



The Summit
Green Campus of Canton Baptist Temple

Resources for Your Life

The Book of Hebrews
28 Sessions

www.thesummitgreen.com
tomhogsed@gmail.com

Resource Guide

This resource was compiled from the personal Bible study and blog entries created by Tom Hogsed, pastor of the Summit in Green. You can find the original blog entries at www.tomhogsed.com.

The **introduction** to this book has been written so the reader has a better understanding of the Biblical author, his purpose in writing, and important points to understand before reading.

Following the introduction, each new page represents a **verse by verse overview** of the Scripture passage. The best way to study is to first read the Scripture verses from your Bible relying on the Holy Spirit to provide understanding and then to support your understanding with the commentary written below.

At the end of each Scripture commentary, there is a short **prayer** written so the reader can personally apply what has been discovered; however, it is suggested that you also pray from your heart in response to God's Word.

Feel free to make your own personal notes in your Bible, on this page, or even in a journal.

If this resource has helped you or you have further questions, please send an e-mail to tomhogsed@gmail.com.

Introduction to Hebrews

Written by an unknown author and written to unknown group of the people, the book of Hebrews may seem like a challenge to understand; however, from the content of the book we are able to derive many things about its purpose. We must not also forget that, ultimately, the Holy Spirit is the author. During the time of this writing the Levitical priesthood and the Old Testament sacrificial system were still in place. Since the temple was destroyed in AD70 and there is mention of Timothy being released from prison (13:23) as well as believers experiencing persecution (10:32-39), we must assume that Hebrews was written prior to that time so it is estimated between AD67-69. It is clear that the author was seeking to prove the superiority of Jesus Christ and Christianity over Moses' law and Judaism. The author of Hebrews also brings out the fact that all believers have direct access to God and therefore have no need for a priest to make sacrifices for them (Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-25). As far as the recipient of Hebrews, we can safely assume he was writing to three specific groups of people: believers, unbelievers who only believed with their intellect, and unbelievers who did not know what they thought about Jesus Christ. The writer wanted the believers to let go of their traditions and system of Judaism in order to embrace the finished work of Jesus Christ, while warning those who still did not believe the truth about Jesus Christ. Hebrews is a book whose purpose is to show that Jesus Christ is better than any other thing that attempts to connect us with God.

Dear God, give me understanding as I read the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:1-3

Remembering that the theme of Hebrews is "Jesus Christ is better than..." the writer begins by establishing the authority of Jesus over all things and His rightful position to be seated next to God the Father. We must also keep in mind that Jesus was the perfect revelation of God and His life was meant to be a complete representation of what God is really like. In past times, God revealed Himself through Old Testament prophets (1:1). There are 39 books in the Old Testament and each one is meant to uncover God's plan to redeem mankind while giving special insight as to how God interacts with man. However, in current times God revealed Himself by sending His only Son, Jesus Christ, and the Father has given Him absolute rulership over the universe (1:2). Through the power of His words, Jesus controls the world and He has been given this position because He "purged our sins" and "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." The author of Hebrews is trying to help the reader understand that the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ caused Him to be a fuller witness to God than the former prophets and therefore they should listen to Him. He did not want his readers to ignore the witness of the Old Testament prophets, but rather see that Jesus had provided a fuller understanding of God and His forgiveness of sin. It is amazing how God loves us so much that He is continually interested in making Himself real to us! In the past He revealed Himself through prophets and then He sent Jesus (God in human flesh) so that we could know Him personally!

Dear God, thank You for sending many ways to reveal Yourself to us, but thank You most of all for sending Your Son, Jesus, to save us from our sin and make a relationship with You possible!

Hebrews 1:4-14

Angels were created by God to help and lend assistance whenever God needed them and many Jews held them in high esteem. In fact, there was a Jewish community which apparently viewed angels as just below God and viewed the Messiah (Jesus Christ) as a little lower than the angels. Although Jesus did set aside some of His authority while on earth, He never ceased to be God and after His work (death and resurrection) was completed He was brought to a higher place of exaltation (Philippians 2:9-11). The author of Hebrews wanted his readers to know that Jesus Christ was better than the angels (1:4). Quoting from Old Testament passages, the author goes on to identify the unique relationship between God the Father and God the Son (1:5) and that angels actually will worship Him (1:6) as well as serve Him (1:7). The writer continues to establish Jesus' position by reminding the reader of His future kingdom and rulership during His millennial reign (1:8-9). Even though Jesus created the earth (1:10), He will one day destroy it, but He will remain unchanged (1:11). This is the writer's way of reminding us that Jesus is truly God (1:12). Ultimately, angels only serve and minister while Jesus will one day reign making Him better than the angels (1:13-14).

Dear God, You are truly higher than the angels and may I worship You alone!

