**Hebrews**

**“Christ the Champion”**

1. **Chp. 1:1 – 4:13 A Better Person**
2. **Chp. 1:1-3 Regal Revealer**
3. **Chp. 1:4 – 2:18 Above Angels**
4. **1:4-14 Superior Son**
5. **2:1-4 *First warning of rejecting the salvation through the Son***
6. **2:5-18 Superior Sacrifice**
7. **Chp. 3:1 – 4:13 Mightier Than Moses**
8. **3:1-4 Builder verses boards**
9. **3:5-6 Son verses servant**
10. **3:7 – 4:13 *Second warning of rejecting a mightier mediator***
11. **3:7-19 Danger of hardening the heart**
12. **4:1-13 Remembering to enter His rest**
13. **Chp. 4:14 – 10:18 A Better Performance**
14. **4:14 – 5:10 Holier High Priest**
15. **4:14-16 Better position**
16. **5:1-10 Better possession**
* **5:1-4 Aaronic priesthood**
* **5:5-10 Melchizedekian priesthood**
1. **5:11 – 6:20 *Third warning of rejecting spiritual maturity***
2. **7:1-28 Higher High Priest**
3. **7:1-10 History and height of Melchizedekian priesthood**
4. **7:11-19 Imperfection of Aaronic priesthood**
5. **7:20-28 A personal High Priest**
6. **8:1 – 10:18 Heavenly High Priest**
7. **8:1-13 Christ’s Covenant**
8. **9:1 – 10-18 Sanctified Sacrifice**
9. **Chp. 10:19 – 13:25 A Better Practice**
10. **10:19-25 Furthering Faith**
11. **10:26-39 *Fourth warning of forgetting faith***
12. **11:1-40 Family of Faith**
13. **11:1-3 Facts of Faith**
14. **11:4-40 Fine examples of Faith**
* **11:4-7 Three examples of prepatriarchal faith**
* **11:8-22 Examples of patriarchal faith**
* **11:23-40 Examples of post patriarchal faith**
1. **12:1-29 Finishing Faith**
2. **12:1-3 Jesus’ example of endurance**
3. **12:4-11 Explaining endurance**
4. **12:12-17 Exhortation for endurance**
5. **12:18-24 Exceeding endurance**
6. **12:25-29 *Fifth warning against escaping endurance***
7. **13:1-17 Faith that Functions**
8. **13:1-6 Loving people**
9. **13:7-17 Loving the church**
10. **13:18-25 Final Farewell**

**Hebrews**

**“Christ the Champion”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Introduction**

We come now to the introduction of a new study in the book known simply as ***To Hebrews***. It is never an easy task as far as a student to start a new study. There are specific steps that must be followed that enable the student to properly investigate the book. These steps include knowing:

* The type of literature
* The author
* The original readers
* The location and time of writing among many other things.

All of these play an important role in determining the context of the passage under investigation. Then there is the time consuming exercise of dividing the book into sections which will enable a further detailed study. In the case of Hebrews with it’s 13 chapters, (*the 3rd longest letter in the New Testament behind Romans and 1 Corinthians*), no easy task. Further complicating our investigation into this amazing book is that though it is a letter the common elements of ancient letter writing were not followed. This letter has no introduction with which most letters started with. The introduction of the letter is where we normally learn of who the author is as well as who the original readers were. Second there is no clear “statement of purpose” where the student would discover the clear reason for writing. What we do have is only two aspects of a normal New Testament letter:

* 1:1 – 13:17 A body of teaching that starts immediately in chapter one verse one and continues all the way through chapter 13 verse 17
* 13:18-25 A closing where the writer asks for prayer from his readers mentions a common acquaintance (Timothy) and mentions a greeting from fellow believers in Italy.

What this means is that our examination lacks the normal elements which help give us the context.

**Authorship**

The first example of this is in determining the writer. Since the writer doesn’t choose to introduce himself we are left with only historical and internal evidence which is vague at best. Further more because the author is uncertain, we are also left with uncertainty with regards to:

* Where it was written
* When it was written
* Whom it was written

This has led some to question the book of Hebrews placement in the New Testament but it must be noted that this book had the full support of early church fathers such as Clement of Rome. It wasn’t accepted in the West until the 4th century when it received the full support of both Jerome and Augustine. But the Eastern Church had no such issues because it regarded the book as the 14th letter from Paul. The issue of it’s acceptance again came up during the reformation where it over came its anonymity and passed the test of inspiration due to its quality and spiritual depth. An examination of this letter reveals that this letter was NOT anonymous to its original readers: The author asks prayer from the readers in 13:18, indicates that he is looking forward to being “restored” to them soon. They also shared a mutual friend in Timothy (13:23) as well as those in Italy. Yet with those clues the question as too authorship still remains, largely being divided between Paul, Luke or Barnabas. The internal evidence is less than conclusive, as some aspects of the style, language and theology are very similar to Paul as well as the author’s mention of Timothy who was Paul son in the faith. But there are significant differences as well: The lack of Paul’s common salutation which included his name in the 13 letters he wrote church’s and individuals. The Greek style in Hebrews is far more refined than found in Paul’s known letters. In Paul’s other letters he was far more insistent upon being an apostle of Jesus and hearing from the Lord directly. Where as in Hebrews the author states that Jesus was confirmed by those who heard Him. Paul in his other writings would quote the Old Testament scriptures using both the Hebrew text as well as the Greek translation of the Hebrew text but in Hebrews only the Greek translation is quoted which suggests that the author only knew the Greek translation. All of this suggests that the author was greatly influenced by Paul but most likely wasn’t written by him. One of the possible answers to authorship is an ancient reference from Clement of Alexandria 150 – 215 AD where he says that the Letter to the Hebrews was written by Paul but that it was written for Hebrews in the Hebrew language and that Luke carefully translated it for the Greeks and that it purposefully didn’t bare the name of Paul as the writer as the original in Hebrew was absent these normal markings due to the prejudice and suspicions held by the Jews against Paul.

**Location, Time and Original Readers**

Like the authorship many destinations have been suggested as the locality of the original readers. But none can be determined absolutely! Some suggest Jerusalem but this location has been all but eliminated by most scholars due to internal and external evidence. The other popular locations are Antioch, Alexandria and Rome, all of which had substantial Jewish populations that had come to recognize Jesus as their messiah. Rome is by far the most popular location by scholars as the salutation in 13:24 makes it obvious that the writer was in company with certain Italian believers who were sending their greetings back to Rome. What we can determine in this letter about the original readers of this letter is that they were believers (3:1) who had come to Christ through those who were eyewitness of Jesus. According to chapter 5 verse 12 they were not “new believers” but were stunted in their maturity. According to chapter 10 verses 32-34 they had gone through great trials because of their faith as well as their association with the writer who was in chains. Yet with that said that had become dull of hearing 5:11 and in danger of drifting away 2:1 and departing from the Living God 3:12. The author feared that renewed persecution would further their decline 12:4-12 and were in need of exhortation 13:22. We can reasonably guess the date of the letter by examining the other evidence as Hebrews is quoted by Clement of Rome in A.D. 95, further more the fact that there is no mention of the ending of the sacrificial system which occurred in A.D. 70 when the temple was destroyed indicates that the letter was written prior to its destruction. Timothy was still alive, persecution was mounting and the Jewish system of sacrifice was seen as ending all point to a date around 64-68 A.D.

**Reason For Writing**

Among the many challenges that Jewish believers faced that Hebrews addresses is:

1. How is Jesus to be understood in relation to the teachings of many Old Testament passages, especially the New Covenant spoken of by Jeremiah?
2. How were these Jewish believers to interpret their religious and cultural expression practiced by their fathers in their new realization of Jesus as their Messiah?
3. How were they to understand their persecution from their fellow Jewish brethren and avoid the temptation of abandoning their new faith in Jesus as Messiah?
4. How are they to understand the old practices of sacrifices in light of the sacrifice of Christ?
5. How were they to engage with gentile believers who didn’t share their culture or former religious practice?

These are the questions that come up in this letter but behind it is the practical question of: ***What can the author do to encourage specifically Jewish believers to live like what they say they believe***? They had like so many professing believers today began to “*drift away*” from their faith. They had lost the sense of relevancy of their faith to everyday life and had begun to go back to the outward religious performance of their formal religious expression. They faced doubts both from alternative philosophies and increased persecution that made abandoning their profession and practice of their faith in Jesus easy to succumb too. The cost of faith in Christ was just too much and with their Jewish brethren advancing this agenda some had begun to doubt the message of eyewitness testimony and began to think that the truths about Jesus were an elaborate hoax in which they had been deliberately deceived.

 To these pressures that they Jewish believers faced the writer without apology stressed Jesus Christ as the answer to their doubts and fears. There is no book in the New Testament that better presents the availability and adequacy of Jesus then the book of Hebrews. Jesus alone is our champion who is incomparable to any person or religion in setting men free as well as granting them unrestricted access to the Living God. The author achieves this by contrasting Jesus against what these Jewish believers were tempted to going back too. Thirteen times In Hebrews the author uses the word “better” to show the superiority of Jesus Christ to what they were tempted to returning too. Jesus is better than angels, He offers a better hope because He is a mediator of a better covenant established by better promises. Another word the author repeatedly uses to express Jesus superiority is the use of the word “perfect” which he uses 14 times. Here the contrast is between what could never be accomplished by their former religious observance but can be accomplish by Jesus “Perfect” work! The third word the author uses us the word “eternal” where the author seeks to show the permanent of the work of Christ when compared to the temporary work that they were being tempted to return too. Yet with those three words emphasizing the superiority of Christ five times throughout this letter the author issues warnings about rejecting the truth once and forever delivered to the saints. In each of these warning these are admonished to heed God’s word!

**Hebrews 1:1-3**

**“The Final Word”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1 Progressive revelation**
3. **Vs. 2-3 Seven superiorities of Jesus’ revelation**
4. **Introduction**

For the sake of examination, I divided the book of Hebrews into three sections. I choose to use one of the author’s favorite words “BETTER”.

1. From chapter 1 verse 1, through chapter 4 verse 13 the focus is upon Jesus being a “**BETTER PERSON**”. The first way in which Jesus proved Himself a “BETTER PERSON” is in the area of communication between the Godhead and His creation.
2. The second division of the book of Hebrews starts at chapter 4 verse 14 and runs through chapter 10 verse 18 where the author delivers upon another area of Jesus superiority as He offers a “**BETTER PERFORMANCE**” as our High Priest.
3. In the last division of this book I believe that the author reveals to his readers one last area where Jesus is better than any thing or anyone that came before Him and that is Jesus in chapter 10 verse 19 through chapter 13 verse 25 offers a “**BETTER PRACTICE**” in which we can place our faith in.

The very first book of the Bible and its very first verse starts with God’s communication to His creation saying, “*In the beginning God*…” Here in Hebrews the author wastes no time in this letter with an introduction whereby he would have made himself known to his readers. Instead the author is consumed with a much larger picture to write about; the “***Creators heart and desire to make Himself known to His creation***”. One of the primary aspects about God as our creator is that He was not content with merely creating all that exists out of nothing, instead His very nature is to reveal Himself to His creation. **The author of Hebrews in the first three verses of chapter 1 shows Seven Superiorities of Jesus as communicator above the prophets of the First Testament or Hebrew Scriptures.** That is not to say that the First Testament isn’t inspired but that God’s way of communication through the prophets had limitations when compared with His communication with His creation through His Son.

1. **Vs. 1 Progressive revelation**

Vs. 1 The statement from the author is simple and blunt: The creator has always been interested in communicating with His creation and the word of God shows that it is a cornerstone of His nature. It is important to make the distinction between “***revelation***” and “***discovery***” as they are opposite. **REVELATION**, is God who is making himself known where as **DISCOVERY**, is dependent upon mankind to discover God. Up first for the author in verse 1 is to speak on how the Creator spoke through the prophets and the limitations of this form of communication. Such a challenge should not be lost upon us as we have all experienced the difficulty of getting our information across to others. We all realize that there are various roadblocks to communication such as a person’s age, culture, education.

 First thing we are told is that the initiator of this communication was GOD, it was the creator who initiated the communication to His creation and not His creation trying to communicate to the creator. I find it interesting in light of organizations like SETI whose purpose is stated as a; “***Scientific search for intelligent extraterrestrial life as they monitor electromagnetic radiation for signs of transmissions from civilizations on other worlds***.” Here is a bunch of very smart people spending every day listening to white noise hoping to hear something that indicates ***intelligent extraterrestrial life*** when all they needed to do is open their bibles and read about the Most Intelligent Life there is who is trying to see if there is any intelligent life left of the planet He created. Next we are told that God spoke at “***various times***” and in “***various ways***”. The Greek is far more exacting than the English as the author’s point is not that God spoke, but that it was at at “***various times***” and in “***various ways***”. The author is NOT combating the denial of divine revelation, instead he is preparing the reader that **God has now through Jesus given His final word in revealing Himself**. This twofold statement is a comparison of the limitations of how God spoke in times past in the “First Testament”:

1. “***Various times***”: The word is a compound word made up of two words “*many*” and “*parts or portions*”. ***The point of the author is that God didn’t speak all at once, but in separate revelations each of which set forth only a part of His will***. One writer of the first testament was given a revelation, and another was given another element of truth about the Creator at another time.
2. “***Various ways***”: This word is also a compound word that means “many” and “manners or ways”. This doesn’t refer to different ways in which God imparted truth to the writers of the first testament, but to various revelations in content and form. ***In the first testament God didn’t choose to communicate once for all but only giving one writer some information and then another writer further information***. He spoke to Moses one way and time them Isaiah at another way and time etc. It is also obvious to those that examine the scriptures that at the beginning of God’s revelation that what He presented to the writers of the first testament was more basic and as time went on what He gave other writers was a more developed revelation.

The first testament revelation was “***progressive***” in nature as no one writer could understand or write about the revelation of God at once. The revelation was given many parts as well as many different types or modes: To one writer it was given as a law, to another it was given as history, another it was a poem, another a typology or parable and still another a prophecy. To the people of the 1st testament the God’s communication was like listing to a grandfather clock as they had to wait tell the chime at the hour and the rest of the time was waiting till the sound was heard.

 The phrase “*in times past*” is also a compound word made up of “times” and “past” these two words are very similar:

1. “**Times**”: “Old in the point of TIME”
2. “**Past**”: “*Old in the point of USE*” Meaning,worn out, ready to be replaced by something *new*”.

The close association of these two words suggests that the writer wanted to convey that the first testament was not to be cast aside but that it was time for a new revelation to be given, on that would be God’s final word and complete the first one.

Next the author says “*God having spoken, spoke*” and by ***this word links the two revelations the 1st and the new***. God did this “*to the fathers or Israel*” by the prophets. John the Baptist confirms this, being the last of these who in John 1:23 said that was, “*A voice of One who is crying out in the wilderness*.” The Greek has that as John was one of many voices which God had used in the 1st testament.

1. **Vs. 2-3 Seven superiorities of Jesus’ revelation**

Vs. 2 The phrase “*in these last days*” again links the times in which God had spoke in the past through the prophets to the end of those times because He is now speaking through His Son. The fact that it said “**THE** *prophets*” set them off in a class by themselves but notice that the author **doesn’t** say “**THE** *Son*” which means that ***the author is drawing the distinction NOT on CLASS but upon CHARACTER and NATURE***. ***Jesus stands at the end of the future as he is also at the beginning of the past, for he is the creator of the worlds.*** So here is the **Seven Superiorities of Jesus as communicator above the prophets of the First Testament or Hebrew Scriptures**:

* Vs. 2 “***Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son***”: The **FIRST WAY** in which Jesus is superior to the first testament prophets: **They were “*mouthpieces of God*”; Jesus the Son is God communicating to His creation**. The revelation God has given us through His Son is not superior merely in WHAT HE said but Who He is! The revelation is superior in PERSONALITY! A revelation made by the only One who in all He said and did revealed the Father. The Son as God, expressed all that God is, Jesus said in John 14:9 “*He that has seen Me has seen the Father*.” Or in John opening statement in his gospel John 1:1 “*On the beginning was the word* (LOGOS), *and the word* (LOGOS) *was with God, and the word* (LOGOS) *was God*.” This is why Jesus is the final revelation to His creation.
* Vs. 2 “***Whom He has appointed heir of all things***”: The author quickly moves into the **SECOND WAY** Jesus is superior: ***The prophets were part of the inheritance but the Son inherits all things***. The dominion promised to Adam was lost due to sin the prophets didn’t regain what Adam lost but Jesus through His incarnation, death and resurrection has alone regained what was lost. **This makes Jesus better than the prophets as they could only communicate truth where as Jesus PERFORMED what He communicated**.
* Vs. 2 “***Through whom also He made the worlds***”: The **THIRD WAY** **Jesus is superior is that He created all things and is the One that operates and manages all things**. The use of the word “*through*” in the Greek speaks of the fact that Jesus is the creator but not just a mere instrument or passive tool in creation. Further more the Greek speaks of the fact that in Jesus all the laws and purposes which guided creation resided in Him. The word “*worlds*” includes all elements such as time and space as well as matter. What this suggests is that all things exist under these but these operate under Him and are a part of His on going and unfolding plan. The Son is not only the divine agent of all of creation but the sustainer of the continual operation of all the creation.
* Vs. 3 “***Who being the brightness of His glory***”: The **FOURTH WAY** **Jesus is superior is that He shares the same glory of the Father and as such is co-eternal and co-existent processing the same glory not merely reflecting it like a moon does the sun**. None of the prophets came any where close to this. The Greek construct of the word “brightness” is best summed up in the authors statement in Hebrews 12:29 where he writes “*Our God is a consuming fire*”. One Greek scholar summed it up by saying that this word states that “*The Son of God is, in His essential majesty, the expression and sole expression of divine light*.” The Greek word for “*glory*” speaks of the collective divine attributes. This is different than Paul’s words in Philippians 2:6 where Paul says that Jesus, “*being in the* **FORM** *God*..” as the word there is immediate and speaks of the personal divine essence in His inmost being. Here the idea is that the glory is attached to His deity!
* Vs. 3 “***And the express image of His Person***”: The **FIFTH WAY**, **Jesus is superior to the prophets is that He is the exact impression of the Person and character of God. The prophets are clearly not**! The writer was not content with speaking only of the glory of God as it relates to Jesus but now moves to the character of God. The word “*express image*” in the Greek was used of an engraver who made a stamp of coins. Metaphorically it revered to a “*distinctive mark*” and was used in classical Greek of a “***person’s personal features***”. “*Of His Person*” in the Greek is a compound word made up of “*under*” and “to stand” or “*that which stands under*”! The idea is that of a foundation that God placed in His Son as a distinctive stamp of attributes and characteristics that bear His exact image.
* Vs. 3 “***And upholding all things by the word of His power***”: The **SIXTH WAY** **Jesus is better than the prophets is that He not only carries the weight of all of the creation, He maintains its coherence and development of it. Which of the prophets could make that claim**? The idea here is not like the Greeks Atlas who sustained the dead weight of the world. Instead the idea is that Jesus sustains the movement of all of creation with all of its changes and transformation through out time. Paul wrote of this in Colossians 1:17 where he said of Jesus that, “*In Him all things* **CONSIST**.” Jesus holds all things together in their proper relationship to each other by His power, He alone is the BOUND in all of creation every where! He alone is the sustainer and maintainer of all of creation, holding it all together by His word.
* Vs. 3 “***When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high***.”: The **SEVENTH WAY Jesus is superior is that He alone shed His own blood of the cross to put away our sin and no prophet could ever do that**. The author has so far focused upon Jesus superiority in creation the final area is a look at His ability in re-creation! The words “When He had purged our sins” in the Greek indicate that He did so acting in His own interest and offering Himself which is what the author continues to insist in chapter 10 verse 12. Sin could only be eradicated by His blood, the bloods of bulls and goats only pointed towards the only cure of the LAMB OF GOD. Sin established its self through Adam’s disobedience and could only be cured by Jesus obedience. Our salvation through Jesus blood breaks the penalty and power of sin through our trust in Jesus. And when we leave this body, we will forever lose our old sin nature and in our glorified body only have His divine nature. The Greek has this as a once-for-all act and the fact that He has “*sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*” indicates that Jesus work if for ever finished where as the Levitical work was never finished.

God did speak in times past in many ways:

* The palmist wrote: Ps 19:1 “*The heavens declare the glory of God*”
* Paul wrote in Romans 1:19 that, “*What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them*.”
* The angels have many times declared as Luke 2:10 records “*I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.*”
* The prophet’s countless times spoke of His glory as in Isaiah 6:3 where we read, “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory*.” He spoke to Moses in a storm and thunder and to Elijah in a still small voice.

**Yet in none of these ways**: ***Creation above, conscience within, angels from on high or prophets in our midst was the message ever complete***. Only in Jesus have do we as John 1:14 declares that we “*beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*.” ***Jesus is God’s final word to humanity, there is nothing more to be said, there is nothing more unsaid, it has all been said in Jesus***!

**Hebrews 1:4-14**

**“Better than angels”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 4-5 Better name**
3. **Vs. 6 The One worshipped**
4. **Vs. 7-9 Better nature**
5. **Vs. 10-12 Superior existence**
6. **Vs. 13-14 Greater destiny**
7. **Introduction**

The author established a sevenfold superiority of Jesus over the prophets with regards to a communicator of a ***completed revelation*** instead of a ***progressive revelation***. Now he focuses upon Jesus superiority over the angels. The abruptness of verse 4 when the author had been just discussing the prophets would cause most of us English readers confusion. “*Why does the author now bring up a comparison between Jesus and the angels*.” The subject matter has been God’s direct desire to communicate with His creation whom we are told has done so at “various times” and “various **WAY’S**”. The author clearly established the perfection of Jesus as the Son of God as being greater than the imperfection of mere men, the prophets. But the author knows his readers and presupposes a question these Jewish believers would have asked, “*What about God’s use of angelic beings to make himself known to His creation in the 1st testament*?” There are 13 such examples in the First Testament where God revealed Himself in or through angelic form to Israel, without becoming the Son of God, which the author’s readers would have been aware of. (Gen. 18:2-15, 16:7-14, 19:1-22, 28:10-12, Ex. 3:1, Num. 22:31-55, Josh. 5:13-15, Jud. 2:1-4, 6:11-24, 13:6-21, 2 Sam. 24:16, Dan. 6:21, Zech. 2:3) So what we now see is that to the author “**The FOCUS of the subject HAS changed** (***prophets to angels***) **while the subject has NOT** (***Jesus’ superiority as God’s final revelation***)!” The comparison in these next verses is that God no longer accommodated the limitations of mankind with the use of angels because of His Son’s incarnation. The connection between these two sections is still the author showing that superiority of the New Testament revelation from the 1st Testament revelation and this time because the Son is superior to angels. To do this **the author will quote seven 1st testament scriptures that point to Jesus superiority.**

1. **Vs. 4-5 Better name**

Vs. 4 *The author starts off by saying that Jesus had “become so much better than angels*..”: At issue for the writer is the exact time in which Jesus showed Himself to mankind as greater than angels. The writer is not denying that Jesus has always been better than angels He is talking about when mankind recognized this as John says in 1:14 “*We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*..” The answer as to when this occurred is the very next words*, “As He by* ***INHERITANCE*** *obtained a more excellent name than they*.” Jesus showed himself much better than the angels after his death burial and resurrection where He sat down at the right hand of the Father.

Vs. 5 Staying on this theme the writer of Hebrews asks and answers a rhetorical question, “*For to which of the angels did He ever say: You are Mt Son, today I have begotten You*.” The **first quotation** is from **Psalm 2:7**. The word “Son” in the Greek is in the emphatic position which is far different than how the angels as they were sometimes referred to as the “***sons of God***”. In the case of angels this terms “sons of God” is collective as a group where as when applied to Jesus “Son of God” unique and individually, as the words “You are MY SON” implies. The word “BEGOTTEN” in the Greek dies not refer to either Jesus’ eternal generation for the Father or His incarnation in time when He became the Son of Man. Instead this phrase is in the context of the psalm of celebration when Solomon was ascending the throne of his father David. So the “begotten you” has to do with Jesus as the perfect King of Kings. It’s Jesus coronation that was begotten not His physical presence. The writer’s point is NOT Jesus entrance into LIFE but His entrance to His office as King of Kings. The reminder to the readers is “*What angel ever ascended to the throne of God*”? Jesus has a greater relationship with the Father than do angels and “blood is always thicker than water!” C.S. Lewis points out that, “*When we make something with our hands it is always something different than what we are. But when we have children though our bodies they are always dearer to us than what we have made with our hands because they are a part of us*.” ***The angels were made; the Son was begotten and what we beget always has the same nature we have***.

 The **second quote** in verse 5 is from **2 Sam 7:14** and again is placed into the context of Solomon. But when you look at the history of Solomon the kingdom will become divided where as Jesus’ kingdom is eternal. The writer leaves out a part of this scripture applying only the words “*I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son*.” This was never said of the angels as they were sons of God be creation and Jesus is the Son of God three unique ways:

* By eternal generation: Always has been always will be
* By His incarnation: The only perfect sacrifice to take away the sin of man
* By His relationship as Messiah at His resurrection. Showing that His sacrifice was accepted

This is how Jesus inherited a better name than the angels.

1. **Vs. 6 The One worshipped**

Vs. 6 ***The third quotation*** is from **Deut 32:43 and Psalm 96:7.** The phrase “*But when He again brings the firstborn into the world*..” reveals that the writer is speaking of Jesus Second coming and the Greek has it occurring at an indefinite time in the future, but viewed as completed. The word “firstborn” in the Greek speaks of Jesus priority and sovereignty over all creation. The author is speaking of a future time when all the angels will worship Him as Messiah. The return of Jesus to the earth to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords will be accompanied by a host of angels. Second Thessalonians 1:7 says that “*When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels*..” We are told in 1 peter 1:12 these are some of the things the angels desire to look into. The argument that the writer is making is that **Jesus is greater than the angels by the demonstration of their worship of Him**. ***We only worship that which is superior to us.*** ***The worship of the angels at Bethlehem is testimony to the deity of the babe in the manger.*** John Bunyan said, "*If Jesus Christ be not God, then heaven will be filled with idolaters*." Revelation and Daniel, give us a glimpse into the heavenly realms where, ***we see ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels engaged in worshipping the Son***.

1. **Vs. 7-9 Better nature**

Vs. 7 The **fourth quotation** is from **Psalm 104:4** the word “spirits” is the word winds and the emphasis is upon the variableness of the angelic nature. What are angels? Servants and ministers, depicted by wind and fire. In our daily life wind and fire are two elements which are more than man can handle at times as we can’t always control them, yet they can be made to be servants of men. These symbolize the angels, superior in being to men, yet servants of men. The point of the writer is to contrast what the angels are to Who Jesus is. They are fitted to their character to special service and as such they are changeable compared to Jesus who is their ruler and unchangeable. Jesus is the creator and Master of the angels, superior to them un every way and as such as the final word better then the 1st testament that the angels were used to make God known.

Vs. 8-9 The **fifth quotation** is from **Psalm 45:6-7** and the twice repeated word “righteousness” in verses 8 and 9 are actually two different words in the Greek: In verse 8 the word means “uprightness” where the second word means that which conforms to the standard of God’s Holy character. The word “anointed” in verse 9 is always used of the Holy Spirit and this quotation is referring to the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon Him for the three-fold office as prophet, priest and king which took place at Jesus’ baptism. The point the writer is making is that Jesus is the ORGINATOR of all things He is the Lord of all including the angels as He is their Lord and they are His servants.

1. **Vs. 10-12 Superior existence**

Vs. 10-12 The **sixth quote** is from Psalm 102:25-27 and is used in support of the unchangeable nature, eternal power and majesty of Jesus is best seen in the fact that He is the one who laid the foundations of the earth and fashioned the heavens. ***Christ is not only the originator, but the sustainer of the universe, the one behind all things, eternally keeping it going until at last it runs down***. Here in verse 11 described very plainly is what has been called The Second Law of Thermodynamics, the degenerative faculty in the universe. All things will grow old like a garment, but not the one who made them and keeps them, i.e., the Son. The word “THEY” in the Greek refers back not to the earth but the heavens which perish as compared to Jesus who we are told is permanent which is what Jesus had said in Matthew 24:35 where He said, “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away*.” The angels being a part of the Son’s creation are subject to change as are the heavens and the earth but Jesus is the Creator and as such as the writer will say in chapter 13:8 is the “*same yesterday, today and forever*.”

1. **Vs. 13-14 Greater destiny**

Vs. 13 The **seventh quote** is from **Psalm 110:1** and these words were spoken to a Son never to an angel. Jesus is the One who waits at the end of history, the One for whom all things exist, and toward whom all things are moving, the heir of all things. All things find their purpose and meaning only as they relate to him. The word “sit” in the Greek is a word that means “be sitting” and describes a permanent place. Sitting permanently at the Fathers right hand speaks of royal dignity and position. Now mere created angel could ever sit at the right hand of the Father.

Vs. 14 The author comes back to the purpose and work of angels as servants to do the work of Jesus as He sends them at His will. Jesus is the co-ruler with the Father and angels are His servants appointed to minister to the heirs of redemption.

 Next week we take up the warning to these same Jewish believers who had made of profession of faith in Jesus, left the temple sacrifices and embraced Jesus as the Great High Priest that if they renounced this profession and returned back to the sacrifices they were in grave danger.

**Hebrews 2:1-4**

**“Unescapable Reality”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-2 Cause and effect**
3. **Vs. 3-4 The great New Testament**
4. **Introduction**

Having made the argument that Jesus’ final revelation is superior to the prophets and angels progressive revelation; the author issues **the first of five warning against rejection such a revelation**. The cause of rejection according to chapter 10 verse 25 was sever persecution from their Jewish country men which had gotten so strong that they were forsaking the assembling together of followers of Christ. This exhortation to ***NOT*** “***drift away***” is a particular strong warning as this was Adam’s sin who was so careless and indifferent towards the command of God, that He rejected the divine revelation for a lie of satan which is what caused this mess to begin with. Christ not only OFFERS a stronger word than the prophets, and has a higher name than the angels, but, in these next four verses: **He is a surer word than the Law which means we must adhere to it’s truths above the First Testament**.

1. **Vs. 1-2 Cause and effect**

Vs. 1 Therefore, we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. The phrase “*drift away*” in the Greek means to “*flow alongside*” and was used of ***a ring slipping off a finger***. The idea is best understood in Proverbs 4:20-21 where Solomon writes, “*My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart.*” These Hebrew believers were to “*give the more earnest heed*” because the Son is better than the prophets and of angels. Their country men had given heed to the First Testament which had been brought forth by prophets and angels but now a better and final revelation had been brought forth and they were willing to abandon it for the first. The premise of the writer’s argument is: ***If rejection of the the First Testament truth was punished (which is the point of verse 2) how much more will there be judgment for rejecting the New Testament truth which was presented by Jesus***?

As a side note there are three clues and two small words here in this text that points to the identity of the original author.

1. The first is the use of the word “**WE**”; three times; twice in verse 1 and once in verse 3. Since this letter is written to Jews the “***we***” is an indication that the author was himself a Jew.
2. The second clue is in verse three and is the word “**US**” and is used specifically in reference too the apostles, which would tell us that the author was an apostle.
3. Finally, the authors heartache for those who will not heed the word of God identifies him as a teacher of God’s word. ***There is nothing more heartbreaking to a teacher of God’s Word than people who week after week are exposed to God’s truth that will change their lives, but it has no effect upon them simply because they do not pay attention***.

