exploits. Caleb, at age 85, said to Joshua, *'Just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for 45 years. I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me'* (Josh 14:11-12).

FAITH CAN TURN WEAKNESS TO STRENGTH

Leaning upon our strengths is a key to effectiveness, but the danger is that we become self-sufficient, and thus bring less glory to God. So God gives us weaknesses – they could be genetic, personal or circumstantial. As we lean upon him in our weaknesses, he promises to turn our *'weakness... to strength'* (v34). Far from disqualifying us, our weaknesses qualify us: Sarah was too old, Isaac was a daydreamer, Leah was unattractive, Joseph was abused, Moses stuttered, Samson was blind, Elijah was depressed, Naomi was too poor, Esther was the wrong nationality, Job was heart-broken, Martha was a worry-pot, Zacchaeus was too hated, and Timothy was timid and sickly. Yet, all of these weaknesses became the very point through which God's genius and strength manifested. The apostle Paul discovered the same. After begging God to remove a weakness, God said to him, *'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'* Paul's faith-filled response was, *'Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me'* (2 Cor 12:9-10).

FAITH CAN MAKE DEAD THINGS LIVE

'Women received back their dead, raised to life again' (v35). Women were very vulnerable in the ancient world. But 5 biblical women who trusted in God received the greatest miracle of all – the resurrection of loved ones, usually children. See 1 Kings 17: 17-24, 2 Kings 4:17-37, Luke 7:11-17, John 11:11-44 and Acts 9:36-42.





DAY 17 FAITH TO ENDURE (11:35-40)



35 There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

FAITH CAN LEAD TO AND CARRY US IN SUFFERING.

In the previous verses, we saw that faith can lead to **escape** from and victory over suffering (v33-35). But now we see that faith can also **attract** all kinds of suffering.

- **Some people are treated brutally for their faith.**

Like Jeremiah and like some of the Hebrew Christians that were reading this letter (see 10:32-34), many heroes of the faith faced 'jeers and flogging and... chains and imprisonment' (v35-36).

- **Some people are martyred for their faith (v37).**

They were 'stoned to death' like Zechariah and Stephen, '**sawed in two**' like Isaiah (as Jewish tradition has it), and '**killed by the sword**' unlike David, Moses and Elijah who '**escaped the edge of the sword**' (v34). The word 'tortured' (v35) refers to a wheel or rack upon which the victim was stretched out and then beaten to death.

- **Some are made outcasts for their faith.**

Becoming destitute and being forced to live in deserts, mountains and caves (v37-38). Elijah is such an example (1 Kings 17-19).

Although God can help us escape suffering (think of how God opened the prison doors for Peter in Acts 12:6-11), sometimes he helps us to endure suffering (think of Paul who was left in prison for years in Acts 24:27). We should trust in God who sometimes delivers us out of or from hardship, and sometimes delivers us in and through it. Whatever God puts us through, he calls us to faith. We must avoid a shallow, triumphalist theology that teaches that God wants to bless us with easy, prosperous lives.

FAITH ENDURES BY LOOKING TO THE PROMISE OF GOD'S FUTURE REWARD AND COMMENDATION.

The recipients of this letter had suffered for a long time. The author reminds them that this is nothing unusual, and their response should be to '**not throw away (their) confidence, for it will be richly rewarded**' (10:35). This is certainly the way it





was with the faith heroes of the past - when their circumstances were crushing, they looked forward to the promises of God. Faith that is not tested can hardly be called faith. It is only as we hold onto God's goodness and his promises, despite the apparent absence of these in our present circumstances, that faith is proven.

• **God will reward us by commending us.**

'This is what the ancients were commended for' (v2). *'They were all commended for their faith'* (v39). God is ready to speak the words *'Well done my good and faithful servant'* over all who endure in faith. Like Enoch, we can secretly experience this fatherly affirmation in this life already (v5), though the applause of our father will be unmistakable and public in heaven.

• **God will more than compensate our earthly suffering in eternity.**

They persevered in suffering 'that they might gain an even better resurrection' (v35). Our future resurrection will be the occasion of our reward. Since rewards vary, so will our experience of resurrection. The New Testament hints at something similar elsewhere: *'Star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead'* (1 Cor 15:41-42). Why does God allow us to suffer? We don't get a satisfying answer in this life, but we're promised that at the end of the age, the answer will be given - along with the compensation of resurrection glory.

• **Us New Testament believers are much closer to this heavenly glory and reward than the Old Testament ones.**

'Only together with us would they be made perfect' (v40). The faith heroes of old wait in heaven for God to bring about his perfect new world of endless blessing, a world that only follows on after Christ returns.

FAITH IS CONNECTED TO ONE'S UNIQUE CALLING.

'By faith and patience we inherit God's promises' (6:12). Hebrews 11 tells us that God has a plan or calling for each of us in this life. This plan or calling is part of the unique inheritance God promises us. There are 'good works which God has prepared for us in advance to do' (Eph 2:10). All are called to the Great Commission of helping people find and follow Jesus (Matt 28:18-20), but within those broad banks, we each have specific callings. But what? Reflecting on this long list of faith heroes reveals that it will be unique, and very likely unrepeatable - as unique as our moment in history, the trials we face, the opportunities God brings, and the gifts, talents and experiences God bestows upon us. Like Noah, who built an ark, some of us will pioneer new strategies in the mission of God. Like Abraham and Sarah, some of us will be called to relocate our lives and trust him for the impossible. Like Isaac and Joseph, some of us will be used to set up the future generations to succeed in the ways of God. Like Moses, some of us will confront injustice and see God's liberation of the oppressed. Some of us will lead. Some of us will be intercessors - seeing God's resurrection power coming upon lives and circumstances. Some will experience sky-rocketing 'success' in this world. Some will live below the radars, reflecting God's glory in the humblest of situations. Comparison is futile. All that God asks of us is faithfulness in the unique calling he guides us into. He will commend and reward us accordingly.





DAY 18 RUN YOUR RACE (12:1-2)



12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Where are we in Hebrews? 1:1-10:18 tells us what we have in the New Covenant – Jesus and his priesthood, prayers and blood. From 10:19 onwards we're told what to do with these blessings: we confidently draw near to God, share our faith and invest in deep Christian community (10:19-25); it would be rebellious not to (10:26-31); God's conditional promise of reward is at stake (10:32-29). A hall of faith heroes inspire us as we do (11:1-40).

Now, in these next 2 verses, the author says the Christian life is like running in a marathon. The author unpacks the metaphor masterfully...

1. BE ENCOURAGED BY PAST-RUNNERS.

'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses' (v1). After listing the champions of faith who have already run their race (ch 11), the scene suddenly shifts and these people (and others like them) are likened to a vast throng of spectators encircling us in an amphitheatre with a race track in the middle. There are so many of them, that they are like a cloud of faces. They do more than just watch – they cheer us on, as if to say: *'By God's grace, we've run our race. We achieved God's call with God's help. We trusted in his promises despite the hardships. We have no regrets about persevering in our faith. We've been rewarded! Now it's your turn – run, run, run!'*

2. THROW OFF HINDRANCES AND ENTANGLEMENTS.

'Throw off everything that hinders' (v1). You can't run as fast when carrying weights or wearing an overcoat. A hindrance is something which distracts you from your race. It might not hinder another, but it does you. Joseph, for example, successfully ruled in Egypt, but for Moses it was a hindering weight. Other weights might well be ambition, anxieties, hobbies, wealth, comparison, comfort or reputation. Be honest with yourself. If it is non-essential to your life, and it's causing you to not run your race well, let it go.

'Throw off... the sin that so easily entangles' (v1). Most sin seems to be small initially, but it grows in strength through repetition. The more you sin, the easier it is to sin again, sucking the joy and peace your soul needs to truly run unfettered in the things of God. You not free to serve God with abandon any more than a





runner can run with a rope tied around his/her legs. God wants you free of sin – not to take away our fun, but so we can run, free of deceit, addiction, sorrow - free to finish strong.