Hebrews 2:1-4

In light of the previous verses where the writer is building a case for Jesus Christ being better than the angels (1:4-14), he now informs the reader about the implications of that truth. Because Jesus is better than and superior to the angels, we must pay special attention to the things we have heard through Him (doctrines and teachings of the faith). Failure to believe the foundations of truth will result in a "drifting away." It seems that the intended audience of Hebrews was prone to spiritual apathy so the author gave a warning to hold onto the things that they knew to be true (2:1). Returning to the subject of angels the author was very aware that their ministry was real and very important. The angels accompanied and assisted God in numerous missions which validated their work; furthermore, Galatians 3:19 tells us the angels were involved in bringing the law to the people. The purpose of the law was to expose sin and obviously the angels played a role in this monumental task. Jesus Christ brought a new covenant and provided assurance of eternal life through His death, burial, and resurrection; however, those who reject Jesus' gift will also receive condemnation. Verse 3 says it like this: "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation...." In essence the author of Hebrews is saying that Jesus, who delivered salvation, is greater than those who delivered the law (the angels) and those who reject His witness will experience punishment. God also proved that Jesus' message of hope was true through signs and wonders (2:4). The advice is very clear - believe in the truth of Jesus Christ and do not neglect the gift of salvation because His witness is greater than that of the angels!

Dear God, allow me to hold true to the foundations of truth and may those around me not neglect the message of salvation given through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 2:5-9

We have already learned that there were certain people during the time of this writing who felt that angels were greater than Jesus Christ (Messiah). In fact, it seems this group believed that angels would rule during the future millennial kingdom; however, the writer quickly refuted this belief declaring that the "world to come" would not be in "subjection to angels" (2:5). Quoting from Psalm 8 the writer reveals that mankind will have dominion during this time rather than angels (2:6-8). The Psalmist asks why God is concerned about man and why He takes care of him. He goes on to say that man has been made a little lower than the angels, but will (in the millennial kingdom) be "crowned with glory and honor" and will be "set over the work of His hands." Although we wonder why God would even bother with us since we continually disobey Him, God's love surpasses our understanding. God was even willing to send Jesus Christ in human flesh to identify with man and ultimately die to pay the punishment for sin. The writer of Hebrews is quick to say that currently all things are not subject to man, but Jesus was "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor" so that "He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." Even though Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for a time, His death brought life upon all those who would believe, repenting of sin and receiving God's grace (2:9). Now, Jesus Christ has been given a position of authority and all things are under His rule.

Dear God, thank You for loving mankind so much that You were willing to taste death for me.

Hebrews 2:10-18

Since man would be ruling in the future millennial kingdom, Jesus Christ was seeking to prepare them for this time; however, first He had to identify with them redeeming them from the penalty of sin (2:10-11). Although Jesus was humiliated and suffered on the cross, God knew that it was necessary in order for redemption to take place and ultimately for man to be glorified in the kingdom. The writer of Hebrews wanted his readers to know that Jesus had done everything to understand how they felt and to pay the price for their sin. Using Psalm 22:2, the writer informed the believers that Jesus now called them brethren indicating that they were His brothers and sisters (2:12-13). Through Jesus' sufferings on the cross He was able "to destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." The writer goes on to say that Jesus' death released "those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Simply put...Jesus' death paid the penalty that man owed, which was death and slavery to sin. Jesus took the punishment for man's sin so that mankind could experience a relationship with God through the work of Jesus Christ. Jesus' sufferings and death brought help to man (2:16) proving that He is merciful and faithful (2:17). In aiding man, Jesus subjected Himself to temptation but never gave into enticement, although now He knows how it feels to be tempted. To me, it means a lot that Jesus was tempted and knows how it feels to be enticed to do evil. Even though He never sinned, He can relate with the pressure we face when confronted with temptation. He is a God who is concerned about man and loves him so much that He desired to put Himself in his place.

Dear God, I know You resisted evil while here on earth. Please provide me with the strength I need to resist evil the way You did.

Hebrews 3:1-6

Having spent the first two chapters speaking of Jesus' superiority over the angels, the writer now presents Jesus as better than Moses. Moses was highly respected by the Jews and was definitely worthy of honor; after all, it was Moses who led God's people out of Egyptian bondage to the land God had promised to give them. Moses was chosen by God and sent to the Hebrew people in order to accomplish a mission from God...to rescue them from Egypt. Moses was an apostle, one who was sent with the authority from God; however, Jesus was also an apostle sent by God to save men from their sin. However, the writer is quick to say that Jesus Christ "has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses." Jesus is better than Moses. Why? Moses was a part of the house while Jesus built the house. I realize that does not make much sense so let me explain. The term *house* is referring to a family rather than a structure and implies that Moses was a part of God's family, but Jesus Christ was actually the creator or builder of that household. In Ephesians 2:19-22 Paul says that the church (not a building but people) was built upon the word of God which was delivered by the apostles and prophets; however, Jesus Christ was the chief cornerstone making Him the foundation of the building...without Him the building would crumble. Much in the same way, Moses was a part of God's household, but Jesus Christ was the foundation making Him equal with God. The writer was not diminishing what Moses had done. Moses was faithful as an apostle of God, but His message pointed to Jesus Christ, who would come in the future (3:5). Since Christ is the creator of the household, we can know we are a part of that house "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." The writer is not referencing salvation, but the proof that we have it. As Moses and Jesus Christ were faithful, we also will be faithful to the end. This does not mean that we become perfect, but that we strive to be faithful to Jesus Christ and His commandments.