This convinces me that the writer of this letter, was **Jewish**, a **Teacher** and an **Apostle**. All of this reminds me of what Jesus said again and again to the people of his day, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear*," (Matthew 11:15, 13:9, 13:43, etc.). The author tells us that: **There are two reasons why Jesus’ message valid**:

Vs. 2 The words “***for if***” in the Greek represent a “***fulfilled action***” **NOT** a “***hypothetical case***” and as such could be interpreted by the English word “***since***” as the idea is a fact that “*word spoken by angels, the First Testament* ***PROVED*** *steadfast*..” The word “*transgression*” in the Greek is a word that means to “*step over the line*” it speaks of a disobedience which has come about from a neglect of hearing the truth, letting truth “*drift by*”, and such neglect resulted in judgment!

1. ***First***: The New Testament is a valid by comparison with the Law. *If the word spoken by angels, the Law of Moses, had validity and those to whom it was given found that it was absolutely true in experience, then this message also is true. If angels could give a word like that, how much more the word that comes by the Son?* ***If the Law spoken by angels had that effect, how much more shall the words spoken by the Son have effect***? Israel's history is a testimony of “*cause and effect*” of this truth. ***In Deut 11:27-28 they were told that if they would obey it they would be blessed; if they disregarded it, they would be cursed***. There is no people on the face of the earth who show a more consistent pattern of cause and effect than the Jewish people. Wherever they have gone, in obedience there has been blessing; in disobedience there has been cursing.
2. **Vs. 3-4 The great New Testament**

Vs. 3 The word “***HOW***” in the Greek is “***How is it possible?***” As such it is a “*rhetorical question that express a denial.*” ***The writer is issuing a grave warning to those Jewish believers who were in danger of returning to the temple sacrifices for atonement which would reject the TRUE sacrifice of Jesus and were doing so knowingly and as such would leave them without recovery***. The author calls Jesus finished work of sacrifice “*so great a salvation*” and is **NOT** a reference to the teaching regarding it but the act its self. The truth of the First Testament, given by angels “*looked forward*” to the “***final finished***” work of Christ. **Jesus was not like the angels who were only “*spokesmen*”; He was the very One who brought into being salvation for believing sinners as well as announced it**. ***It was a great mystery to this writer how these Hebrews could be so convinced of the trustworthiness of the First Testament brought forth by angels and be so doubtful of the New Testament brought forth by the very Savior who sacrificed Himself for their salvation***! This leads to his second point:

***B. Second***: This message is valid because it is spoken to us by the Lord! The writer makes **three points as to the validity of the message through the Son**.

1. **COMMUNICATED by Jesus**: Vs. 3a “***Which at the FIRST began to be spoken by the Lord***”. The word “***Lord***” in the Greek ***is the word used to translate the Hebrew word Jehovah and to the Jewish readers of this letter it meant that the First Testament letter was given by angels but the New Testament letter was given by Jehovah personally.*** By implication, the writer says, this message did not originate with the apostles, it did not come to us by means of prophets, it came through the Lord himself; he spoke it. **There was no second of third party communication as it came directly from the Son of God**! As such they should even be more obedient to it than they were to the First Testament not less!
2. **CONFIRMED by those who heard Him**: Vs. 3b “***And was confirmed to us by those who heard Him***”. Second, it was confirmed by eye witnesses. The greater validity of the New Testament is who heard the truth of the Lord directly, ***the apostle***s. They were official “*eye witnesses*” and they confirmed the truth spoken by the Lord. This is always an unimpeachable argument as in any court in the land will accept evidence if it is confirmed by enough eye witnesses.
3. **CERTIFIED by God through miraculous works**: Vs. 4 “***God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy spirit, according to His own will***?” Third, it was attested by signs sent from God himself, by wonders and miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his own will. ***Not only did the apostles confirm the message they witnessed the miracles that accompanied the message***. Nicodemus in John 3:2recognized this when he said to Jesus, “***Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him***.” **The primary purpose of miracles was to attest to the truth that Jesus taught NOT to alleviate distress and suffering**. In Matthew 11:2-5 when John the Baptist sent his disciples to question Jesus concerning being the Messiah Jesus spoke of His works. And in John 10:38 Jesus said, “***though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.***” The author lists three such manifestations that God worked:
4. ***Signs and wonders***: A sign is a mark or token that is miraculous in nature. And a wonder is something so different or strange that it causes a person to watch because it is miraculous in nature.
5. ***Various miracles***: Is the word linked with the “power of God” and it describes a supernatural act which has the undeniable power of God working through it.
6. ***And gifts of the Holy Spirit***: The Greek word “gifts” means “distributions and impartations” from the Holy Spirit. The idea is that a person performs that which the Holy Spirit in powers.

It all focuses on one question in the first part of verse 3: ***How shall we escape if we neglect such great salvation***? This question addresses both the Hebrew believers, gentile believers as well as non-believers:

1. ***To the Hebrew believers the writer is saying***: It is not enough that you know Jesus as your Messiah: If you do not continue in Him and begin as the writer said in verse 1 “drift away” you will stop growing in your relationship with Him. The outcome of your “drifting away” will be far more than the lose of your peace, joy and freedom; you will also experience greater temptation, and confusion which will lead you into a greater change that you will be further deceived to the point where you will wonder if you ever really knew Jesus as your Messiah in the first place.
2. ***To the non-Christian it says***: It cause the person to ask, “*Where are you going to go*?” “*How will you be able to escape or avoid God's universe*?” Bob Dylan wrote a song about this where he stated, “*You’re going to have to serve some body*..” ***It’s an unescapable reality***! ***Most of the people in the world are trying to avoid the unavoidable but every person is going to have a come to Jesus meeting***! So why waste your life trying to attempt to escape? Especially when you consider that Jesus whole desire in this meeting is to bless you not to curse you.

***The awful truth in eternity is that hell will be full of people who never actively opposed Jesus Christ, they simply chose to neglect the truth of His gospel***. ***All a person has to do to go to hell is do nothing!*** That is the subject of the first four verse of chapter 2. These Hebrew believers knew the truth that Jesus proclaimed and accomplished, they even believed that this truth was 100% reliable they were aware of it but weren’t willing to surrender too it, so they just drifted away into eternity apart from Him and into eternal damnation. The point is that “***Right teaching always demands a right response***!” Being “***intellectually convinced***” but not “***spiritually committed***” is the surest way to hell I know of! These Hebrews had all the facts to make a commitment but demonstrated that they just couldn’t get in the boat! A person should never be satisfied with a religious feeling, with going to church, being married to a believer or church activities. All those things as good as they are can still cause a person to “*drift away*” into hell unless they have made a personal commitment to JESUS as Savior and Lord of their lives.

**Hebrews 2:5-9**

**“To boldly go where no man has gone before”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 5-9 *RECAPTURE OUR LOST DESTINY***
3. **Introduction**

Hebrews is all about Christ. ***The writer said in chapter 2:1-4, because we cannot exist without Christ. It’s dishonesty to pretend we can.*** ***In chapter 2:5-18 the writer changes his focus as he anticipates the question with regards to the reason God the Son became fully man. At issue is Jesus in his humanity as our mediator before God***.

The writer of Hebrews will argue that angels will never do as mediators. The simple reason for this is that don’t deal with the same challenges that we do: **No angel has ever been a man; no angel has ever had to deal with the temptations that accompany a fallen human nature**! But Jesus, the Son, has! That’s what the writer will say in chapter 4:15 where his reference is Jesus as High Priest where he writes, “***For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin****.*” What is in view in this chapter is the value for us because of the ***identification of incarnation***. These 14 verses present four different views of Jesus earthly ministry. At the end of each view we will end up at the cross so that the reader would appreciate that whatever value there is in the life of Jesus, it is made available to us only by means of his death. ***The truth concerning Jesus is that He didn’t come into this world to be our moral guide, our principled teacher or a worker of miracles. NO, He came to live in this world in order that he might die***. **At the cross, he poured forth his life in order that we may have life.** **These verses present: Four reasons why it was necessary that Jesus, the Son of God, became man.** This passage are miniature gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, though they are not in the same chronological order as they are in our Bibles.

1. Vs. 5-9 ***The first reason Jesus Christ became a man is to: RECAPTURE OUR LOST DESTINY.***
2. Vs. 10-13 ***The second reason why Christ became man is to: RECOVER OUR LOST UNITY.***
3. Vs. 14-15 ***The third reason is to: RELEASE US FROM OUR PRESENT BONDAGE.***
4. Vs. 16-18 ***The fourth reason is to: RESTORE US IN TIMES OF FAILURE.***
5. **Vs. 5-9 *RECAPTURE OUR LOST DESTINY.***

Vs. 5-9 ***RECAPTURE OUR LOST DESTINY***: The first reason listed by the writer for the necessity of Jesus becoming a man is linked back to Genesis 1:28 where God said to Adam and Eve, “*Be fruitful and multiply;* ***fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth****.*” No angel could take the place of Jesus Christ for God because **God never gave the right to govern the world to angels, He gave to mankind**. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:3saying, “*Do you not know that we shall judge angels*?”

The writer quotes from Psalm 8, where David cries, “*What is man that You are mindful of him*...?” David was looking up into the majesty of the heavens and asks in verse 6 paraphrasing, “*Where is man's place in all of your creation*?” The right interpretation of “***son of man***” is given in the context as well as the Greek. Had he meant this as a reference to Jesus as the “*son of man*” you would not have had the phrase that follows the “**son of man**” which is “*that You take care of him*.” The “*son of man*” here means **the human race**! And the Holy Spirit answers his own question in verses 7-8. "*You have made him for a little lower than the angels, You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet*." The writer of Hebrews in verse 8b insists that when David says “***all things***,” in verse 8 he meant, everything. For he adds a commentary saying, “**Now in putting everything in subjection to him*, he left nothing outside his control.***” The Greek word in verse 5 speaking of the “***world***” is **a word that describes the inhabited earth not the pre-inhabited world of Adam** and as such is a reference to **the Millennial reign of Christ**. The phrase “***In subjection to the angels***” is a military term used of arranging soldiers under a commanding general. That’s why we read the context “For He has NOT put THE WORLD **TO COME**”… “*Under the control of angels*”.

According to Genesis 1:28 mankind’s intended destiny, was God authorized dominion over all His creation. We were made to be reigning over all God's creation. This passage includes far more than just the earth; it includes the created universe of God as far as man has ever been able to discover it in all the illimitable reaches of space and whatever lies beyond that. ***All this is to be put under man's dominion***.

But mankind's authority was ***derived authority***, as we were to be subject to God who indwelt us. ***Mankind was to be the means by which the invisible God became visible to his creatures.*** As long as mankind was subject to the dominion of God within him, he would be able to exercise dominion over all the universe around. ***Only when man accepted dominion could he exercise dominion***.

Immediately you want to pay attention the “***pronouns***”, “***him***” in the writer’s commentary in verse 8; take note that they are **NOT capitalized** as that tells you that the “HIM” is not Jesus but rather **mankind**. The writer points out that man was made lower than the angels for a **LIMITED TIME** so that they could learn what the exercise of that dominion meant. He was given a limited domain: **this earth**, amid all the billions of galaxies of space! He was given a limited physical body that within that limited area mankind could learn the principles by which his dominion could be exercised throughout the universe. This is what the author describes as being “*lower than the angels.*” But the writer goes on to explain that **something happened that changed even this limited dominion on earth when he says**, “*But* **NOW** *we do not yet see all things put under* ***him***.” ***This is the whole story of human history***: We do not see everything in subjection to mankind. Every time mankind attempts to exercise his dominion, he quickly finds he is no longer able to do so. Throughout the history of humanity, there has been a continual attempt to restate man’s dreams for dominion over the earth. We see this come up in ordinary people who continue the quest to do extraordinary things like going faster, climbing higher, conquering more lands. **We have to explore and regain dominion it’s in our DNA**. The trouble is not for lack of effort; we just can never regain dominion and keep it. Something is broken, damaged as we can not regain this balance. **The history of man is the story of continual unexpected crisis all caused by our attempts to exercise dominion**.

Through out recorded history, people were wrestling with the same moral problems then that we are wrestling with today. ***Irrespective of all our amazing technological advancements in the control of certain physical forces to life, we have made absolutely NO progress when it comes to moral relationships***. It’s painfully obvious, mankind has lost their moral compass and more importantly their relationship with God. The Fall of man is the only adequate explanation for this. Even in the individual life very few people have realized the dreams they began with. This is what Paul said in Romans 8:20 when he wrote, “*the creation was subjected to futility*.”

Vs. 9 Look at this wonderful change to mankind’s “**LOST DESTINY**” as the writer ***DELIEVERS THIS AMAZING HOPE***, “*But we see Jesus*”. ***With the eyes of faith, we see Jesus already crowned and reigning over the universe, the man, Jesus, fulfilling man's lost destiny***. With incredible clarity in Revelation 5:4-6 John witnesses a scene in heaven that is exactly what the writer of Hebrews has been saying as John says that he, “*wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain.*.” ***Jesus, alone has broken through the barrier of mankind’s habitual heritage of failure***. Our fallen flesh that has kept us from being what we want to be! Shakespeare wrote in Macbeth Act 5, scene 5 page 2, “***Life's but...a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, that signifies nothing***." That is what the author in Hebrews says is what life is apart from Jesus Christ.

Ah but Jesus fulfilled mankind’s qualifications with all our limitations to win back our heritage, our LOST DESTINY. This is what Paul says in Philippians 2:5-8where he writes, “***Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross***.” Jesus like us, became lower than the angels, taking on flesh and blood, entering into the human race, becoming part of it, he experienced death. And in so doing took our place. Jesus Christ has come to begin a ***new race of men***. That’s exactly what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17 where he writes, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*.” That race includes himself and all those who are his, and to that race the promise is that they shall enter into all the fullness God ever intended man to have. In the Philip’s translation of Colossians 1:27, Paul put it this way, “*They are those to whom God has planned to give a vision of the full wonder and splendor of his secret plan for the nations. And the secret is simply this: Christ in you! Yes, Christ in you, bringing with him the hope of all the glorious things to come*.” This is ***The first reason Jesus Christ became a man: RECAPTURE OUR LOST DESTINY.*** Oh angels are amazing part of God’s creation and they cannot die but neither can they save lost souls like us nor can they restore our lost destiny! And which Gospel does this line up with? The Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of the Great King.

**Hebrews 2:10-13**

**“Finding ourselves”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 10-11 The Captain of unity**
3. **Vs. 12-13 Chosen identity**
4. **Introduction**

Two weeks ago we started looking at the hypothetical question that the writer of Hebrews anticipated that his readers would ask with regards to; the necessity of Jesus becoming a man. He lists four reason for Jesus becoming man the first of which was:

1. Vs. 5-9 ***To: RECAPTURE OUR LOST DESTINY.***

Now we take a look at verses:

1. Vs. 10-13 ***The second reason why Christ became man is to: RECOVER OUR LOST UNITY.***

Next week we will continue our investigation with:

1. Vs. 14-15 ***The third reason is to: RELEASE US FROM OUR PRESENT BONDAGE.***
2. Vs. 16-18 ***The fourth reason is to: RESTORE US IN TIMES OF FAILURE.***
3. **Vs. 10-11 The Captain of unity**

Vs. 10 In 1 Corinthians 1:23 Paul wrote that “*we preach* ***Christ crucified****,* ***to the Jews a stumbling block*** *and to the Greeks foolishness…*” The cross of Christ was clearly a stumbling block tripping them up and one of the main reasons these professing Hebrew believers were drifting back to the Levitical sacrifices. To counter this “*stumbling block*” the writer seeks to prove the necessity of the incarnation and specifically the cross of Jesus. This section begins with the phrase “***For it was fitting for Him***” and in the writer stating it this way, he means to paint the contrast to two other ways:

1. Vs. 2:1 “Therefore we ***must***..”: Which states the following is a ***logical necessity.***
2. Vs. 2:17 “… ***had to be*** made like His brethren...”: Which stats it was an ***obligation growing out of circumstances***.
3. Vs. 2:10 “For ***it was fitting***..”: This contrast to the above two states that our salvation was brought forth found its origin not in God’s statement but in ***the very nature of God***!

Thus the writer shows the reasonableness of Jesus on the cross as it fits the very nature of God! ***God the Father provides the sacrifice, God the Son procures the sacrifice and God the Holy Spirit applies it***! It was God’s intention that the Son become fully man for the direct purpose that only through His sufferings could He be the leader bringing many to glory!

Next the writer says, “*for whom are all things and by whom are all things*,” The phrase in the Greek is “on ***account*** of whom” God is the final agency that all things came into being. By saying this the author combines the reason for the suffering of the Son with God’s very nature to bring it into fruition! The writer moves to the second outcome of Jesus death on the cross namely: “*brining many sans to glory*” and the way in which that was brought forth through Jesus: “*to make* ***the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings****.*” The “*sons*” includes Jesus as OUR Captain who according to verse 9 through the “*suffering of death was crowned with glory and honor.*” The phrase, “*captain of our salvation*” is made up of the word “***captain***” (found only 4 times in N.T. twice in this letter) and means, “*One who goes first*”. The writer is saying that ***Jesus is the Person going first on the road to heaven***. But in John 14:6 Jesus said literally “*I am* **the ROAD**, *the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*.” Jesus is not only our **LEADER ON THE ROAD** to salvation, He is the very road its self sprinkled with His precious blood! The word “***Perfect***” in verse 10 **isn’t** the Greek word that speaks of “*moral imperfections*” but rather speaks of **finishing the course prescribed to Him**, described as “*the suffering and death upon the cross*”! At issue here is not Jesus’ “***Moral Perfection***” but the second area of His perfection, His “WORK”! The reason for it not being “***Perfect*** or ***Completed***” is that it wasn’t “***FINISHED***” **which in John 19:30 Jesus declared on His last breath that it was!** His earthly life was all about identification with fallen humanity. The only area where Jesus doesn’t identify with fallen humanity is SIN! That being said, he never acted out of uncertainty, he never spoke out of fear, the reason for this was that He alone was man as was intended by God. The moment Jesus experienced fear gripping his heart, immediately he trusted upon the indwelling Father and fear was met by faith. The moment he felt uncertain, not knowing which way to turn, He rested back upon the indwelling wisdom of God and was immediately given the right word for the situation. Jesus didn’t just save us, then ascend into heaven with the parting words, “***Good luck, don’t do anything I wouldn’t do***!” ***He has walked the same road we have, fought the same battles we are fighting, He is our perfect Captain!***

Vs. 11 According to verse 11 ***he fully entered into our fears and pressures and because of this he is fully one with us***. The phrase, “*He who sanctifies*” refers to Jesus who according to verse 10 “*is bringing many sons to glory*”. And “*those being sanctified*” of course refer to believers. The word “*sanctifies* and *sanctified*” in Hebrews always is a reference to “*consecration*” not “*purification*”, “*position*” not to “*condition*”. The, writers point is that, **Jesus has put us, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, on the path to glory**. It’s a “***progressive sanctification***” as it will continue on through ***glorification*** and into ***eternity*** where although we will “*know as we are known*” (1 Corinth 13:12), we will continue to grow more and more like our Lord. Even in the infinite years of eternity we will never become in the absolute “LIKE HIM” for ***finiteness*** can only approach infinity, it can never “***EQUAL***” it.

 Notice the phrase, “***are all of one***” which is defined by the phrase “*for which reason He,* (JESUS), *is not ashamed to call them* **BRETHREN**”. This is the heart of the 2nd reason Jesus became man; which was to ***RECOVER OUR LOST UNITY with our Lord!*** It is interesting to note that Jesus never refers to His disciples as “***brethren***” until **after His resurrection in John 20:17** where He sends Mary to announce His resurrection to His “***BRETHREN***”. The phrase “***are all of one***” is saying that Jesus and believers are all out of “***ONE SOURCE***”, it is for this reason that Jesus *is not ashamed to call them* **BRETHREN**”. The Greek word for “*brother*” means “*from the same womb*”, speaking of the one source that we have in common, God the Father. Believers, because of Jesus, find our ***source of identity*** in God the Father, thus Jesus calls us His brethren. ***The implications of this are to great for words as we consider the reality that Jesus who is God the Son in His exalted deity is not ashamed to call us His brothers***! Paul’s said in Ephesians 1:3, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with* ***every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ***”.

Of all the things we humans suffer from, sense the fall, nothing is more obvious then the loss of our “***IDENTITY***”! In the 60’s and 70’s we were all about trying to “***FIND OURSELVES***” which was a truthful statement of having lost our sense of identity. Things haven’t changed in 30 to 40 years as gender confusion has reached mass hysteria. People are constantly trying to “*discover themselves*” and try as they might they can not ***RECOVER THEIR LOST UNITY OR IDENTITY***! But as believers in Christ***, WE HAVE RECOVERED OUR LOST IDENTITY***! Everyone of us, followers of Christ, now ***have the answer to one of the great question every person seeks to have answered***: “**WHO AM I**”? The answer through Christ: ***A child of the King of Kings, and one who our Lord is not ashamed to call His brothers and sisters***! Not only our we; “*brothers and sisters*” but as Paul said in Romans 8:17 “*if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together*.” And all of this because He has chosen to identify with us!

1. **Vs. 12-13 Chosen identity**

Vs. 12-13 To illustrate this, the writer quotes from Psalm 22:22 and Isaiah 8:17-18.

1. First, after stating the fact that Jesus “*is not ashamed to call them* **BRETHREN**” he quotes Ps. 22:22. This was the same Psalm in which Jesus had quoted from the cross. David wrote this from his own experience but the Holy Spirit intended its final application be Jesus. In verses 19-21 of that Psalm we hear the prayer to be raised from the dead. In verse 22-31, He gives thanks for answered prayer before it is answered and in view of that fact that God WILL raise Him from the dead, He will declare His name to His brethren. ***The quote is to give scriptural verification to the truth he just expounded in verse 11 as to our identity***. The interesting part of the quote is that our identity is tied to the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:13-19 Paul writes, “*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable*.”
2. The second quote is out of Isaiah 8:17b-18a as the writer quotes these verses to show the close unity which now exists between Jesus and those He call His brethren. This passage from Isaiah was his criticism towards Israel during the Syrian Israeli war under king Ahaz, where the nation was trusting in other things instead of God for their victory. To this Isaiah says, “*I will put My trust in Him*” and that the nation had been appointed as living symbols of God’s plan. Again ***this quotation is meant to express the close unity that exists because of Jesus which reveals our recovered identity***.

Thus this passage links up with John 17:22, and Jesus prayer for us to the Father, “***That they may be one, Father, even as we are one,***”. Thus to make ***a new CREATION, undivided in identity with the Son is the second reason Jesus Christ became man***.

**Hebrews 2:14-18**

**“Your touch is what I longed for”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 14-15 The absence of life**
3. **Vs. 16-18 Merciful Master**
4. **Introduction**

We come now to the last two reasons reasons Jesus became a man:

1. First in verses 14-15we see that, ***Jesus came is to release us for our present bondage***.
2. Second, in verses 16-18 we see that ***Jesus came to restore us in times of failure***.

Summing these two truths up reminds me of the song “I will Serve Thee” where the lyrics go, “***Heartaches, broken pieces. Ruined lives are why You died on Calvary, Your touch was what I longed for, You have given life to me*.**” Both of these last two truths are “***present day practical***” but are obscured in our day do to our societies presupposition against them.

1. When it comes to the first truth of releasing believers from our present bondage ***our society doesn’t recognize that we are under any bondage***. It’s an odd reality that most people believe in things that only a short time ago were considered “*science fiction*” while at the same time they mock the knowledge of an unseen evil that permeates society and influences mankind and the world system. This continues while the continual headlines and news are reporting the devil’s work in the world. You can see the problem as it relates to our society when they don’t recognize the existence of evil that is manipulated by the devil.
2. The second, issue is equally obscured in our society because our society has become extremely adept at self justification and extreme narcissism. ***The truth that Jesus came to restore us in times of failure has no value when our world doesn’t ever believe that it has failed!*** And if perchance things appear like we have then clearly it’s not our fault but someone else’s!
3. **Vs. 14-15 The absence of life**

Vs. 14 The writer’s starts with: “*Inasmuch then as the* **CHILDREN**..” is clarifies those who have “*partaken of flesh and blood*” as human beings. The word “*partaken*” in the Greek is the word “***koinoneo***” and we know that it means “*to share something in common with someone else*”. All humans have this in common with each other, the same human nature described as blood and flesh. What is interesting to note in regards to this being a letter to the Hebrews is that ***this phrase was a common rabbinical phrase to speak of the contrast of the human nature with that of God’s nature***. That is an important detail for two reasons:

1. First, it goes to the objection held by religious Judaism with regards to the incarnation and the Son of God sharing the human nature and still being God the Son. This was the issue with their rejection of Jesus and His deity. ***They held to the fact that God’s nature has NOTHING IN COMMON with man’s human nature, therefore God could not become a man***!
2. Second, it is yet another clue as too the identity of who the original author of Hebrews was. ***We see that at very least he had to be very familiar with rabbinical Judaism or most likely a rabbi***. Yet another point leading to the Apostle Paul, who was a rabbi.

Next we read that, “*He Himself likewise* **SHARED IN THE SAME**, *that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil*.” The words, “***He Himself***” is an obvious inference to Jesus but it goes further to address the religious Judaism’s rejection of the contrast with man kind’s human nature to that of God’s nature. The Greek word for “*likewise*” is made up of two words “***alongside and nearby***” and it is here the the writer begins to explain the incarnation:

1. First by saying that the Son of God didn’t have “*blood and flesh*” ***IN COMMON*** with man, instead He took His place “***alongside or nearby***” the human race!
2. Second, the writer chose that words carefully in saying that Jesus, “**SHARED IN THE SAME**” with humanity in regards to “*blood and flesh*”! They are **NOT** the same words used to describe what all humans share in common (***koinoneo***) with regards to “*blood and flesh*”, instead they are two Greek words that mean “***TO HOLD WITH***”! What this states is that Jesus the Son of God **DID NOT** share in common with humanity, their “*blood and flesh*” in the **same manor all other humans do**. But instead He “**HELD TO HIMSELF**” an “**ADDITIONAL NATURE**” and by so doing “***ASSOCIATED HIMSELF***” with the human race without its sin but with its blood and flesh! Jesus “***took to Himself, something which He had nothing in common with, human nature***.” All humans share the same human nature in common with each other. “Jesus ***UNITED*** Himself with human nature that was ***NOT*** natural to Him.” The phrase “**SHARED IN THE SAME**” in the Greek speaks of the incarnation as a “***voluntary acceptance of humanity’s nature***”. This is the point that the writer will further make in Hebrews 10:5-9. What the author of Hebrews does in this verse is ***reveal the truth about the dual nature of Jesus, Very God and true Man***!

Next in verse 14 the writer shares the purpose for this above stated uniting with humanities nature, which the writer says is that, “*through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil*”. Jesus “*took hold of humanity*” to DIE because through dying and raising Himself out from under death, He would break the power of death and the one who has the power of death.

Jesus had conquered death and brought to end the devils hold over it. The Greek word for “*power*” is a word that refers to “*power in the sense of dominion*” thus satan’s dominion over the human race in the form of death had been defeated. Notice the word “***HAD***” past tense not ***HAS*** present tense, which tells us that our victory has been won. The word “*destroyed*” doesn’t mean “*eliminated*” or has “*quit working*”. Instead what this means is that only for believers has the devil’s work in death been “***rendered inoperative***”.

Vs. 15 The Greek word for “*release*” is used in Greek literature to describe a person who is ***released from a contract***. The writer is saying that Jesus by His death and resurrection has released believing sinners from the grip and fear of death, that held sinners in bondage. In Romans 8:6 Paul describes the “**carnally minded *as* death, but to be spiritually minded *as* life and peace.**” As such Paul describes “*death*” in terms NOT of being “***SOMETHING***” but rather in terms that describe it as the “***ABSENCE OF SOMETHING***”. When a doctor is called on to examine a body they are not looking for the “*evidences of* **DEATH**” they are looking for the “*evidences of* **LIFE**” which are missing if a person has died! In the truest since “death” in all its forms is “the absence of LIFE”, that’s what boredom is, distress, fear and worry. The contract is over even the “FEAR of death” which is the devil’s whip by which he keeps us in slavery and bondage. Non believers have no escape from this and have paid their therapist boat loads of money to help them escape the fear of death to no avail. Only in Christ do we have a way to escape the fear of death! We are assured that we will not miss out on “life” which is ironically one of the things that satan brings up to keep us in bondage. The great and glorious news is that Jesus incarnation has stripped away the devils hold over us that says that; “***Freedom is having what you want***” and it has been replaced with God’s truth that “***Freedom is doing what God wants***!” Jesus said in Matthew 16:25 “*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it*.”

1. **Vs. 16-18 Merciful Master**

Vs. 16 The forth and final reason Jesus “***ASSOCIATED HIMSELF***” with the human race was ***to restore us in times of failure***. The idea here is that Jesus’ work on the cross, didn’t provide for the salvation of fallen angels but did provide for the salvation of fallen humans. Jesus passed by fallen angels a superior creation to save an inferior creation and as such is worthy of greater praise.

Vs. 17 The word “*Therefore*” points back to that above fact and links it with the necessity of the incarnation due to the fact that Jesus didn’t give aid to angels but to the seed of Abraham. “in all things” is the Greek word that means that it was an “***obligation imposed upon Him by the consideration that He was giving aid to the seed of Abraham***”. In order to provide salvation for the human race He had to “***ASSOCIATED HIMSELF***” with the human race. The incarnation was a NECESSITY as He must “***voluntary accept humanity’s nature***” if He was to save it. The phrase “**like** *His* **brethren**” in the Greek is asserted WITHOUT qualifications, which means that there was a real and complete likeness to the traces of of the effects of fallen man, poverty, temptation, unmerited death, etc.

 Next we are told that, “*that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God,..*” The incarnation made it possible for Jesus to become a “MERCIFUL” High Priest. The Greek word for “*merciful*” describes “***the ability for one to feel sympathy with the misery of another that leads them o act on their behalf to relieve their misery***.” It is this fact of the incarnation that leads Jesus to be both “merciful” as well as “faithful” in His sacrifice as humanities great High Priest! The idea of “compassion” as an attribute of a priest is no where to be found in the First Testament and was one of the faults of the priests as they lacked sympathy with the people. In Hosea chapter 4:4-9 the priests were described as eating up their people which in part was responsible for the people to continue to reject God’s ways. At the time of Christ and beyond the priests were unfeeling and cruel, so that the idea of a compassionate priest would be celebrated by the Hebrews who read this letter and had endured the lack of sympathy of the Aaronic priesthood. The phrase “*in things pertaining to God*” is a technical phrase in Jewish literature and speaks of the functions of worship.

 We are given the specific service Jesus rendered as High Priest as “*to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*” The word “*propitiation*” refers to the act of Jesus offering Himself on the cross to satisfy the righteous demands of God’s justice so that mercy might be shown on the basis that justice has been satisfied.

Vs. 18 The emphasis in this verse is not upon Jesus suffering but upon the fact that He was tempted, the words “in that He Himself suffered” qualify the word tempted. It explains what the temptation consisted of. The word “tempted” carries two ideas: First the idea the action of testing someone to see what good or evil is in the one being tested. Second, because none ever passed the test the word came to mean a “solicitation to do evil”. Both meanings are in view here. All of this was present at the cross as Jesus choose death to self rather than disobedience to the Father’s wishes. The cross is seen as the basis for cleansing and forgiving our regular failures. It is what John wrote of in 1 John 1:9 where we are told that “***If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness***.” Jesus alone is able to do this because during His life he learned the necessity for compassion and faithfulness when He “***ASSOCIATED HIMSELF***” with the human race. The writer will again state as much in Hebrews 5:2 where we read that, “*He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness*.” David wrote in Psalm 91:2 that, “*the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.*” This verse doesn’t merely say that Jesus is able to become that for us, it declares that He is our refuge and fortress!