3. RUN WITH GRIT AND TENACITY.

'Let us run with perseverance' (v1). The Greek word for run (*agonal*) is the root word for our English word 'agony'. Following Jesus is not easy. One uphill patch follows after another. Endurance (*hupomone*) does not mean passive patience, but rather an active determination that refuses to be deflected. Following Jesus is not a quick, fast sprint. It's a long, arduous journey that tests our faith again and again. Though God may bless us with moments of relaxation and stunning scenery, the default mode of the marathon runner is one of dogged resolution and unyielding exertion. Faithfulness to Jesus requires daily renewal of trust, and along with it, a long, slow obedience in the same direction. How one finishes is even more important than how one starts.

4. RUN THE PATH SET OUT BEFORE YOU.

'Let us run... the race marked out for us' (v1). The Greek word 'marked out' (*prokemei*) suggests that God visually lays out the path before us. God is the one who marks out our unique calling, in the same way that he marked out a unique path for each of the faith exemplars of chapter 11. Although he does not show us all the details of our future, it is expected that our calling will grow clearer over the years.

5. FIX YOUR EYES ON THE ULTIMATE HERO.

Although we look down the path of calling, our focus is on the Caller who stands at the winning post (the ancient version of a finishing line).

• Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Without Jesus who pioneered it, there would be no path. Still today, Jesus calls us: *'Come follow me'* (Matt 14:9). Our path of faith will evidence similarities to the path he perfectly ran during his earthly life, one marked with opposition and difficulty. Breathless, bleeding, abandoned, naked, scourged and humiliated, Jesus *'scorned (i.e. considered of little value) the shame of the cross'* (v2). What kept his spirit from flagging? This: in perfect trust in his Father, he looked past the horrors of the cross to *'the joy set before him'* (v2) – referring to both the reward of being seated at his Father's right hand and all the people that would be his own as a result of the blood he shed.

• Jesus is the hero and supporter of our faith.

Although all the faith heroes of chapter 11 were flawed, sinful and often erratic in the quality of their faith, Jesus is the consummate hero and champion. He alone is unfallen, unbeaten, unmatched. The faith heroes may watch over our lives in a figurative sense, but Jesus watches over us literally. We fix our eyes on the One who has his eyes fixed on us.





DAY 19 A RIGHT PERSPECTIVE ON HARDSHIPS (12:3-8)



3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. 4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.

HARDSHIP IS PART AND PARCEL OF THE PATH.

These early readers – like Jesus before them – were experiencing ‘*opposition from sinners*’ (v3). They were being persecuted. Unlike Jesus though, they were not being martyred. Jesus ‘resisted to the point of shedding blood’ (v4). They were being marginalised but not murdered. Jesus endured worse agony ‘*for the joy set before him*’ (v2). If Jesus suffered while pioneering our path, we cannot expect to have an easy life on that same path. He doesn’t ask more of us than he has experienced himself. Thankfully, he provides not only a past-tense example, but also present-tense empowerment. He watches over, cares for, sympathizes with, prays for and supports us in our suffering – and promises us great joy on the other side of our trial. The author then goes on to speak about hardship in general – not just persecution, but **any difficulty** that might cause us to ‘*grow weary and lose heart*’ (v3) or involve us struggling ‘*against sin*’ (v4).

How do we make sense of these hard times? Why does God allow them to come into our lives and churches? Are they arbitrary? One answer is provided here...

HARDSHIP IS A SIGN OF GOD’S FATHERLY LOVE.

God loves us so much that he takes us as we are. But he loves us too much to leave us in the condition he finds us. God is determined to forge the image of Christ deeper into our character (Rom 8:29). This process of becoming more like Jesus is not optional. If we have God as our Father, then Christ’s image being carved into us is a significant part of our destiny.

How are we to become more like Jesus?

It takes time. As well as the formation of godly habits like reading and reflecting on God’s Word, repenting of the sins the Spirit convicts us of, and faithfully following the Spirit’s leading. It requires that we follow Jesus alongside others where mutual challenge, accountability and support are practiced. However, all those are not enough.





God allows hardships into our lives as a means of making us ore like Christ.

In the same way a furnace burns away a metal's impurities, so God allows the heat to be turned up, hot enough to burn away the impurities in our hearts and minds. It's a myth (widely believed) that the Christian life is all about God making things easy for us. But he would never be so cruel! Rather, he sees to it that the right mixture of joys and troubles come our way.

Our heavenly Father trains us by allowing troubles.

The Greek word for 'discipline' (*paideia*) can also be translated 'train'. In verses 5-6, the author quotes Proverbs 3:10-12. In the same way a good parent will lovingly train their child, so God trains us through tough times. Our heavenly father sees dangerous sins, straying tendencies, self-sabotaging weaknesses or unhelpful habits in us (ones we are often oblivious to) and seeks to correct them. Sometimes, he does so through pain. Our experience corroborates this - how many Christians today testify to how God got their attention only after some severe trial or circumstance came upon them?

Is there a way to minimize hardships?

Our circumstances are mostly out of our hands, but there is something we can do to prevent at least some trials. Listen to how Michael Eaton puts it:

"The easy way to grow in holiness is to respond to God's word. But when we do not do that, God has a tougher way – his hand comes upon us in discipline. If we will not learn the easy way we must not be surprised if we have to learn the hard way. When God sees that we are drifting into spiritual pride, self-confidence, worldliness, laziness or self-satisfaction, he speaks to us. But if we will not hear his voice, he is likely to take action!"

God trains us for our future.

That said, God's trials, if cooperated with, do not just take us from ungodliness to godliness. They also take us from one level of godliness and maturity to yet a higher level of godliness and maturity. To reach the full potential of each of our unique callings will require a higher level of character and faith than we now have. That's why God trains it into us.

He trains us because he loves us.

Many believers assume that difficult times are a sign of God's lack of love. The opposite is true! Allowing us perpetual ease would be a sign of a lack of love. ***'The Lord disciplines the one he loves... God is treating you as his children'*** (v 6 & 7). There is no harshness or vindictiveness in God. He chastens us without anger. He is not taking revenge upon us. God's correction is never to punish us. Nor to make us pay for our sins – that was done once and for all on the cross. His correction is motivated only by his love, not by his justice. He has nothing but love in his heart towards us. God might let the world get away with many sins (though judgment comes later). But if we are his children, he would never let us sin and sin and sin without intervening sooner or later.





DAY 20 YIELD TO HIS DISCIPLINE *(12:9-12)*



9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! 10 They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

We're still on the subject of God's correcting and training us by allowing difficult times to come upon us. The writer uses two analogies to help us understand this:

FIRST ANALOGY: GOD'S TRAINING OF US IS LIKE PARENTAL DISCIPLINE.

The writer reflects how 'human fathers... disciplined us and we respected them for it. They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best' (v9-10). Good parents refuse to leave character flaws, recurring disobedience and folly unchallenged in their children. They try to avert these self-destructive aspects through various kinds of discipline. The clause, 'as they thought best' reminds us that, well-meaning as parents are, they're often unskilful in how they go about this discipline. In contrast, our heavenly Father's discipline of us cannot be improved upon. How should we respond to it?

- **Trust his discipline.**

'God disciplines us for our good' (v10). God is not so cruel as to give us perpetual ease and comfort. Wanting what's best for us and best in us, he weeds out what is toxic and unhelpful in us. He also uses hardships to train us for our future usefulness. Think of King David as a young boy. A lion comes upon him, and he is forced to fight it. Luckily, he prevails over it, but still what a terrible thing to have happened to him. We might ask how a loving God could have allowed it. Later, along comes Goliath, and we realize that the earlier challenges were (much-needed) practice runs for more important future victories.