Dear God, make me faithful to You alone.

Hebrews 3:7-19

Jesus was a faithful and perfect witness who brought grace upon mankind through His sacrifice on the cross. The writer had just challenged his readers in 3:1-6 to believe the witness of Jesus Christ and now he warns them in 3:7-19 of the consequences of unbelief. These verses are filled with urgency and the necessity of guarding against rebellion. Using an Old Testament example of the Israelites, the writer offers up the reasons for their 40 year wilderness wanderings...failure to believe in God. The people of God had just been miraculously delivered from Egyptian bondage, yet they left Egypt and hardened their hearts against God. Although God spoke to the people through Moses, they continued to ignore his voice and complained. God had promised to bring them into the land of Canaan and give them rest from their enemies, but they chose to rebel against God and many would never enter the Promised Land. In the wilderness God had given miracle after miracle to prove His love and faithfulness to them, but they turned their back on Him. Because of their unbelief God was angry at that generation (3:10-11). The author of Hebrews immediately turns his attention to his readers and warns them not to be like the Israelites who continually witnessed God's work, but did not have faith in Him (3:12). Instead, the writer told them that accountability (exhort one another) and abstinence from sin would keep their hearts right before God (3:13). Those who died in the wilderness did so because of unbelief (3:19); therefore, we also must believe God will do what is right and best. The message is clear - guard your heart against unbelief.

Dear God, protect from heart from unbelief and remind me, through reading Your word, what You have done and continue to do in my life.

Hebrews 4:1-10

After warning his readers of the consequences of unbelief, the writer begins to unfold God's promise of rest to those who have faith. What is the promise? According to verse 1, the promise is "entering His rest," which includes peace with God, salvation, and a future hope of heaven. Being secure in a relationship with God brings rest and deliverance from insecurity. The writer of Hebrews urges his readers to carefully examine their heart and discover their true spiritual condition. There seemed to be those amongst his readership who intellectually accepted the message of Jesus Christ, but failed to believe with their heart (4:2). The writer returns to the Jews who were miraculously delivered from Egypt, but God's message did not impact them because it was not "mixed with faith." James states very clearly that "faith without works is dead." When genuine faith in God's message is believed there will be visual proof and life change...a person cannot stay the same when they trust in the work of Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews also compares the rest which God gives to those who are His to the seven day creation where He rested on the seventh day (4:4-5) - He worked six days and rested on the seventh. Entering God's rest is still open. His rest was available during the time of Moses and was still available during David's lifetime (4:6-7), but it continues to be open to us. There is a sense of urgency here and the writer desires those who are reading to enter into God's rest and leave their life of rebellion and disobedience. Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land, but ultimately the rest which was offered was not just a physical rest but a spiritual one (4:8). One day there will be a spiritual rest for God's people and all their works will cease as they find true rest in God (4:10).

Dear God, thank You for the rest offered to everyone who will by faith believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ. I look forward to the final resting place in heaven where true rest will then be realized!

Hebrews 4:11-13

In Hebrews 4:4 the author states that God worked six days on creation and then rested on the seventh. The reason God rested on the seventh day was because He had finished the work which He set out to complete. Since we are to follow after God, we also must work until the task at hand is completed. Our task is still not complete and will not be until we possess eternal life. We are called to do God's will during our lifetime and continue in it. The writer of Hebrews challenges us to "be diligent" so that we do not settle into a life of disobedience (4:11). He reminds his readers that God's word is the tool which exposes that which is good and that which is bad. The word of God is "living and powerful" meaning that it is relevant across all generations - the examples the writer had shared from the Old Testament were applicable to the life of the reader today. God's word is also "sharper than any two-edged sword" implying that it is an instrument of judgment; furthermore, the word of God is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" which means it can expose good and evil within the human heart. God's word is supernatural (since it comes from God) and possesses the ability to expose who we really are. In fact, Hebrews 4:13 declares that "no creature is hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." The standard we must live by is the word of God because it is the avenue by which God has revealed Himself and given us His will. Don't ignore the word of God! The word has the ability to expose sinful areas in our life, but also fill us with the power to overcome temptation. Make God's word a significant part of your life and allow it to discern your heart.

Dear God, as I read Your word may I accept it as powerful and relevant in my daily life. As I discover Your will through Your word, help me to change!