**Hebrews 3:1-6**

**“Professors verses possessors”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-2 The House of God**
3. **Vs. 3-5 The Messiah verses Moses**
4. **Vs. 6 If**
5. **Introduction**

In Catholic circles the main issue of importance as it relates to the founding fathers of the faith is ***apostolic succession***. But for most people they are less interested in apostolic succession and more interested in ***apostolic success***. *What can Jesus do for me right now*? *Can He do anything about the problems I face this very moment*? Hebrews Chapter 2 closed on the four-fold practical note of what Jesus can do for us because of the incarnation. Because of Jesus finished work He has enabled us too:

1. Vs. 5-9 ***RECAPTURE OUR LOST DESTINY.***
2. Vs. 10-13 ***RECOVER OUR LOST UNITY.***
3. Vs. 14-15 ***RELEASED US FROM OUR PRESENT BONDAGE.***
4. Vs. 16-18 ***RESTORED US IN TIMES OF FAILURE.***

Chapter 3 picks up the fourth reason saying that Jesus as our compassionate and merciful High Priest came that he might help us when we fail. There are two equally important truths that cause a lot of folk’s difficulties today concerning Christianity: ***What is the Church and who is in it***?

1. **Vs. 1-2 The House of God**

Vs. 1 The use of the word “*therefore*” shows that the writer is drawing a conclusion from his preceding statement, that Jesus is better than angels and prophets. Now He builds on this as he asks his Jewish readers to examine Jesus in relation to Moses. Notice that he calls these Hebrew readers “*holy brethren*”, the word “*holy*” is a word that means “*set apart for God*” and as such ***isn’t a reference to quality of life but rather to a position in salvation***. This is an important designation as it relates to this letter as the author is addressing the “***professing church***” which was made up of “*real possessing believers*” and those who were only intellectually agreement. The writer knew some of those who would read this letter weren’t saved but address them based upon their profession not on the estimation of their true spiritual condition. This group of Hebrews needed to “consider” carefully the the “High Priest of their confession” Jesus as some of them were turning back to the sacrificial system for atonement from their sins instead of trusting in the “Lamb of God” who dies once and for all for the sin of all. The writer describes Jesus as the “Apostle” which speaks of the act of sending someone out on a commission to do something, the person sent having the credentials. It is the same word that was used of Moses in Exodus 3:10.

 The word “*confession*” means to speak the same thing as another and here the context is in reference of agreeing with God as to who His Son Jesus is. The use of this word is set up as a contrast to some of the Hebrews who “*professed*” or bore witness to this by words without having to having to rely upon this “confession” wen faced with persecution. Those that professed when faced with persecution turned back to the sacrificial system instead of trusting in Christ’ sacrifice of the cross. The fact that they turned back revealed that what they had was profession without true possession!

Vs. 2 This caparison of the Messiah with Moses was a very delicate one as Moses was revered by the Hebrews. The writer starts this comparison by saying both Jesus and Moses were “faithful” but the difference between them was not their faithfulness but their position as Moses was a faithful “servant” and Jesus was a faithful “Son”.

Six times in six verses the word *house* appears and in each occurrence it is in reference to the “*house of God*”. Far too many people think that the phrase “*the house of God*” refers to the **church building**. A look through the scripture will reveal that a building is never called the house of God. This is the point Steven made in Acts 7:48 when he said “*The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says.*” The early church never referred to their buildings as the House of God. When the church referred to the “*house of God*” they meant ***the people***, NOT a building! The house of God is YOU and me! Though the temple or the tabernacle, is called by this phrase it is only done so as a picture. Buildings were never actually meant to be the place where God dwelled as Isaiah 66:1-2 reminds us that, “*Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool -- where is the house which you would build for me? ... All these things my hand has made*.” The truth according to Psalm 22:3 God is, “*Enthroned in the praises of Israel*.” And according to Jesus in Matthew 18:20 “*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*” It is clear what the author meant as the “House of God” to stand for as in verse 6 where he writes, “*But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house* **WE ARE**…” God’s plan was NOT to indwell buildings but rather to dwell in people, that they may be the tabernacle of his indwelling. The next to last chapter of Revelation (21:3b) we read that “*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people*.” Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 6:19 “*do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own*?” This is the focus of all the Bible: God's purpose to inhabit us and to make us the manifestation of his life, as Paul prays in Ephesians 3:19 that “*you may be filled with all the fullness of God*.” The message of the Bible is that it takes Christ for us to be a Christian, when we put Christ into the Christian, we put God back into the mankind.

The writers point directly relates to this as the people that are the house of God, Moses ministered as a servant, but Christ as a Son. Therefore, the Son is much more to be obeyed, much more to be listened to, much more to be honored, than the servant. Moses served faithfully as a servant. **The ministry of a servant is always preparing things**. He must prepare meals, he must prepare rooms, he must prepare the yard. ***He is always working in the anticipation of something yet to come.*** His work is in view of that which is yet future. The writer readily acknowledges that, “*Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant*”, his purpose was to prepare US “*the house of God*” to be inhabited by the Son! **The role of a son in a house is to take over everything, to possess it, to use whatever he likes.** The house was made for Him. So Christ has come to ***inhabit us***, as Paul again prays in Ephesians 3:17 “*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*”.

1. **Vs. 3-5 The Messiah verses Moses**

Vs. 3-5 Having said both were faithful the reason Jesus is better than Moses is that the “builder” of the house is greater than the house. Jesus is the architect and builder of the house of Israel and Moses is a member of that house. Jesus is the builder of the house but not by independent will or agency of His own, but as being the son of God who built all things.

 Further more Moses faithfulness was as a “servant” which is a noble word that bound servant as the services Moses rendered were exceptionally important and valued by God but were a “*testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward*.” Which confirms the idea that Moses was a servant in God’s house, where Jesus is a Son over that same house! Both were faithful in respect to their positions.

1. **Vs. 6 If**

Vs. 6 The writer keeps in mind the fact that only some of his Hebrew readers were saved declares, “*We are that house* -- **if.**” At this point he interjects the little word, *if*:

“*And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and.. our hope*.” The possibility is raised of being self-deceived in this matter of belonging to Christ, of being his house. Some were making only a “***profession of salvation***” that under persecution were going back to the sacrifices and in so doing were revealing that they weren’t apart of the “house of God”. The little word “IF” in the Greek text is introducing a hypothetical condition that is yet unfulfilled. If the Jews who he was writing too “HELD FAST” the confidence of Jesus’ sacrifice, which would reveal that they were of the “*house of God*”. Their salvation hung on their action! What is at issue is **NOT** the “**RETENTION**” of their salvation but their “**POSSESSION**” of their salvation in the first place. The text doesn’t say, “in whose house we will CONTINUE to be” instead it says, “whose house WE ARE”. The subject at hand is ***NOT the SECURITY of the believer***, instead the question is; ***are they a believer***! The test was up to the individual to determine and they would be able to see this if they “held fast” which is a nautical term and speaks of holding ones course towards shore. If they stayed the course of their profession than they would show that they had possession of their salvation! It they left the course of their profession they would reveal that they were never in possession of their salvation. The apostle John would write of them in 1 John 2:19 that “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us*.”

If once having ***professed*** to receive the Lord Jesus, we do not manifest signs of new life, there is nothing that transforms our old nature and behavior than, we are simply professors of truth but not **possessors** of Christ! As such we would be self-deceived. In spite of external appearances, and religious observances, we never had true faith. This is the essence of the argument of the entire book of Hebrews. The writer is not speaking of people who deliberately tries to pass themselves off as Christian, he is talking here about some who have gone through every possible ritual to identify themselves with Christianity. Because of this they feel they are Christians. They believe the right things, they hold the right creed, they are rigid about the proclamation of the truth and conform to doctrine in every degree. But they are self-deceived, for as they are unable to manifest what God has come into human hearts to produce, they reveal that there never was faith in the beginning.

**Hebrews 3:7-19**

**“Eternal Security”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 7-11 Scriptural support**
3. **Vs. 12 The warning**
4. **Vs. 13-15 Deceitfulness of sin**
5. **Vs. 16-19 Never believed**
6. **Introduction**

We start now with the ***second warning*** of this book:

1. The first one was in chapter 2 verse 1 against “*drifting away*”. It was the danger of ***paying no attention, of being preoccupied. It describes the danger of letting the truths concerning Jesus, which alone have power to set us free, to drift by, unheeded, unheard***.
2. The second one, starts here in verse 7 and runs through chapter 4 verse 13 and is in two parts.
3. First in 3:7-19 is the danger of hardening your heart against the truth. This warning is against the ***danger of hearing the words and intellectually believing them, understanding there meaning, but taking no action upon them***. The peril of holding truth in the head, but never letting it get into the heart. Truth **KNOWN** never does anything; it is truth **DONE** which sets us free. The terrible danger which the writer points out is that truth known but not acted on has an awful effect of hardening the heart so that it is no longer able to act -- and ***we lose the ability to believe***.
4. Then in 4:1-13 the failure to enter His rest.
5. **Vs. 7-11 Scriptural support**

Vs. 7-11The “*therefore*” in this section reaches back to the Authors argument of Jesus superiority over the prophets, angels and Moses. He now continues with scriptural support from Psalm 95:7-11where David is giving commentary on Exodus 17:1-7 which is the story of the murmuring and hardness of heart by the Israelites at Rephidim do to a lack of water. This scriptural support is used to enforce the warning from Jewish history, to illustrate what happens if they don’t hold fast the confidence firm to the end is from the first testament. The inclusion by the writer of the phrase, “*As the Holy Spirit says*”, denotes that the warning he has just shared is both **rooted in history** and is **not mere rabbinical opinion** but **truth from the Holy Spirit**.

These Hebrews who enjoyed the protection and provision from God, dared to question God by saying, “*Is the Lord among us our not*?”. Instead of trusting God in the midst of adversity, they demanded God demonstrate to them that He was in their midst to help. The word “*harden*” in the Greek is a prohibition of continuing an action of “*hardening*” that they were already engaged in. These Hebrews were being similarly warned not to take the same attitude as their forefathers had in the wilderness. They were being persecuted because of their “*professed faith*” in the Messiah and the gospel but they are being warned that NOT trusting God in the midst of this and going back to the Levitical sacrifices would be hardening of their heart. The phrase in verse 10 “*And they have not known My ways*” speaks of an ignorance which was due to their neglect of obeying God.

The word “*rest*” in verse 11 speaks of a “*permanent cessation of activity*” thus a “*permanent rest*” or God’s rest that He gives to people. In context, the failure of that generation to enter into the land and enjoy those promises was because of the “sin of unbelief”.

1. **Vs. 12 The warning**

Vs. 12 Having given *biblical support of the defection of the wilderness generation of Hebrews* the writer can now warn these present day Hebrews against committing a similar sin. The use of the words “*any of you*” in the Greek make this a warning to each person individually not the group corporally. The words, “***heart of unbelief***” speak not only of corruption that drags the person down but a corruption that drags others down with them. It is a hardening heart of unbelief that is NOT passive but active. There is the difference between a “*heart in which unbelief is present*” and a “*unbelieving heart*”. A true believer may at times have a “*heart in which unbelief is present*” but they can never have a “*unbelieving heart*”. An “***unbelieving heart***” is one in which there is **no faith** towards the true God at all. The first may describe at times a true Christian, but the 2nd one can never describe a true believer. This warning to some of these ***Hebrew profession believers*** is of a “*unbelieving heart*” and as such indicates that ***they were never saved and had stopped at mere intellectual assent to Jesus being the Messiah and to the gospel.*** The word “*departing*” in the Greek doesn’t mean the same as it does in the English. In the English it can have the meaning of: “*Having arrived at a location and then leaving or departing from that location*.” Here in the Greek the word is a compound word made up of two words, “***off***” and “***to stand***” thus “***to stand off***” which is exactly the position of these ***professing Hebrews*** as they were “***standing off***” ***from Jesus the Messiah***, they **hadn’t left**, **they had never yet arrived at His location**. Our word “***apostasy***” is derived from this Greek word and is defined as “***the act of a person who now renounces their former professed belief in favor of some new diametrically opposed belief***.” The “*new belief*” isn’t merely a new belief, it is one that ***negates the former belief***! That is the point of the author; should these professing Hebrews go back to the Levitical sacrificial system of faith they would be “***negating***” their “***new professed belief in Jesus as the Messiah***, **THE LAMB OF GOD**”! They could trust in “Levitical sacrifices” or the “crucified Messiah” but not both as they are “***diametrically opposed***” to each other.

1. **Vs. 13-15 Deceitfulness of sin**

Vs. 13-15 The Greek word “*exhort*” and means to “*call with a loud voice*” and in conjunction with the word “*today*” means that these Hebrew possessing believers were to continually call with a loud voice to these Hebrew professing believers NOT to harden their heart and go back to trusting in the “Levitical sacrifices” in stead of the “crucified Messiah”. Further more the writer describes what the leading cause was of their turning back to the “*Levitical sacrifices*” in stead of the “*crucified Messiah*” as “***deceitfulness of sin***”. The word in the Greek means to “trick” and the hardening of the heart was caused by this “trick of sin”; which was that they could still trust in “Levitical sacrifices” while intellectually professing belief in the “crucified Messiah”. This is the same point that the writer will take up in Hebrews 10:4 where he writes, “***For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins***.” In verse 14 the writer illustrates the difference between of “***possessor***” of Christ and a “***professor***” of Christ. The “***possessor***” is a “***partaker of Christ***” and means “*one who holds with another*” or a “***participator***” **sharing IN and partaking OF Jesus the Messiah**. **The chief characteristic** of a “***possessor of Christ***” is described as: “***Holding from the beginning of our confidence steadfastly to the end***”! As in verse 6, which we examined last week, the question of the writer: “***Is* NOT *the* RETENTION *of salvation based upon the* PERSISTENCE *of faith, but the* POSSESSION *of salvation as* EVIDENCED *by a* CONTINUATION *of faith***!” **The writer to the Hebrews is NOT concerned with the future of these Hebrews, he is concerned with their past and present as they have NO FUTURE if they are NOT partakers of Jesus as Messiah as they aren’t saved to start with**! We like these Hebrews: “*Don’t KEEP our salvation based upon persistence of faith, rather we are in possession of His salvation seen by our continuance of faith in Jesus.*” The Greek word for “*confidence*” is translated in Hebrews chapter 11:1 as “*title deed*” and describes in secular Greek as documents bearing ownership of a person’s property. Here it is being used of faith in the Messiah which is the ground of assurance and security that “possessing believers” are saved. If some of these Hebrews have “*possessing fa*ith” that persists to the end of their lives, despite persecution, they have complete security. Finally, in verse 15 the writer warns against the hardening of the heart mentioned in verse 13 and uses the unbelieving generation of Hebrews in the wilderness as an example which all but Caleb and Joshua failed.

1. **Vs. 16-19 Never believed**

Vs.16-19 The writer points out that these ancestral Hebrews of the exodus refused to trust God and instead comprised. The result was all but two of the whole number of those who left Egypt under Moses compromised and perished before every entering into the Land of Promise. This was the same group of Hebrews who had obeyed the prescribed symbol of deliverance, by killing the Passover lamb, and sprinkling its blood over the doorposts. They had followed Moses out of Egypt passed through the Red Sea. Yet, with all of those reasons to continue trust God and “*hold fast firm to the end*” they didn’t.

The real test of their faith would came for the first time when they were asked to trust God to obey against the Giants that could destroy their life in the land of promise, their failure to do so revealed the truth that they never had any faith! ***They had never really believed God. They were only acting as they did to escape the damage, death, and danger of Egypt. But they had no intention of coming into having to trust and obey God in dealing with the conflict of possessing what God had for them if it meant they had to deal with the giants in the land***. They had only intended to leave the effects of Egypt without having to walk in obedience with God!

The application for Christians and the church is the same as for these profession Hebrews: **Our security isn’t based upon “*intellectual*” agreement but upon spiritual commitment**: There is a danger in merely considering the cross of Christ and counting the truth of his death as appropriated for us intellectually and getting baptized based on that intellectual agreement, just as the early Hebrews did at the exodus with the blood of the Passover lamb, going through the waters of the Red Sea baptism. All of this reveals the truth in the Word of God that it is possible that we can:

* ***Profess the Lord Jesus***
* ***Take our stand upon the cross of Christ***
* ***Claim his death for us***
* ***Profess to have been baptized into his body***
* ***Enjoy the God’s Fatherly care***
* ***And even observe him working miracles in our life***

Yet, when God asks us to lay hold of the giants in our life that are destroying us, the Giants of fear, bitterness, jealousy, envy, lust and impatience; things that keep us in bondage, we can refuse to trust Him to defeat these Giants among us. To this the writer says, ***we are in danger of remaining in the wilderness and never entered the promised rest***.

**Hebrews 4:1-13**

**“The radical and revolutionary rest”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-3 Remaining rest**
3. **Vs. 4-10 NEW principle in operation**
4. **Vs. 11-13 The Word of surgery**
5. **Introduction**

We took up the 2nd warning in the book of Hebrews last week, and this week we continue with the result of hardening the heart and that is not entering God’s rest. One of the genuine marks of a person who has “*held of from the beginning with confidence to steadfastly to the end*” is that they enter the rest of God.

1. **Vs. 1-3 Remaining rest**

Vs. 1-3 Having reminded his readers of the generation that came out of Egypt that didn’t enter the rest of Canaan because of unbelief, the writer now continues to warn these present Hebrews of their possible failure of entering the rest of the Messiah. These persecuted professing believers had been taught that “tribulation” was a mark of God’s displeasure and as such found it hard to believe that “rest” was attainable in Jesus. The “Us” refers to professing Hebrew believers at the time of the writing and the “them” to the generation that came out of Egypt. The “good news” that was preached to the professing believers was that there is spiritual rest in the Messiah Jesus, while the good news to the post exodus Hebrews was temporal rest in a land of promise. The truth of the “good news to” post exodus Hebrews didn’t benefit them because though it was heard it was not believed. When those Israelites stood at the borders of the land they had no doubts at all that the land was there, they believed in it. ***Their problem was that they lacked the faith to act on what they believed! Faith is more than belief; it is activity on belief!*** Verse 3 provides a chief characteristic of those who believe described as “For we who have believed ***DO ENTER THAT REST***.” What happened to these exodus Israelites is what is common amongst many in the evangelical realm as it is known as “***easy believism***”. It un-biblically assumes that a person can raise their hand to receive Jesus as Savior without any personal transformation. ***That is a far different reality then the promise of Christ that when He comes into the human heart there is a “radical change of government that results in a revolutionary change in behavior***.” **A gospel that doesn’t change a soul can not save a soul**! The outcome of this ***“radical change of government that results in a revolutionary change in behavior***” is that for the first time his working in us is rest.

1. **Vs. 4-10 NEW principle in operation**

Vs. 4-10 These verses give us a picture of this rest as seen in the Sabbath. What we learn is that it was available from the foundation of the world. God ceasing from His labors of the seventh day of creation is intend to be **a picture** of what the rest of faith is. God never wants His children to mistake ***shadows for substance***. In verse 8 we read that, “...*if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day*.” It is clear by verse 9 that the shadow of the Sabbath was not all that God intended, as 500 years later in Psalm 95, have recorded that, “...*there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God*.” The writers point is **if these are nothing but shadows then what is the real rest**? That’s where verse 10 comes in as we read, “*For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His*.” There is a radical new and opposite principle of human behavior, that God intends humanity to operate in, it was His plan from the beginning. It was from this principal that humanity fell, and in 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul explained to them by saying, “*Therefore,* ***if anyone is in Christ****, he is a* ***new creation****;* ***old things have passed away****; behold,* ***all things have become new***.” ***It is this NEW principle in operation in our life, that reveals to us that we can have assurance that we belong to the body of Christ.*** Humanity after the fall lives in a lie fostered by satan about human activity. We have been told and believe the lie that we have the DNA to be what we want to be when we want to be, we can achieve whatever we desire to be. We are certain we have what it takes, we can educate ourselves, develop new skills, and when we do we will have what it takes to be what we want to be. That’s the lie that the New Testament writers discovered when they came to Christ:

* ***Consider Paul’s confession of this discovery in Philippians 3:3-10 where he wrote***:

“*For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus,* ***and have no confidence in the flesh****, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* ***But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.*** *Yet indeed* ***I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*** *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*.”

* ***Then there is Jesus’ on words in John 15:5:*** “***I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing***.”
* To which Paul gives a hearty Amen in Philippians 4:13: He writes “***I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*.**”

**Saints the truth is**: We don’t have what it takes, and we never did. **The only one who can live the Christian life is Jesus Christ in and through us**. Our part is to depend upon him and not upon us, and to do so in: Every situation, and every circumstance, allowing Him to work and perform every activity. Thus ***we cease from our own labors***. ***What’s odd is every true Christian began their Christian life this way***! We all came to the place where we stopped trying to save ourselves. We looked to the Lord Jesus, and received him, and rested by trusting in His finished work. But now as believers we have become at times what Paul declared to Galatians in 3:3 when he wrote, “*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit,* ***are you now being made perfect by the flesh***?” We stopped heeding the exhortation of Paul’s in Colossians 2:6 where we are told, “*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord,* ***so walk in Him****.*” And because of this we have stopped “*looking unto Jesus, the author* ***and finisher*** *of our faith*”, Hebrews 12:2. **The result of this truth in the life of the believer is Rest**! We now ought to have relief and release, from ***worrying***, ***fretting*** and ***straining***, because we are resting upon the One who is completely adequate to do through us everything that needs to be done. The word that is emphasized with regards to this ***NEW principle in operation in our life*** is the word “**TODAY**”. This informs us that God's design for living is **TODAY***,* and not waiting until we are in heaven. ***What’s being given to us is NOT inactivity, but rather freedom from straining in our own effort***. He expects everything to be done by the Colossians 3:17 principal where we are told that, “**whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him**.”

**IV. Vs. 11-13 The Word of surgery**

Vs.11-13 Looking at the above truth about a ***NEW principle in operation in our life,*** ought to bring every reader to two realizations:

1. ***Lord, please show me how to enter into this rest, I want to know what this is in my life***!
2. ***Then in verse 12 we realize that the instrument by which we enter in, is the Word of God.***

In order to enter into this new principal, we must repudiate the old. But the problem is, the old activity is so ingrained in us that we automatically respond to old thought patterns. We have a natural reaction to just play “**OLD TAPES**” and because of this the new life of Jesus never gets heard. We find ourselves just singing the same old tunes of bitterness, impatience, anger, frustration, anxiety, worry, fear, uncertainty and inferiority. There is only one thing that can get us from playing the same worn out songs: The word of God! The writer informs us that the Word of God is living and powerful. It is described as, “*living*” and the Greek tense of the verb indicates “*constantly active*”. It is “*powerful*” and the Greek word used is one in which we get our English word “*energy*” from and describes again an “*active and effective energy*”. The word “*sharper*” in the Greek is “to cut” and describes the word of God as having an incisive and penetrating quality as it lays bare ALL, self-delusions and moral false arguments. ***In the of the Holy Spirit it has a two-edged action***.

1. ***It strips off the false***: It exposes the entrenched power of the flesh in our life, and strips it off. The word of God, is utterly ruthless, moving in on us, backing us into a corner, taking down all our fences and facades, worming its way right into the heart of our nature, discerning even between the soul and the spirit.
2. ***It unveils what’s true***: When we come to the place where we are ready to take a good look at ourselves, then there comes the marvelous, healing, wholesome, comforting, sweet, delivering word that sets us on our feet again, and shows us, in Christ, every provision for every need. We step out each fresh, each new day into the glorious experience of a victory that is already won in Christ.

Further more it is described as “piercing” and the Greek word her means to “go through”. The phrase “*even to the* ***DIVISION*** *of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow*” is interesting in the Greek. They DO NOT mean dividing of the soul and the spirit or of the joints from the marrow. Rather it means going through the soul and going through the spirit, as defined by “*joints and marrow*” which are not in contact with each other and therefore can not be divided. The dividing IS NOT that of one thing from another by piercing it but rather of separating the elements of the soul and the elements of the spirit so we are able to see what the true make up of them. This is further clarified by the phrase, “*and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*.” The Greek word “*discerner*” is a compound word that means to “*sift out and analyze*”.

The outcome of this is in verse 13. We all remember Genesis and the Story of Adam and Eve where after the fall they attempted to hide themselves from God. They hid because they realized they was naked and he were ashamed and tried to clothe themselves. That’s what happens we we are examined by the Word of God. James 1:23 describes the Word of God as a mirror; that shows us as we truly are not as we want others too see us as. But this stripping away also through the same Word of God enables us to see ourselves as God the Father sees us in His Son. We are truly we we are, just sinners saved by grace, with nothing to defend, nothing that need be hidden, nothing that cannot be fully exposed to everyone. We have entered into His rest. All our walls and barriers have come down and we are FREE from hiding any more. Because we are what we are before God, we can be exactly what we are before all of humanity. In 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 Paul wrote of what this new view looked like in himself when he wrote, “***For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.***”

**Hebrews 4:14-16**

**“*I’m only human*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 14 Passed through the heavens**
3. **Vs. 15 Sympathetic high priest**
4. **Vs. 16 Throne of grace**
5. **Introduction**

Last week we learned that a ***radical change of government will result in a revolutionary change in behavior which will be seen in a rousing principle of human energy known as “rest”***. It is essential that every Christian “***be diligent to enter this rest***” (verse 11). *The sustained inability to enter God’s rest is an indication that the professing believer is only that, which proves they have never had a real conversion.* This rousing principle of REST, is not an option that we can choose to accept or ignore. ***It is the whole goal of God's work in human hearts***. This principle is activity out of rest is where we cease from our self-directed activities, we stop being the CENTER of our own universe where we have been striving to live every sense our inception. This new rousing principle of rest, is made available to us only in Jesus Christ, and it causes us to not only cease from our self-directed activities, it also enables us to trust in the ability of Jesus through the Holy Spirit to work through us.

This is accomplished though faith or trust. Now many people think that this is the weak link as they have a built in excuse as to why they can never enter God’s rest because they “*just don’t have enough faith*”. But the truth is that every one exercises faith or trust ever moment of the day. We trust that the alarm will go off as it is supposed to do, we trust our cars will run as they are designed to do. Why we even trust our fellow passengers on this spinning ball as we count on them to do what they are supposed to be doing. The problem isn’t that we “*just don’t have enough faith*”; no the problem is that we find it easier to place our faith and trust in objects and people who fail far more often then God who has never failed once! We have no idea who the person is that made our alarm clock or car is. In fact, several times a year we get notices of recalls proving that the people we placed our trust in weren’t as trustworthy or reliable as we assumed. But I can’t think of one time when I’ve trusted in God that He has ever disappointed me, where He has failed to do what He said He was going to do. This is what the life of rest is all about; trusting in the Lord Jesus who has come to indwell our hearts, to do through us all that we do, using the functions of our human personality to do so. That is rest. This takes us away from our favorite excuse for failure, “***Well, I'm only human.***” In this section of Hebrews, we learn that as we trust Jesus to work in and through our lives we are “***NOT ONLY HUMAN***”: We have a new POWER to meet every situation:

* Not with human wisdom-----but with God’s wisdom
* Not with human strength-----but with God's strength
* Not with the exercise of our own will power----- but by the exercise of absolute surrender and trust in God’s power
1. **Vs. 14 Passed through the heavens**

Vs. 14 The writer through out this letter is not only issuing five warnings against rejecting the Messiah and turning back to the Levitical system of righteousness as seen in the sacrifices, but he is also giving positive support for not doing so in the superiority of Jesus as their Messiah. The writer has taken great pains to prove that Jesus is superior to the prophets, the angels, Moses and Joshua. Here in this section the writer continues proving that Jesus is a superior High Priest to that of Aaron.

* The prophets gave the Word to Israel through the disposition of angels
* Moses led Israel out of Egypt and Joshua led the nation into the land of promise

But ***all of that would mean nothing if Israel didn’t have a High Priest who could mediate salvation*** and that position belonged to none of the above, it belonged to Aaron. But the question the readers would have asked was: ***In what way is Jesus better than Aaron as a High Priest***?

1. Vs. 13 The first way the writer showed Jesus’ superiority was in in the previous section in verse 13 where we are told that “*before Him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we must give an account.*” ***Jesus Christ is superior to Aaron in His knowledge about those He serves as High Priest***. Jesus knows us thoroughly, sees everything about us. Nothing is hidden from Him we are absolutely open before Him. He knows our weaknesses. He knows what temptations we deal with. He knows with in all of us is a hunger for acceptance. He knows, that under pressure we will tend to excuse our failure.
2. Vs. 14 The writer now gives the 2nd way that Jesus is superior to Aaron in verse 14, “*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest* ***who has passed through the heavens****, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession*.” Here we are told that, Jesus is the only one who has “*passed* ***THROUGH*** *the heavens*.” The word “*through*” in the Greek is in the perfect tense which ***speaks of a completed action in the past that has results in the present***. The superiority of Jesus over Aaron as High Priest is stated in that little word “***THROUGH***”. These Hebrew readers were very familiar the work of the High Priest and were completely dependent upon him to accomplish his tasks or they would remain in their sin. The High Priest would need to pass “***THROUGH***” the court of the tabernacle, “***THROUGH***” the Holy Place, into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the atoning blood of the Lamb upon the mercy seat atop of the Ark of the covenant. **But all of this was a shadow of the real thing**. Aaron could accomplish the shadow but not “*passing* ***THROUGH*** *the heavens*”. This isn’t just saying that Jesus “*passed* ***INTO*** *the heavens*” but that He “*passed* ***THROUGH*** *the heavens*”. The difference is that when we take people and put them on a rocket and blast them off into space they pass into the heavens but they are still within the limits of “***time and space***”. No matter how for we could send them even if it was possible to send them to the farthest reaches of the universe **they would still be in the heavens**. But here the claim is that Jesus has “***passed THROUGH the heavens***”, **went outside of the limits of time and space**. Aaron could never perform this! Friends, the atonement was NOT complete at the brazen altar, the atonement had to be carried “THROUGH” into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled on the Mercy seat for it to be complete. This mercy seat in the tabernacle was only a ***REPLICA*** of the one in heaven. ***Jesus sacrifice for our atonement wasn’t compete at the cross.*** It wasn’t completed until He as our High Priest entered to heaven with HIS own BLOOD and presented it upon the mercy seat in Glory in His bloodless body that our sin has been paid for. This is what the writer of Hebrews states in Hebrews 9:12 “*Not with the blood of goats and calves,* ***but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all****, having obtained eternal redemption*.” Not only was Aaron unable to offer a ***lasting sacrifice*** that would pay for sin, even if he could’ve he wouldn’t have been able to “*pass* ***THROUGH*** *the heavens*” to complete the atonement. John describes this very scene in Revelation 5:6 where he describes what he sees saying, “*And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood* ***a Lamb as though it had been slain****.*.” Jesus not only “*passed* ***THROUGH*** *the heavens*” but he had to over come satanic obstacles according to Ephesians 6:12 “*spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places*” and Colossians 2:15 “*having disarmed principalities and powers*..” This is an amazing picture of the battle that Jesus waged after His death on the cross as he “*passed* ***THROUGH*** *the heavens*” to the mercy seat to complete the atonement. Jesus is superior because there are no limits to his power to accomplish this.
3. How is Jesus able to accomplish this amazing feat as High Priest? The writer tells the readers, “Jesus Christ the Son of God”. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said of Himself, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*.” The writer declares not only His title as, “the Son of God” but as Paul declared in Colossians 2:9 that “*in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*”. Jesus was a greater High Priest than Aaron because of what he alone could accomplish “passing THROUGH the heavens” but the writers point is that “*Who Jesus is as the Son of God*” is what enabled Him to accomplish what He did!