- **Yield to his discipline.**

'How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!' (v9) It's pointless resisting, insulting or running from God's discipline. Much better to submit to him. The Greek word for submit (*hypotasso*) can also be translated 'yield'. Think of a child receiving a vaccination. They might not understand why their parents would allow it, never mind just stand there while they endure the pain. But the worst thing is to wriggle or run. Not fighting it, but instead, letting God/the nurse do their work is better, as vulnerable as we may feel.

- **Don't pretend to enjoy his discipline.**

'No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful' (v11). It's pointless stoically





pretending like adversity is plain sailing. If someone asks us how we are doing, even though we trust God, we should still be real about our present experience, which might be desolating, scary, perplexing or agonizing.

• **Rejoice in the future results of God's discipline.**

Our view of the future changes our experience of the present. Thankfully, these tough times are not forever – there is always light at the end of the tunnel. They are only 'for a little while' (v10) – though God's 'little while' might be longer than we'd hoped for. In the same way David was more equipped to fight Goliath because of his battle with a lion, and in the same way, a child is more able to fight off sickness because of vaccinations, so we will be more able to do God's will and reflect Christ's character in future situations. Indeed, receiving his discipline will mean that we will be more able to 'share in his holiness' (v10). The painfully ploughed up soil of our lives means we will eventually 'produce a harvest of righteousness and peace' (v11). Other Scriptures echo this same teaching, for example, 'The testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything' (James 1:3-4).

SECOND ANALOGY: GOD'S TRAINING OF US IS LIKE PHYSIOTHERAPY.

'Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed' (v12-13). The Greek word for 'train' in verse v11 (*gymnazo*) introduces another analogy: God's chastisement develops our gymnastic or athletic ability. (This hints back to the racing analogy in verses 1-2.)

• **Discern the spiritual dysfunctionality in your life.**

Notice the terms 'feeble arms', 'weak knees', 'lame' and 'disabled' (v12-13). We're led to imagine a person who is physically broken, crippled, badly needing restorative physiotherapy. The idea is that, especially in the early stages of our walk with God, there is so much in our quality of character, understanding and faith that is broken and disjointed. This brokenness is only exacerbated by our sinfulness or unbelief. When trials come our way, we should 'ask God for wisdom' (James 1:5) to help us understand what aspects of our lives need growth or restoration. This then leads to the next step...

• **Actively cooperate with God in that area.**

Next we're led to imagine this physically broken person getting some help from a physiotherapist-trainer, who seeks to 'strengthen' our arms and knees, until we're no longer 'lame' but 'healed'. This trainer-healer does this by taking us in hand and putting us through some exercises. We are to raise our hands. This is a picture of prayer – we must let the difficulty drive us to God in greater levels of dependency and prayer. We are to bend our knees – this is a picture of greater levels of humility and submission. We are to walk, and then run up and down on a 'level path' (see Prov 4:26), a straight track – this is a picture of forming habits of endurance and daily godliness. What kind of 'daily godliness'? The next few verses will tell us...





DAY 16-20 JOURNAL YOUR JOURNEY



After each day, flip here and write down:

- *a highlight verse or*
- *an insight you want to hold onto or*
- *something you want to apply or change in your life*

DAY 16: THE HALL OF FAITH (11:32-35)

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DAY 17: FAITH TO ENDURE (11:35-40)

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DAY 18: RUN YOUR RACE (12:1-2)

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DAY 19: DON'T GROW WEARY (12:3-8)

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DAY 20: YIELD TO HIS DISCIPLINE (12:9-12)

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THINGS I AM GRATEFUL FOR OR ASKING GOD FOR THIS WEEK:

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Don't forget to pray each entry back to God, and maybe WhatsApp it to those you are sharing this journey with.





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WEEK FIVE

HEBREWS 12:14-13:6





DAY 21 BATTLE AGAINST UNHOLINESS (12:14-17)



14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. 16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. 17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.

UNHOLINESS TAKES MANY SHAPES AND FORMS.

1. Strife.

'Make every effort to live in peace with everyone' (v14). Although we must not avoid difficult conversations with others, *'as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone'* (Rom 12:17). Accusatory, aggressive, abusive, antagonistic and adversarial ways of relating to others are unholy ways of relating. We are to be peacemakers and bridge-builders. This involves listening to, spending time with, praying for and loving the people God has placed in our lives, as well as reconciling and restoring any broken relationships.

2. Bitterness.

'See to it that... no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many' (v15). Bitterness is a poisonous weed [see Deut 29:18]. Not only does it quickly spread and corrupt our lives, it spreads through a community, damaging other people by infecting them too. We can be bitter towards God: sceptically questioning his goodness, distrusting him, believing that he is somehow singling you out for a bad deal in life. We can also be bitter towards others: unforgiveness, a critical attitude, taking offence, wounded pride, nursing a grudge, and suspiciously feeling like others have specially overlooked you or singled you out for ill-treatment. The antidote to this is that *'no one falls short of the grace of God'* (v15). To overcome bitter tendencies we must approach the throne of grace to find help and mercy in our time of need (Heb 4:16), and then extend that same grace and mercy to others.

3. Sexual immorality.

'See to it that no one is sexually immoral, or godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son' (v16). Apparently, Esau's sexual appetite drove his choices – Genesis 26:34-35 tells how he took wives from among the pagan Hittite women. Sex is for marriage (Heb 13:4). Whenever we have sex with someone who is not our spouse, we may have a fleeting thrill but, as we will see in two paragraphs time, it leads to serious loss – hardly worth the trade!





4. Short-term gains at the expense of long-term rewards.

The Greek word for 'godless' (*bebelos*) means profane or, as we might say it today, secular. It is being absorbed with immediate emotional fulfilment, earthly comforts and material wealth and security – with an indifference to eternal and unseen things like God, his Word, his Spirit's presence, and his promise of blessing and inheritance. Genesis 27:27–34 tells the story of how, for the momentary satiation of an appetite, Esau was willing to abandon his lifelong birth right. The lesson of Esau is this to look beyond the short-term, immediate promise that sin and this world makes. It's better to hold on to the long-term, often slow-in-coming promise that God makes to bless us in this life and forever.

UNHOLINESS FORFEITS THE REWARD GOD HAS FOR US.

We have already explored the idea of reward/inheritance on day 6 and day 17 in this devotional study. The theme comes up once more in this section on Esau:

Unholiness forfeits the possibility of constant awareness of God.

'Without holiness no one will see the Lord' (v14). Many Bible commentators argue that this means that we will not be in heaven one day. But surely our writer is thinking about reward in this life, not heaven. The only other place in Hebrews that speaks of seeing God is where it says that Moses, while on earth, *'saw him who is invisible'* (11:27) – in other words, it is something that God blesses us with in this life. This verse then likely refers to the experience of living closely to God, conscious of his presence, blessing and guidance in our daily lives. The Most Holy Place, open to us by the blood of Christ, awaits our daily habitation, but we will not be able to enjoy it very much if we consistently choose to live in the basement of compromise.

Unholiness forfeits some or all of our inheritance.

Esau experienced deep regret. *'When he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done'* (v17). God may forgive our unholiness, but his forgiveness seldom reverses the damage it brings to the blessings, usefulness and reward God had planned for us. Only our recommitment to holiness can do that.

BATTLE AGAINST UNHOLINESS.

The battle involves a relentless pursuit.

The Greek word for *'make every effort'* (v14) (*diokete*) can be translated 'pursue' or 'follow'. Holiness comes from a long, slow effort in the same direction. We are to go after holiness. It's a fierce battle. When there are setbacks and knock-downs, we must get up again.

The battle involves immersion in a supportive spiritual community.

The Greek clause for 'see to it that none' (*episkopountes me tis*) means 'as a community be alert to every individual'. Isolated, we are easy prey to unholiness. It's only as we stand together, shoulder to shoulder, watching over and caring for each other, that we all can remain standing, and keep getting up again when we fall.