Hebrews 4:14-16

Even though the word of God discovers the true condition of our heart (4:11-13), the writer of Hebrews shares these verses so we do not feel like we have no where to turn. For those who have trusted in Jesus Christ, He has become their High Priest. In the Old Testament the high priest would go through the outer court, Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies once a year in order to make an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people. Although this sacrifice did not forgive sin, it symbolized death which was required for the forgiveness of sin. The writer says that much like the high priest, Jesus came through the heavens to become our High Priest. Distinct from the animal sacrifice which was made once a year, Jesus Christ was the once for all sacrifice which brought forgiveness of sin. Paul in Romans 5:19 says it like this: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Adam's sin brought sin, but through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ many are made righteous. What are the results of having Jesus Christ as our High Priest? The writer mentions a few benefits. First, Jesus understands how we feel when tempted to sin. He can identify with the struggle a person goes through when they are faced with the choice of good and evil. Although Jesus Christ never gave in to temptation, He knows what we experience. Another benefit to having Jesus as High Priest is that we can come into His presence at any time. The Old Testament priest only came before God once a year, but we can personally run into God's presence at any time. The writer tells us to "come boldly to the throne of grace." The last benefit he mentions is we can "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Because we have been forgiven from sin, God freely provides grace to those who are being tempted or to those who simply need strength for the road ahead. What an amazing thought!

Dear God, help me to experience Your strength as I face the trials and temptations each day!

Hebrews 5:1-14

The priesthood followed certain requirements - not just anyone could be a high priest. The writer details some of those conditions and then reveals how Jesus Christ was the ultimate High Priest. Verse 1 indicates that high priests are taken from men in order to do things which pertain to God. The high priest is able to "have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness." Because he is subject to weakness and sin, the sacrifices he offers for the sins of the people pertain to him also (5:3); in other words, the high priest is not perfect and needs the sacrifice along with his people. The high priesthood is not a ministry which he chooses, but one appointed to him by God; in fact, God the Father called Jesus Christ to become the High Priest for all mankind (5:4-5). Being a man, Jesus Christ was able to sympathize with the temptations man experienced, but being God He was able to become "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." Men obey God initially when they repent of their sins and believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to take away sin; however, obedience is continually demonstrated in the life of a believer through following God's ways (5:9). The writer was worried about his readers' spiritual understanding in matters of the priesthood and even referred to them as "dull of hearing." The readers had received plenty of revelation from God such as the Old Testament scriptures, Jesus Christ, and the instruction of the apostles, but they failed to put it into practice. The author of Hebrews challenges his readers to move from spiritual immaturity to "have their senses exercised to discern good and evil." Our spiritual life was not meant to stagnate, but to grow and flourish. How is your spiritual maturity today? Are you a hearer but not a doer?

Dear God, may I not be just a hearer of Your word, but one who would respond and obey what I have learned.

Hebrews 6:1-8

There is great danger in remaining spiritually immature and the writer of Hebrews wanted to warn his readers; furthermore, he challenged them to become spiritually mature in their faith, reject dead works, and embrace Jesus Christ (6:1). It appears that the readers also had great misunderstandings about numerous issues, especially those which found their basis (faith) in Old Testament rituals (6:2). God was the only one who would be able to assist them in their spiritual maturity if they would only believe the revelation which He had already given (6:3). Verse 4 begins a highly debated passage of scripture which many people use to support the loss of salvation to those who walk away from their faith. I want to say that I reject this view because salvation is eternal (John 10:27-29) and the passage seems to indicate that if you can lose salvation, you can never get it back ("impossible...to renew them again to repentance"). This view presents salvation as something that has to do more with the individual than the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. My view of Hebrews 6:4-8 is that the writer is speaking to readers who had "experienced" the glories of salvation, but only gave intellectual belief to it's facts instead of also believing with the heart (leads to life change). The words *enlightened*, *tasted*, and *partakers* do not mean that this group of people had experienced salvation; these words indicate that they had been connected with people who were truly saved and as a result experienced by observation. Ultimately the writer was saying that those who reject the finished work of Jesus Christ have no chance of ever being saved from their sin (6:6). Verses 7-8 illustrate the two responses to the Gospel: those who believe with their heart grow (v.7) and those who reject it will experience eternal judgment (v.8).

Dear God, help those who are Yours to experience true life change through the power of Your Holy Spirit!

Hebrews 6:9-19

It appears that the writer of Hebrews changes audiences. In the preceding verses he was speaking to people who had rejected the revelation from Jesus Christ and warns them of the consequences if they failed to fully trust in Him. Now he calls the readers "beloved" which implies that this group of people he was now speaking to were genuine believers. Compared to the last group of people he desires "better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation." Instead of a message of warning, the author provides words of encouragement for them to continue to grow in their faith. He begins by saying that God will not "forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Although every Christian is tempted to become apathetic, the writer of Hebrews challenges them to "not become sluggish but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." At times the Christian life becomes tiresome and we may be tempted to give up or slow down, but we should continue on realizing that all the benefits of salvation will be discovered in the future (6:12). God made a promise to Abraham that He would make of Him a great nation and although he went through many trials, God was faithful and fulfilled that which He had promised (6:13-15). As God had promised to make from Abraham a great nation, God has promised hope to those who have placed their faith in Him. We may experience trials and hardship, but God is faithful. This hope should encourage us to continue and not give up!