After having made these statements the writer again warns his readers to “*hold fast our confession*”. These professing believers were giving up the eternal for the temporary, renouncing their professed trust in Jesus as the great High Priest for Aaron!

1. **Vs. 15 Sympathetic high priest**

Vs. 15 The writer also makes clear that though the Lord Jesus has passed into the place of supreme power, with no limits upon his ability to work, he has not lost His compassion and mercy towards us as He is fully aware of the human limitations and problems. “*We have not a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*” The Greek word “*sympathize*” is a compound word that means to “*suffer with*” and means more than just a knowledge of human infirmity. It points to a knowledge that shares a common experience with a person. The Greek word “*weakness*” deals not with physical sufferings but with moral temptations which is further explained by the words “*in all points tempted as we are*”. Jesus, in His earthly life went through a full life of every pressure, every temptation, every fear, and by every anxiety and every worry. He was tempted in a greater way than any person has ever been, yet he did it without failure, without sinning. Never once did he fall.

1. **Vs. 16 Throne of grace**

Vs. 16 The writer exhorts these professing believers to do more than give intellectual assent and obtain salvation. The Greek phrase “*Let us come*” was a familiar phrase used by the Hebrews to describe their approach to God through the first testament sacrifices and is here being used to approach God through the sacrifice of Jesus as Messiah. By doing so they would:

1. **Obtain Mercy**: This is what is need for past sins and is justification
2. **Find Grace**: This is what is needed for present and future sins and is sanctification

Here we have “*four words that change everything and forever remove*” our need to excuse our failure. The words don’t seem initially to be that big of deal, but when the reference is to the Holy God they change everything and everyone! The four words that are a real game changer for humanity are the revelation that God sits upon: “***The throne of grace***.” The great reformers, nailed it when they summed up their movement taken from the Word of God as: ***No sacrifice but Calvary; No priest but Christ; No confession but to the throne of grace!*** These three truths turned Europe upside down during the Middle Ages. There are two truths here that aren’t normally associated A throne always speaks of authority and power, while grace conveys the idea of sympathy and understanding. These two thoughts are normally combined together but here in Jesus Christ they are. ***We have in Jesus a person with infinite power, yet He is in complete and utter sympathy with us***. Because of the figurative language employed in Scripture the perceived idea is that heaven is some place a long long far away in space somewhere, a great distance from earth and us. But the truth is heaven is outside time and space, where we currently dwell. And based upon that heaven and more specifically the “the throne of grace” can be within us as well as around us, above us, and beyond us. ***The throne of grace is not in remote space; it is right in the heart of a believer in whom Jesus Christ dwells***. To come to “*the throne of grace*” does not mean we go into our prayer closet and make a long distant call. Instead it means to look upon the One who indwells us. The throne of grace is that close to us, and available to us.

Because of this fact the writer says, “*let us draw near with boldness, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help every time we need it*.” That is, all the time, every time you need it! Don’t believe the lie of satan that you need to save these, you need to use them not save them.

**Hebrews 5:1-10**

**“*The perfect priest*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-4 Four qualification for a priest**
3. **Vs. 5-10 Jesus the perfect priest**
4. **Introduction**

In the arena of religion one of the most important questions a follower of one religion can ask the follower of another religion is, “***Who “mediates” between you and your god***?” “***Who do you go too when you have violated your religious practice and now need to be pardoned***?” We Christians might ask, “***What do you do about SIN***?” we are in the heart of the book of Hebrews chapters 5-9 and it is all about answering that question and as such it’s all about Jesus as our High Priest and what He alone has done about SIN! The Hebrews, in which the author writes, were familiar with the idea of the Messiah and they were familiar about the high priest but they were ***not familiar with the Messiah also being the High Priest***. To complicate things, the writer needs to combat what was known about Jesus as far as His earthly ancestry being from the tribe of Judah not form the priestly tribe of Levi as Moses and Aaron were. Jesus while on earth had no access to the temple as a priest, He never performed any priestly duties which would have contradicted the Hebrews concept of the priesthood.

1. **Vs. 1-4 Four qualification for a priest**

As we continue looking at Jesus’ superiority over that of Aaron as high priest the first four verses deal with the ***general qualifications***to be considered a high priest. We know this to be the case by the initial words of the writer in chapter 5 as we read, “*for every high priest*” and this indicates that he is not speaking specifically of Jesus Christ. This can be easily compared to the opening words of verse 5 where we read, “*So also Christ*” which indicate that ***this section is dealing specifically with Jesus as High Priest***. So in the first four verses of the 5th chapter the writer lists ***four regulations or qualifications, to be a priest in Israel***. The writer is reminding these Hebrews what a priest really is. He is **NOT** to be identified by what he wares or the tasks he officiates. These four qualifications for a priest are:

1. Vs. 1a “***Taken from among men***”: I realize that in todays society of political correctness and gender equality this maybe offensive but “***A priest must first be a man***”. But more importantly as this relates to Jesus, in order to represent humanity Jesus needed to cover His deity with His humanity. Paul writes of this in Philippians 2:6-7 saying, “*who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men*.” He entered the human race as a babe in Bethlehem.
2. Vs. 1b “***He may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins***”: The second qualification isn’t so much a qualification as it is ***a responsibility***. Further more it isn’t centered around what he does so much as ***WHY*** he must do what he does. The Hebrew priests chief concern is dealing with “sins”! The priest offered sacrifices to deal with ***the single most important problem facing humanity: That which separates man from God***. **He must deal with universal problem of continual personal failure, SIN and the enviable consequences of that failure of sin, GUILT!** This is the experience of every single person in humanity and no person has been able to escape its grip over our lives. There is not a person save Jesus who has ever known what it is to not suffer from SIN and a sense of GUILT. The problem isn’t just sin and rebellion, no the problem is what do we do once we have had our “*fun of sin and rebellion*” and all we have left is guilt and shame? The antidote to sin and the consequences of sin, GUILT is life must be sacrificed and a priest must therefore offer that sacrifice. Jesus completely fulfilled this at the cross when as both the sacrifice (the Lamb of God) and the High Priest He became both the priest and the Victim. And as we noted already in 4:14 “*passed through the heavens*” presenting His own blood to the Father at the mercy seat.
3. Vs. 3 “***As for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins***”: The third qualification of a priest is that he must himself be afflicted with the same single most important problem facing humanity, that which separates man from God. He must understand the same problems others face. But here lies the problem some of these Hebrews had with Jesus: ***How could Jesus Christ fulfill this and still be sinless***? ***How could he live as a man and never sin, and yet understand how we feel when we sin***? This was the area that the enemy was using to dislodge the faith of some of these Hebrews under intense persecution. We will return to this in a bit as it is the whole point of the passage.
4. Vs. 4 “***No man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was***”: The fourth qualification of a priest is that he must be appointed by God! ***A man doesn’t decide this as a career choice but rather is called too it by God***. The truth is no church, or institution can ordain priests, only God can do that. ***The purpose of a priest, was to cleanse and strengthen humanity making us fit for life. If a priest didn’t do that then they were he is worthless***. That is what God’s indictment was against the priests or shepherds was in Ezekiel 34 to who only used God’s sheep for their own benefit.
5. **Vs. 5-10 Jesus the perfect priest**

Vs. 5-6 This next section, (verses 5-10), as noted deals with Jesus’ qualifications in light of the four mentioned in the first four verses. The difficulty in this section is that the writer doesn’t take Jesus’ qualifications in the same order as the above four. For instance, ***the first two quotations of verses 5-6 answer the qualifications of 1 and 4 that a priest had to represent humanity in its weakness and be called of God to do so***. To do this the writer quotes two psalms that prove his point.

1. The first quote is out of Psalm 2:7, and relates to Jesus being in the womb of Mary and born in Bethlehem. Thus we see that Jesus fulfilled the first qualification of becoming a priest as He became a man; one with us in the essential humanity of our life.
2. The second quote is out of Psalm 110:4 is where we are told that at the age of thirty he entered upon the priesthood. The difference here is that this quote refers to a different priesthood than that of the Aaronic priesthood; one that was established before Aaron known as the order, of *Melchizedek*. We will learn much more about this mysterious person as we go on in Hebrews. But for now this is a reference to Genesis 14:18-20 and here in psalm 110:4 were we see him as a person who was a king-priest (royal-priest) who lived in the time of Abraham. His ancestry is completely unknown but we do know that he was the king of Salem which was the ancient name for Jerusalem and that he was the priest of the True God. We also realize that he lived long before Aaron and as such the priesthood of Melchizedek superseded the Aaronic priesthood and that his priesthood was unending.

Vs. 7-8 In the remaining 4 verse we take up the 2nd and 3rd qualifications of being a priest the responsibility of taking care of the greatest need of humanity, dealing with sin through the sacrifice and how Jesus could never sin, yet fully sympathize with sinners? Again this is in reverse order as the writer take up the 3rd qualification and how can ***Jesus sympathize with all that we humans go through, if he has never sinned***? The answer to that is in verse 7 and as you read that verse there is no other incident that we know of in the ministry of Jesus that this could refer too other than Jesus prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, which is found in three of the Gospels (Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42 and Luke 22:39-46). This verse fits perfectly into the description where we see Jesus making, prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the Father who was able to save him from death. As the Lord and his disciples left the Upper Room they passed through the dark valley of the Kidron, up unto the side of the Mount of Olives to the olive tree grove where it was his custom to go. Separating three of the disciples, Peter, James and John, he withdrew with them into the deeper shadows of the garden. There followed a protracted period of excruciating torment of spirit that found expression in loud, involuntary cries, streaming tears, and ending in a terrible bloody sweat. Here we come face to face with the mystery of the Garden of Gethsemane:

1. First, is **the total unexpectedness of this to the Lord**. He had gone to the garden, but he suddenly began to be greatly distressed and troubled. Nothing like this is recorded of Him before. In Jesus’ anticipation of what He would be going through and His explanations of it to the disciples, He had never once mentioned Gethsemane. There is no prediction of this in the Old Testament. There are many verses that predict what he would go through on the cross; but there is not one word of what he endured in the garden.
2. Second, we note **His deep unrest of heart, and distress of soul**. Never prior to this do we ever read of Jesus experiencing such a thing. So deeply troubled is Jesus that He does something unprecedented in His earthly ministry he appeals to his own disciples for help. He asked them to bear him up in prayer as he went further into the shadows, falling first to his knees and then to his face, crying out before the Father. There we are told Jesus prayed three separate times each time asking the necessity of what He was presently experiencing. He even asked the Father to make clear to him if this was a necessary activity. The only explanation to Jesus’ behavior is to realize that this experience was so unexpected and sudden that it had left Him for the first time, confused. Such things come upon us all the time but had never come upon Jesus.

To this mystery Hebrews 5:7 reveals that Jesus was facing the full misery which sin produces in the heart of the sinner. The Garden of Gethsemane reveals that Jesus was being exposed to the full intensity of what makes sin in our lives so defeating:

* **Shame**: Shame is the awareness of my unfitness. A self-contempt, a loathing of myself. Not being able to look myself because I have been false to my standards, and ideals. As Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane, suddenly, for the first time, he began to feel ashamed. All the naked filth of human depravity forced itself upon him and he experienced the shame of our misdeeds as though they were his. No wonder he He cried to the Father, “*If it be possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless,"* he adds*, "not my will, but thine, be done*.”
* **Guilt**: After awaking the sleeping disciples Jesus again returned to prayer and He began to feel a sense of guilt. Guilt is the sense of injury done to someone else. It is the awareness of damage that I have caused to the innocent or the undeserving. Jesus experienced an awful sense of guilt, as if He deserving judgment. He writhed in silent torment and Mark tells us he began to pray more earnestly than ever before.
* **Despair**: Once again he came to his disciples and finding them sleeping he went back. And this third experience was the worst of all, as Jesus for the first time experienced despair. He was crushed under a sense of hopelessness, of helpless discouragement, of utter defeat. His eyes filled with tears, his mouth was opened in involuntary, agonized cries, his heart was crushed as in a wine press, so that the blood was literally forced from his veins and his sweat fell to the ground in great, bloody drops.

This is what is meant by the writer of Hebrews in the words in verse 8, “***Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.***” **Jesus through the Garden of Gethsemane experience learned what it means to obey God when every cell in his body wanted to disobey, when everything within him cried out to flee this experience**. Yet, knowing this was the will of God, he obeyed, trusting God to see him through. He learned what it felt like to hang on when failure makes us want to throw the whole thing over. When we are so defeated, so despairing, so filled with shame, and guilt that we want to forget the whole thing. He knows what this is like, he went the whole way, he took the full brunt of it. You and I will never pass through a Gethsemane like he went through. He went the whole distance.

Vs. 9-10 Carries us on to the victory of the cross with the words “Being made perfect”. Because He alone entered into all that any sinner in all their weakness knows, “*He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*.” When we obey him, as he obeyed the Father, then all that God is, is made available to us, just as in the hour of his anguish. Jesus refused to question the Father's wisdom. He refused to blame the Father, to say what He was going through was unfair. ***He refused to take refuge in unbelief even though this came suddenly and unexpectedly upon him***. Instead, Jesus surrender to His Father's loving care and looked to him to sustain Him through what He was experiencing. Psalm 107:27-29 says, “*They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and* ***are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses****. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still.*”

**Hebrews 5:11-14**

**“*Hold the pickles*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 11 Prolonged immaturity**
3. **Vs. 12-14 The cause of the problem**
4. **Introduction**

We come to a pivotal section in our letter to the Hebrews, and the third warning of the letter where the writer warns the reader not to reject spiritual maturity. In this section from 5:11 to 6:12 the writer gives four examples he witnessed in these professing Hebrew believers: Three of them are stated and one is implied. Each of them are given a description that explains their condition:

1. Vs. 11-14 ***The prolonged immature***, those who have “*come to need milk and not solid food.*”
2. Vs. 1-3 ***The maturing believer***, those that have left “*the elementary principals of Christ*”.
3. Vs. 4-8 ***The stillborn***, those “*who were once enlightened but now were endanger of falling away*”.
4. Vs. 9-12 ***The reproducers***, those that have, “*ministered to the saints, and do minister*”.
5. **The prolonged immature**

Vs. 11 This section starts out with the words, “***of whom*** *we have much to say*” and is a direct reference to the topic of Jesus being “*a high priest after the order of Melchizedek*”. The Greek word indicates that what he is referring to is ***the teaching*** about the Melchizedekian priest of Jesus, not Melchizedek specifically. The importance of this truth lay at the heart of these unsaved Hebrews who were returning to the Levitical sacrifices instituted through Aaron instead of the truth of the King of Peace High Priest Jesus, as the lamb of God. The writer wanted to explain this more to them but had to adjust his writing do to their ***prolonged immaturity***. The phrase “***hard to explain***” is to be interpreted by the words “*since you have become dull of hearing*”. In other words, the difficulty of interpretation of this truth about Jesus was **NOT** difficult do to the TRUTH or the challenge of communicating it. The writer explains the cause of this difficulty by the condition of its most visible symptom, “***dull of hearing***”. Further more these professing Hebrew believers had not always suffered from this condition as we are told that they had **BECOME** “*dull of hearing*” which indicates that they were not always in this condition. This is further brought out in 6:4 where we are told that they “*were once enlightened*”. ***Their problem wasn’t in that they COULDN’T receive the truth about Jesus it was in that they WOULDN’T***!

First let’s be plain: There is nothing wrong or unnatural about a ***recently born again believers*** in need of “**MILK**” which is further described in the comparison with the ***maturing believer*** in verse 1 as the “***elementary principals of Christ***”. But the problem described is one in which there were some who had ***been professing Christians for a good many years***. Enough time had passed that ***the expectation of the natural development of maturity*** should have been achieved. By this time through a natural spiritual progression and a NORMAL spiritual DIET, maturity should have enabled them to have been able to rightly divide the Word of God as teachers. But instead they were still dependent upon someone teaching them the basics of the gospel. It was a clear case of “***arrested spiritual development***”.

The rabbi is describing a spiritual condition like one would observe in the physical growth of humans. You can have the cutest little child, that says and does the cutest things when they are of a young age. But if these cute things they say and do persist as their bodies continue to mature and develop the same cute things we observe at a young age are no longer viewed the same. Any parent would experience sorrow over the arrested physical development of their child.

1. **Vs. 12-14 The cause of the problem**

To make matters far worse such an arrested spiritual development was something completely preventable as the person closed themselves off to hearing the truth. To clarify the condition of ***prolonged immaturity,*** the writer makes three observations about this problem.

1. Vs. 12a “*For though* ***by this time*** *you ought to be teachers*”: The Greek word for ***time*** here is time contemplated not a definite period of time. ***These professing Hebrews had sat under solid teaching for a long enough period of time that not only should they have full understanding of the truth that should have been able to communicated it to others by this time!*** The writer clears up a common reason **why this spiritual condition goes undiagnosed** in many people who suffer from it: ***Age alone does not produce maturity***! Our biological age in Christ **doesn’t automatically determine** our “*spiritual maturity*”. It is amazing how many Christians associate their biological years in Christ with the thought of their ***inevitable spiritual growth and maturity***. They refer to this all the time, “*Why I’ve been a Christian 35 years*”, but such a statement doesn’t necessitate that they have spiritually matured to a level of 35 years of walking and depending upon Christ. I suppose we do this because physically, as far as our intellect is concerned, with have done nothing to mature. ***Time has passed and it has been matched by physical transformation***. But our spiritual and psychological development is not the same as our physical development. Have you noticed that the same fleshly attitudes and actions have ***NOT*** dissipated from our life by mere passing of days? ***Passing of time never brings maturity***! There is a big difference in having grown and matured through twenty-five years of experiences. Then having the same experience over twenty-five years and have not grown from it. These Hebrew professing believers had been going through the same experience again and again, but had yet to grow spiritually from it and instead were simply marking time. That is **the definition of immaturity**: *Repeating the same action over and over and expecting different results*. There are far too many Christians in our society that have decided too engage in a ***prolonged adolescence***, that is now merging into ***premature senility***! You can recognize them by the ***pickling process***: Those that have come to SIT, SOAK, and SOUR. The truth is **age will never cure immaturity**!
2. Vs. 12b-14 “*You need someone to teach you again*…” The ***second observation*** the writer makes is that ***arrested spiritual development*** is **self-identifying**. There are **two clear marks that provide a simple test** that we can determine whether we have this condition:
3. The **first mark** is an **inability to instruct others**: Though these believers had been Christians for years they still couldn’t help anyone else. They had nothing to say when other believers were struggling with problems. They couldn’t even point them to Jesus. They were stuck even after many years in only being able to understand the simplest biblical truth. The writer describes them as: Needing milk for spiritual sustenance, instead of solid food. He further defines this as “*unskilled in the word of righteousness*”; which is ***the practice of the Word of God that results in in right conduct and living***. The simple reason for this was because they only want milk. That is ***the first self-identifying mark of immaturity***, is an inability to instruct others.
4. The **second mark** is an **inability to discern good from evil**: This test is seen in the positive trait in verse 14 of those who partake of solid food who can discern both good and evil. The contrast by implication is that those of ***arrested spiritual development*** can’t do that. This trait shows up in ***many varieties***:
5. It can describe ***a person who knows what is right and even thinks they are doing what is right but are in reality continually doing the wrong things***. These spiritually immature are always creating problems and difficulties with others.
6. Then there are those that are ***doctrinally undiscerning***: Christian’s who are characterized by Paul’s critique of them in Ephesians 4:14 as being “*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men*..” They are in continual search for the latest theological fads, books, speakers and video series that proclaim to offer something that they claim can’t be found or is essential to add to ***the simple application of the word of God***. These ***doctrinally undiscerning***; are in a never ending quest for something to add too the Bible or that can replace it.
7. Next is the ***emotionally gullible***: Christian’s who are moved by emotional appeals. They are easily affected by emotional stories and respond to them purely on emotional stimulation and give of their time talent and treasure because of these emotional appeals. They lack the ability because of their dependence upon emotional stimulation to evaluate any work. If it has emotional content, that is all they are looking for.
8. Finally, you have the spiritually immature who are ***personality followers***: Those who fasten themselves to a particular personality or movement and read only their books and listen exclusively to them to the exclusion of others. Those who do this are immature and unable to distinguish the activity of ego, from the manifestation of the Spirit. They applaud what God condemns; and resent what God approves.
9. The ***third observation*** the author makes is that “arrested development” causes the immature to lose out on so much truth that transforms and puts them in risk of losing even more. **The use of the word “babe” in verse 13 carries NO implication of these professing Hebrews salvation**. They are not called “*babes in Christ*” as Paul calls the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3:1. Instead the word in the Greek simply means the immature in contrast to the mature. The qualifying phrase in the context is that this phrase is referring to unsaved Hebrews who were intellectually convinced but not spiritually committed. The writer wanted to give them more on the riches of the Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ which would have blessed them, but because of the their dull of hearing he couldn’t. There is a very grave danger that threatened these professing believers in chapter 6:4-8 that we will get to later if they continue in this condition of prolonged immaturity.

**Hebrews 6:1-3**

**“Moving to maturity”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1a Marks of maturity**
3. **Vs. 1b-3 Six features**
4. **Introduction**

We are back looking at the third warning in this book: ***Rejecting spiritual maturity***! In so doing the writer wrote about four groups that made up the fellowship of Hebrew believers in Rome:

1. Vs. 11-14 ***The prolonged immature***, those who have “*come to need milk and not solid food.*”
2. Vs. 1-3 ***The maturing believer***, those that have left “*the elementary principals of Christ*”.
3. Vs. 4-8 ***The stillborn***, those “*who were once enlightened but now were endanger of falling away*”.
4. Vs. 9-12 ***The reproducers***, those that have, “*ministered to the saints, and do minister*”.

The first general observation is that two of these groups are negative profiles and two are positive profiles:

1. Negative: The ***prolonged immature*** and the ***stillborn***
2. Positive: The ***maturing believer*** and the ***reproducers***

That observation leads us to the mysterious reality that ***all four of these groups existed under the same roof, had the same opportunities to grow under the same teaching presented to them***. The conclusion from this observation is that: **The differences were not to be found in differing spiritual diet or lack of spiritual nurturing**. Instead the lack of results was placed solely upon the listener as they were “*dull of hearing*” (Verse 5:11). Though this was no doubt true of the original recipients of this letter, I believe that this is **NOT always true of the modern evangelical church today**. I’m gravely concerned that we pastor / teachers bare some of the responsibility for the lack of maturity in the church today. There are three ways in which we pastor / teachers have contributed to immaturity with in His Church:

1. ***Diet***: The lack of verse by verse expository, systematic bible teaching, through the books of the Bible as originally written.
2. ***Discipleship***: The lack of discipleship where there exists an expectation of accountability to apply the truths taught.
3. ***Definition***: The changing of the definition of **GROWTH** from “***spiritual maturity***” to “***numerical attendance***”. Where this occurs the focus shifts from Jesus being essential to the believer, to the church being essential to the believer.

With that said we take up focus in the first three verses of chapter 6 of one group that was growing in their faith.

1. **Vs. 1a Marks of maturity**

Vs. 1a It is at once clear that one of the “***marks of maturity***”, by way of illustration from the physical realm, was a natural change in diet from “**Milk**” to “**Meat**”. In chapter 5 verses 12-14 the writer explains that milk is defined as:

* The “***first principles of the oracles of God, that leaves the believer unskilled in the word of righteousness because they are still discussing the elementary principles of Christ.***” It seems, by way of the author’s definition that, “**Milk**” as far as a spiritual diet is concerned is essential for “***salvation***” but lacks the substance and nutrients necessary for our “***sanctification***”. To continue on in a diet that only emphasizes our need to ***get saved*** once we are saved would stunt our continual growth in how to ***daily walk with God***.

What is at issue within this mark of maturity is understanding exactly what the author meant by these two exhortations:

1. ***Leaving*** the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ
2. ***Let us go on*** to perfection

Without the proper study of these two phrases it would be impossible understand the point the writer is making to the original reader. The Greek word “*leaving*” is a verb that means to “*put off*” and is further clarified by the words “*the elementary principles of Christ*.” The word implies an alteration from the original discussion. It carries the idea that a person can’t go on without separating themselves from that which they were attached described here as “*the elementary principles of Christ*.” In the context of the letter it seems as though the ***prolonged immature*** remained in this state due to a fixation on Jesus atonement as the Christ which they just continued to wrestle against, in light of the the Levitical sacrifices. ***That continual debate kept them from moving onto maturity.*** The words “*Let us go on*” in classic Greek were used to “*bring or carry*”. These two words help to define the meaning of “*the elementary principles of Christ*.” Which was the emphasis upon the superiority of Jesus’ sacrifice to that of the Levitical sacrifices. All of this will be developed further in the letter where in 7:19 the writer will say that the law with regards to the Levitical sacrifices made nothing perfect where as in chapter 10:12 after Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins He sat down.

This is why the writer is urging these professing believers to graduate from milk to meat, from immature diet to solid food, as he says in 5:14, “*Solid food belongs to those who are of full age*.” ***The continuation of the exclusivity of the diet had stunted their maturity***. ***As already stated spiritual maturity is not produced automatically by age, neither is it produced by proximity to “solid food” or teaching***. **It is produced by practice**! Which is what the author had said in verse 14 saying, “*Those who by* ***reason of USE*** *have their senses* ***EXERCISED*** *to discern both good and evil.*” Those two words “***USE***” and “***EXERCISED***” support the position that maturity requires the “***hear of the word of God to be a doer of the word of God***” as James wrote in 1:23. ***Spiritual maturity is produced when we act on what we believe***, putting it into practice. But to reach this maturity requires us to leave behind the ABC's, or elementary truths, by which we came to Christian faith. The writer says, “*Not laying again the foundation*.” **While it vital to have a solid foundation to build upon, there is NO ADVANTAGE to tearing up a solid foundation regularly to build the same one again and again**. Instead “***repetitive foundation laying***” is a sign of arrested development and immaturity. One commentary noted that, “*American evangelicals don’t usually come to church to learn anything. Instead what they want to hear is the same old stuff so they can say, Amen too*!”

1. **Vs. 1b-3 Six features**

Vs. 1b-2 What needed to be set aside was the typology, pictures of the 1st testament that pointed to the reality of the Lamb of God. They needed to let go and move on from the incomplete to the completed work of God in Christ. The phrase “*elementary principles of Christ*” is very different in the Greek. **But it presents a question**: *If these Hebrews had left the 1st testament sacrifices and made profession of the Messiah, why does the writer exhort them to abandon these same sacrifices?* The answer is that ***they had only made a mere intellectual agreement*** to this that was not being trusted upon under the stress of persecution. ***These Hebrews had NOT yet finally and irrevocably discarded the old practice for the new truth***! This “***repetitive foundation laying***” they kept relaying was over 6 things that was ingrained in the 1st testament understanding mentioned in verses 1-2. We must avoid making our application based upon what we think these six things mean TODAY, to be blunt what they mean today is irrelevant! What we must investigate is what the intended meaning was to those that read the original letter. The foundation of the 1st Covenant had six features:

1. Vs. 1b ***Repentance from dead works***: In the 1st testament this meant ***turning away from evil sinful deeds that brings about the effects of death***. Ezekiel said in 18:4 “*The soul that sins will die*.” Turning away from dead works and turning towards God was part of their foundation but what was missing was **HOW** to do so. Early on in the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus both preached to “*Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand*.” But as we move on past this we note that Paul preached to the elders of the Ephesian Church in Acts 20:21 “..*repentance toward God and* ***faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ****.*” What was missing was “*faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*”. Jesus had declared in John 14:6 “*No one comes to the Father, but through Me*.” A person no matter how sincere their repentance can not turn to God apart from faith in Jesus Christ! Jesus IS THE ONLY WAY TO TURN TO GOD! Repentance from evil works is an important truth but **it was incomplete** if it was not accompanied by faith in Jesus! So the writer tells them that they needed to abandon the partial work for the completed work!
2. Vs. 1c ***And of faith towards God***: This is mostly covered in the above segment but in Acts 2:38 we are told that Peter preached, “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized* ***in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins***”. Clearly there is no repentance apart from faith in Jesus. The only faith acceptable to God is faith in God the Son, as already noted in John 14:6. ***Some of the Hebrews addressed in this letter believed in God, but they were not saved. Their repentance from evil works and faith towards God was sincere but couldn’t be completed without Jesus Christ***, as Acts 4:12 tells us that, “*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*.”
3. Vs. 2a ***Of the doctrine of baptisms***: The word “*baptisms*” is an unfortunate translation. The Greek word is NOT “*bap-****tizo***” which is always used for the ordinance of baptism but is instead the Greek word “*bap-****tismos***” which means **washings**! This fact is yet another indication that this passage is addressing Hebrew professing believers and not true followers of Christ. Every Hebrew home had a basin by the door used for ceremonial washings. **It is these washings that the writer is telling his readers to abandon and move on from**. The reason for this was predicted in Ezekiel 36:25-27 Where we read the Lord say, “*Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*” The old washings were symbolic but clearly temporary where as the new washing was once and for all. It was this NEW washing that Jesus spoke of to Nicodemus where He said, “*Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*.”
4. Vs. 2b ***Of laying on of hands***: This has noting to do with the New Testament practice of Acts 6:6, 8:17 and 1 Timothy 4:14 where you place you hands on someone to pray over them but instead is a reference to a 1st Testament practice where the person who brought a sacrifice to the priest would place their hands on it, to symbolize their identification with it on the sacrifice. The writer is telling them to abandon this practice because our identification is with Jesus Christ not by laying our hands upon Him as our sacrifice but because we have trust in His work on our behalf. We now “lay hold” of Christ by trusting in Him.
5. Vs. 2c ***Of resurrection of the dead***: The doctrine of the resurrection in the 1st Testament was very incomplete. There was an understanding that there was life after death and rewards for the righteous and judgment for the wicked. In Job 19:26 we read Job’s hope that, “after my skin is destroyed, this *I know,* that in my flesh I shall see God” and as such we learn that the resurrection was bodily, and not just spiritual. But in the New Testament the doctrine of the resurrection is detailed and complete and became a major theme of early church teaching. Jesus said in John 11:25 “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*” There is considerable clarity in the New Testament in passages like 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 John 3:2 where we read that “*Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*.” The writer asks his readers to abandon the incomplete teaching of the resurrection for the complete understanding brought about in trusting Jesus “*the resurrection and the life*”.
6. Vs. 2d ***And of eternal judgment***: The 1st testament spoke some on the final judgment like Ecclesiastes 12:14 where we read, “*For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil*.” But in the New Testament we are given a fuller picture like Romans 8:1 where we read, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*” Or 1 Cor. 3:12-15 where we are told about the believer’s judgment for reward or lack of reward. Or Matthew 25:31-46 of the separation of the sheep from the goats. The final great white throne judgment of Rev. 20:11-15. Leaving the elementary principles on eternal judgment to the fuller understanding that came by faith in Christ is the writers appeal.

Vs. 3 The phrase in “***And this we will do if God permits***” must be understood in the context of “***Leaving*** the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ” and “***Let us go on*** to perfection” It is a reference of the six foundational aspects these professing believers were holding on to instead of moving onto maturity. There are two possible interpretations to this brief verse: Some see it as the writer saying “*I will go on and teach you what you need to know about these above six things if God permits me*.” Others think that the writer is saying, “*You will go on to maturity if you allow yourself to move on from these six foundational aspects of the 1st testament*.” I think that the writer could be thinking of both of these as maturity is going to require them by the work of the Holy Spirit both a greater understanding and an abandoning of the 1st testament teaching.