DAY 22 A NEW COVENANT (12:18-24)



18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; 19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, 20 because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death." 21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

WE'RE NOT UNDER THE OLD COVENANT ANYMORE.

So discouraging was the persecution against them, some of the Jewish readers of Hebrews were being tempted to go back to Judaism – either in full apostasy or by secretly holding to the gospel but no longer identifying with the church of Jesus. The author therefore highlights what they would be losing – the joy and power of the New Covenant.

The word **'not'** (v18) precedes verses 18-21, and the word **'but'** precedes verses 22-24. The second section is set in bold relief against the first. The first section describes the 1300BC making of the Old Covenant, mediated by Moses, when the desert-wandering Israelites gathered around a burning, shaking Mount Sinai (see Ex 19-20). There, they received the law. The second section tells of Mount Zion, the hill on which Jerusalem stands. Zion is where Jesus' blood opened up a **'new and living way'** (10:20) for us to come in to God's presence. It's where Jesus from heaven poured out his Spirit on the first church. The writer graphically contrasts the two covenants, in order to elevate our gratitude to 'Jesus the mediator of a new covenant' (v24). Here's the difference between the two:

THE OLD COVENANT WAS OUTWARD AND VISIBLE, THE NEW IS INWARD AND SPIRITUAL.

When the Israelites came to Sinai it was all very physical. They travelled far to get there, and gathered at the base of a flaming mountain. They had to travel to where God was. Moses brought down the 10 Commandments, inscribed in stone. Compare that with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost on Mount Zion (see Acts 2). God came to where they were. No longer would pilgrimages to holy places be part of God's work in the world. Though there were outward manifestations





of the Spirit in the flames above people's heads (Acts 2), these merely pointed to the inward, heart-warming flames of the Spirit that would spread out to all the nations of the world. The law of Moses was written on stone, but the Spirit inscribes the ways of God into the very hearts of those in Christ.

THE OLD COVENANT WORKED BY FEAR, THE NEW COVENANT BY ASSURANCE AND JOY.

'The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear"' (v21). The author's contrast of the 2 mountains is poetic and powerful. The frightening visual imagery of blazing fire, darkness, and gloom fades before the bright-shining city. The cacophony of whirlwind, trumpet blast, and a sound of words is muted and replaced by the joyful praise of angels in a celebratory gathering. The trembling congregation of Israel is superseded by the assembly of those whose names are permanently inscribed in the heavenly archives. As the Old Covenant gives way to the new in the coming of Christ, so fear gives way to joy and assurance.

Moses was terrified of the red-hot wrath of God because of the people's sins. Though God is still holy, and hell is still pictured as a place of fire and darkness, yet Jesus died as our *'propitiation'* (1 John 2:2), God's banishing anger has been turned away from those who shelter beneath the cross. The fire has not been put out but we are protected from it. Hearts melted by the love of God, we stand in ravished awe of him. We have no fear of his eternal condemnation. Rather, our only fear is forfeiting his promised inheritance – a needless consequence that comes from persistently failing to be enthralled by his offer of bounteous grace.

THE OLD COVENANT WORKED BY EXCLUSION, THE NEW BY INVITATION.

God said to Moses, *'Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them to not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death'* (Ex 19:12). Only Moses was allowed to draw near to God. The mountain was fenced off. Even animals would die if they touched it.

Compare that with Zion, the place from which the nations began to be reached – not with a complicated list of 613 commands, but with the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. The overwhelming unapproachability of God is eclipsed by the loud invitation to all – to come and enjoy confident access to the presence of God, through Jesus (see 10:19-20).

At Mount Zion, when they heard *'the voice speaking words,' they 'begged that no further word be spoken to them'* (v19). However the gospel of the New Covenant makes it possible for us to hear the voice of God not as a terrifying roar. Not the thundering voice of a Law-giver, rather we hear the gladdening voice of a loving shepherd who says, *'My sheep follow me because they know my voice'* (John 10:4)) and a doting father who *'testifies with our spirit that we are his children'* (Rom 8:16).





DAY 23 NEW CITIZENSHIP (12:22-24)



22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

1. THE NEW COVENANT GIVES US MANY BLESSINGS.

All these blessings are governed by the verb translated, 'you have come' (v22, 23). The present tense makes it clear that we are virtually experiencing these already...

2. THE NEW COVENANT GIVES US CITIZENSHIP IN A HEAVENLY CITY.

'You have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem' (v22). In the Old Testament, Mount Zion and the city on it, Jerusalem, are conceptually the same thing (Amos 1:2). The Psalmists esteemed Jerusalem as the most important city in the scheme of God – the headquarters of David's kingdom, famous for its unity (Ps 122:3), security (Ps 125:2), and stability (Ps 137:7). It was even described as the epicentre of God's purposes, to which the nations will be drawn in, and from which God's word would be sent out (Isa 2:3). Most significantly, it points to a heavenly parallel, the 'heavenly Jerusalem' (v22) – God's heavenly headquarters, God's true dwelling place (although he is present everywhere), where his people dwell with him in unity, security and stability. This heavenly city already exists in heaven, and we are already citizens of it.

3. THE NEW COVENANT GIVES US ASSEMBLY WITH ANGELS.

The *'You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly'* (v22). The Greek word for 'joyful assembly' (*panegyris*) was used in the ancient world to refer to a multitudinous gathering to celebrate an occasion of joy, often associated with a feast. It was also used of the celebratory atmosphere at the annual athletic competitions, such as the Olympics. Twice in the New Testament we catch a glimpse of a myriad of angels festively worshipping and praising God (Luke 2:13, Rev 5:11). Whenever we praise and worship God, we are not alone – we are part of a heavenly choir. We may not see the angels now, but in heaven we will.

THE NEW COVENANT GIVES US MEMBERSHIP IN THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH.

• What a privilege this is!

'You have come to... the church of the firstborn' (v23). Firstborn children, in the ancient Near East, would receive a double portion of the family possessions, and the right to rule within the family. It carried enormous privilege. The Greek word for 'firstborn' is plural. In Hebrews 1:6 Jesus is called 'the firstborn Son', but





here his followers are called by the same name. We all are firstborn sons and daughters.

- **How secure our membership in the church is.**

Our *'names are written in heaven'* (v23)! By God's grace, we are enrolled in a heavenly registry (see also Exod 32:32, Ps 69:29, Isa 4:3, Dan 12:1 and Luke 10:20). The Greek word for church (ekklesia) speaks of the called-out ones. As we're granted the gift of faith in the gospel, it's as though our names have been read out.

- **We are part of the universal church.**

The New Testament speaks sometimes of local churches, and sometimes (as it does here) of the universal church. Though our experience of our local church may at times be discouraging (for example, many in the church being written to had left because of the enduring persecution), yet we can draw comfort that we are part of the universal church.

- **We will one day be a victorious church.**

The New Testament sometimes speaks of the present-tense 'church militant' – the church still locked in battle with the world, the sinful nature and the devil. Yet here it speaks of the future 'church triumphant' – the church that will be glorified and liberated from all suffering and sin (see Eph 5:27). When the battle is fierce, we draw strength by remembering that the battle will one day give way to eternal victory. Already now, we experience foretastes of this future.

THE NEW COVENANT GIFTS US WITH GOD'S JUSTIFICATION.

These last blessings in verses 23-24 (of coming to God, to the spirits of people, and to Jesus and his blood) are probably best understood together as emphasizing God's blood-bought justifying verdict over the lives of those 'whose names are written in heaven' (v23):

- **We come to God 'the Judge of all' (v22).**

Though God as 'Judge' is often thought of in negative terms (see 10:30-31 for example) in these verses it is presented positively, since God's final verdict over our lives hinges on the fact that we are in Christ.