Dear God, I don't want to give up even though things can become difficult. Help me to rely on You for strength and remember You are faithful to fulfill Your promise of hope and deliverance.

Hebrews 7:1-10

For the next couple days we will be examining Melchizedek who was the king of Salem as well as a priest in Jerusalem during the time of Abraham (see Genesis 14:18-20). His name meant king of righteousness and peace, but there are very little particulars known about his life (biographical and genealogical); in fact, Hebrews 7:3 says that he is "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God...." Some have said that Melchizedek was Christ Himself but upon further examination it seems that he was made to be *like* the Son of God. In keeping with the theme the writer of Hebrews has been addressing, it is better to examine this passage in relationship to the priesthood. The comparisons between the priesthood of Melchizedek and Jesus Christ are very evident: they were both kingly (7:1), righteous (7:2), peaceful (7:2), and without end (7:3). The writer was actually getting ready to prove how that the Melchizedekan priesthood was better than the Levitical (sons of Aaron) priesthood. In these verses, two reasons stand out for its superiority. First, Abraham (father of the Hebrew nation) paid tithes to Melchizedek proving that Abraham was subordinate (7:4-6a, 8-10). Secondly, Melchizedek blessed Abraham (7:6b-7). We'll continue more on this topic tomorrow.

Dear God, give me understanding of this passage.

Hebrews 7:11-19

Having already stated in Hebrews 7:1-10 that the Melchizedekan priesthood was better than the Levitical priesthood, the writer now focuses on showing that Jesus' priesthood was also greater (since He followed the Melchizedekan priesthood). It is very apparent that the Levitical priesthood could not save anyone, even though people received the law under it. Verse 11 states that if the Levitical priesthood was perfect, there would be no need of another priesthood. Remember, the Levitical priesthood offered animal sacrifices once a year for the sins of the people and was only symbolic of the perfect sacrifice to come; this system did not bring salvation but only an easing of the guilt over sin. Jesus Christ, being from the tribe of Judah, could not be priest according to the Levitical priesthood; however, He brought a new priesthood which did away with the law given by God to Moses (7:12-14). The law was never able to erase sin, but only expose it, so there was a need for a new law. The writer of Hebrews was letting his readers know that a new covenant had come and Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the old law, yet He was also the new Priest who offered the perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Jesus Christ has become the new High Priest and has established a priesthood which is eternal (7:17). Furthermore, the Old Testament law has been annulled and Jesus Christ has brought about a "better hope, through which we draw near to God." The Old Testament law kept people at a distance because of their sinfulness; however, through the perfect blood sacrifice, those who have drawn near in faith are able to enter the presence of God (7:18-19). God has enabled man to come into His presence at any time because of the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Dear God, I am so thankful that You have given us complete access to You because of Your Son, Jesus Christ. May I run to You during times of need in order to receive mercy and grace!

Hebrews 7:20-28

Having declared the need for a new priesthood, the writer of Hebrews presents Jesus Christ as the eternal Priest who perfectly fulfilled the demands of the law. Because of this, Jesus was greater than man-appointed high priests who entered the Holy of Holies once a year to offer an animal sacrifice for the sins of the people. Jesus followed the order of the Mechizedekan priesthood therefore making Him an eternal Priest (7:20-21). Verse 22 declares that "Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant" which means He guarantees this covenant will work. Again, this new covenant rests on the basis of Jesus Christ becoming a man, living a perfect life, and being the sinless sacrifice needed to pay the penalty for the sin of man. Old Testament priests continually offered animal sacrifices because they were temporary, but the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross was "once for all" (7:27) so there was no need for priests to continue their work on behalf of the people. The sacrifice offered by Jesus is "able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (7:27). The writer of Hebrews is emphatically stating that salvation only comes to those who approach God through the finished work of Jesus Christ because He is the One who is able to "make intercession." To make intercession means that Jesus Christ, the Righteous, is able to come to God on our behalf. Our sin keeps us from God; however, if we have accepted the righteousness of Jesus Christ, then we are able to come to God on the basis of His righteousness. This fact makes Jesus Christ a superior High Priest.

Dear God, my heart is humbled before You as I think about how Jesus freely gave Himself on my behalf. Thank You for making Him a once for all sacrifice which enabled me to have a relationship with You.