**Hebrews 6:1-3**

**“Moving to maturity”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1a Marks of maturity**
3. **Vs. 1b-3 Six features**
4. **Introduction**

We are back looking at the third warning in this book: ***Rejecting spiritual maturity***! In so doing the writer wrote about four groups that made up the fellowship of Hebrew believers in Rome:

1. Vs. 11-14 ***The prolonged immature***, those who have “*come to need milk and not solid food.*”
2. Vs. 1-3 ***The maturing believer***, those that have left “*the elementary principals of Christ*”.
3. Vs. 4-8 ***The stillborn***, those “*who were once enlightened but now were endanger of falling away*”.
4. Vs. 9-12 ***The reproducers***, those that have, “*ministered to the saints, and do minister*”.

The first general observation is that two of these groups are negative profiles and two are positive profiles:

1. Negative: The ***prolonged immature*** and the ***stillborn***
2. Positive: The ***maturing believer*** and the ***reproducers***

That observation leads us to the mysterious reality that ***all four of these groups existed under the same roof, had the same opportunities to grow under the same teaching presented to them***. The conclusion from this observation is that: **The differences were not to be found in differing spiritual diet or lack of spiritual nurturing**. Instead the lack of results was placed solely upon the listener as they were “*dull of hearing*” (Verse 5:11). Though this was no doubt true of the original recipients of this letter, I believe that this is **NOT always true of the modern evangelical church today**. I’m gravely concerned that we pastor / teachers bare some of the responsibility for the lack of maturity in the church today. There are three ways in which we pastor / teachers have contributed to immaturity with in His Church:

1. ***Diet***: The lack of verse by verse expository, systematic bible teaching, through the books of the Bible as originally written.
2. ***Discipleship***: The lack of discipleship where there exists an expectation of accountability to apply the truths taught.
3. ***Definition***: The changing of the definition of **GROWTH** from “***spiritual maturity***” to “***numerical attendance***”. Where this occurs the focus shifts from Jesus being essential to the believer, to the church being essential to the believer.

With that said we take up focus in the first three verses of chapter 6 of one group that was growing in their faith.

1. **Vs. 1a Marks of maturity**

Vs. 1a It is at once clear that one of the “***marks of maturity***”, by way of illustration from the physical realm, was a natural change in diet from “**Milk**” to “**Meat**”. In chapter 5 verses 12-14 the writer explains that milk is defined as:

* The “***first principles of the oracles of God, that leaves the believer unskilled in the word of righteousness because they are still discussing the elementary principles of Christ.***” It seems, by way of the author’s definition that, “**Milk**” as far as a spiritual diet is concerned is essential for “***salvation***” but lacks the substance and nutrients necessary for our “***sanctification***”. To continue on in a diet that only emphasizes our need to ***get saved*** once we are saved would stunt our continual growth in how to ***daily walk with God***.

What is at issue within this mark of maturity is understanding exactly what the author meant by these two exhortations:

1. ***Leaving*** the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ
2. ***Let us go on*** to perfection

Without the proper study of these two phrases it would be impossible understand the point the writer is making to the original reader. The Greek word “*leaving*” is a verb that means to “*put off*” and is further clarified by the words “*the elementary principles of Christ*.” The word implies an alteration from the original discussion. It carries the idea that a person can’t go on without separating themselves from that which they were attached described here as “*the elementary principles of Christ*.” In the context of the letter it seems as though the ***prolonged immature*** remained in this state due to a fixation on Jesus atonement as the Christ which they just continued to wrestle against, in light of the the Levitical sacrifices. ***That continual debate kept them from moving onto maturity.*** The words “*Let us go on*” in classic Greek were used to “*bring or carry*”. These two words help to define the meaning of “*the elementary principles of Christ*.” Which was the emphasis upon the superiority of Jesus’ sacrifice to that of the Levitical sacrifices. All of this will be developed further in the letter where in 7:19 the writer will say that the law with regards to the Levitical sacrifices made nothing perfect where as in chapter 10:12 after Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins He sat down.

This is why the writer is urging these professing believers to graduate from milk to meat, from immature diet to solid food, as he says in 5:14, “*Solid food belongs to those who are of full age*.” ***The continuation of the exclusivity of the diet had stunted their maturity***. ***As already stated spiritual maturity is not produced automatically by age, neither is it produced by proximity to “solid food” or teaching***. **It is produced by practice**! Which is what the author had said in verse 14 saying, “*Those who by* ***reason of USE*** *have their senses* ***EXERCISED*** *to discern both good and evil.*” Those two words “***USE***” and “***EXERCISED***” support the position that maturity requires the “***hear of the word of God to be a doer of the word of God***” as James wrote in 1:23. ***Spiritual maturity is produced when we act on what we believe***, putting it into practice. But to reach this maturity requires us to leave behind the ABC's, or elementary truths, by which we came to Christian faith. The writer says, “*Not laying again the foundation*.” **While it vital to have a solid foundation to build upon, there is NO ADVANTAGE to tearing up a solid foundation regularly to build the same one again and again**. Instead “***repetitive foundation laying***” is a sign of arrested development and immaturity. One commentary noted that, “*American evangelicals don’t usually come to church to learn anything. Instead what they want to hear is the same old stuff so they can say, Amen too*!”

1. **Vs. 1b-3 Six features**

Vs. 1b-2 What needed to be set aside was the typology, pictures of the 1st testament that pointed to the reality of the Lamb of God. They needed to let go and move on from the incomplete to the completed work of God in Christ. The phrase “*elementary principles of Christ*” is very different in the Greek. **But it presents a question**: *If these Hebrews had left the 1st testament sacrifices and made profession of the Messiah, why does the writer exhort them to abandon these same sacrifices?* The answer is that ***they had only made a mere intellectual agreement*** to this that was not being trusted upon under the stress of persecution. ***These Hebrews had NOT yet finally and irrevocably discarded the old practice for the new truth***! This “***repetitive foundation laying***” they kept relaying was over 6 things that was ingrained in the 1st testament understanding mentioned in verses 1-2. We must avoid making our application based upon what we think these six things mean TODAY, to be blunt what they mean today is irrelevant! What we must investigate is what the intended meaning was to those that read the original letter. The foundation of the 1st Covenant had six features:

1. Vs. 1b ***Repentance from dead works***: In the 1st testament this meant ***turning away from evil sinful deeds that brings about the effects of death***. Ezekiel said in 18:4 “*The soul that sins will die*.” Turning away from dead works and turning towards God was part of their foundation but what was missing was **HOW** to do so. Early on in the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus both preached to “*Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand*.” But as we move on past this we note that Paul preached to the elders of the Ephesian Church in Acts 20:21 “..*repentance toward God and* ***faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ****.*” What was missing was “*faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*”. Jesus had declared in John 14:6 “*No one comes to the Father, but through Me*.” A person no matter how sincere their repentance can not turn to God apart from faith in Jesus Christ! Jesus IS THE ONLY WAY TO TURN TO GOD! Repentance from evil works is an important truth but **it was incomplete** if it was not accompanied by faith in Jesus! So the writer tells them that they needed to abandon the partial work for the completed work!
2. Vs. 1c ***And of faith towards God***: This is mostly covered in the above segment but in Acts 2:38 we are told that Peter preached, “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized* ***in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins***”. Clearly there is no repentance apart from faith in Jesus. The only faith acceptable to God is faith in God the Son, as already noted in John 14:6. ***Some of the Hebrews addressed in this letter believed in God, but they were not saved. Their repentance from evil works and faith towards God was sincere but couldn’t be completed without Jesus Christ***, as Acts 4:12 tells us that, “*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*.”
3. Vs. 2a ***Of the doctrine of baptisms***: The word “*baptisms*” is an unfortunate translation. The Greek word is NOT “*bap-****tizo***” which is always used for the ordinance of baptism but is instead the Greek word “*bap-****tismos***” which means **washings**! This fact is yet another indication that this passage is addressing Hebrew professing believers and not true followers of Christ. Every Hebrew home had a basin by the door used for ceremonial washings. **It is these washings that the writer is telling his readers to abandon and move on from**. The reason for this was predicted in Ezekiel 36:25-27 Where we read the Lord say, “*Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*” The old washings were symbolic but clearly temporary where as the new washing was once and for all. It was this NEW washing that Jesus spoke of to Nicodemus where He said, “*Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*.”
4. Vs. 2b ***Of laying on of hands***: This has noting to do with the New Testament practice of Acts 6:6, 8:17 and 1 Timothy 4:14 where you place you hands on someone to pray over them but instead is a reference to a 1st Testament practice where the person who brought a sacrifice to the priest would place their hands on it, to symbolize their identification with it on the sacrifice. The writer is telling them to abandon this practice because our identification is with Jesus Christ not by laying our hands upon Him as our sacrifice but because we have trust in His work on our behalf. We now “lay hold” of Christ by trusting in Him.
5. Vs. 2c ***Of resurrection of the dead***: The doctrine of the resurrection in the 1st Testament was very incomplete. There was an understanding that there was life after death and rewards for the righteous and judgment for the wicked. In Job 19:26 we read Job’s hope that, “after my skin is destroyed, this *I know,* that in my flesh I shall see God” and as such we learn that the resurrection was bodily, and not just spiritual. But in the New Testament the doctrine of the resurrection is detailed and complete and became a major theme of early church teaching. Jesus said in John 11:25 “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*” There is considerable clarity in the New Testament in passages like 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 John 3:2 where we read that “*Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*.” The writer asks his readers to abandon the incomplete teaching of the resurrection for the complete understanding brought about in trusting Jesus “*the resurrection and the life*”.
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Vs. 3 The phrase in “***And this we will do if God permits***” must be understood in the context of “***Leaving*** the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ” and “***Let us go on*** to perfection” It is a reference of the six foundational aspects these professing believers were holding on to instead of moving onto maturity. There are two possible interpretations to this brief verse: Some see it as the writer saying “*I will go on and teach you what you need to know about these above six things if God permits me*.” Others think that the writer is saying, “*You will go on to maturity if you allow yourself to move on from these six foundational aspects of the 1st testament*.” I think that the writer could be thinking of both of these as maturity is going to require them by the work of the Holy Spirit both a greater understanding and an abandoning of the 1st testament teaching.

**Hebrews 6:4-8**

**“The impossible enlightened”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 4-5 Five advantages**
3. **Vs. 6-8 The impossible to renew**
4. **Introduction**

Our study brings us now to the third group that made up the the Hebrew speaking church in Rome and the writer does so with four words that sets the tone of his concern for them: “***For it is impossible***”. He doesn’t say highly unlikely but “***impossible***” and with that one word the author unknowingly set in motion one of the most heated debates it Christianity; “***Can a person lose their salvation***?” Though this debate has raged for a 1000 years the first question that needs to be asked by the Bible student is, “***Was this the question the writer was asking and answering in the first place***?” Before we move to unlock this ill respective of the what the writer intended to say to the original readers this is still a very sobering passage! Before we dig into this passage and exactly what the Greek phrases of verses 4-6 means the context in which the writer makes this statement has already been set: *He is not addressing the question of whether a person can lose their salvation.* Instead he is addressing the issue that this specific group of professing believers were demonstrating; some of them were turning back, because of persecution, to the Levitical sacrifices for their temporary atonement instead of trusting n the finished work of Jesus for their salvation.

1. **Vs. 4-5 Five advantages**

Vs. 4-5 First the writer gives his readers a fivefold advantage of the spiritual work that God had done for this group of people:

1. ***Once enlightened***
2. ***Tasted the heavenly gift***
3. ***Become partakers of the Holy Spirit***
4. ***Tasted the good word of God***
5. ***(Tasted) the powers of the age to come***

The five advantages the Holy Spirit had given these Hebrews is sandwiched in between a warning where we read in verse 4 that, “***It is impossible for those who were once enlightened***…” followed by four more advantages and verse 6 where we read, “***to renew them again to repentance***.” It is only when we combine these two phrases of the warning that we can get its full sobering magnitude of the warning: “***It is impossible for those who were once enlightened…*** ***to renew them again to repentance***”. Further more the force of the Greek words “***impossible***” and “***renew***” give no wiggle room for the interpretation for word “***impossible***” to be **diluted** to mean “***difficult***” as it is the same word used else where in Hebrews and in each case it can only mean “***impossible***”. The same is true of the word used for “***renew***”. **The writer is saying that those who once experienced a renewal cannot again have the same like experience, they cannot again be brought to a life-changing repentance**. It is the absolute nature of this statement that makes this such a sobering passage. But in light of the context the responsibility of this impossibility does not fall into the hands of the God of grace who has already given them these five advantages but rather in the hands of those who have already received these five advantages but refused to take full advantage of them by coming to faith. This presents two problems:

1. How can anyone experience these **5 Spirit-given advantages** and still not be a Christian?
2. If they are a Christian, how can they fall away, without any hope of restoration?

It is over these issues that the battle has been waged throughout the Christian church.

1. ***Once enlightened***: Of first importance is that ***this phrase makes no reference at all to salvation***. There is no mention of new birth or regeneration and to make the “*once enlightened*” as “*born again*”, without any connecting phrases any where in the Bible is a stretch NOT implied in the text or else where. None of the normal New Testament terminology is used to indicate salvation. In fact, NO TERM used in these five advantages is ever used in the New Testament for salvation. What we have here is two words of a phrase that will indicate who the writer had in mind when he wrote it:
2. First the word “***once***” in the Greek it means “***once for all***”. This means that the “***enlightening***” **never needed repetition**. From the writer’s perspective to the original readers, **these Hebrews who had listened to the message of the New Testament had experienced the the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment in their minds and hearts to clearly understand what they had heard**. John 16:13-15 clarifies our understanding of this when we read Jesus’ words to His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit’s work saying, “*when He, the Spirit of truth, has come,* ***He will guide you into all truth****; for He will not speak on His own authority, but* ***whatever He hears He will speak****; and* ***He will tell you things to come****. He will glorify Me, for* ***He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you****. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that* ***He will take of Mine and declare it to you*.**” The writer is declaring that this happened to the readers and it never needed to be repeated for the purpose of the lack of understanding or to make it clearer.
3. Second the word “***enlightened***” in the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures always has to do “***intellectual perception of biblical truth***”. The word means to be “*mentally aware of something, to be instructed or informed*”. The word carries NO CONNOTATION of response, neither acceptance or rejection. To illustrate this, we need only look at Matthew 4:16 where Jesus read Isaiah 9:1-2 that declares that those “*who sat in darkness have seen a great light*.” All those who heard in Galilee were not saved but they had ALL SEEN a great light! **Seeing and believing are not the same thing**. Those who had witnessed Jesus words and works in Galilee were to some extent “*enlightened*” as indicated in Jesus warning to these very cities in Matthew 11:21-24 where He says “*If the mighty works which were done in you were done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago*..” ***These Hebrews who the writer is addressing had natural knowledge of factual information***. When considering those from the Galilee area who had first hand knowledge of the words and works of Christ and the advantage that such experience afforded them was to a degree that only a few thousand people in all of history who had as much “*enlightenment*” as they did. But most of them didn’t move beyond “*enlightenment*” to faith! The only conclusion you can make of **these Hebrews is that they were “*enlightened*” but not saved**! And because of this they were in grave danger because their lack had nothing to do with something more the Holy Spirit could give them to inform them further to belief. Peter describes them in 2 Peter 2:20-21 “*For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them*.”
4. ***Tasted the heavenly gift***: At issue in this advantage is the understanding of what the writer meant by using the word “*tasted*” and what he meant by the phrase “*heavenly gift*”. The word used to describe the advantage given to them by the Holy Spirit was a “***taste***” and it is worthy to note that if the writer intended to describe those he was writing to as believers then why did he say that they merely “***TASTED***” of the “*heavenly gift*” instead of saying that they “**RECEIVED** the heavenly gift”? The writer is clear on this, the “*heavenly gift*” was not feasted on he was only sampled which had left an impression of the distinct flavor of his goodness. It appears that these Hebrews were like their forefathers in Kadesh-Barnea outside the land of promise who had in their hands the blessings of the fruit of the land of promise but still turned back. The interpretation of the words “*heavenly gift*” can be one of two persons, the Holy Spirit as He is spoken of as such or it can be a reference to Jesus who is the greatest “*heavenly gift*”. Seeing that the Holy Spirit is the focus of the third advantage I don’t believe that He is what the writer is speaking of here. I believe that these Hebrews had tasted of the blessings of salvation in Christ but had yet to feast upon Him fully as they hadn’t received Him. They had tasted in what they had seen and heard but turned back and didn’t fully partake of Him.
5. ***Become partakers of the Holy Spirit***: Here the main issue is what does the word “***partakers***” mean in reference to the Holy Spirit? The word in the Greek is in the aorist tense not the perfect tense. Which means that the reference to the meaning of “***partakers***” is not to a “**permanent**” state but a mere fact of a work of the Holy Spirit. Had it been in the perfect tense it would have spoke of the finished work of the Holy Spirit having permanent results. The fact that the writer doesn’t use the perfect tense instead uses the aorist tense **points to the incompleteness of the work of the Holy Spirit in the case of these Hebrews.** “***Partakers***” of the Holy Spirit doesn’t mean “***possessors***” of the Holy Spirit. They weren’t indwelt by Him, He had NOT taken up His permanent residence in their hearts, they were not sealed by Him, born again by Him, or baptized by Him into the body of Christ by Him! Instead they were mere participators in His work co-operating in His pre-salvation work that was ***leading*** them to the act of repentance from their sins and trusting alone in the finished work of Jesus for their atonement. This work had not yet been completed because these Hebrews had resisted its completion! The Bible never speaks of Christians as being only associated with the Holy Spirit, it speaks of Christians being INDWELT by Him. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to come along side the unbeliever as they partake of His work of revealing Jesus to them, convicting them of sin and revealing His work on their behalf. These Hebrews didn’t “***possess***” the Holy Spirit, they were only “***partakers***” of His work.
6. ***Tasted the good word of God***: At issue in the fourth advantage is two phrases “*tasted*” and “*word of God*”. The word “tasted” is the same as above and refers to having “sampled” the word of God but didn’t eat of it. What I find interesting is what the “sampling” is; the writer doesn’t use the normal reference to the “word of God” “***logos***” in the Greek but instead uses the word “***rhema***” which emphasizes the parts of the word rather than the whole! The writer uses this word as it fits the sampling of parts of God’s word instead of the partaking of the whole of it. These Hebrews had sampled parts of the word of God and may have done so with enthusiasm and appreciation but they hadn’t done what Jeremiah describes he did in Jeremiah 15:16 where we says, “*Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts*.” Instead they were like the description of Herod towards John the Baptists words in Mark 6:20 where he enjoyed listening to John preach was fascinated by his words but when pressed to make a decision forsook the message and had him beheaded. There is nothing wrong with “*tasting*” as it is the first step to eating but if all you ever do is taste and never eat you will eventually die of starvation.
7. ***(Tasted) the powers of the age to come***: Same word “tasted” is implied here as well but we will need to understand what the writer meant by the phrase “*the powers of the age to come*”. The word “powers” in the Greek is repeatedly used to refer to miracles, wonderful works or mighty works. The word “age” in the Greek refers to a period of time characterized by miracles. It differs from this present age in which we live where “mighty works” are not the common every day norm. What the writer is saying is that these Hebrews had witnessed “mighty works” from the apostle’s healings and other “wonderful works” that will be common in the millennial kingdom of Christ. Yet though they had tasted of such things they had not come to faith in Christ.
8. **Vs. 6-8 The impossible to renew**

Vs. 6-8 The writer has carefully pinned his case against these Hebrews who have had every advantage given by the Holy Spirit to the degree that the Holy Spirit has nothing more to offer these Hebrews, there was nothing lacking in the information He had given them in fact they had participated in it right up to the point of their salvation but then had refused for no reason of lack and returned to trusting in the Levitical system of sacrifices for their atonement.

The use of the word “***if***” indicates that the case the writer is presenting is hypothetical and as such is intended as a warning to those Hebrews who fit this category. The Greek words “*fall away*” are on used here in the New Testament and in the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures in Ezekiel 14:13, 15:8 where it is used of Israel falling away from true worship of God. The word means to deviate from the right path, to turn aside. It describes an as yet hypothetical situation whereby these Hebrews break away from the completed work of the Holy Spirit’s advantages. The word “renew” is a word the means “*to restore back to original condition*” and simply implies that having rejected the five advantages the Holy Spirit had given them they wouldn’t be able to recapture what they had already rejected as if they had never heard it. It is here that we must remind ourselves who this letter was being written to before we move to an application for us today! The writer was addressing pre-temple destruction Hebrews who were being tempted to go back to the Levitical system of temple sacrifices. And in so doing they would be renouncing their professed faith in the Messiah for the sacrifices of the first testament. Should they do so they would render their hearts so hard that the five advantages already granted them would no longer have any effect. They would be irrevocable lost, nothing more the Holy Spirit could do for them. With that said, the situation that these Hebrew professing believers faced cannot be repeated today in the same sense as there is no temple in Jerusalem and no way to go back to the Levitical system of sacrifices at the present time. There are no sacrifices to leave and return to. The sin they were in danger of committing isn’t the same as the rejection of Christ by unbelievers today.

The analogy found in nature represents the free bestowal of spiritual enlightenment as one piece of ground reacts by producing useful herbs, this reveals that some of these Hebrews had bore fruit in accordance to the five advantages. Others bore thorns and briers and is likened to some of the Hebrews who went back and rejected what they knew to be true.

**Hebrews 6:9-12**

**“Confident of better things”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 9-10 Beloved**
3. **Vs. 11-12 Showing diligence**
4. **Introduction**

This morning we finish up the third warning in this letter “*the danger of rejecting spiritual maturity*”. It is by far the sternest of the warnings so far as we saw last week the warning made to the professing believer who were ***only intellectually convinced*** but ***not*** yet ***spiritually committed***. There the warning was, “*For it is impossible if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance.*” The writer already identified his readers: Four groups that made up the church of Hebrews speakers in Rome. Two of which were negative; the prolonged immature and the still born of last week. And two of them were positive, those growing in maturity (chapter 6 verses 1-3) and the group that we shall examine today in verse 9-12.

1. **Vs. 9-10 Beloved**

Vs. 9 First for sake of understanding the context of the writer we need to recognize who he is addressing in verses 9-12. A carefully examination reveals **two groups**:

1. First in verse 9-10 we have the group described to us as the “**beloved**”. The writer must have spent considerable time evaluating them as he declares that he was “***confident of better things concerning them, things that accompanied salvation***”. The writer goes on to generally describe these “***things***” in glowing terms as they not only were engaged in “***work***” **their motive** in the way in which they were doing their work was a “***labor of love***” done in the “***name of Jesus***” as if they were exercising the work towards Him. This was not only a “***past observation***” but “***a present day reality***” as they were still demonstrating this “***labor of love***”.
2. Second in verses 11-12 we have a second group only described as “**each one of you**” who were to take motivation from the “***beloved***” that the writer had just addressed. This group was to “***show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end***” as the “***beloved***”. They were not to remain “***sluggish***” but instead “***imitate those who through*** **FAITH** ***and*** **PATIENCE** ***inherit the promises***.”

The differences in these two groups ***go beyond the demonstration*** of what they were doing and the way in which they did or didn’t accomplish the “***work***”. It becomes clearer in the Greek that ***these two groups describe*** **believers** ***and*** **unbelievers** both of which made up the church of Hebrew speakers in Rome. I say this because of several identifying marks in the text:

1. The first group is called by the writer “***beloved***” in the Greek which is a descriptive term from the word agape. It is used 60 times in the New Testament the first 9 of which it is used of God the Father to describe God the Son. Every other time whether addressing Jews or Gentiles, it is ***used only to describe*** “**believers**”.
2. The second group is **NO** where identified as “***beloved***” and are instead characterized by the writer as those who **DO NOT** “***show***” the same “***diligence to the full assurance***” and those who have “***become sluggish***” and need to ***imitate*** the “***beloved***” who had “***faith and patience***” which indicated that this group didn’t have those qualities.

The remarkable thing to realize is that both of these two groups had received the same five advantages of:

* ***Once enlightened***
* ***Tasted the heavenly gift***
* ***Become partakers of the Holy Spirit***
* ***Tasted the good word of God***
* ***(Tasted) the powers of the age to come***

The conclusion we can make from this observation is that ***while these five advantages of God are*** ***HELPFUL*** ***for salvation they do not indicate that a person*** ***HAS*** ***salvation***! This observation ought to clear up the mass confusion in the church as to why we see people who have benefitted from these five advantages but are no longer living out what they profess to believe! The apostle John aptly describes them in 1 John 2:19 saying that “***They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us***.”

 The phrase “***we are confident of better things concerning you***..” in regard to the “***beloved***” centers around the word “***confident***” and is translated else where as “***persuaded***” the word suggests ***a conviction that was the result of proof***. The phrase is in the perfect tense which means that it is fixed. As this was a general letter that didn’t mention specific names of who he regarded in these four groups the writer wants to settle the hearts of those who were living out their faith and weren’t mere pretenders. Coming from such an absolute statement as “*For it is impossible if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance*”; we can see why the writer would want to reassure some, without removing the danger others were facing. The writer only mentions one of the “better things” in this section but before he does he goes back to what he had previously mentioned “*things that accompany salvation*”. Things that “*accompany salvation*” is a contrast between:

* Not remaining as an immature Christian but moving on into maturity
* Not preferring milk but moving on into the meat of the word
* Not remaining unskilled in the word of righteousness but mature in righteousness
* Letting go the elementary principles of Christ and moving to maturity

The “*things that accompany salvation*” are positive, not negative, they don’t reflect external ceremonial religion, but relational transformation and new life. There reality doesn’t come from repeated sacrifices but from trusting in the complete sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

 Then the writer interjects the phrase “*though we speak in this manner*” was meant to be a comfort to those believers who after reading the last section with absolute warning may have been wondering if the warning applied to them. Paraphrasing this the writer is saying, “*Beloved fellow Christians, though we have been speaking about these fearful warnings to unbelievers in your midst, we know that far better things apply to you. You have already shown and continue to show the things that accompany salvation.*” It is important that the church understand that we must not use the characteristics of the intellectually convinced but not spiritually committed of verses 5:11-6:4 to separate the wheat from the tares as that is Jesus’ responsibility when He returns, as He alone weighs the thought and intents of the heart.

Vs. 10 The writer at once lets his readers know of the faithfulness of God as He doesn’t forget their work done in His behalf. Saints, ***our names will not be lost in His book of life, our salvation will not slip His mind and our rewards will be forgotten***! What a comfort this is as many a believer throughout history has experience times of doubt at the times of discipline and judgment. The prophet Malachi gave stern warnings of judgment to befall the nation but the Lord also had him write in Malachi 3:16-17 “*So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. “They shall be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.*” God always knows His own and because of this we have no fear of final judgment, missing the rapture or loss of rewards. It is also clear by the writer’s words that a believer’s works are not what saves him or keeps him saved, they are only an evidence of his salvation. It is also interesting to see that the motive behind the work is what God sees as it is a “***labor of love which you have shown towards His name***”. The significance of the service is not in the work alone but that ***it is an expression of love and devotion to Jesus exercised towards others***. The way to have unity in the body of Christ is to have believers continue to grow in the Love of God! Unity of faith will never be accomplished apart from devotion to God! The fact is none of us are lovable all the time in our own personalities and merits but Christ is, so our actions towards each other are not to be done with view to each other but with a view towards Jesus! Further more the writer’s observation wasn’t past tense but present day reality as they “*have ministered to the saints,* ***and do minister***!” What I find interesting is to note that the praise towards these believers is in the midst of warnings to those of the Hebrew speaking church that were both prolonged immature as well as those who were only intellectually convinced but not spiritually committed. This suggests to me that part of “ministry” includes correction in which the aim is restoration and encouraging others to come to faith in Christ. Such ministry is to be regularly exercised towards the “saints” and being a saint has nothing to do with the level of a believer’s spiritual maturity, miracles done in their name it only speaks of their salvation who the Lord declares them to be holy in His sight because they have trusted in His son’s Holy work.

1. **Vs. 11-12 Showing diligence**

Vs. 11-12 This section was written for the as yet unbelievers who were a part of the Hebrew speaking church. They had a profession of faith but were in imminent danger of falling away and trusting in the Levitical sacrifices for their salvation. The writers earnest desire is that they take a look at the true believers among them and they would “***show the same diligence to full assurance of hope until the end***.” The word “diligence” in the Greek means to show eagerness with haste, they need to come to Christ and they needed to do so NOW! They had exhibited sluggishness and procrastination in hearing and believing but their time was running out. They had not verbally outright rejected the gospel but to not accept it was rejecting it. So they needed to “***imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises***.”

**Hebrews 6:13-20**

**“Trust Me!”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 13 His Person**
3. **Vs. 14-15 His Purpose**
4. **Vs. 16-18 His Promise**
5. **Vs. 19-20 His Priest**
6. **Introduction**

Over the last several weeks our look has been at the third warning issued by the writer about the lack of spiritual maturity and it has been very sobering. The reality that the readers faced in reading this letter was that they fit into one of four groups and two of those groups were very dangerous to their soul. To me reading this section felt like going to a doctor and hearing the possibilities of your health could be grave or fatal if not immediately corrected. ***The concept we realized is that having received from the Holy Spirit those five advantages mentioned in verse 4 gave us a great OPPORTUNITY but they didn’t guarantee the OUTCOME***! In spite of the pre-work of salvation given to us by the Holy Spirit it is possible that a person could have understood intellectually:

* ***The work of Jesus on their behalf***
* ***Been excited about the possibility of heaven***
* ***Emotionally full of joy about the possibility of forgiveness***

But there is NO SALVATION apart from TRANSFORMATION! If there has been NO permanent transformation as a result of those five advantages, then we are at very least stunted in our maturity or at worst not saved at all. As horrifying as the possibility is to our pride, I would much rather come to grips with the lack of my own spiritual growth while I still can do something to change then from Jesus own lips and realize that I needn’t have lived my life in the condition I had. I’m concerned that the modern evangelical church that has been busy with religious activities faithfully performed by people who continue to posses the same dispositions and attitudes, of people, who are not Christians. As I said prior there are two unmistakable evidences of maturity:

1. ***Continual personal evaluation of our maturity and spiritual growth; the “Is it I?”, question***.
2. ***Consistent desire to help people for Jesus that is as much interested in WHY we are doing what we do as what we are doing***!

***With that said it is possible to be have those to evidences of the true Christian life and still have little if any sense of assurance, or security in our relationship with Jesus***. We can be a Christian and still be full of doubts, fears, anxieties, and uncertainties about our relationship to Christ. That is what the writer addresses today. In the last section of the warning the writer put before some of his readers that they should “*imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*” There were among them in the Hebrew speaking church in Rome people who were true followers of Christ who through faith and patience were inheriting the promises. In theses verse before us the writer suggests another example in their ancestry who they can imitate, Abraham. The use of this patriarch is very revealing to me as it speaks of an underlining reason some of these Hebrew speaking church attenders were being persuaded to go back to the Levitical system of sacrifices, you see they just couldn’t TRUST Jesus at His word. So in this section, with the father of the faith as the example the author gives ***FOUR REASONS YOU CAN TRUST GOD***:

1. Vs. 13 ***His Person***
2. Vs. 14 ***His Purpose***
3. Vs. 16-18 ***His Promise***
4. Vs. 19-20 ***His Priest***
5. **Vs. 13 His Person**

Vs. 13 The readers would have immediately recognized this “*spiritual giant*” of their ancestry as Paul called him in Romans 4:16-18 the “*the father of us all and the father of many nations*”. The writer has carefully chosen a story from the life of Abraham that will encourage the reader who struggles with doubts, fears and anxieties and uncertainties concerning their own spiritual maturity and growth. The story is found in two sections of Genesis chapter 15:5 and chapter 22:17-18. What we learn by looking at Abraham’s example reveals that trusting in God’s promises has far more to do with what we learn about God and far less of about what we see in us. ***What makes our confidence strong enough to defeat even the most persistent doubts and fears is that our faith isn’t in our WORTHINESS inheriting the promises but in God being WORTHY in keeping them***! The ground of our hope is what Paul wrote to the Philippians in Philippians 1:6 as he said, “***Being confident of this very thing, that HE who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ***.”