- **We come to fellow-believers who are also 'the righteous made perfect'.**

We are not just part of the present people of God, but also the historical people of God, those whose bodies have died yet they are alive in heaven awaiting future embodiment. God declares those in Christ 'righteous'. *'To the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,'* (Rom 4:5). Despite our failures, God has assured us that at Judgment Day we will be made perfect.

- **We come to Jesus and his justifying blood.**

'We have been justified by his blood' (Rom 5:9). His *'sprinkled blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel'* (v24). Abel's blood cried from the earth for justice (Gen 4:10), while Jesus' blood mercifully announces from heaven our *'confidence to enter the Most Holy Place'* (10:19).





DAY 24 AN UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM (12:25-29)



25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? 26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

'See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks' (v25). This is the final warning section in Hebrews. It warns believers who are tempted to reverse their commitment to Jesus and the mission he has given us. What happened at Sinai was a pale shadow of what would later happen in the gospel. At Sinai, God's voice 'shook the earth' (v26). *'The whole mountain trembled violently'* (Ex 19:18). The author quotes Haggai 2:6, a prophecy telling how the New Covenant will involve a much greater shaking, one that shakes earth and heaven – the entire cosmos!

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT GOD SHAKES THE EARTH AND THE HEAVENS? THREE THINGS...

1. Jesus' cross shook the earthly and the heavenly realm.

There was a physical shaking that re-positioned things on earth. As Jesus died *'the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth shook, the rocks split'* (Matt 27:51). More significantly, there was a dramatic spiritual re-positioning. 'God was pleased... to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross' (Col 1:20). Also, 'Jesus dealt a fatal wound to 'the prince of the power of the air' (Eph 2:3) and his dark kingdom (Col 2:15). Still today, as we voice the gospel, God's heavenly power can transform lives from darkness to light.

2. Jesus' reign allows all kinds of instability to come in history and our lives.

Although God's kingdom – where God's will is happily embraced, and God's power is setting captives free – is already here, it is only here in part. No nation in history has achieved any substantial length of calm. Given enough time, unexpected and often unavoidable events derail the best of human intentions. The pursuit of nation-wide prosperity and peace flounders. Just when calm seems to have finally arrived, a political leader is killed or exposed as corrupt, an economy crashes and fortunes fail, one tribe of people turns against another, a bomb-blast terrifies many, a disease breaks out, or there is threat of nuclear war. These





shakings do not just happen at a macro-level – they happen in each of our lives. Things go wrong in our relationships, bodies and personal circumstances. Like a diamond hidden in a sand-filled sieve, God shakes human history and our lives with all kinds of chaos and upheavals to make the diamond of God's kingdom more desirable and evident.

3. Jesus' return will shake the earthly and heavenly realm.

Mount Sinai shook for a moment with God's glory, but when the Son of Man *'comes... with power and great glory'* (Luke 21:27) his glory and judgment will shake everything. The material cosmos as we know it will come to an end, being born again as the new heavens and earth (1 Cor 7:31, 2 Peter 3:10, 12, Rev 21:1). All that is not of God in the cosmic and human realm will be smashed and ruined. The rebel kingdoms of fallen humanity will end, and only God's kingdom, coming to full fruition, will survive (Rev 11:15).

THANK GOD FOR THE GIFT OF HIS KINGDOM.

- **It is an unshakable kingdom.**

'We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken' (v28). When the shakings come, we as God's people grieve along with others. But we have no reason to despair or to fear like others. Our confidence is the diamond of God's kingdom – which we have received, are receiving and will receive. We are to keep our eyes always on the Lord. With him at our right hand, we will not be shaken (Ps 16:8). Hence, we always have good reason to give thanks and to joyfully worship. What we value most is the king and his kingdom, which are never under threat.

- **It is an inflammable kingdom.**

With the flaming Mount Sinai still in mind, the author changes his metaphor, by quoting Deuteronomy 4:24: *'Our God is a consuming fire'* (v29). Not only will God smash the fallen kingdoms of this world, he will also burn them up in purifying judgment. This works out at a personal level too. Our lives and ministries will come under the fire of God's judgment. Only what is built upon the kingdom will survive. *'If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss'* (1 Cor 3:14-15).

- **It is an awesome kingdom.**

'Since we are receiving a kingdom... let us be thankful, and so worship God' (v28). We do not deserve God's kingdom. It is a gift of grace. In fact, the clause, 'let us be thankful' can also be translated as *'let us hold onto grace'*. Over and above grateful dependence on his grace, we are to have *'reverence and awe'* (v28) for the king of the kingdom.

Recognising who he is, we will *'not refuse him who speaks'* (v25). To the degree we trust, worship and obey him, to that degree will our lives and the results of our ministry *'remain'* (v27), withstanding the shaking and burning that come partly in this life, and fully on judgment day.





DAY 25 A LIFE OF LOVE (13:1-6)



13 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. 2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. 3 Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. 4 Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." 6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

TRUE THEOLOGY ALWAYS LEADS TO A CHANGE OF LIFE.

Up until chapter 12, Hebrews has let us wade deeply in the depths of doctrine, with some implications for how we live weaved in here and there, especially from 10:19 onwards. Now, we come to the final section, chapter 13, where the writer focuses exclusively on how we might actually live differently in light of these truths. He lists 12 practical pointers for living in a Christ-confident way. We explore 6 of these today...

1. Love your brothers and sisters in Christ.

'Keep on loving one another' (v1). The Greek word for 'keep on' (*meneto*) is the same word used just 3 verses before: 'so that what cannot be shaken may remain (*meneto*)' (12:27). If we want to live a life that is indestructible, one that is made of eternal stuff, one that endures God's judgment, then we must live a life of love. In the New Testament, love is mentioned as the crowning characteristic of the gospel-changed life. The Greek word used here for love (*philadelphia*) refers to brotherly and sisterly love, a love marked by deep affection as well as a commitment to be there for each other in times of need. The author gives us examples of brothers and sisters in need...

2. Love those who need a place to stay.

'Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers' (v2). In those days, Christians found themselves in new towns as much as anyone else. Whether they were travelling preachers, business people or those displaced by persecution, they needed a safe place to stay. Staying in an inn was not ideal because not only were they expensive and dangerous, but notorious for immorality. Still today, we show love by opening our homes to fellow-believers. Hospitality should invade our space and routine, coming with unexpected bonuses too – for as





we bless, so we are blessed. Think of Abraham who unwittingly opened his home to angels who brought him news of what he most wanted (Gen 18:1-22).

3. Love those who are in painful and vulnerable situations.

'Remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering' (v3). People who suffer, such as prisoners and the persecuted, tend to be forgotten. But since Christ our sympathetic high priest does not forget us, we should not forget these people. We should remember them, keeping them front of mind. More than merely thinking of them, we should use our imaginations to identify with them (*'as if you were together with them'* and *'as if you yourselves were suffering'*). Every blow they receive puts a wound on our back. This empathy will help us pray for them, and reach out in practical help.

4. Love and be faithful to your spouse.

'Marriage should be honoured by all' (v4). Marriage is a divine ordinance. As such, it should be cherished. The entire community should support the success and sacredness of marriages. One way to honour marriage is to *'keep the marriage bed pure'* by guarding against adultery (sex outside of one's marriage) and sexual immorality (a broader term which includes the idea of sex before one is married). The enemy of our souls is also the prime dishonourer of marriage – he will do all he can to encourage us to have sex outside of marriage, and to not have sex inside of marriage. Sexual impurity in God's children invites God's discipline – he will not stand by while we damage ourselves, each other, the marriage institution and the witness of our community.