Hebrews 8:1-13

The writer wants to summarize many of the thoughts he has been sharing with his readers so he draws their attention to what he calls the "main point." Verses 1-5 reveal this message to be that Jesus Christ is the greatest High Priest and is superior to any Old Testament system. The Old Testament law (given in Exodus and Leviticus) was only a foreshadowing of what would be completely fulfilled through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In brief, the Old Testament law called for animal sacrifices which represented the need for death to satisfy the punishment for sin; however, this law could never remove sin. The writer has already revealed a need for a perfect High Priest as well as a perfect sacrifice which would erase sin and those needs were met through Jesus Christ. Now, He has become the "Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises," meaning He goes before God on behalf of man (8:6). Man can only approach God on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If the Old covenant (Old Testament sacrificial system) would have been perfect there would be no need for a new one (8:7); however, since it was not, God established a new one (8:8-12). This covenant will be "in their minds" and written "on their hearts." The old covenant was largely outward but this new covenant would be inward. God was establishing Himself as a personal God who would dwell in the hearts of man and "be their God" and they would become His people (8:10). Along with this everyone would know Him, from small to great, and He would be "merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds." With the introduction of the new covenant, the old one would cease and the Levitical system would be "obsolete." We truly have a God who is personal and desires more than anything to have an intimate relationship with us. If we come to Him through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, He will forgive sin and provide mercy to those who are in need.

Dear God, thank You for being my God. Help me to know You more.

Hebrews 9:1-10

The writer again returns to the inability of the old sacrificial system to bring salvation to those who were a part of it. In verses 1-10 a description of the Old Testament, earthly tabernacle is given in brief. In verse 2 the writer describes the Holy Place, which was the first room in the tabernacle. This room contained things such as the lampstand, showbread, as well as the table for the showbread (see Exodus 25:23-40 for more description of these items). Verse 3 describes what was behind the veil which divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This room contained the golden censer (which was actually right outside the Holy of Holies) but actually was the separating line before one entered this sacred place. Behind the veil in the tabernacle was the ark of the covenant, which contained a golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod, and the tablets of the covenant (10 commandments). Moving from a description of the tabernacle, the writer now explains the purpose of the tabernacle. The priest would go into the first part and perform priestly services, but he would only enter the Holy of Holies once a year (v.7). The priest would enter this place alone and always with blood, which "he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance." Remember, the tabernacle did not provide any personal worship of God for the people because it kept them at a distance from Him; in fact, the Holy Spirit indicated that the way into the Holy of Holies had not been revealed at the time of the tabernacle (v.8). However, it was symbolic of what was to come in the future and anything done in the tabernacle was imperfect and ultimately pointed to a future fulfillment (vv.9-10). The writer calls this fulfillment a "time of reformation" which refers to restoring of something that is imperfect. We'll continue on this thought tomorrow.

Dear God, continue to provide understanding for these verses.

Hebrews 9:11-28

In contrast to the Old Testament, earthly tabernacle with a sinful priest, the writer now reveals that Jesus Christ is the High Priest of "good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands." Furthermore, this tabernacle does not depend on "the blood of goats and calves," but through the blood of Christ "He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Jesus accomplished what the Old Covenant could not...He shed His blood as a sacrifice for the sin of mankind and because He satisfied the demands of the law (perfection, holiness), He was able to remove sin "once for all." The death of Jesus was the perfect sacrifice and therefore annulled any further sacrifices being made by human priests. His sacrifice brought eternal redemption to those who would accept it. Redemption carries the idea of a slave being purchased in order to give him freedom. The blood of Jesus Christ purchased our freedom from the consequences of sin; in other words, the penalty for sin was death but Jesus died in our place (9:12-15). It is very clear that the writer of Hebrews is saying that "without shedding of blood there is no remission," meaning there is no forgiveness without death (9:16-22). Making His home in heaven (9:23), Jesus now appears before God on our behalf (9:24) and through His sacrifice He forgives sin (9:25-26) and will one day return for those who are awaiting Him (9:27-28).

Dear God, I again thank You for the sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Without His death there would be no forgiveness of sin and I thank You for giving everyone an opportunity to receive His "once for all" sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:1-18

As already stated, animal sacrifices of the Old Testament law were offered by the High Priest once a year but never made those approaching perfect. In fact, that system was only temporary and was designed as a reminder of sin, not to eradicate it. Verse 4 tells us that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin." So why was the system necessary? Verse 1 gives us the reason - the law was "a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things." The death and shedding of an animal's blood only pictures the perfect sacrifice which was to come - Jesus Christ. Jesus came to do the will of God to do away with the Old Covenant and establish the New Covenant. By doing God's will, Jesus Christ sanctified (made holy) those who would accept and believe in His perfect sacrifice for sin (10:10). Being made holy means that the believer is set apart from sin to God. This righteousness is positional which implies that when God looks upon the believer, He does so through the righteousness given by His Son, Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews goes on to say that after Jesus had offered Himself as a sacrifice, He "sat down at the right hand of God...waiting till His enemies are made His footstool." Most importantly, His sacrifice has now given those who believe a right standing before God, which could never be done on our own (10:14-18).