To set up the illustration in Genesis 15:5 account we are told of God’s appearance to Abraham where He first made a statement “*I am your shield, your exceeding great reward*” Whereby Abraham focuses on the longevity of the reward seeing that he has no heir. That’s when the God promised Abraham in verse 5 “*Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. And He said to him, so shall your descendants be.*” The intervening six chapters to the immediate fulfillment of that promise Isaac’s birth (the ultimate fulfillment was Jesus) was 25 long years later in 21:2. Those 25 years were not filled with faith and obedience from either Abraham or Sarah as time passed without the fulfilled promise Abraham and Sarah took matters into their own hands as Hagar was employed to bare an heir to fulfill the promise as she gave birth to the middle east conflict in the birth of Ishmael. ***The important point the writer was making is that Abraham realized the promise not because he trusted in his work but in God’s oath which twice He confirmed***. Two things stand out in this illustration:

1. First, ***Abraham did not believe it because he saw immediate results***.
2. Second, ***Abraham didn’t believe because he was doing his best to accomplish it***.
3. Vs. 13 **His Person**: This brings us to the first of four reasons why Abraham could trust God: It ***wasn’t*** because Abraham saw the immediate results, he clearly began to waver in faith because of ***time*** and thought he had to help God out. And it wasn’t because Abraham was doing his best to accomplish it, after all he and Sarah’s best was Ishmael, and we all know how well that has worked out over the last 7000 years. Abraham was confronted with TRUTH about the character of **God**; He **invented truth**, **it is the essence of God’s nature**, **everything He says and does is truth**. Therefore, ***if God makes a promise, he not only will keep it, He has to keep it because He has no other nature then truth***. In Romans 4:19-21 that we have the answer to the question: “***Then why did Abraham believe God's promise***?” As Paul writes of Abraham,“*And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God*”. **Faith must always rest on the character of God not the faithfulness of man.** Abraham believed that God told the truth about Himself, and that God would always be true to his own character.
4. **Vs. 14-15 His Purpose**
5. Vs. 14 **His Purpose**: The second reason Abraham could trust God was that God’s promise to him ***wasn’t aimless***, it was ***a promise with a PURPOSE***. It wasn’t Abraham’s idea to leave Ur of the Chaldeans and move to the land of Canaan, it was God’s leading that directed him. Through out God’s encounter with Abraham in His making a covenant with Abraham it was entirely God’s work. ***And when God established His covenant, it was He who established it with a promise and it was God who made it UNCONDITIONAL***. God never told Abraham He would bless him IF he fulfilled certain obligations, requirements and certain conditions. The reality is Abraham wasn’t chosen by God because he had a certain quality or virtue, he was chosen purely on God’s will, just the same way Israel was chosen (Deut. 7:7-8). The ultimate purpose was to: Make known the true God, to reveal the Messiah, to be the preserver of the Word of God, to be a living demonstration of the faithfulness of God. The amazing thing is that ***Abraham was not a party to the covenant***, He was ***only a witness to it and a vehicle for its fulfillment***! ***You can trust God because He will NOT let His plan fail***!

Vs. 15 Before we move to the third reason you can trust God in verses 16-17 the author deals with ***the proof of FAITH that it doesn’t come from our own experience; it is simply the demonstration of what we have already believed, because we believe Who said it***. Albert Einstein didn’t come to the knowledge of relativity by performing a series of experiments that ultimately convinced him that relativity was true. Instead he gradually saw the concept of relativity, and being convinced, he performed experiments that demonstrated it to others. This is the way of truth, “***believing is seeing***.” **The secret of faith**: ***Is that it rests on the character of Jesus Christ. As far as we are concerned we must determine whether He is telling us the truth, and we can trust Him, or we must reject Him as a self-deceived impostor***.

1. **Vs. 16-18 His Promise**
2. Vs. 16-18 **The Promise**: The third security deals with the oath that God made to Abraham. The truth is ***God didn’t need to make an oath to Abraham or any person for that matter***. God’s word is good **without** a “*promise*” but to accommodate the people who have a continual problem with trust, God promised on Himself to keep what couldn’t ever be broken because of who He is, and the purpose He make the promise. What this reveals to us who have a problem with trust is that: ***God who can not lie, promised to never break what He can not break, to fulfill what was His idea in the first place that accomplishes His will***! Just so that we all understand this it was NOT His promise upon Himself that made His promise more secure, He did this for us, not for Himself! The writer goes on to say in verse 17 that both of these things are without any possibility of change or variance. The word is used in the Greek of wills that once made are unchangeable and in this case even by God Himself! This promise is the most “secure” promise ever made and reminds us that our security is not based upon us never letting go of God but in God never letting go of us!
3. **Vs. 19-20 His Priest**
4. Vs. 19-20 **The Priest**: The final reason we can trust God is in the person of Christ that all Christian faith has an “***anchor both sure and steadfas***t”. Jesus, not only made promises to us but he has himself demonstrated them. Since this is true, then our faith will be strengthened as we see more clearly the character of the One with whom we have to deal. This is why the author moves immediately to the matter of the high priesthood of Melchizedek. Again and again in this letter he has used this phrase, “a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” The sheer repetition of it indicates there is something very vital hidden here. Now we shall see what that is. What the writer is saying as the reason why we can trust God to keep His word is that Jesus alone is forever the Guardian of our soul. Jesus said in John 10:28 that He will, “*give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand*.” Paul wrote of this security because of Jesus our High Priest in Romans 8:31-35 “*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*”

**Hebrews 7:1-3**

**“J.E.S.U.S.”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-3 Five superiorities Melchizedekian Priesthood**
3. **Introduction**

In the 7th chapter of Hebrews the author presents to his readers a portrait of Jesus. *What’s interesting is that he takes the picture of Jesus as High Priest through the lens of Melchizedek*. Further more the snap shot is taken from a very fuzzy picture found in Genesis 14:18-20 and an incident in Abraham's life, where Abraham met Melchizedek. The story recorded there was when Abraham was returning from a battle with the five kings, and this strange King from Salem met him and blessed him, and Abraham in response to this gave tithes to this King named Melchizedek. What we know of Melchizedek is that he was a priest of the true God, who lived in the village of Salem (later known as Jerusalem) and *here in Hebrews we see that according to the writer, he fulfilled a role that foresaw and foreshadowed the ministry of Jesus Christ*. The division of this section is meant to be a comparison of the two priesthoods Melchizedekian and Aaronic; the writer will do this two ways:

1. First in verses 1-3 we will see five positive differences that Jesus has in the Melchizedekian Priesthood, that aren’t available in the Aaronic Priesthood.
2. Second, in verses 4-26 the writer presents three negative differences, which we will take up next week.
3. **Vs. 1-3 Five superiorities Melchizedekian Priesthood**

Vs. 1-2 This section starts out with the phrase, “***For this Melchizedek***”, which reveals to the readers that what they are going to read is going to be a comparison between ***Melchizedek*** and the Aaronic priesthood. Then as they read a little further they pic up a story between the father of their people Abraham and this same Melchizedek where they witness a seldom used word today, ***reciprocity***: ***Which is defined as the mutual exchange of benefits***. We read about when Melchizedek met Abraham and gave to him bread and wine which are the symbols of life and strength, the ***very things that we partake of when we come to the Lord's table***. Abraham, in turn, gave tithes of everything he possessed to Melchizedek. Now, the tithe, or tenth, is always the mark of ownership. To pay a tenth is to indicate that God owns the whole. Symbolically, therefore, **Abraham was saying to Melchizedek**, “***You have the right of ownership over everything in my life.***” The provision of strength from Melchizedek exactly equaled the degree of commitment on the part of Abraham, ***reciprocity***. You may exercise dominion to the same degree you are prepared to submit to the dominion of Jesus Christ in your own heart. You can have as much of Christ as, in turn, you are ready to permit him to have of you. Abraham wouldn’t have done this to a mere man, that is why we are told that Melchizedek was, “***a priest of the Most High God***.” And it is here in this phrase where we see the first of five qualities that makes Jesus by way of Melchizedek superior to Aaron and the Levitical priesthood.

1. Vs. 1 “***Priest of the Most High God***”: The first way in which Melchizedek is superior to the Aaronic Priesthood has to do with ***the quantity of people effected by Melchizedek’s priesthood when compared to Aaron’s***. The key to noting this superiority is in the use of the phrase ***Most High God***. When God choose to reveal Himself by use of the word Yahweh He did so by declaring ***His name as the unique Covenant name that was used exclusively for Israel***. The Levitical priests were priests for Yahweh, they served Him and His people Israel and no other. That describes a Levitical priesthood that was ***NATIONALISTIC*** in origin, **exclusively for the Hebrews or converts to Judaism**. But that is not how God is described in Genesis 14:18 or here in Hebrews, instead God is described in a more ***UNIVERSAL*** name *El Elyon* which is a name that represents ***the God over heaven and earth***. Here we learn that the Melchizedekian Priesthood was above national distinctions and was instead universal in nature. Jesus is the Messiah over Jews and Gentiles, not just over Israel but over the world! This is further illustrated in the fact that the Melchizedekian Priesthood came into existence hundreds of years before the Levitical Priesthood. Of further interest it is interesting to note that only after this encounter with Melchizedek did Abraham speak to the king of Sodom using a combination of the national name along with the universal name of God.
2. Vs. 1-2 “***King***”: The second thing we note is both in verse 1 and 2 where no less then four times Melchizedek is referred to as king. The comparison is obvious as the Levitical priesthood forbid any sort of ruler-ship being associated with it. Israel never knew this kind of authority in the priesthood though it was clearly predicted in Zech. 6:13 where we read, “*He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, and* ***shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne****, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both*.” As such what we see that is superior is that Melchizedek’s priest had more authority because it was also a Royal priesthood.
3. Vs. 2 “***King of righteousness and King of peace***”: The third aspect of the superiority of the Melchizedekian Priesthood looks at the specific aspects of that royalty in the twofold quality of His reign as “*He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace*.” That is what Jesus gives us today! He can give you what only he is. These names reveal that: ***We need what He is in order to be what he was***!
4. First He is the, “***King of Righteousness***”: ***He is the one who has the secret of right living, the divine plan that results in right behavior***. He is the king of that, he controls it.
5. Second, He is also the “***King of Peace***”. ***He is the king of inner peace; He alone has the power to give us the right frame of mind.*** He holds in His hand the secret of inner calm, that sense within that gives **poise**, **power** and **purpose** ill-respective of what turmoil and confusion is going on around us.
6. Vs. 3a “***Without father, without mother, without genealogy***”: The word “***without genealogy***” only appears here is all of Greek literature the reason for this is that it can fit no other person in history and would make no sense to anyone else. Jesus was chosen because of WHO He is, NOT because of where He came from. The point the writer is making has to do with ***continuity*** here: “*He is without father or mother or genealogy..*” ***What this verse says is that there is no mention made of Melchizedek's ancestry, his pedigree, record of his birth or death***. There are two possibilities in this regard:
7. It may mean that Melchizedek was a perfectly normal man and that all these things were true of him, but none of the normal things were recorded.
8. Or it could suggest that Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate manifestation of Jesus.

***Either way the silence in the record by Moses as interpreted by the writer of Hebrews is taken as an illustration of the eternal, changeless, PERSONAL, unending priesthood***. The point the author is making practically to his readers deals with ***Availability***! What this practically means to us is that Jesus is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, throughout every year over each and every lifetime. Or as the writer will later say in Hebrews 13:5 “***I will NEVER leave you nor forsake you***.” *Because Jesus is High Priest in the order of Melchizedek* ***those that belong to Him are never out of his presence, never shut off from His resources, never separated from his wisdom, His peace, or His truth***.

1. Vs. 3b “***Having neither beginning of Days not end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually***.”: This final aspect of the superiority of ***Melchizedek’s priesthood when compared to Aaron’s*** deals with the fact that his is eternal and not temporary. A Levitical priest served only from the age of 25 until they were 50. No priest no matter how good, faithful or talented could serve more than 25 years. They were all temporary. Further more the priesthood began in the wilderness when the covenant was established with Moses at the giving of the law until it ended at the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70. But what the writer says is that ***Melchizedek’s priesthood*** had no dispensation attached to it! Jesus abides as our great High priest without end because He lives forever and because as a High Priest in the order of ***Melchizedek’s priesthood*** is also forever!

In the final analysis of the first three verse of chapter 7 we realize five superiorities of ***Melchizedek’s priesthood*** as it is: ***Universal, royal, righteous and peaceful, personal and eternal***! Folks, ***Jesus is just want we need***, He is the very Person we have been looking for! Someone has well said that when we consider Jesus His name makes a perfect acronym for us: J-E-S-U-S, “**Just Exactly Suits Us Sinners**.”

**Hebrews 7:4-19**

**“Side by Side comparison”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 4-10 Three proofs**
3. **Vs. 11-19 Three arguments**
4. **Introduction**

Having just given the reader in the first three verses of chapter 7 “*five positive differences that Jesus has in the Melchizedekian Priesthood, that aren’t available in the Aaronic Priesthood.*” The writer now anticipates in verses 4-10 the need for proof of what he has just said so he gives them three proofs that what he had just declared was true. The second thing that the writer does is present a side by side comparison of the superiority of the ***Melchizedekian priesthood*** by placing it next to the **Imperfection of *Levitical priesthood***.

1. **Vs. 4-10 Three proofs**

Vs. 4-10 In these verses the writer instead of focusing on the positive differences of the Melchizedekian Priesthood looks at the inadequacy seen in the Aaronic Priesthood.

1. Vs. 4-6 The ***first*** proof is in two parts that demonstrated the *Melchizedekian Priesthood* superiority as seen in the actions of Abraham giving a tenth of his spoils to Melchizedek. He writes, “*Consider how great this man was, to whom* ***EVEN*** *the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils*.” There are two things that could have ***obligated*** Abraham to give a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek:
2. First, **IF** Melchizedek as a king had fought alongside Abraham against Chedorlaomer. But there is no mention or indication that Melchizedek was even there let alone fought or provide resources to the battle.
3. Second, **IF** Melchizedek as a priest of the, Most High God, had preformed some sort of priestly services on behalf of Abraham or his army prior to the battle. But there in no mention of this until after the battle where Melchizedek brought out the bread and wine and blessed Abraham with what today we call the Lord’s supper or communion.

Since neither of these two obligations occurred it implies that Abraham’s tithe was ***free from obligation, law or commandment*** and ***instead was freely and generously given out the best that Abraham had***. Abraham simply recognized Melchizedek as deserving of the tithe based upon who he was and who he served the Most High God! ***It was given in thanks giving as an act of worship***!

***The Second***, part of this proof is a bit more complicated to understand: The Israelites were agrarian in their economy, they survived off the land. But the tribe of Levi was the priestly tribe and as such was supported by the tithes from the brothers of the other 11 tribes. So you had 11 tribes of Abraham’s descendants tithing to one tribe. The point the writer makes is that sense Abraham the common ancestor paid tithes to Melchizedek before his future ancestors existed then all the tribes including the descendants of Levi also paid tithes to Melchizedek. As if the descendants of Levi himself, paid tithes through Abraham, even though they were yet unborn to Melchizedek through Abraham. The point is: ***If these Levitical priests through Abraham offered help in comparison to Melchizedek, it was incomplete, limited and temporary***.

1. Vs. 7 The second proof is found here in verse 7 where we read “***beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the greater***.” One of the things that we learn in reading the first testament is that it is essentially the history of one man and his descendants. It starts with his introduction to us in Genesis 12:1 and ends with the prophet Malachi. That which started with God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5 with God’s words, “*Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be*.” Continued on through out the first testament but what’s interesting is this priest-king is only mentioned in a few verses and what is mentioned about him in connection to Abraham and the promise is that he blessed him. Melchizedek is established as greater than Abraham and greater than any descendants that came from Abraham. In John 8:56-58 Jesus entered a discussion about Abraham and made this remarkable statement saying, “*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM*.” We are never given how Abraham knew about Melchizedek, and we have no idea how much Melchizedek knew about Abraham. What is not in dispute “***beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the greater***.”
2. Vs. 8-10 There is one last proof of the five positive differences of the *Melchizedekian Priesthood* as we read in verse 8 “*mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives*.” The point is that even if the Levitical priests weren’t required to quit after 25 years of ministry, they would have had to cease at some point when they died. The argument the writer makes is that this fact reveals that the Levitical priesthood was designed as temporary because the priests were temporary. The other tribes all paid tithes to a temporary system but their forefather whom all the tribes were in his ancestry paid tithes to a priest who lived on and didn’t die since no death is recorded of Melchizedek. That makes his priesthood eternal and not temporary and clearly superior to Aaron’s. Jesus being from the *Melchizedekian Priesthood* is a living priest, not a dying priest. He therefore is the only priest who can without interruption bring God to humanity and humanity to God.
3. **Vs. 11-19 Three arguments**

Vs. 11-19 Next the writer ***shows*** just how far the Levitical system is inferior as we learn that the ministry of Jesus Christ superseded the Law. The context in this section is found in verse 19 where the writer informs his readers that the purpose of the priesthood is to enable humanity to “*draw near to God*”. You can sum up Christianity in three words “***Access to God***”! That was also the goal of Judaism and the Levitical priesthood but the veil was always there keeping the majority of humanity away. The veil was there because of sin and the Levitical sacrifices only symbolically anticipated the fulfillment. Now that the fulfillment had come in Christ’s sacrifice for the sin of the whole world the Levitical priesthood and system was no longer necessary. This was a difficult thing for the Hebrews to accept as they couldn’t imagine that the Mosaic order was only symbolic and temporary and fully inadequate to bring anyone to perfection, (verse 19). They struggled at grasping how something that was instituted by God couldn’t be perfect? It wasn’t that it wasn’t perfect for what God had designed it for it was just not permanent and as such it was insufficient for what these Hebrews were attempting to use it for. The outline of the writer’s argument in verses 11-19 goes as:

1. Vs. 11-14 **Imperfection of *Levitical priesthood***: No where in scripture does God say that His intent was that the *Levitical priesthood* would remain forever. In fact, the first testament predicts another priesthood was coming as twice recorded in chapter 7 verse 17 and 21 quoting out of Psalm 110:4 “*The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek*.” The argument is simple as it asks two questions to those who are still fixated upon the Levitical system:
2. “***If God through His word predicted another priesthood was coming, then it is reasonable to believe that the new one was necessary and would replace the old priesthood***?”
3. “***If God intended the Levitical priesthood to continue and improve or be necessary to gain access to God then why did He plan for the Messiah to be a priest from a different order, Melchizedek***?”

The timing of Melchizedek’s introduction to Abraham further illustrates this as God placed this between Abraham’s calling and the covenant He made with Him. This indicates that it was always God’s intention that access to Him from Abraham’s descendants would be from a higher priestly order than the one generated from Abraham’s descendants! The “*perfection*” mentioned in verse 11 has to do with the purpose of the priesthood which to reconcile men to God through the sacrificial system. Because this was only a typology that pointed to the finished work in Christ it was not able to make men perfect, had those sacrifices been able to bring a person into God’s presence they would have ceased but instead they had to done every day. The purpose of both the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic Law were to bring people to God but both were only symbolic and awaiting the finished work of that which they pointed too, Jesus and as such were imperfect towards what the Jews were now trying to make the two do. The is why Jesus said to them in John 14:6 “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*.” What the Levitical priesthood could not do Jesus in the Melchizedek priesthood could do! ***The point the writer makes is that all the Aaronic Priesthood could do is correctly diagnose the problem they could never produce a cure***! The word in verse 12 “changed” describing the priesthood being changed means to put one thing in the place of another. Through Christianity came from the fulfillment of of Judaism, it wasn’t an enhancement it was designed as a replacement as what Judaism did was point towards the completed work in Jesus. The Hebrews were rejecting the fact that Jesus didn’t come from the priestly tribe of Levi and the author doesn’t deny this instead he says that this very fact proves the temporary nature of the *Levitical priesthood*. As a priest he had no genealogy, and as such ***He ministers in the power of an endless life***. Jesus had no beginning, no ending, but continues forever. The Law, which is only temporary, must go. It had an inherent weakness in that it could not supply what the flesh in its frailty lacked.

1. Vs. 15-17 **Perfection of *Melchizedekian priesthood***: The Greek has two words for the word “another” in verse 15, “***and additional one – of the same kind***” and “***another of a different kind***”. The differences in the meaning of these two Greek words for “***another***” is that the **first one** indicates a “***quantitative difference***” where as the **second** indicates a “***qualitative difference***”. The reference here describing Jesus is that of the second word for another as Jesus in Him we do not have a High priest like the others that were limited. Instead we are told in verse 15 that He “arises” by Himself. He didn’t come into the world as all the other priests before Him had, He was born of a virgin, no other priest from the tribe of Levi could claim that. This implies that He had no priestly ancestry, He took up the mantle of High Priest not by ancestry but by WHO He was. He also indicates that He was one of a kind in that He was the only priest who rose from the dead as the grave couldn’t hold Him. Another difference is that heredity took president over godliness a prerequisite for the priesthood but not in the *Melchizedekian priesthood*, which Jesus belonged too. Serving in the *Levitical priesthood* had nothing to do with character, ability, personality or holiness. Instead Jesus came in power to do what no other priest could ever do; give access to God the Father!
2. Vs. 18-19 **Summation of the argument**: Aaron and the Levitical priesthood by necessity has to be replaced by Jesus and the *Melchizedekian priesthood*. The Greek word “annulling” means to do away with something that has been established because it was imperfect and replace by something that is new and is perfect. The old system could ***reveal sin but it could never remove sin***! It is for this reason it had to be removed and replaced as it could never grant access to God. That is what Paul says in Romans 7:24 where we read, “*O, wretched man that I am. Who can set me free from this body of death*?” Did you notice that Paul asked a rhetorical question and phrased it WHO and NOT WHAT? That is exactly what the writer says in verse 19, “***for the law made nothing perfect***..” ***That is the point the author of Hebrews is making, what humanity needs isn’t going to be found in the WHAT of religion but in the WHO of Jesus***! Paul went on to explain this in Romans 8:3-4 saying, “*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, judged sin in the flesh, that the righteousness that the law demanded might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit*.”

There is one clear fact that points to the superiority of something when compared to another: That is when it replaces the older model. The appearance of Jesus as High Priest in the order of Melchizedek proves His superiority. The new High Priest (Jesus) came with a different address and a different ancestry. That meant if the old priesthood went, the Law had to go too. This new priest had a different address; he came from the tribe of Judah instead of the tribe of Levi. Judah was not a priestly tribe it was a kingly tribe. This new High Priest was a king!

**Hebrews 7:20-28**

**“The Last High Priest”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 20-22 Guaranteed**
3. **Vs. 23-25 Last One**
4. **Perfectly Fitted For Us**
5. **Introduction**

This morning we come to one of the most amazing sections of scripture in all the Bible as the clarity of Jesus as our Great High Priest is on display. I suppose that when ever we open our hearts and our Bibles to the power of the Holy Spirit we are on Holy Ground but in this section it just seems to be a little higher holy ground!

1. **Vs. 20-22 Guaranteed**

Vs. 20-22 One of the things that is immediately apparent is that the writer was very aware of the knowledge that the reader would have had at Jewish tradition. Take for instance his argument here that deals yet again with the superiority of Jesus as High Priest because His priesthood is in the order of Melchizedek. The reference is to the fact that Aaron and the sons of Levi never took an oath in Exodus 29 at their ordination. That’s not a well known fact to you and I, is it? Yet the writer naturally assumes that his readers would have known that. Because there was no oath we realize that God never promised to Aaron or his descendants that their priesthood would be forever, this fact alone suggest that the Levitical priesthood was temporary. There in doubt that many if not all of Israel assumed that the priesthood was permanent but they would have not of come to this conclusion based upon the word of God. Had God made an oath as He had with

Melchizedek than t would have been permanent. In Jesus the permanent plan has come, that is why His ministry was confirmed with an oath. God is saying through the oath, “***I will never change my mind. You will never be able to find any other program that works. Never***!” Because this is permanent, there is no shut-down, no change of plans, which means we can have complete confidence in Christ’s work as High Priest because He will never become obsolete! In Jesus we have a Great High Priest who is never out of fashion, never off duty, will never wear out, move away or anything else that would render Him in effective. He can work from the “gutter-most to the uttermost”. Four times in this letter the writer makes reference to Psalm 110:4, it’s his proof text! There were four distinct disadvantages that the Levites had in their service that Jesus doesn’t have in His:

1. ***The Levites served in the temple on a temporary and repetitive basis***: Their service was temporary for three reasons:
* They could only serve for 25 years
* They were mere mortals, died and their sons had to replace them
* There was no oath making it permanent

Further more what they offered in service was not permanent as they had to continue to offer the sacrifices, where as according to verse 27 Jesus offered Himself once for all!

1. ***The Levites themselves were sinful***: According to Exodus 29 they had to daily offer sacrifices for themselves before they could for others. This pointed to the reality that they were just is as much need for atonement as those that came to them.
2. ***What they offered was temporary***: There was no permanence in what they offered as they had to continually, repetitively had to offer the same thing over and over as it was a temporary fix not a permanent cure!

Though not a part of the text the question lingers as to why set up a temporary priesthood if you want a permanent? What was the purpose of the Levitical priesthood? First it is important to realize that according to Exodus 29 that God is the one who instituted the Levitical priesthood and His plan included replacing it not because it wasn’t His idea or that it was bad. It was replaced because its design was temporary. When looking at the Levitical priesthood you can see three reasons why God ordained it:

1. ***It promoted God’s wisdom and will***: It was the Levites responsibility to distribute the Word of God to the people of God so that they would come in continual contact with the wisdom and will of God for their lives.
2. ***It aided in the restraint of sin and promotion of godliness***: Paul said that he would not have known sin if it wasn’t for the law and neither we would have known what God plan for us was as His word says be holy for I am holy.
3. ***It pointed them to Jesus the permanent solution and prepared them for Him***: The law and the Levities unknowingly were the very things that God had designed to point people to the Lamb of God our great High priest.

“*Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant*”, the oath made by God to Melchizedek about his priesthood was consummated by Jesus coming as He is the guarantee that He offers a better agreement than the Levitical one that wasn’t designed to be an everlasting agreement. Jesus isn’t just a mediator of a better covenant He is a guarantee of one! He has guaranteed to pay all our debts, past present and future.

1. **Vs. 23-25 Last One**

Vs. 23-24 The Levitical priests had the ultimate disqualification from permanent ministry, DEATH! There would never be one priest from the linage of Aaron that could serve indefinitely, each was succeed by another priest for the priesthood to continue. The Hebrew reader would only need to look at the ordination of Aaron and his sons in Exodus 29 by Moses and then read in Numbers 20:23-29 as Aaron the first High Priest is about to die and Moses brings his son Eleazar to Mount Hor. There God reminded them that neither Moses nor Aaron would see the Promised Land. At that moment all the nation would realize that neither Moses the Law Giver nor Aaron the father of the priesthood would ever enter the land of promise. Had they understood they would have realized three things about the old covenant:

1. It was not permanent
2. It could not bring them to the promised land
3. It could not save them

This is contrasted in verse 24 with Jesus who “***continues forever***” and has an “***unchangeable priesthood***”. He never needed a successor, did bring us into the promised land and does save us! He is the last High Priest!

Vs. 25 Here we read that Jesus’ priesthood is: Eternal, Unalterable and Unlimited. The 25th verse is one of the most beautiful verse in all the Bible right up there with John 3:16. And like John 3:16 we see four truths about our salvation:

1. ***He is ABLE***: **Person of our salvation**! Other priests might have been WILLING to save but Jesus alone is not only WILLING but ABLE! The old sacrifices temporarily covered sin but they NEVER removed sin. Psalm 103:12 makes the promise that, “*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us*.” Jesus said in John 14:6 that, “*No one comes to the Father except through Me*.”
2. ***To SAVE to the utter most THOSE***: **Objects of salvation**! The objects of those who will be saved are those who come to Jesus to be saved as they are described as those who desire to draw near to God. There are no other restrictions, no other prequalification’s than sinners who want to draw near to God! Jesus said so in John 6:37 “*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*” There is no other way to the Father except through the Son but the Son is open to every person who trusts only Him! The other side of that is that Jesus can ONLY save those who come to Him, so He is able to save ALL but not all will be saved because not all will come to Him to be saved!
3. ***Who COME TO GOD THROUGH HIM***: **Nature of our salvation**! Is to bring people NEAR to God, He does this by delivering them from their sin, which qualifies them to come to God. When looking at the subject of “deliverance from sin” we can find verses that depict this being done in the threefold element of time of each sinner being delivered:
4. ***Past tense***: **Salvation**! We **HAVE** been freed from sin, so we can say “***I have been saved***!”
5. ***Present tense***: **Sanctification**! In the present tense we **ARE** freed from sin’s power. So we can say, “***I am saved and am being saved***!”
6. ***Future tense***: **Glorification**! In the future tense, we will be free from sin’s presence, so we **SHALL** say, “***I am saved from sin’s presence***!”

All these are truths that deal with the nature of the believer’s salvation and together they represent the full and complete way in which a believer is saved!

1. ***HE ALWAYS lives to make intercession for them***: **Security of our salvation**! The security of our salvation rest upon the perpetual intercession of Jesus for us. The truth is we can’t keep ourselves saved any more than we can save ourselves but ***Jesus has the power to not only save us, He alone has the power to keep us***! Jesus is constantly, eternally, perpetually praying for us before the God the Father! Whenever we sin Jesus says to the Father, “*Put that on my account, as I have already paid for that sin*!” This is why according to Colossians 1:22 “*to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight*.” And how we are able to according to Jude 1:24 “*keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.*” In Jesus we are now blameless in the Father’s sight and when we are glorified we will be blameless in His presence!
2. **Perfectly Fitted For Us**

Vs. 26-28 To start out with the author tells His readers that it was “*fitting for us*” to have a high priest like Jesus. He is the only one that would do for us as He alone is absolutely essential for all humanity if God was going to save us. *The Hebrew’s were rejecting Jesus along the lines that He was not a Levite and the writer says that the fact that He was not from the tribe of Levi is not a liability it is an essential asset*! If Jesus was from the tribe of Levi, then His priesthood would be just as ineffective as theirs. Here we are told that Jesus is five things that a Levitical priest could never be that Jesus was because He was from the order of Melchizedek:

1. **Holy**: Jesus is from the very beginning, because of His nature, eternally HOLY! There is no sin in Jesus that satan could ever use to get a hold over Him and control or enslave Him. ***Jesus is not capable of sin***. He was without sin eternally, He was without sin while He walked upon this earth, tempted in everyway like us, and He is without sin now!
2. **Harmless**: There is a ***difference of direction*** when you compare “*holiness*” to “*harmlessness*” as “*holiness*” direction is towards God while “*harmlessness*” direction is towards their fellow man. Jesus harmed no human, ***His whole live was summed up in living for others benefit not His own.*** He always acted towards the benefit of others even when others acted towards Him in hatred and cruelty. Instead of harming those who would harm Him, He healed them!
3. **Undefiled**: This word refers to freedom from moral or spiritual blemish. Jesus lived 33 years upon this earth and was in this world with all of its moral and ethical decay, living among sinning humanity, touching them, going among them while they habitually practiced moral degradation. He was being continually tempted without a break from satan to sin like the rest of those in captivity. Yet in all those 33 years never once did he contract the least amount or trace of sin upon Himself. ***He was the like the rays of sun light upon a cesspool who in the end only shone the radiance, purity and power of His light upon the mess and never once lost His brilliance or His purity***!
4. **Separate from sinners**: This phrase speaks of being of ***a completely different class***. He wasn’t separate from sinners ***logistically*** or ***geographically***. In fact, everyone He came into contact with were sinners, His parents, His siblings, the religious, even His own disciples. Jesus at with sinners, walked with sinners, worked with sinners and even worshipped with sinners, but never at any time was His nature like those He lived among. ***If He had ever behaved like any of us He could have never saved any of us***!
5. **Higher than the heavens**: He is exalted because of the fur other truths about Jesus just mentioned. It is because of these things that Jesus doesn’t offer sacrifices for Himself or like the other Levitical priests. Jesus only offered one sacrifice (Himself) one time for all of humanity! The Priest was and therefore so was the sacrifice He offered, so it was once for all time! Instead of rejecting Jesus as being different than the Levitical priesthood of Aaron they should of thanked God for only Jesus could offer them what Aaron and the Levitical priesthood pointed towards!