5. Don't love money.

'Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have'. As a fallen culture we tend to overvalue money. Consumerism and materialism are driven along by discontent. This leads us to use people and love money, rather than use money and love people, as we should. Rather, in this verse we are exhorted to keep money in perspective. We need it to meet needs, but it should not be the driving motivation of our lives. Instead, we should seek first God's kingdom (Matt 6:33) and cultivate a sense of contentment (see Phil 4:11-13). The way to do this is to trust in God's presence, goodness, faithfulness and ever-present help. After all, he promises: *'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'* (v5).

6. Only an awareness of Christ's care for us can sustain a life of love.

On the back end of all these ways to love others, the author quotes Psalm 118:6: *'We say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"* It is as we are confident that Jesus will be there for us, that we can replace fearful talk with God-confident talk. Trusting in Christ's active care and love drives out our fear, including our fear of people. In this way, God's *'perfect love drives out all fear'* (1 John 4:18) and helps us to love others.





DAY 21-25 JOURNAL YOUR JOURNEY



After each day, flip here and write down:

- *a highlight verse or*
- *an insight you want to hold onto or*
- *something you want to apply or change in your life*

DAY 21: BATTLE AGAINST UNHOLINESS (12:14-17)

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DAY 22: A NEW COVENANT (12:18-24)

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DAY 23: NEW CITIZENSHIP (12:22-24)

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DAY 24: AN UNSHAKABLE KINGDOM (12:25-29)

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DAY 25: A LIFE OF LOVE (13:1-6)

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THINGS I AM GRATEFUL FOR OR ASKING GOD FOR THIS WEEK:

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Don't forget to pray each entry back to God, and maybe WhatsApp it to those you are sharing this journey with.





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WEEK SIX

HEBREWS 13:7-25





DAY 26 JESUS YESTERDAY, TODAY & FOREVER *(13:7-10)*



7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. 9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so. 10 We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

The writer of Hebrews carries on his final instructions. (We will come back to verse 7 again when we reach verse 17, which explores the same theme.)

JESUS IS UNCHANGING.

He is 'the same yesterday, today and forever' (v8). In the midst of his instructions, the writer comes back to one of the main themes of his letter: Jesus Christ's deity and reliability. Having just mentioned the **'word of God'** (v7) – the gospel message about Jesus that converted these people decades earlier – he now reminds them that the Jesus they originally trusted in is still, and will always be, the same.

We have the Jesus of yesterday.

See his power and wisdom, active in creation (1:2-4). Notice his kindness and authority, his meekness and courage recorded for us in the Gospels, which tell of his words, his deeds and the events of his life. Celebrate the victorious salvation achieved once and for all by his cross and resurrection. Hear of his faithfulness in the millions of his follower's testimonies over the centuries. Discern his goodness to you personally in your past. He has not changed! What he has been, he now is.

We have the Jesus of today.

The book of Hebrews highlights many things Jesus is doing this very moment. He is sustaining all things by his powerful word (1:3). He is seated at the right hand of Majesty, exalted as the Lord of the universe (1:3, 13). As our older brother, he is delighting in us as his brothers and sisters (2:11). He is helping those of us who are being tested and tempted (2:18). He is our sympathetic and faithful high priest, offering us grace and mercy in our time of need (4:15-16). He is praying for us at this very moment (7:25). He will not change. This is not momentary 'luck'. Every day of our lives, until the end of the age, this is the goodness we can expect from him.

We have the Jesus of forever.

In the opening chapter of Hebrews we read, *'The Father says about the Son, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever...'* He also says, *'Though the heavens are the work of your hands, they will perish. You will roll them up like a robe; like a*





garment they will be changed. But (Jesus) you remain the same (1:8-12). We wait for him to *'appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him'* (9:28). Then we will spend all eternity with him – his steadiness and constancy becoming more magnificent as the millennia tick on.

JESUS IS SUFFICIENT.

'It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace' (v9). This verse highlights that the strength and joy that are found in Jesus are not only always the same, but are always sufficient.

His sufficiency means we need not ever hide behind past legalistic traditions.

The first recipients of this letter were being tempted to shelter their faith within Judaism. By so doing, they would be less persecuted by the Jewish authorities. One way of visibly being more Jewish was to abide by the food laws of Moses, as well as participating in the many Jewish meals that were important within the Judaism of that time. The author is clear that we cannot camp at both the legalistic Mount Sinai and the New Covenant celebrated on Mount Zion (12:18-24). If one were to try do so, the persecution may decrease, but so will one's experience of the empowering grace that Jesus gives. Still today, in areas where Christians are minorities, we are tempted to hide our faith within non-Christian faith communities. We might tell ourselves that we will win them to Christ from within. But in reality, this achieves nothing of substance. We might avoid troubles, but we will forfeit both our witness to that community itself, as well as our joy in Christ. It is better to remove ourselves from that community, and witness to it from without.

His sufficiency means we can say no to extrabiblical teachings.

We are not to *'be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings'* (v9). Still today, Christians and churches may be tempted by 'strange' teachings. By 'strange', the author means teachings and practices that might be attractive or even popular, but foreign to what we read of in the apostle's teaching in the New Testament. More spiritual strength can be found for the troubled heart at the Throne of Grace than a thousand extrabiblical teachings or self-help books could ever give us.

What a privilege it is to feast on Jesus' sufficiency!

'We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat' (v10). The point is that life in the new covenant is superior to life in the old one. Within the ancient Jewish Holy Place, only the priests were allowed to eat the *'bread of the presence'* previously offered on the altar – the ordinary worshiper was not. And yet, 'ordinary' worshipers in Christ have the extraordinary liberty to feast on something so much greater – Jesus and his salvation. He offered his life upon the altar of the cross. We are spiritually nourished by the grace that flows from his saving sacrifice. In the words of Jesus, *'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'* (John 6:51).





DAY 27 SACRIFICES THAT PLEASE GOD (13:11-16)



11 The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. 12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. 13 Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. 14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. 15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

OTHERS MIGHT EXCLUDE US FOR OUR INCLUSION IN CHRIST.

It must have been agonizing for the Jerusalem Jewish-Christians to be told by their Jewish neighbours that no one approved of their faith in Jesus as Messiah. No one likes to not belong. The temptation would have been to publicly dress down their faith in Jesus so as to fit in with the surrounding culture. The author pleads with them not to do so, by using a striking picture... Picture the animal being sacrificed on the altar of the temple. Now the High Priest takes the blood of the animal into the Most Holy Place to secure God's forgiveness. Similarly, Jesus' blood is presented before heaven's altar (Rom 3:25). But what happens to the body of the animal? It is tossed on the rubbish dump outside the city. In the same way, though Jesus' blood achieved humankind's acceptance, making 'people holy' (v12), yet his body was crucified outside the city – a sign of his being rejected by humankind. Crucifixion was too vile a thing to be done in the city!

The writer points out that though we are wonderfully accepted by God through our faith in Jesus, yet at the same time we might need to 'bear the disgrace Jesus bore' (v13) on earth. Following Jesus might mean that we experience rejection by our surrounding culture, or a group of people we once had privileged status in. Publicly professing our faith in Jesus, we might lose some of our reputation, comforts, friends and chances of worldly success.

In all these cases, we must be willing 'to go to him outside the camp' (v13). We might lose these earthly privileges, but we gain two things: 1) We are invited to 'go to him' – to Jesus. Jesus makes himself especially close to those who endure the pain that comes from following him. 2) It leads to a greater ministry. Jesus' exclusion from Jerusalem led to his achieving blood-bought inclusion (salvation) for others. Still today, we may be pruned of earthly privileges so that we will be even more fruitful in the future (John 15:2).

WE MIGHT NOT FEEL WE BELONG IN OUR CITY, BUT OUR TRUE HOME AWAITS.

'Here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come' (v13). We might find and follow Christ in this world, but the moment we do,





we discover that our ultimate, lasting inheritance is in the world to come. When something is stripped from us here and now – loved ones, reputation, acceptance, possessions – it only intensifies our anticipation for the future, when we will live in the new Jerusalem. We can relish the thought that one day ***‘the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, (will come) down out of heaven from God’*** (Rev 21:2). Then we will never be separated from anything or anyone of value ever again. It is the land of No-More-Tears.