Dear God, I thank You that I can now approach You through the righteousness given to me by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:19-39

As mentioned in Hebrews 10:1-18, Jesus Christ is the perfect sacrifice for sin and on the basis of His death, the writer instructs his readers to have "boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus." All those who believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ now have direct access to the presence of God (10:19-20). The writer also invites those who have not believed to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" and then to respond by holding "fast the confession of our hope without wavering, because He who promised is faithful." Drawing near to God always results in love, good works, and joining with others to worship (10:24-25). In essence, the writer of Hebrews is calling them to abandon the Levitical system of worship and embrace the perfect sacrifice found in Jesus Christ; however, this choice would probably result in some form of persecution. So, for them to forsake the Old Testament system meant that they were committing to faith in Jesus Christ. For those who would reject this new covenant (death of Jesus Christ for our sin), there would be "judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries." Their rejection of God would also mean that they had "trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the spirit of grace." God will judge those who reject salvation through His Son and "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Instead of returning to the Levitical system of worship, the writer challenges those Hebrews who had not made up their mind about Jesus to recall what they knew about Him and accept His sacrifice. Although they may be persecuted for rejecting the Levitical system, they would have a "better and enduring possession ...in heaven" (10:34). The writer reminded the Hebrews that Christ would return soon (10:37) and expected them to live by faith. God justifies (declares righteous) those who accept the sacrifice of Jesus through faith. When a person has true faith, it will be demonstrated in their actions. Genuine faith cannot be destroyed! The chapter concludes with the writer encouraging those who have believed to remain faithful.

Dear God, as I have received salvation through faith, help me to continually demonstrate it through my attitudes and actions!

Hebrews 11:1-3

This is a good time to refresh our memories about the purpose and theme of the book of Hebrews...the death of Jesus Christ has forever done away with the Old Testament system of worship (Judaism) and established Him as the perfect sacrifice for sin; therefore, there is no need to continue in this system of works. Many of the Jews believed in the system rather than in the One to whom the law was symbolizing. The writer wanted to remind his readers that salvation was never a result of works but always a product of faith. This brings us to the word *faith*, which is defined by the writer as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Simply put, the writer says that faith is the belief or full assurance of a future reality. Throughout the Bible, men and women have had to trust the promises of God and all of this started with God telling Adam and Eve that He would send someone to deliver them from their sin (Genesis 3:15) and destroy the works of the devil. Although Adam and Eve (as well as many Old Testament saints) did not have the details of how God would make sinners righteous, they trusted that God would keep His promises to do so - this is faith! Faith leads the believer to then act on His faith by entrusting his every decision to God, whom he knows will keep His promises. This is so relevant to the Christian today because we experience many trials and disappointments, but we rest in the fact that heaven (eternity) will more than compensate for the hardships we face on earth.

Dear God, thank You for the hope I have in You and the present will pale in comparison to what You have in store for us.

Hebrews 11:4-40

Hebrews 11 has become known as the list of the great Heroes of the Faith from the Old Testament. Each one mentioned is an example of someone who lived their life by faith; however, it is also important to point out that these people were not perfect. We must stop here and acknowledge that God, in His grace, has chosen to use broken and sinful people to accomplish His will. By saying this I am not trying to cloud their witness, but I want to emphasize the grace of God in the lives of those who have faith in God and live by faith. Instead of examining each person, I want to provide a brief overview of what the writer of Hebrews wanted his readers to understand. The list of these Old Testament saints provides us examples of people who trusted God and acted upon that faith. Their works did not bring righteousness; however, their faith in God evidenced itself in works. Verse 6 says that "without faith it is impossible to please Him" meaning a person must approach God in faith believing "that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." This is not a simple belief in the existence of God, but a faith which evidences itself through righteous actions. As you read the names and a brief description of what each person did, remember that they did not have confidence in themselves, but in the power of God. The same must be true for us. If we have faith in God through His Son, Jesus, we will act in accordance to His Word. Is your faith reflected in your actions?

Dear God, help me to demonstrate my faith through my actions because of my trust in You.

Hebrews 12:1-2

We must understand the next two verses in conjunction with Hebrews 11. In the preceding verses, the writer has listed many names of Old Testament saints who believed in the promises of God and evidenced genuine faith in His power. Through each example, the writer of Hebrews is displaying a model of faith for the reader and challenging them to also live a life of faith. Hebrews 12:1 begins with *therefore* which urges the reader to look back at these great examples of faith, but it also requires a response about knowing this to be true. We are "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" who are not spectators, but rather examples to be followed. Our response should be in three ways. First, we must "lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us." Keep in mind that the writer is speaking to Hebrews who had not really made up their mind about Christ and had not yet come to salvation. So, when he tells them to "lay aside every weight" he is referring to the Levitical system of worship. He goes on say that they should also lay aside the "sin which easily ensnares." I don't believe the writer is referencing one particular sin, but the ultimate sin, unbelief. In context with the book of Hebrews, unbelief is specifically a failure to acknowledge and trust in Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice for sin. Secondly, the author tells his readers to "run with endurance the race that is set before us." After they would come to faith in Christ, the writer desires them not to quit. The race is symbolic of life and we should persevere through trials and temptations. Last, the writer challenges the Hebrews to look to "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Jesus Christ was to be the focus of their faith. Being the author of faith, He perfectly exemplifies it. Being the finisher, He will make sure it is brought to completion. Is Jesus Christ the object of your faith today? If He is, have you been enduring the difficult journey of life by faith?