**Hebrews 8:1-5**

**“The intrusion of eternity”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1 Position**
3. **Vs. 2-5 Preparation**
4. **Introduction**

***The author of Hebrews simply cannot take his eyes off Christ.*** In 7:26 he said: “***It was fitting*** *that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens*.” Jesus was just what his readers needed! And because this book is in the Bible and according to 2 Timothy 3:16 “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God,..*”; then ***Jesus is just exactly what we need in our lives as well***! In Chapter 8 we have another major division in the letter. You will recall that our focus was on Jesus as High Priest, how what some of the Hebrews viewed as a liability in his genealogy because He was not from the tribe of Levi was in reality an **essential asset**. The main focus in chapters 8-10 moves from the Person of the High priest which we saw in verse 26 to the work of the High Priest and His sacrifice. Through church history and its influence in society there has been a never ending attempt to “sanitize” Christ and Christianity from any connection with His cross. But the truth remains “*You will never understand Jesus apart from the cross.*” They are indivisibly united! They are best explained in the phrase of verse 27 where we read that, “*This He did* **ONCE FOR ALL** *when He* **OFFERED UP HIMSELF**”. There had never been a Levitical priest who ever **OFFERED UP HIMSELF** upon the alter of sacrifice. But not only did Jesus do so but verse 28 tells us that “*the Son who has been perfected forever*”. The job of the High Priest was to find a sacrifice that had the right qualifications that would be acceptable; it had to without spot or blemish and as such we are being told that Jesus Christ could find no sacrifice that was without spot or blemish except himself, so he offered himself. There was no Priest found worthy to sacrifice and no innocent victim worthy of offering, so Jesus as High Priest was worthy and became the sacrifice offering Himself once and for all, as both Priest and Victim. Further more, the cross of Christ is a “timeless” event! When you combine the two key thought s of verses 27 and 28 together you get that picture: *This He did* **ONCE FOR ALL….** *the Son who has been* **perfected forever**”. The Cross of Jesus is NOT merely an event we look back into time to understand it is rather an event that was in its very nature an ***intrusion of eternity into time***! The Cross of Christ burst into time for the world to see but the fact is it had been going on since before time began and it continues on throughout time into eternity. Two scriptures prove this point:

1. First in Revelation 13:8 we are told that James is “*the Lamb slain* ***from the foundation of the world***.”
2. Then in Revelation 5:6 as the apostle John looked all around ***heaven*** searching for one worthy to take the title deed to the earth and remove the curse of the fall saw, “*,* ***in the midst of the throne****,…****stood a Lamb as though it had been slain****..*.”

This is why all of humanity prior to the Cross and the historic presentation of Christ could be saved, just as we are saved today, because the cross reached backward into time as well as forward into time. From God’s perspective the cross of Jesus Christ, is the central act of history, everything flows from that.

1. **Vs. 1 Position**

Vs. 1 First the writer wants to remind his readers that, the point of emphasis is in Jesus as High Priest is not about **duration** but **location**! **The central question is**: ***Where can a person find this kind of ministry of Jesus Christ***? The writer answer is twofold and is yet another superiority of Jesus priesthood when compared to that of the Levities, His “**POSITION**” and His “**PREPARATION**”.

1. **POSITION**: First in verse one he writes that that it comes from the risen Lord, Jesus Christ who is “***SEATED at the right hand*** *of the throne of the Majesty in heaven*.” Thus the emphasis is upon Jesus “**POSITION**”. I find two things about Jesus “**POSITION**” fascinating, His **posture** and its **location**!
2. **Posture** “***Seated at the right hand of the throne***”: The writer starts off by way of a point of comparison saying that; Jesus as our High Priest was “***Seated***”. Every Hebrew reader of this letter would have stopped the writer right then and there and said, “*Excuse me, did you say the Priest was* ***seated***?” Go back Exodus chapters 25-30 as God gave Moses the pattern of the tabernacle with all its furniture and you will notice that there is one piece of furniture missing in the earthly pattern that is very present in the Heavenly Tabernacle, ***a chair or a throne***! In the earthly tabernacle there was no pattern given for a chair because the Levitical priest never sat down! They stood all day long from morning to evening as they were constantly offering sacrifices as Hebrews 10:11 goes on to explain because, “***Every priest stands*** *ministering daily and* ***offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins***.” The Levitical priest’s job was never done, because what he had to offer was never permanently effective. There was no need for a chair, a bench or a Barcalounger in the earthly tabernacle yet we read that in the heavenly tabernacle Jesus was “SEATED”. The only piece of furniture that had any resemblance of a seat in the earthly tabernacle was in the holy of holies behind the veil atop of the arc of the covenant in the mercy SEAT. But it was not designed to be a place for a priest to sit and would have blasphemous for him to do so. Yet we are told after Jesus as our High Priest offered Himself, He sat down because His work was done, as His last words on the cross were, “*It is finished*!” Jesus in one sacrifice accomplished what 10’s of thousands of priests and untold millions of sacrifices never did, forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. Saint’s ***as far as our salvation is concerned, Jesus has taken His seat***! ***Ah but as true as this is with regards to being seated as our redeemer, He is nonetheless STANDING, as our helper.*** Remember Stephen’s witness before the Sanhedrin where in his time of need he declared that He saw Jesus STANDING at the right hand of God! He has accomplished all that needs to be done and there is nothing more He has to do! The work of Christ needs nothing added to it because it is perfect. Further more we are told that the taking His seat involved it being on the “*right hand of the throne*”! The significance of being on the “***right hand***” is two fold:
3. The right hand was the ***place of honor and exaltation*** of a monarch. To sit there was was the highest honor a king could bestow. In the ruling council of the Sanhedrin it was ***the place of final authority and power***.
4. The right hand was also significant as it related to trials in Judaism as ***the seat on left side was responsible for writing the condemnations for the accused and the right seat was responsible for writing the acquittals***. In John 3:17 Jesus himself said that He came into the world not to “***condemn***” the world but that the world through Him might be saved or “***acquitted***”! ***Jesus now sits on the right hand of the throne a place of honor, power and mercy*** and it is on this seat that we have read that “e always lives to make intercession*he always lives to make intercession for us*.”
5. **Location** “***Of the Majesty in the heavens***”: I think that the readers would have found tremendous comfort in reading this as they were in Rome deprived of the temple services in Jerusalem but they need not be concerned as Jesus the great High priest was “***Seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.***” A far better location then Jerusalem to obtain mercy! Jesus is not somewhere out in outer space called heaven! Yes, Jesus is in heaven, but heaven is not “***out there***” in some unspecified distant location in a “*galaxy far far away*” He is not like we are looking all over the heavens for Luke Skywalker. No, according to Jesus in Luke 17:21 “*The kingdom of God is within you.*” ***Heaven is within***! In Exodus 25:9 God told Moses, “*According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.*”
6. **Vs. 2-5 Preparation**

Vs. 2-5 The sanctuary in which Jesus is a High Priest is infinitely superior than the one in which the Levities served in. When this book was written, the wilderness tabernacled hadn’t been used for a 1000 years, and the Herodian temple in Jerusalem would only be standing for another 5 years. Ah, but the true sanctuary in which Jesus serves can never crumble or be destroyed. The use of the word “true” in the Greek doesn’t mean that the other tabernacles were “false” but rather between eternal and temporary!

1. Second the author writes that Jesus is “*a minister of the* ***true sanctuary*** *which God made and not man*.” Here the emphasis is upon Jesus’ “**PREPARATION**”. Verse 3 is in response to a hypothetical question the writer anticipates the readers would ask: If Jesus has finished His work and is seated in heaven, what’s He doing now? The answer is that His sacrifice and atoning work is finished but priestly ministry is not finished as we saw in 6:25. The tabernacle took form and shape under the direction of Moses as a copy of something else that Moses had been shown in heaven and was built in three parts:
2. The outer court which the people could come.
3. The inner structure in the center of this court divided into two sections. One part called the Holy Place where only the priests and the Levites could enter.
4. The third part of the tabernacle was the rear section of this structure, called the Holy of Holies, containing in it nothing but the Ark of the Covenant of God, where Shekinah glory of God, indicated the presence of God. Into that Holy of Holies, hidden behind the veil, entrance was prohibited to all upon pain of death, with the exception of the high priest who could enter once a year and then only under the most rigid requirements involving the shedding of a sacrifice and the bearing in of a basin of blood.

All this was but a pattern or a copy of the true tabernacle. The interesting thing is that this is the same threefold structure of the universe:

1. The world of matter, the world of things, material or physical structure that we can touch, sense, see, taste, and smell. There is a great and varied area for discovery and exploration in this world. This where science works.
2. The world of mind, the world of ideas, of emotions, the arts, knowledge, and the interchange of human ideas. This too, is a world, rich in voyages of discovery.
3. Then there is the world of the spirit, a world that is a great mystery to us. It is a world in which are hidden the secrets of life. The keys to living are all in the world of the spirit. But into this world we cannot enter, we have no way of access in ourselves.

Now Moses was shown all this. He saw the invisible realities of the nature of God, the structure of the universe, and the need for man too have a Mediator, who would provide a way of access into this world where all the secrets of life are hidden. It was God's intention that man should have access into the inner world. We have no difficulty now with the worlds of mind and matter. We can explore it, we can weigh ideas, we can analyze them, we can entertain the various thoughts of men and we find wonderful delight in doing this. But into the world of spirit we cannot enter. There is only One who can enter that realm -- the Holy of Holies -- the High Priest!

By means of the cross, Jesus our High Priest, entered into the Holy of Holies. The cross is made for the whole man; it can be understood on three levels of life:

1. There is the understanding of the cross on the physical level, its pain, its anguish, the awful thirst of it.
2. There is an understanding of the cross on the emotional level. It is a moving experience to contemplate what occurs in the minds and hearts of those connected with the cross, and especially in the Savior's mind.
3. But the real meaning of the cross never comes to us except as we move into the realm of the spirit, where we are entirely shut up to revelation. Our minds or emotions are incapable of explaining it on this level, we are shut up to what God says it means. But, on that level, we discover there is marvelous meaning and insight on life granted to us in the cross, and in the next section the writer begins to unfold to us the results of this sacrifice. The first part reveals the provision, in the cross, of a new arrangement for living.

**Hebrews 8:6-13**

**“Christ’s Covenant”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 6-7 Better contract**
3. **Vs. 8-13 Jeremiah’s endorsement**
4. **Introduction**

Though out the book of Hebrews the two things the writer is most passionate about continues to be written numerous ways: ***He most passionate about them staying with their profession of faith in Jesus and because of this he is passionate about Jesus***! The 8th chapter marks a transition in his letter as it switches from the person of Jesus to the work of Jesus; the final 7 verses of chapter 8 take a unique look at the work of Jesus as mediator of a superior covenant because of it’s 8 superior characteristics. If your Bible is like mine, you will notice that 167 out of 244 words of these 7 verses are italicized. The reason for this is that the writer is making his case by quoting the prophecy of Jeremiah 31 concerning a future New Covenant. All of this was designed to cause the readers to realize that despite those Hebrews who were attempting to get them to abandon Jesus for the Old Covenant there were far more reasons to stay. Before we break into the text we need to clarify what we are examining today.

1. **Vs. 6-7 Better contract**

Vs. 6 First the writer says in regards to Jesus that “*He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also a* ***MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT***, *which is established on better promises*.” ***The argument hinges on the reader understanding both what a covenant is as well as what a mediator is***. First the Greek word for **mediator** means a ***person who stands between two people or parties and brings them together.*** They are a go-between in a dispute or conflict and they must represent both parties. A ***covenant is a contract or agreement between two parties***. In the case of **Jesus** His ***ministry is to reconcile humanity back to God***. The First covenant had mediators as well, in ceremonial matters the priests filled this role but ultimately it was Moses who acted as a mediator, as we see in Exodus 20:19 as the Israelites after hearing the 10 Commandments read and observing lighting flashes and smoke form the mountain said, “*You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, least we die.*” The prophets also acted as mediators of God’s word. Moses and the prophets weren’t false mediators they were just unable to bring fully reconcile people to God, they were just a reflection of the true mediator, Jesus. So ***Jesus is a better mediator because only He can bring sinful humanity together with a Holy God, He is the ONLY go-between***. But ***further more is offers a better covenant or contract***. If you have ever entered into any kind of contract you know that some are better than other and it all hinges on the “***terms***” and “***promises***”! The author of Hebrews declares that the reason for the New Covenant being better is because it offers a much great set of terms and promises. A standard contract has promises made to both parties and some of those promises are “*conditional*” in nature know as “***if then***” promises. What makes this New Covenant superior with better promises is that it is **NOT** an “***if then***” contact and the promises are 100% beneficial the humanity with 100% of the responsibility in keeping the contract with God not with humanity! If the New Covenant was even partially dependent upon us keeping our part of the bargain, then there would be no hope of us ever being able to enjoy the promises. People break their promises all the time but God never breaks His.

Vs. 7-8a The next point the writer makes is show that ***while the Old Covenant wasn’t false it had it’s faults because of what it had to work with, US***! That’s why he writes, “*If that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a* **SECOND**.” The point that the writer makes is that ***the Hebrew scriptures anticipated a New Covenant as Jeremiah the prophet foretold of establishment 2000 years before it came***. That obviously means that the first covenant was temporary and pointing to a later New covenant which would render it obsolete. He suggests that instead of encouraging those fellow Jews to abandon the New Covenant in which Jesus was the mediator they should have been expecting a New one and embraced it. So the writer says in verse 8a, “*finding fault with them*” and then ***quotes Jeremiah’s prophecy listing eight reasons according to God’s word that the New Contact is better than the old contract***.

1. **Vs. 8-13 Jeremiah’s endorsement**

Vs. 8b-13 This quote over 2000 years before the New Contract was issued is from one of their most beloved prophets, Jeremiah.

1. **Based only on God’s terms**: Vs. 8b “*Behold the days are coming, says* ***the LORD****, when I will make a New Covenant*”: The Lord told Jeremiah that He was going to write a New Covenant based only on His terms. ***This contract was more like a WILL then it was a contract between two parties in which both had terms and promises.*** Though a “WILL” is a type of contract, and may have many different “beneficiaries” that can all enjoy it’s promises it is only written by ONE Person. The beneficiaries have no part in determining the benefits, their only responsibility is to accept or reject the WILL’s promises they can never change what the WILL provides. The New Covenant is based upon Jesus being the Mediator of it and it is only on His terms and conditions, all we can do is reject it or accept it. And some of these Hebrews were trying to change the terms by adding on to it, which render it for them null-and-void!
2. **New and BETTER then the Old**: Vs. 8b-9 “*A New Covenant…not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers*.” The writer continues to tells his readers what necessitated this New Covenant saying in verse 9, “*because* ***they did not continue*** *in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord*.” It was the Jews forefathers that soon after God made the contract that broke it and that is what necessitated the making of a new one. This reveals to us a powerful truth, ***the New covenant had to eliminate the flaw in the first contract, the Israelites***. It also reveals that there was NO HOPE of improvement from humanity through time or culture otherwise God would have reissued the same covenant. The New Covenant isn’t slightly modified or enhanced it is radically different because it eliminates what caused the first contract to fail, humanity to keep up their terms.
3. **Proven better because it had perfect results with the same imperfect people**: Vs. 8c “*with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah*.” It had the same *beneficiaries* that the Old Covenant had but it achieved perfect results. Note that God mentions both halves of the divided kingdom: The 10 northern tribes that were carried away by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. These 10 tribes never fully returned from captivity and were either absorbed into the two tribes of the Southern kingdom or became half Jewish and half gentile, Samaritan. ***The point the writer makes is that the effects of the failure of the Old Covenant because of Israel didn’t alter the success of the New Covenant in Christ***. Even though the Northern tribe lost their genealogical records, God still knew who they were and was able to keep His promises to them. Now you might note that the *beneficiaries* are all Hebrews. God has never made a direct Covenant with gentiles and as far as the Bible is concerned He never will. The New Covenant isn’t made with the church it is made too the same people the Old Covenant was made with, Hebrews. We can become *beneficiaries* by being grafted in the same way Abraham became a *beneficiary*, by faith. We must remember God has never and will never reject Israel even though they have rejected Him at times. Neither will he ever transfer His promises too another.
4. **Better because the promises weren’t dependent upon Israel keeping their terms**: Vs. 9 “*because* ***they did not continue*** *in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord*.” The blessings of the Old Covenant were conditional upon perfect obedience to the terms it was a “**if-will” contract**! God gave the law with the contract and having already been recipients of God’s blessing through the Exodus they said, “*All that You have said we will do*!” I have no doubt that this was their intention as Paul explains the problem in Romans 7:14-25 “*For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.
For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin*.” **Israel’s sins did not do away with the obligations of the law but it did forfeit their experiencing all the blessings of the contract**.
5. **Better because it is relational not religious**: Vs. 10 “*For* ***this is the covenant*** *that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD:* ***I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.***” The ***New Covenant would be radically different because it would internal and external, relational and not religious***! What this New covenant did was **change the motivation of obedience from FEAR to LOVE**. Notice the difference in the parchment of the contract: God’s Old Covenant as seen in the law was written on cold hard stone or on doorposts, writs and foreheads as a continual reminder of the terms we have agreed too! There was no way to place the terms on hearts. But God’s intention is too write His New Covenant upon our hearts and He does this through the Holy Spirit, birthed through a relationship because of His Son who proved His love for us! The New Contrast is a “***HEART CHANGER***” not a “***THOUGHT REMINDER***”!
6. **Better because it’s personal not merely educational**: Vs. 11 “*None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.*” This dove tails with the above superiority because the contract is relational it is personal as God’s word is within us and so is our tutor, the Holy Spirit. Every believer as a resident Teacher in the Holy Spirit. That’s what Jesus said in John 14:26 saying that “*the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you*.” The contrast between the contracts is obvious in Jeremiahs quote as the old contract was dependent upon those who couldn’t keep the contract to teach those who wouldn’t keep it and in the New contract we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit who implement the truth into our hearts!
7. **Better because it offers forgiveness for failures**: Vs. 12 “*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*” Where the old contract broke down because the promises were tied to perfect obedience the New Contract is tied to perfect forgiveness! What we “promise breakers” need more than anything else is forgiveness. ***Under the old contract our sin and failure were never truly forgotten because they were never truly forgiven as sin was covered but not cleared***! The old contract was a shadow anticipating the New contract. Oh glorious it is that God had “forgotten” all our sins!
8. **Better because it is ready and available NOW**: Vs. 13“*He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away*.” This New contract that Jeremiah 2000 years before it came was now available for all of the Hebrews to receive. This was their stumbling block as to receive the New contract they had to abandon the old obsolete contract. They had to realize that it was no longer valid for them or anyone else and that God no loner honored the old contract because the new one had arrived. The old contract was only temporary and a symbol or picture of the new contract. These Hebrews rejection of the new contract was like a person who has a picture of a loved one they haven’t seen in many years. The picture is on the wall of their home and in their wallet and on their desk at work they see it everyday and look forward to the time when they will be reunited with their loved one. The picture is a great representation of their future time together and over time the picture becomes for dear to them. But one day unexpectedly their loved one shows up at their door. But all they do is continue to look at the picture and never recognize their loved one. They have focused so long at the picture that when the loved one had come in person they no longer see the person. The symbol has been substituted for the reality, the symbol is treated as the real thing! The sad truth is that the loved one can do for them what the picture could never do but can’t because they still hold on to the picture which can never accomplish what they whish it could. The picture wasn’t BAD it is beautiful it was never intended to be the real thing. When the real thing has come its time to get rid of the picture and grab ahold of Jesus!

**Hebrews 9:1-10**

**“A clean conscience”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-5 Better than the best**
3. **Vs. 6-10 Three limitations**
4. **Introduction**

The ninth chapter of Hebrews is very detailed and to be quite honest for most of us, confusing with regards to how to apply its truths. First of all, we need to realize that what the writer was writing about was perfectly clear to the Hebrew readers. This section describes in detail Exodus chapters 26-28 and the tabernacle in the wilderness. The chapter deals with one of the most difficult aspects of humanity: ***What to do with our nagging conscience***? The subject isn’t immediately identified until we skip forward in Hebrews chapter 9 to verses 13-14. It is in those two verses that we gain perspective of this chapter: **“***how much more* ***shall the blood of Chris****t, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God,* ***cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God***?” The writer is drawing his readers into ***the practical effect of Jesus’ ministry*** which are highlighted by the words to, “***cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God*.**” The problem the author is dealing with is something that we all have to deal with, “***How to handle a nagging conscience***?” A Conscience has been defined as:

* “*That still, small voice that makes you feel smaller still*.”
* “***It’s what causes you to feel bad when everything else feels good***!”
* The Disney prophet Jiminy Cricket defined it as, “*A conscience is that still small voice that people won’t listen to*.”

***The truth is a conscience is NOT the means by which we tell what is right and what is wrong***. A conscience was never supposed to be that. ***It is ONLY training in God’s Word by His Holy Spirit that tells us what is right or wrong. It is only then that our conscience plays a part by insisting that we do what we now know is right and avoid what we now know is wrong.*** Without a sanctified conscience we can be misguided into thinking that what we think is right is wrong and what we think is wrong is right! Our conscience can accuse us when we violate whatever standard we have adopted, even when that standard may be wrong when viewed in the light of God's Word by His Holy Spirit. And our conscience can also wrongly approve us when we live up to some wrong standard.

Based upon the text, these Hebrews did not have a troubled conscience because of “***evil deeds***”, but because of “***dead works***.” The readers of this letter who were professing Christians knew how to handle the problem of sin. They knew that when they disobeyed God’s word that the way to deal with their conscience was to confess their sin before God, and receive His forgiveness. But their problem was an ***overactive conscience*** that was plagued with guilt over sins of omission (good left undone), not sins of commission (sinful behavior). They were trying to put their conscience to rest by ***religious activity***; trying to easy their troubled conscience by appeasing God by greater religious activity! You can’t find fault with their desire to please God but you can find fault with the motivation they employed to do so; intensive religious activity! The difference from those who have an over active conscience in comparison to those who don’t can’t be measured by activity but instead must be weighed on the MOTIVE behind such activity! We don’t serve to placate God! Our activity is not to try to win the acceptance before God! God is not impressed by our increased effort. At issue is the motivation behind the religious activity that these Hebrews were being tested to go and do to “cleanse their conscience”. This section divides into two sections as we look at two covenants through the lens of two sanctuaries the first we will tackle this morning the next we will look at next week:

1. Vs. 1-10 We look at the religious activity of the first covenant: In verse 2-5 we will look at the sanctuary, verses 6-7 we will look at the services in the sanctuary and finally in verses 8-10 we will look at the significance of all of this.
2. Vs. 11-14 We look at the sanctuary in verse 11, the services in 12, and their significance in verse 13-14.
3. **Vs. 1-5 Better than the best**

Vs. 1-5 Throughout the book of Hebrews the writer continues to illustrate the superiority of Jesus by comparing him to all that these Hebrews held holy about their religion. But through out all of these comparisons the writer never says that things that the Hebrews worshiped or held in high regard were worthless, instead he said they were God ordained. ***The writer never elevated Jesus at the expense of running Judaism down, instead he made Jesus even greater by showing Him superior to what they already held as precious***! He didn’t need to elevate Jesus by belittling their faith! The first point the writer needs to make is to defend the first covenant so that his readers won’t misunderstand his point. The activity of the first covenant was NOT worthless or pointless. In fact, it was sanctioned and authored by God! There problem wasn’t that that they weren’t from God, no ***their problem was that they were temporary and symbolic***! Here in these first 5 verses we see the description of the tabernacle with all of the activity that went along with it. By comparison, only two chapter are dedicated to the creation account where as there are over 50 chapter dedicated to the tabernacle specifically chapters 25-40 of Exodus. The reason for this is that it is a portrait of Jesus and His work. This is why the the writer here in this chapter goes out of his way to show that ***the problem wasn’t the activity, or the place of the activity, the tabernacle***. All of this was God’s idea and His design and all of the activity that went on in that place was God-authorized. There was nothing wrong with the activity of worship in the tabernacle; it was God-authorized, and perfectly proper. There was nothing wrong about the God-authorized regulations; the preparations the priests had to continually do in performing their duties. ***So if there was nothing wrong with the activity, why couldn’t it continue***? That is what the writer will go on to discuss in verses 6-10 and 11-14!

1. **Vs. 6-10 Three limitations**

Vs. 6-10 All of these activities had to do with the Old Testament, the worship in the tabernacle, and the regulations connected with it. The writer in verse 9 points out these activates had three limitations:

1. ***Vs. 9 Limited value***: First the writer says in verse 9 that these activities were, “*Symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which can not make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience.*” These activities only affected the outer man and did nothing to change the heart. The activity of service, the ritual, sacrifice, or ordinance, had no power on the person who performed it let alone on the person they preformed it for. The activity only affected the outward part of the body of the person involved in the activity. If all a person is doing is focusing on the the activity of baptism, then all they are really doing is getting wet and perhaps washing of the outer dirt from the body. It’s not the activity of the “*baptism*” that’s the problem it’s the heart of the person getting baptized that’s the problem. ***No religious activity has VALUE in and of itself***. This truth needs to be declared over and over again to people. Religious people are convinced that God places value in religious activity! But the author of Hebrews says, “*No, not even if the religious activity that is God-authorized being done in God’s place of worship*.” Jesus spoke against such religious activity in reading the word of God in John 5:39 where he said, “*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.*” There was no value in religious reading of the Bible thinking that doing so would save a person; no it’s in what the person does with what they read, TRUST in JESUS THAT SAVES A PERSON. If the conscience is not touched even though they have been engaged in the activity, then their focus is on the activity and not upon God who alone gives us rest and peace! Religious activity is like a person who goes down and buys new clothes every time they need a bath. Their activity never deals with their real problem; all it does is but keeps covering it.
2. ***Vs. 9 Limited truth***: The ***second*** point the author makes is that these activities all were intended to have a deeper message. He writes, “*It was symboli*c *for the present time.*” ***No ritual or activity had MEANING in and of its itself, instead the activity or ritual ONLY had meaning in what it stood for***! Every one of these activities in the tabernacle were intended to convey a deeper message. Take for instance the activity of the provisions of the show bread, the incense, the offerings, the ornate building itself with its altars. All of this religious activity was to teach the people their importance was not to place importance upon the outward activity it was only “symbolic”. What was important wasn’t the activity but what it stood for. But the Hebrews completely missed this and thought God was interested in the activity or ritual. In Isaiah 1:11-14 God tells the nation, “*To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats.  Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies-- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.*”
3. ***Vs.9 Limited reach***: The ***third*** point the writer makes is that these activities never touch the conscience. In verse 8 the writer said, “*The Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing*.” The phrase “*Is still standing*” is a mistranslation; as it should be “*still has any standing*.” That idea is, “*still has any value in their sight*.” The Hebrews could never see what the truth that God was showing them at as long as they had their attention focused on the activity or ritual. And the mere activity never had any effect upon their guilty conscience. All it did to their conscience is require more and more activity in an attempt to appease the conscience. The truth is these Hebrews needed to see the worthlessness of the activity or ritual before they could appropriate the truth behind the symbol. David illustrated this truth when he wrote about it in Psalm 51:16-17 “*For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.* ***The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart-- These, O God, you will not despise****.*” David realized that the activity of “*burnt offerings*” was just the symbol of the true sacrifice of “*a broken and a contrite heart*” of which“*God, will not despise.*” This psalm was written after David’s double sin of adultery and murder. And in the Psalm **David confesses that God brought conviction to his heart, not through the activity of the ritual but what it pointed towards “*a broken and a contrite heart*”**. This is why David had conscience cleansed because it went beyond the endless religious activity.

**Hebrews 9:11-16**

**“From duty to delightful devotion”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 11-14 Not made with hands**
3. **Vs. 15-16 All things through Christ**
4. **Introduction**

Here in verses 11-14 the writer gives his readers the contrast to religion with its activity that had:

1. **Limited Value**: ***No value in religious activity in and of its self***!
2. **Limited Truth**: ***No meaning in religious activity apart from what it pointed towards***!
3. **Limited Reach**: ***No ability in religious activity to change the heart or conscience***!

The contrast is immediately apparent in the first two words of verse 11, “***But Christ***”! Jesus is the opposite of religion even when religion had its ordinances, ritual’s service and activity that was ordained by God because Jesus’ impact didn’t have “limited value, truth or reach” into our lives! ***Religion, (even God ordained activity) has a faulty motor inasmuch as it depends upon human activity of the worshiper to do what only God can do change the inward heart***! All the activity of the worshipper can only affect the outer-man; it can do nothing to change the inward man. It can never clean clear or quiet the conscience. If it could then there would be no need for Christ we would be totally dependent upon our own religious activity. In this section we look at one of the most difficult aspects of the Christian life; Duty at the expense of Devotion! The writer is walking a fine line as he expounds upon what has changed it the believers service of God that the religious Hebrews didn’t want to abandon. Saints, our religious works will never work, to ease our troubled conscience, but those who have understood grace will be set free to serve not to receive love and forgiveness because they have love and forgiveness!

1. **Vs. 11-14 Not made with hands**

Vs. 11-14 That’s why we Christian’s depend upon “*Christ as our High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more permanent tabernacle not made with hands, that is not of this creation*.” The new covenant, depends not on the activity of the worshipper but on the activity of Christ in our place! Because of this the affect of Jesus moves from the outward man to the inward man. When our conscience, is confronted with the value, truth and reach of Christ's blood, it has nothing to say! In verse 12 we are told of three things that Jesus does in this “*perfect tabernacle not made with hands*”:

1. “***Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood***”: First, Jesus’ service is in His own blood, not in the temporary sacrifices. ***The sacrificer was the sacrifice***!
2. “***He entered the Most Holy Place once for all***”: Second, He made His sacrifice of Himself only once, and that one sacrifice was more than sufficient for ALL people. That means that not matter type of sin or how often you sinned, accepting Jesus’ sacrifice is all we will ever need!
3. “***Having obtained eternal redemption***”: Third, Jesus obtained a “*permanent eternal redemption*”. Because of this Jesus has cleansed us from “past, present, and future” sins once and for ALL!