WE ARE PRIESTS WHO GET TO OFFER NEW KINDS OF SACRIFICES TO GOD.

In the Old Covenant the priests made offerings to God. Some of these were an expression of praise and thanks. Most of them were an offering to cover sin. Now all of us – not just 5% of the population, like in ancient Israel – get to bring offerings to God. Not to cover our sin – Jesus our High Priest has ably done that on our behalf – but to express praise and gratitude. Thankfully, we don’t need to kill animals. But we do give of ourselves, and sometimes it will be a genuine sacrifice. But we do not do so because we need to earn God’s grace, but rather because we already have it. Our grace-ravished hearts will want to extend to others some of the grace we have already received. With ***‘such sacrifices God is pleased’*** (v16).

What kinds of sacrifices do we, the New Covenant priests, make to God? The author of Hebrews mentions 3 while the apostle Paul adds 5 more.

- > **Verbally praising and thanking God.** *‘Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise’* (v15).
- > **Pointing others to Jesus.** The writer refers to the sacrifice of praise that is *‘the fruit of lips that openly profess his name’* (v15). In Romans 15:16, Paul refers to *‘the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the nations might become an offering acceptable to God’*.
- > **Being just and generous to others in need.** *‘Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God’* (v16).
- > **Yielding our whole body and life to God.** *‘Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship’* (Rom 12:1-2).
- > **Loving each other.** *‘Walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God’* (Eph 5:2).
- > **Financially underwriting the advance of God’s kingdom.** Speaking of the financial support for gospel work, Paul says it is *‘a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.’* (Phil 4:16).
- > **Encouraging the ministry of other believers.** This is described as a ‘drink offering’ (Phil 2:17) – referring to how the priests of old used to pour out a drink offering upon the sacrifice of others.
- > **Making costly personal sacrifices for the gospel,** perhaps even dying as a martyr, is a priestly offering (2 Tim 4:6-7).





DAY 28 HONOURING SPIRITUAL LEADERS *(12:1-2)*



7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. 18 Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way. 19 I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS?

Spiritual leaders should grow their commitment and capacity to do 6 things...

1. Communicate God's Word.

The leaders *'spoke the word of God'* (v7). They studied, internalized, elevated and tirelessly communicated the truths of the Bible.

2. Set an example of life and faith (v7).

Leaders are to aim at an 'outcome'. The Greek word (*ekbasis*) refers to a lasting impression. Leaders, though not being perfect, should aim at high levels of faith and faithfulness in their own lives.

3. Keep watch over those they lead (v17).

The main biblical metaphor for spiritual leadership is that of the shepherd who knows their sheep, guards them from harm, and patiently leads them into the green pasture of whole-hearted discipleship to Jesus.

4. Be accessible relationally.

The author is desperate to be reunited to this church (v19). Spiritual leaders should not be aloof, but available to the people they lead.

5. Raise up more leaders.

Verses 7,17 and 18 all refer to a plurality of leaders. A study of Exodus 18 and Acts 6 reveals that a major priority of existing leaders is to multiply themselves by developing and deploying yet more leaders.

6. Pray for their people.

In verses 20-21, which we will unpack in the next day, the author prays a rich Gospel-themed prayer for his people. The chief work of human shepherds is to usher the 'sheep' under their care towards Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, both in their ministry and in their prayers.





WHY SHOULD WE HONOUR THESE LEADERS?

- **They have guided our spiritual journey.**

The Greek word for 'spoke' (*elalesan*) indicates leaders who were no longer with them, who probably had died. Yet the impression of their words is still on those who remain. We can draw strength today from the words they spoke to us in the past.

- **They have earned their stripes.**

It seems that, according to verse 3 earlier in chapter 13, some of these leaders are in prison. In this context, they have suffered. They have had enough time to make an overall impact (or *ekbasis*) (v7). The more seasoned a person is in their faith, the more honour they deserve.

- **They have God-given responsibility.**

As church members, we have the tragic ability to increase the burden of their leadership to the point that their overall effectiveness is reduced, coming back at a cost to all of us (v17).

HOW DO WE HONOUR OUR LEADERS?

- **Remember them.**

It is not only the present leaders we have that have the capacity to bless us. It is also leaders who, in years gone by, either brought us to faith, or made a lasting impression on us.

- **Cooperate with them.**

'Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority.' (v17) Part of our respect for our leaders is not only their godliness under trial, or their effectiveness in ministry, but also the sheer fact of their God-given office. Just as much as a church needs godly leaders, it also needs godly followers. It does not matter that we might think we can do a better job of leading than they can, what matters is that God called them to lead, not us. As Judges 5:2 puts it, 'When leaders lead and followers follow, praise the Lord.'

- **Encourage them.**

We are to see to it that their work is a joy (v17). One way to do this is simply to encourage them. We often tend to forget that our leaders are not super-saints who are beyond discouragement. Rather, they are fellow-believers whose unique assignment is the spiritual leadership of people in the church. In the same way we need encouragement to persevere wholeheartedly in our assignment, so we should give them the same.

- **Pray for them.**

The author makes this point twice (v17 and 18). The tallest trees catch the most wind. The enemy targets leaders because he knows that if the shepherd is struck, so the sheep will be scattered (see Zech 10:1). Therefore, pray for the well-being, godliness, joy, wisdom, perseverance and fruitfulness of your leaders. Whatever personal and spiritual well-being is theirs, tends to flow back towards those they serve and lead.





DAY 29 PRAYER THAT EMPOWERS OBEDIENCE *(13:20-21)*



20 Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The author now pulls together most of the threads of his entire letter in this final, power-packed benediction. It is a sample of what we should pray for ourselves. Let me amplify this prayer in a way that teases out its fuller meaning. Perhaps you want to pray it over your life, or the life of another.

GOD, MAY I DO YOUR WILL WITH ALL MY HEART.

I pray that I might be so supernaturally encouraged and enabled to do so. Let me please you in all things, and in so doing, bring glory to Jesus Christ. It is not enough for me to merely believe the Gospel. Help me to believe it in such a way that it leads to the transformation of every aspect of my life – my work, my family, my finances, my sexuality, my thinking patterns, the words I speak, my way of relating to others, my way of facing trials and delays, the use of my gifts, my witness to others and my ministry in the church.

GOD, GIVE ME THE GOOD GIFTS THAT ENABLE ME TO DO YOUR WILL.

As the 4th century African church father, Augustine, used to pray, ‘Command what you will and then give what you command.’ God, you are not so cruel as to call me to a path of whole-hearted discipleship, and then leave to my own devices to walk that path alone. The writer of Hebrews teaches me that I should not emphasize my obedience as much as I emphasize the supernatural work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in me and for me, enabling my faith-filled obedience. Thank you for all these gifts - ‘everything good’ – that you give so as to make my obedience both a pleasure to me and to you.

FATHER, THANK YOU THAT YOU ARE A ‘GOD OF PEACE’.

Through the gift of your Son, you have reconciled me to yourself. You promise that in the midst of all kinds of troubles that you will give me a peace in my heart. Father, bless me, keep me, make your face shine on me, be gracious to me, turn your face toward me, and give me peace (Numbers 6:24-26).

JESUS, THANK YOU THAT YOU DIED AND ROSE AGAIN FOR ME.

You have been ‘brought back from the dead’. That same resurrection power brings a new beginning and power into my life.





JESUS, THANK YOU THAT YOU PRESENT YOUR BLOOD IN HEAVEN ON MY BEHALF.

In the heavenly sanctuary, you have secured my forgiveness and acceptance with a Holy God by presenting your blood. Now I have eternal redemption and I can have my conscience cleansed daily.

JESUS, THANK YOU THAT YOU ARE 'THE GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP'.