Dear God, help me to endure the race through faith in You.

Hebrews 12:3-11

As the people mentioned in Hebrews 11 had become examples of those who had lived lives of faith, we should also be challenged by their lives of obedience and follow in their footsteps (12:1-3). Although living a life of faith would possibly bring persecution and trials, the writer of Hebrews calls believers to remember the example of Jesus Christ, who went all the way to the cross (12:3-5) and suffered the ultimate persecution - death. The writer of Hebrews reminds his readers that they had not yet experienced death, so they should continue being faithful to God and His ways. Trials and persecution have a way of teaching believers and guiding them in the right direction, so he urges believers to "not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him" because "whom the Lord loves He chastens." Some of the Hebrews were being persecuted because they had rejected the Levitical system of worship, but they were not to lose heart! Trials are not just a result of doing right, they are sometimes a result of sin and we are encouraged to "endure chastening" because "God deals with you as sons." Earthly fathers discipline their children and we still respect them (12:9a), so how much more should we respect God when He disciplines us (12:9b). God's discipline in our life is "for our profit" so that "we may be partakers of His holiness." Although experiencing God's discipline is never joyful, it results in a righteous life (12:10-11a). The writer desired that his readers would respond to God's discipline with the right heart attitude because it would ultimately lead to a righteous life. We must regularly examine our life and respond to any discipline we are experiencing knowing that the right response (submission to God) will lead to holiness!

Dear God, provide the strength I need to endure trials and discipline so that I can live a life of faith and holiness.

Hebrews 12:12-29

Returning to the illustration of a race (12:1-30), the writer challenges the believers to "strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed." Although many of his readers had experienced persecution and trials from not following the Levitical system of worship (Judaism), he knew that they could endure and finish the race (12:12). He knew they could do it! As they are running this race, they must "pursue peace with all people, and holiness" because through their examples unbelievers will see the characteristics by which Christians live their lives (12:14). Believers must be careful about the way they live their lives because others are watching. In verses 15-17 the writer of Hebrews specifically addresses those readers who still have not made a heart commitment to Jesus Christ by warning them about continuing hardness the grows in a heart when a person continually rejects the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sin. He points to Esau (see Genesis 25:29-34; 27:1-39) who wanted God's blessing, but did not want God Himself. Although Esau cried out for the blessing, he was rejected because of the hardness of his heart (12:16-17). Verses 18-29 provide another illustration of those who have exposure to the truth of God, but reject Him with their heart. As Moses was about to be given the law on Mt. Sinai, the people experienced the presence of God beginning with thunderings and lightnings as He was welcomed in with a blasting of a trumpet. The people feared and trembled (Exodus 19:16-19) at His presence, but now the Hebrews were being given the opportunity to approach God through the perfect blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There was no need to fear being in the presence of God based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross which permanently removed sin. The writer of Hebrews warns his readers not to be like Esau or the nation of Israel, but rather turn to Jesus Christ and avoid the punishment on those who reject His sacrifice. In these verses the author of Hebrews addresses two groups of people. First, he challenges the believers to endure trials and persecution; however, he invites those who have not made up their mind about Jesus Christ to strongly consider Him as the only sacrifice for sin!

Dear God, help me to endure trials and also pray for those who need to decide to follow You.

Hebrews 13

This letter ends with a very practical section, which expresses how genuine faith will work itself out in daily life. After having spent most of the letter explaining the superiority of Jesus Christ to the Levitical system of worship and also providing examples of those who walked in faith, the writer of Hebrews provides some specific characteristics of those who truly believe. He begins by challenging his readers to "let brotherly love continue." In John 13:35, Jesus said that the identifying mark of someone who follows Him is that they have love for one another. Along with this thought, the writer urges them to "entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." Not only were they supposed to love those who were fellow believers, but also those who were still in their unbelief (13:2). Believers should "remember the prisoners" which represents those who were suffering persecution for their faith (13:3). Another mark of a believer is their view of marriage and any sexual activity outside of marriage would be judged...Christians were to keep themselves pure from sexual sin (13:4). Verses 5-6 instruct the follower of Christ to abstain from seeking after material things, but rather be satisfied in the presence of God, who will "never leave you nor forsake you." The writer also turns to some religious directions (13:7-17) to go along with the moral direction he has already given them in Hebrews 13:1-6. First, he reminds them to respect church leaders who rule, speak the Word of God, and provide a faithful example (13:7). Secondly, believers should closely guard the teachings of Scripture so they will not "be carried about with various and strange doctrines." The false doctrine that the writer was referring to were specifically those who followed the Levitical system of worship. This system was no longer needed because Jesus Christ had provided grace through His death on the cross (13:8-16). Lastly, the readers are instructed to "obey those who rule over you, and be submissive." The writer then closes his letter asking his readers to pray (13:18-19) and also with a blessing that the "God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight."

Dear God, help me to live a life of faith!