I have to admit that I am sheep-like. At times, I wander off the path, am foolish and weak. You are the shepherd who loves me, helping me at my point of need. Watch over my life. Guide me. Rescue me.

JESUS, THANK YOU FOR THE ETERNAL COVENANT.

You have spoken a promise of security and salvation over my life. Never will you leave me, and never will you forsake me. I am yours, and you are mine. Not on the basis of my commitment to you, but rather because of your commitment to me.

HOLY SPIRIT, RESTORE AND EQUIP ME.

Like the original receivers of the Hebrews letter, at times I am deflated and discouraged. I lose hope and perspective. I lose my nerve and conviction to keep giving you my all, and doing your work. Apply all the above-mentioned gifts to me. Fill up what is lacking in me, fortify what is broken in me, heal what is wounded in me, and fire up what is extinguished in me.

HOLY SPIRIT, THANK YOU THAT YOU LIVE AND WORK INSIDE OF ME.

Although many of these gifts – reconciliation, Jesus' shepherding, Jesus' blood, the promise of the New Covenant – are outside of me, yet the one great gift is internal – you, the Holy Spirit, have come to indwell me. So please, directly and supernaturally, in a way that I can feel in the depths of my heart, work in me. Let your indwelling and the other good gifts translate into an inner strength that replaces weakness, and an inner passion that displaces fatigue. 'Work in me' in such a way that I can spread the fame of Jesus 'to whom be glory for ever and ever'. Let the transformation of my life be so evidently rooted in the Gospel and grace of Jesus that people will not be impressed with me, but with you.





DAY 30 GRACE BE WITH YOU (13:22-25)



22 Brothers and sisters, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you quite briefly. 23 I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you. 24 Greet all your leaders and all the Lord's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings. 25 Grace be with you all.

How to end such a masterful manuscript about the rich resources we have in Christ to face all that life throws at us with faith and joyful perseverance? The author ends this masterpiece in a very personal way, including a prayer for them (v20-21), then also: a request (v22), some good news (v23), a greeting (v24) and a final summary (v25).

A REQUEST

The author urges his readers to *'bear with (his) word of exhortation, for in fact (he has) written to (them) quite briefly'* (v22). We might see this letter as having the grandeur and detail of the Sistine Chapel, but the author thinks of it as a simple 'word of exhortation.' In 3:13 and 10:25 he urged us to encourage one another so that none of us will be hardened by sin's deceitfulness – but in essence, this entire letter is the author's attempt to do just that for us. The word 'exhortation' speaks of a piece of communication that is both rational and moving. A dry intellectual study of Hebrews or any book in the Bible is a misuse of God's gift of his Word. It is something that should engage every aspect of ourselves – our intellect, emotions and will.

The author had a lot more to say. In fact he thinks of this letter as a 'brief' condensation or summary of important Gospel realities. Perhaps we should be less interested in summaries of the Bible, for the Bible is a summary already! God has given us in the Scriptures enough depth and complexity to spend 100 lifetimes mining still. He asks that we 'bear' it, giving it open-hearted and weighty attention. Hebrews was never intended by God or the author to be one more book packed onto a shelf of unread or once-read books. Rather, it is a manual we are meant to dwell in – reading (and re-reading), reflecting on, studying, praying deeper into our hearts, applying wider into our lives.

Some 200 years later, I'm sure it would delight the author of Hebrews greatly that you have just taken 30 days to delve deeply into some of his work. Perhaps you want to give this booklet to another, or come back to it in the future for another round of prayerful reading.

SOME GOOD NEWS

Twice the author had mentioned Christian leaders in prison (10:32-34 and 13:3) – Timothy was one of them. He was a mutual friend of the author and the church.





Timothy was a trainee and co-worker of the apostle Paul. He has two letters written to him in the New Testament. Paul, himself in prison and just before he was martyred, had warned him of the perils of ministry into such a hostile context. Apparently, after Paul's death, Timothy was incarcerated. The great news (v23) is, firstly, that Timothy has been released. Secondly, the author, along with Timothy, is hoping to visit them. There's so much packed into verse 23: 1) Relationships must be prioritized in God's kingdom. The church is built on relationships – strengthened by both written correspondence (like the Hebrews letter) as well as quality time together. 2) Leaders are to set an example of suffering well for the churches they lead. 3) Though God allows martyrdom, he sometimes answers our prayers by ending seasons of suffering, like he did for Timothy. Ours is to ask; God's wisdom is to answer how he sees fit.

A GREETING

The author sends a greeting to all their 'leaders and all the Lord's people'. There are two counter-balancing principles here: 1) Leaders are of some importance in the life of the church. After all, this is the third mention of 'leaders' in the same chapter (see v7 and 17). 2) Leaders are not mediators between Scripture and the church. The author does not write to leaders, but to the entire church. The Reformation of the 1500s had, at its heart, getting Scripture back into the hands of the people, where they could read it for themselves. God's Word is meant for all of God's people. What a privilege for all of us to read it in our language and every day.

The author writes, *'Those from Italy send you their greetings'*. Not only Timothy, but a group of people from Italy, were mutual friends of both the author and the recipients. Again, we note that every effort to build relationships within and between local churches is important. Every strengthened relational bond becomes a bridge of kingdom-advancing possibility.

A FINAL SUMMARY

'Grace be with you all' (v25). What better way to pull together all the loose threads in the letter to the Hebrews than with this final benediction. Grace is arguably the greatest word in the Scriptures, even greater than 'love'.

Grace is God's love in action. It emphasizes that whatever we receive from God through his Son is neither deserved by our good deeds, nor negated by our bad deeds. God's grace is the love, kindness and favour that pours over into our lives through the fountainhead of both the past work of Jesus our Sacrifice on the cross, as well as the present tense work of Jesus our Shepherd and High Priest. This grace is not only the source of our now-and-forever salvation, but also the source of our hope in times of closed doors, joy in sorrow, patience in ordeal, victory amidst resistance, tenderness of heart in setbacks, and final triumph when we breathe our last. By grace, we will one day pass with Jesus into the very throne room of grace – that same place we have accessed all these months, years, decades before – by prayer and faith in the blood of Christ.





DAY 26-30 JOURNAL YOUR JOURNEY



After each day, flip here and write down:

- *a highlight verse or*
- *an insight you want to hold onto or*
- *something you want to apply or change in your life*

DAY 26: JESUS YESTERDAY, TODAY & FOREVER (13:7-10)

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DAY 27: SACRIFICES THAT PLEASE GOD (13:11-16)

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DAY 28: HONOURING SPIRITUAL LEADERS (13:7,17-18)

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DAY 29: THE PRAYER THAT EMPOWERS OBEDIENCE (13:20-21)

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DAY 30: GRACE BE WITH YOU (13:22-25)

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THINGS I AM GRATEFUL FOR OR ASKING GOD FOR THIS WEEK:

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Don't forget to pray each entry back to God, and maybe WhatsApp it to those you are sharing this journey with.





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CREDITS

Terran Williams, a pastor of Common Ground Church (www.commonground.co.za), wrote this book.

The biblical text used is the New International Version: 2011.

OTHER THAN THE BOOKS MENTIONED ABOVE, TERRAN DREW MOST OF HIS INSIGHTS FROM SEVERAL BOOKS:

- Bruce, FF. The Epistle to the Hebrews: New International Commentary on the New Testament. 1990.
- Eaton, M. Preaching Through The Bible: Hebrews. 2009. Sovereign World Trust, UK.
- ESV Study Bible. 2001. Good News Publishers. 2001
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- Wiersbe, W. Be Confident: Life by Faith Not By Sight. 1982. David C Cook, East Sussex, England

This book was created in 2018 as part of a sermon series through Hebrews. It was provided as an aid in daily devotions for all Common Grounders. If you would like copies, contact info@commongroundchurch.co.za.