All of our religious activity adds NOTHING to our acceptance before God. Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:6 that God has made us “***accepted in the Beloved***.” As difficult as it is for us to believe this: God **doesn’t** “***LIKE US BETTER***” because we serve Him, go to church, read our Bibles or pray! Some may argue that I just destroyed the motivation of doing those things; and I would argue that I just changed the motivation from fear to LOVE, from works to GRACE! God’s love has never been based upon what we do for Him, God loves us because He is love and that is what He does! Serving God is not our ***DUTY*** it is our ***DELIGHT***! Nothing impedes our growth and maturity more that a guilty conscience. A guilty conscience is one of satan’s most effective weapons as he knows you will never draw near to God if you have a guilty conscience. If a Christian want’s to be victorious over the devil, you will need to accept the fact that the blood of Christ completely makes you acceptable to God. The glorious truth is that God the Father welcomes us into His presence NOT on the grounds of:

* ***Our successful spiritual progress***
* ***Dedicated service***
* ***Biblical knowledge***
* ***Ability to say no to sin***

Instead He welcomes us into His presence on the sole grounds of our acceptance of the blood of Christ cleansing us from all sin, past present and future! It is this truth that has far to often been a secret in Christianity that has enabled believers throughout history to overcome the satan as we are told in Revelation 12:11 that the martyred believers during the tribulation will overcome satan, “*by the blood of the Lamb*.” These future saints refused to wilt before his accusations of the devil and were, able to enjoy access to the throne of grace.

1. **Vs. 15-16 All things through Christ**

Vs. 15-16 But what does all of this have to do with the blood of Christ? It is this aspect that the writer address in verses 15-23. In verse 15 he begins to address this saying, “*For this reason He* (Jesus*) is the Mediator of a new covenant, by means of of death*..” As I said a few weeks back the clearest way to understand a “covenant” is to call is a “contract”. There are many different kinds of contracts but the two which the writer looks at is a two-part conditional contract also called a “***if-then***” because it has terms that needs to be completed in order for the promises to be received. But if you look at verse 16 the writer refers to another type of contract that he calls a “testament” and he describes this type of contract by what must take place for people to be the beneficiaries of it has he writes, “*For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator*.” So what kind of contract requires the death of someone for the beneficiaries to receive the promises? A WILL! The writer points out, that no will that is written that can bestow any benefits until after the death of the person who wrote the will. Jesus blood is inescapable; His death was not for his sake, but for ours. He was our representative. The cross is God's way of telling us that there is nothing in us worth saving at all, we have no salvageable content in us whatsoever. He takes us and says, “*There is nothing any of you can do for me, not one thing.*” In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we are told that God “*made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*.” This is Paul’s way of telling us that God says, “There is nothing in you that can please me; there is nothing you can do in your own effort that is worth a thing.” The Cross of Jesus eliminates us, from claiming any approval, we simply are NOT good people and we can NOT do good works to make up for our failures. This why our religious activity can not improve our relationship with God in the slightest degree. The truth of this destroys our pride. We Christians are not indispensable to God; He is indispensable to us. It is this great truth to that brings us to realize that: We are completely bankrupt to do anything for God, so that we can receive everything from him. That is why the writer says in verse 14, “*the blood of Christ ... purifies our conscience* ***to serve the living God***.” Included in the gospel is the truth that Jesus has made Himself available to us, to do everything in us. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:24 “*He who calls you is faithful,* ***who also will do it***.” ***Jesus is the one who calls you to do something but He is also the One who intends to do it, through you***. Therefore, we need to stop thinking that we have to depend on *our* intellect, *our* ability, *our* gifts, *our* talents, or *our* anything, and start realizing that we are relying on Jesus’ ability to supply what He asks us to do. That is what Paul said in Philippians 4:13, “***I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.***” All of these “benefits” are available to us Christians but only if we relying upon the FACT that Jesus has died for these benefits to be released towards us! The “WILL” is NOT in effect if there is NO death of the benefactor. That was the problem with these religious Hebrews as they didn’t want to accept His death because that would make “*null and void*” all their religious activity making them a “*special people*”! If we refuse to accept this fact, then we will never find any lasting acceptance before God because it will always be conditional upon our religious activity. ***We will always be wrestling with whether we have done enough to be pleasing to God by our activity***. But if we accept this truth we will move from DUTY, to DELIGHTFUL DEVOTION in our service. The writer of Hebrews will sum it up very well in his doxology in 13:20-21 where he writes, “*Now may 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, through Jesus Christ****, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen*.”

**Hebrews 9:16-28**

**“Accepted sacrifice”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 16-17 A will and death**
3. **Vs. 18-22 Forgiveness and blood**
4. **Vs. 23-26 Once for all**
5. **Vs. 27-28 Judgment and a substitute**
6. **Introduction**

We go back now and focus a bit more of verse 15 where the sentence started with the phrase “And for this reason” which points back to what the writer had just wrote that “*Because of Jesus’ death He had become the mediator of a new and better contract*.” This contrast is between two contracts both of which as noted were not made with us gentiles or the church but with Jews. Further more the writer states that the fault of the first didn’t lie with the contract but what it had to work with, people as represented in the Jews. Looking at these two contracts we can see that:

1. The ***POINT*** of the contract was still the same: ***Too reconcile fallen humanity back to a righteous God***.
2. The ***TERMS*** of the contract were still the same: **Ezek. 18:4 “*The soul who sins shall die*.”**
3. The ***MEANS*** of the contract hadn’t changed: Hebrews 9:22 tells us that “***without the shedding of blood there is NO REMISSION.***” There can not be any reconciliation apart from the shedding of blood. But the problem lies, in what the writer will say in chapter 10:4 that “***It is NOT POSSIBLE that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins***.”

“***If the point of both contracts were the same, and the terms of the contracts were the same, and the stated means of the contracts were ineffective in guaranteeing the stated aim of the contract; then how could the contracts ever be completed***?” The only way that to reconcile fallen humanity back to a righteous God is through shed blood and the way in which that had been done by order of God was through the blood of “bulls and goats” was deemed by God as “***impossible***” to execute the contract. That would mean that the terms stated: “*The soul who sins must die*”, would NOW be expected. The writer has explained to his readers that the “blood of bulls and goats” were only meant as a temporary symbol of the permanent plan of Jesus that according to chapter 10:10 that His death was “***once for all***”. The reader’s problem would have been how to comprehend what they and their forefathers had practiced as the “means” to reconciliation if it was impossible to reconcile them back to God. Since God had ordained the animal sacrifice and required their forefathers to practice it to be reconciled to God what happened to those, who for hundreds of years had practiced this and then died? Did God make an exclusion for them? Did the blood of bull and goats work for them and if so why wouldn’t it work for the readers of this letter? This is the point of this section as the writer’s focus is ***the threefold necessity of the Messiah’s death***.

1. **Vs. 16-17 A will and death**

Vs. 16-17 First let’s address the readers concerns: First the question as to “***how the first Testament believers were saved***”: They were **saved on the same basis as believers today – “*By the finished work of Christ*”**. One of the first accomplishments of Jesus’ death was to redeem those who had believed in God under the first contract. He preached “liberty to the captives”. Jesus death was “***retroactive***”! Just as the symbol of the blood of bulls and goats ***covered*** symbolically the ***people for the previous year***! ***They were credited by faith with what Jesus, their promised Messiah, would one day do for them and all sinners***. In the truest since Jesus sacrifice had already been made in God’s mind long before it was made in human history, as we are told in Hebrews that it was finished from the foundation of the world! Here is where theses Hebrews were mistaken: *The Old Testament sacrifices were* ***NOT THE MEANS*** *to salvation*, *they were the* ***SYMBOLS*** *of* ***the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God*** *who would take away the sin of the world*! This is why what Paul wrote I 1 Corinth 1:23 was true of the Jews as they saw the Cross of Christ as a “*stumbling block*”. It had nothing to do with their own Scriptures in which they ignored what God said in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. They instead preferred their own ideas about the Messiah and adopted their own religious ideals that took in works as a means to salvation! The first of ***necessity of Jesus’ death***, is that:

1. Vs.16-17 **A will demands death**: As noted last week is that a “WILL’s” benefits, provisions and promises don’t come into effect until the person who made it DIES! The writer says that God gave an eternal inheritance to Israel but it was in the form of a contract or will. But it the first contract acted only as a “promissory note” until the provider of the note died. There is no mention of how or when the person will die only that He will. What happened with most the the Hebrews is that they took the “promissory note” as the true will instead of what it pointed towards. As such the writer pints out that the benefits, provisions and promises don’t come into effect until the person who made it DIES!
2. **Vs. 18-22 Forgiveness and blood**

Vs. 18-22 The second point that the writer says regarding the necessity of Jesus’ death is that:

1. Vs. 18-22 **Forgiveness demands blood**: The shedding of blood is a symbol of death and were even seen in the covenant made with Abraham all of which point towards Jesus. In verse 19 the writer draws attention to the contrast that though both the Old Covenant as well as the New Covenant are sprinkled blood (Exodus 24:6-8 and Matthew 26:28) Moses did so with the blood of animals where as Jesus took up the cup saying, “*This is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*.” But saints it is good for us to be reminded that Jesus physical “blood” isn’t that which saves us, it’s His dying on the cross on our behalf that does. The pour out of His blood just symbolizes His actual death. With out this distinction than all that would have been necessary was Jesus giving up a pint on a blood drive! The purpose of the blood was to symbolize His sacrifice for our sins which brought about our cleansing from all sin and with this the truth that “*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*” The writer is drawing this conclusion to demonstrate that some of the Jews had focused upon the symbol instead of the person. For instance; the Law allowed a poor person to bring two quarts of fine flour if they couldn’t afford the lamb or even the turtledoves, (Lev. 5:6-7). This proves that such things were meant to be symbols that pointed towards Jesus’ death. The reason for this “*blood*” symbol is Lev. 17:11 where we are told that “*the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls*”. The penalty for sin is death and nothing but death (symbolized by the shedding of blood) can atone for our sin. We can gain forgiveness by self effort, if we could than Jesus Christ died in vain. Neither can we come into His Holy presence by being “good Christians” reading our bibles and going to church. The truth is “forgiveness is the most expensive known to man” but cost has been paid for by the death of Jesus! There is no substitute! The reader of this letter is warned “never to presume or trivialize the grace of God!” God doesn’t forgive our sin by saying, “Since I love you so much, I’ll let this sin go.” God’s nature doesn’t let our sin slide, His holiness and righteousness demands payment by death and the only death that can pay for our sin is His only begotten Son Jesus. God’s great love doesn’t lead Him to “overlook” our sin, it leads Him to provide payment!
2. **Vs. 23-26 Once for all**

Vs. 23-26 Again the writer reminds the reader that the earthly tabernacle was a “copy” of the heavenly one and all it had to offer was a symbol for the real thing. The “Heavenly tabernacle” offered “better sacrifices” which is the writer’s point. The animal sacrifices that some of the Hebrews were insisting upon were just a sketch, a faint picture of the shed blood of Jesus. Paul writing of this declared in Philip 2:9 that because of Jesus sacrifice “*God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at THE name of Jesus EVERY knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth*.” The argument is plain, to which of the animal sacrifices did God the Father give this exaltation? Only Jesus satisfies what God’s holiness demands no one can come to the Father except through Jesus! Jesus presents us in Himself and this is why we are told that we are “*Accepted in the Belove*d”! Go the Father sees:

* Jesus’ ***righteousness*** instead of our ***unrighteousness***
* Jesus’ ***sacrifice*** instead of our ***sin***
* Jesus’ ***payment*** for our sin instead of the ***penalty*** for our sin

No person is declared “just as if they have never sinned” until they are placed into the death of Jesus! Further more Jesus didn’t enter the earthly tabernacle He went into the very presence of God the Father and when He did, He took us with Him as we are told in verse 24 that He did so “FOR US”! God’s satisfaction with Christ’s sacrifice doesn’t depend upon a continual sacrifice, as we are told in verse 26 that “He would have to suffer often”. This should put to rest the heretical doctrine of the Catholic Mass where Jesus is perpetually offered as a sacrifice, instead of once and for all! To the Catholic Church Jesus is STILL being sacrificed where as the Bible teaches that we are to REMEMBER Jesus sacrifice NOT believe that it is repeated every week! This is why most Roman Catholic crucifix’s still have Jesus on the cross!

1. **Vs. 27-28 Judgment and a substitute**

Vs. 27-28 The third and final point that the writer says regarding the necessity of Jesus’ death is that:

Vs. 27-28 **Judgment demand a substitute**: All humanity will die, it is the one appointment that no one will be late for. But there is another appointment that we want to miss and that is “judgment”. We aren’t able to make atonement for sins, to pay what God’s righteous judgment demands the only thing we can do is trust on our only substitute, Jesus! Jesus die like all men but unlike all men He never faced judgment and instead took our sins, NOT His sins; as we are told in 2 Corinth 5:21 that “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*.” In verse 28 is a reference that every Hebrew would understand and that is the relief that would experience on the “Day of atonement”. It happened when the High Priest would come out of the Holy of Holies. If he didn’t come out it meant that he did something wrong and that their sins remained, but if he appeared than they knew that the sacrifice had been accepted by God. The reference here is that they second coming will cause a greater sense of relief as they will look on Hi whom they have pierced and realize that His sacrifice was accepted!

**Hebrews 10:1-6**

**“We preach Christ crucified”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-4 They failures of the old sacrifices**
3. **Vs. 5-6 the necessity of Jesus crucified**
4. **Introduction**

The focus of chapter nine was on the ***necessity*** of Jesus’ death, whereas the focus of chapter ten is not on the necessity of the cross but rather on the ***superiority*** of the cross of Jesus. Through out church history it seems as though over time the emphasis upon Jesus sacrifice on our behalf loses its popularity even among evangelicals. The story is told an old church in England that had the scripture verse 1 Corinthians 1:23; “***We preach Christ crucified***”, carved in an arch over the entrance to the church proudly proclaiming its identity. For many year’s great bible teachers came and went under that banner doing just that. But over time a new generation began to come though the church that considered Jesus’ death as not significant for salvation. The preachers taught that what was important was Jesus life not His death, that salvation came by people following Jesus earthly example. Ironically some ivy began to grow along the right side of the arch and completely covered the word “*crucified*” and all that could be read was “*We preach Christ*”. As time went on and many more years passed two things happened at about the same pace, the preachers that came to teach no longer saw the necessity of Jesus being preached and adopted a social gospel; while at the same time the ivy grew over the word, “*Christ*” and the only words that could be read were “*We preach*”! The final outcome if the church continued upon its course would be that the only word left would be “WE”. That is always the inevitable outcome of a church that stops preaching “*Christ crucified*” it ends up only being about **US**! Two things are the aim of the first 18 verse of chapter ten that emphasize the ***superiority*** of the cross of Jesus:

1. Vs. 1-6 Three failures of the old sacrifices
2. Vs. 7-18 Seven superior traits of Jesus sacrifice
3. **Vs. 1-4 They failures of the old sacrifices**

Vs. 1 Under the first covenant the priests were continually busy. It has been estimated that at Passover alone over 3000 lambs would be killed turning the Brook of Kidron red with their blood. But no matter how many sacrifices that were made they were completely ineffective to accomplish the plan of God. More importantly the old contract was never designed to implement the plan of God; it was only a shadow of the reality, a photo of the real image. The blood of bulls and goats is not the blood of Christ and because of this it could never take away sin. In the first four verses the author mentions three complete failures of the old covenant’s sacrifices:

1. Vs. 1 ***They can not bring access to God***: “*A shadow….can never…make those who approach God perfect.*” The greatest limitation of the sacrifices is that as faint symbols all they can do is reflect the form. Only the High Priest once a year could go into the presence of God; even with all those sacrifices he could never bring anyone with him. The blessings and promises were only pictures and because of this they could never be realized. Before Jesus’ finished work on the cross no one could get closer to God, we were always going to be outside the door! The word “perfect” in this verse means to bring to completion and the author is saying that even with all the religious effort in which the High Priest served offering each and every day sacrifices year after year he could never complete the task of bring people closer to God. The reason for this is that these sacrifices were never intended to do so, their purpose was a picture not to make people perfect. The Hebrews had taken that which purpose was a picture and made it a religion! The very fact of the “repetitive picture” should have been all they needed to reveal to them that it could never accomplish what they had “believed” it could! It’s repetition, every day, year after year was proof of it’s ineffectiveness to accomplish making people closer to God. It’s simple math if you multiply anything by zero the answer is always going to be zero! You can repeat the process every day year after year and you will never be able to change the answer. This revelation of the writer to his readers must have spawned a question: “*Why did God go through all the trouble establishing faith symbols if they were not the reality*?” There are three reason that I see for this:
2. ***To reflect reality***: The purpose of a shadow is always to reflect the reality of the image. It causes you seek out that which has caused the shadow! It seems that God wanted Israel to look deeper into what was causing the shadow and not just begin to think the shadow was the reality! The sacrifices pointed towards the sacrifice of Jesus to come. ***There is no doubt some in Israel through out their history who saw the shadow looked around to the see the reality like***: Simeon in Luke 2:25-35 who was waiting for the “***Consolation of Israel***” and saw Jesus in the temple with His parents and taking Him up in his arms exclaimed, “*My eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel*.” Peter speaks of some of them in 1 Peter 1:10 saying that, “*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you*.”
3. ***To remind Israel of the penalty***: Through the sacrifices Israel was constantly reminded that the penalty to sin and rebellion was death. Death was going on each and every day for their sin, they were reminded that their sin caused death and that only death would be the remedy to sin, not religious works our being a “*good person*.”
4. ***To recall the need to deal with sin***: Finally, God gave them the sacrifices as He had Adam and Eve as a “covering” for sin. A shadow is better than nothing at all and when offered with a right heart the sacrifices offered a “temporary” reprieve from the judgment of God. To not sacrifice was to be cut off from God and His people completely. They were temporal and only offered a covering and not a “cleansing” from sin and because of this they could never bring a person into the presence of God.
5. Vs. 2-3 ***They can’t remove sin***: Removal of sin is what we need not just mere covering for sin. The sacrifices only temporarily covered sin without ever removing it and it only lasted until the next sin. In that sense they were like a prescription that reliefs the symptoms temporarily but does nothing to aid in the cure. ***The fact that you have to continue to refill the prescription is a constant reminder of to facts***: One, that ***you are sick*** and two, ***that there is not cure possible with the medicine you are constantly required to take***! With every sacrifice there was a reminder of those ***two facts*** were sinners and nothing we are presently doing is changing this fact! ***Those sacrifices didn’t erase sin they called attention too it***! Those sacrifices didn’t even ease the “conscience” that had sinned they reminded them that they were sinners! With every sacrificed animal was a greater awareness that they were “***incurably sick***” under the current prescription, they were just ***temporarily masking symptoms***! In one sense this is a good thing as it is a warning system helping us avoid things that would cause us to further damage our lives. But as far as freeing us from the penalty or power of sin or delivering us into the presence of God the sacrifices could never bring us to the cure which is only in Jesus! Every sacrifice told the same story to every listening heart: That to draw near to God required a God-approved life be willing to lay down their life. The truth was the more faithful the believer the guiltier they felt as they were more aware of God’s holiness and their own inability to stop sinning! They were caught between the knowledge of God’s holiness and the knowledge of their un-holiness with at the knowledge of a remedy! David wrote if this in Psalm 51:3 where he said, “***My sin is always before me***!” The forgiven sinner is ever aware to their sin but they know that they are forgiven in Christ and have escaped the penalty and power of sin to enslave them.
6. Vs. 4 ***They were only external***: The heart of the problem is always a problem of the heart! The sacrifices were external and offered only a temporary outward solution that never changed the real problem which is the heart of man. Sin is seen outwardly but originates inwardly and if the only treatment dealt with the outward then it only dealt with symptoms while ignoring the problem. That’s why the author says, “*It’s not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*” There is no relationship between a person’s sins and an animal this is why the writer elaborates further in verses 5-6 upon Jesus becoming the only perfect sacrifice they would be our cure not just temporarily alleviate our symptoms. There is are some even among the church that believes that: *Jesus died on the cross that they may be free to live free to live a self-indulge life*. Jesus bore all my pain and suffering, so now I don’t need to ever endure pain, difficulty or heartache, and if I do then there is something wrong, because it’s all about me! This a distorted narcissistic form of the Christian faith. ***The truth is that Jesus died in order that I might be free to die with him to the self centered life, and he rose again so that I might live in His power and service to be a blessing!*** The Christian will never know the blessing of the rising without the dying! Unless we willing lay down our lives we will never have them back again as He had designed them to be. This is exactly what Jesus said in Matthew 10:39 “*He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*” Ah but the glorious thing is if we are continually dying with him, we will also be continually rising with him.
7. **Vs. 5-6 the necessity of Jesus crucified**

Vs. 5-7 The Old Testament revealed the God’s design, but in Jesus we see God’s desire: “*When He (Jesus) came into the world, he said, Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of Me to do thy will, O God*.” This is what God’s real design was, He was never interested is the rivers of blood that flowed from the altar. All the blood of the animals slain never gave the guilty conscience any rest. God’s only interest in them was that they taught something, they pointed too:

***The necessity of a human body***: But just a man but one in which the human will continually chose to depend upon God to obey the God’s word! That was what was needed and why we read the quote of Psalm 40:6-8. Prior to the incarnation Jesus paused on the threshold of heaven, and said, “*A body You have prepared for me*.” There in the womb of the virgin named Mary a human body was being formed, a body with nerve and muscle and sinew and hair and eyes and feet, growing through all the stages that the normal human embryo goes through. Within that body was a human soul with the capacity to reason, to feel and to choose. But in that human body, would never once act on its own, never once take a step apart from dependence upon the Father who dwelt within. Jesus said this in John 14:10 where He says, “*Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works*.” That’s the principle that God has been after all along. When Jesus allowed this direction in from the Word of God in His life every temptation he endured, every problem that He experienced, He would go back to what God had said saying, “It is written”! That is what led Him too the cross, where He laid down His life. And by means of that sacrifice, we are now able to join Jesus in this victorious life that is God's original plan for man.

**Hebrews 10:6-18**

**“At the threshold of heaven”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 5-18 Seven reason as to why Jesus sacrifice is successful**
3. **Introduction**

The fifth verse of chapter ten begins with a transition as we note the word “*therefore*”. The writer has just brought his readers to the truth that the first contract could never be successful in accomplishing what they were practicing. He had clearly stated it saying, “*these sacrifices, even though they are repeated continually year after year can never enable to approach*!” The repetitive nature of them didn’t increase the inevitability of success instead they proved two things: The Person who offered was hopeless ill and that prescription could never cure them. The writer went on to explain three ways that the shadowy prescription of animal sacrifices was unsuccessful as a “permanent treatment”:

* Vs. 1 ***They could not bring access to God***
* Vs. 2-3 ***They could not remove sin***
* Vs. 4 ***They only dealt with the symptoms of sin***

It is right after this that the writer introduces the “*therefore*” which is followed by a quote from Psalm 40:6-8 and the heavenly conversation between Jesus and the Father about the necessity of His incarnation and Jesus’ willingness to be the “Cure” for humanities hopeless condition. This is what God’s real design that the sacrificial system was only a shadow of. God was never interested is the rivers of blood that flowed from the altar. God’s only interest in them was that they taught something, they pointed too:

1. ***The necessity of a human body***: Not just any man but one in which the human will continually chose to depend upon God to obey His word! That is why the writer quotes from Psalm 40:6-8. Prior to the incarnation Jesus paused on the threshold of heaven, and said, “*A body You have prepared for me*.” There in the womb of the virgin named Mary a human body was being formed, a body with nerves, muscles and sinews, hair, eyes and feet, growing through all the stages that the normal human embryo goes through. Within that body was a human soul with the capacity to reason, to feel and to choose. But in that human body was someone very different from every other human that had ever been in a womb. This human would never once act on His own, never once take a step apart from dependence upon the Father who dwelt within. Jesus said this in John 14:10 where He says, “*Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works*.” This is what was needed to reconcile an unholy people to a holy God and why no animal sacrifice would ever work. Jesus fallowed the Word of God at every temptation, every problem He faced, He would go back to what God had said saying, “***It is written***”! And it was this obedience that led Him too the cross, where He laid down His life as the perfect and only sacrifice being the lamb of God who could take away the sin of the world.

It is from this that the writer gives his commentary on Psalm 40:6-8 and seven reason as to why Jesus sacrifice is successful!

1. **Vs. 5-18 Seven reason as to why Jesus sacrifice is successful**

Vs. 5,7 **It completely reflected God’s will**: The first and foremost reason why Jesus’ sacrifice was successful; where the Levitical sacrifices were not, is found in the quote of Psalm 40:6-8 in verses 5-7. The point brought out in this quote is found in the words in verse 5, “*A body You prepared for Me*” and the words of verse 7, “*I have come --- to do Your will*.” What this combined phrase of Psalm 40:6-8 reveals is, that the number one reason why Jesus sacrifice was successful was that **it completely reflected God’s will**! It was God’s plan all along, and as the quote indicates it was in the mind of God before the world was created! God knew that humanity confined in Adam and Eve would choose independence instead of relationship. And *God already knew that the first contract of Levitical shadows would never be effective if curing man’s rebellion, they would only offer temporary masking of the symptoms.* So as we have just read from Psalm 40:6-8 God planned from the beginning that He would send His only begotten Son to come and die. So on the edge of heaven we have this conversation when it was time for the incarnation where Jesus acknowledges that His own earthly body was to be sacrificed to be the cure for man’s rebellion. This is further reflected over and over as we read Jesus’ own words through our His earthly ministry that His purpose was to do His Father’s will! Jesus sacrifice was successful because it was offered in perfect obedience to the will of the Father, **IT COULDN’T NOT BE EFFECTIVE**! This is why we noticed satan’s attempt during Jesus temptation in the wilderness was to get Jesus deter from obeying the Father’s will. Satan even tried using Jesus own disciples to accomplish this as Jesus had to rebuke Peter for suggesting that Jesus didn’t need to go to the cross. From the beginning of His earthly ministry Jesus told His disciples that he had come to obey the Father’s will and that meant that He would die upon the cross and be raised to life on the third day! They should have known that Jesus the messiah wasn’t a martyr He was a willing and obedient sacrifice for the sin of the world! On the cross Jesus was saying what He had always said to the Father and to all of humanity, “*Father, I know that You never planned that the Levitical sacrifices would cure humanities rebellion, So I willing and gladly give My body to pay the price, to cure them from the cure of rebellion*.”

Vs. 8-9 **The sacrifice of Jesus replaces the shadow of the Levitical system**: Here the writer continues with the second of seven reasons that Jesus’ sacrifice was a success with a commentary of the above Psalm 40:6-8. The point made in this section is found in the end of verse 9 where he writes, “*He takes away the first that He may establish the second*.” The point he makes is that the Levitical sacrifices could never and were never attended to be permanent as they were only temporary and symbolic. God’s focus was always on the “***reality of the shadow***” and not on the shadow! The point is that **the sacrifice of Jesus replaces the shadow of the Levitical system**! You can not be under two contracts at the same time when the second contract’s design was to replace the first contract! Jesus death on the cross has come and it has replaced the Levitical system and God has forever set it aside!

Vs. 10 **It once for all “*changed the believer*”**: The third reason that Jesus sacrifice is successful we are told is that by it, “*we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*.” The writers point is that it is successful because it has **once for all “*changed the believer*”** as we are now set apart for our proper use! The Levitical sacrificial system had no way to change the person from unholy to holy. The Geek word used for sanctified is in a “*perfect participle*” with a “*finite verb*” which tells the reader in the strongest terms possible that the believer is in a permanent state of positional transformation. A literal translation would be, “*You have been made permanently made holy.*” This tells us that the writer is referring to positional sanctification and not practical sanctification. We are being changed from glory to glory degree by degree which is a reference to our practical sanctification but positionally we are standing before God forever in Christ Jesus! One act by Jesus, at one moment, provided permanent transformation. And our position will never be changed throughout all eternity.

Vs. 11-12 **It removes sin**: Jesus’ sacrifice is the only thing that can “***effectively permanently remove SIN***”. ***The Levitical sacrificial system could only temporarily relieve the symptoms but never cure the disease***. Through out this section the writer has offered four striking contrasts between the Levitical sacrificial system and Jesus’ sacrifice of the cross:

1. Many priest’s verses One priest
2. Continual activity of the old priests verses the sitting down finished work of the One priest.
3. Repeated offerings the the priests verses the once-for-all sacrifice of the One priest
4. Ineffective sacrifices of the priests that only covered sin verses the effective sacrifice of the One priest that removed sin.

The problem was not a lack of effort on behalf of the priest it was that they couldn’t offer the right sacrifice! Jesus sat down after His sacrifice because it was and IS finished!

Vs. 13 **It destroys His enemies**: The fifth reason it is successful is found here in the 13th verse where we are told that we are “*waiting till His enemies are made His footstool*.” ***Jesus sacrifice was even greater in that it went beyond defeating sin to defeating the enemy to our soul satan and his minions.*** The Levitical sacrificial system did nothing to destroy the father of lies and literally it had no effect on him. But when Jesus died upon the cross, His death not only transformed us He conquered the devil who according to Hebrews 2:14 “had the power of death.” In Colossians 2:15 Paul wrote of this saying that Jesus, “*Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it*.” In Romans 8:37 we are told that “*we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*” Jesus forever conquered death and defeated the devil!

Vs. 14 **It perfects forever those who are being sanctified**: The sixth reason it is successful is that ***Jesus sacrifice alone can perfect that which is practically still being made perfect***. Paul spoke of this encouraging truth in Philippians 1:6 saying that we could be “*confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*”. The idea behind the word “*perfected*” is not to make spiritually mature but eternal salvation. As such we can rest in our security and not fear failure with regards to receiving forgiveness. Forgiveness is permanent because the sacrifice is permanent.

Vs. 15-17 **It fulfills the promise of the New Covenant**: The seventh and final reason it is successful is that ***Jesus’ sacrifice fulfills the promise made by Jeremiah in his prophecy in chapter 31:33-34.*** The sacrifice of Jesus as stated in Jeremiah’s prophecy was not a new concept and His sacrifice had to be accomplish in order for the terms of the will to be executed thus His sacrifice was the fulfillment of God’s word. There was no escape from the writer’s conclusion they could not accept Jeremiah’s prophecy in 31:33-34 while rejecting the Jesus’ sacrifice fulfilling that promise! To reject Jesus was to reject Jeremiah’s prophecy and to do that was to reject the Holy Spirit who spoke through Jeremiah.

Vs. 18 The writer concludes with this statement: With the work of sacrifice finished in Jesus death upon the cross, with forgiveness permanently provided for by Jesus’ finished work, satan destroyed, sin defeated, the Levitical system replaced, the believer transformed and God’s will fulfilled. Why would anyone think that God wanted the religious Hebrew to go back to maintain the Levitical sacrifices? To reject Jesus finished work was to leave yourself without hope of salvation!

**Hebrews 10:19-22**

**“Provision and Privilege”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 19-20 The secret of the Christian life**
3. **Vs. 21-22 The results of drawing near to God**
4. **Introduction**

***I had full intention to teach through all seven verses of this section but found the truths larger than my ambition and my prayer is that you will discover why during our time together in this glorious text.*** The writer of this letter in this section is drawing his argument to a close. Most of the arguments that are launched against the Christian faith today are based on a distorted view of Christianity. I fault the Church for this distortion as it has done two things: It has elevated the necessity of its position while devaluing Jesus’ work and our continual moment by moment need for Him and the work of the Holy Spirit! When the world sees real Christianity in our lives and the church, it has nothing to say in opposition. It is this true faith which the book of Hebrews so masterfully sets forth before us. It reveals clearly the difference between the false and the true. The false way of living as a Christian is to believe and try harder. It appears in the common attitude, “*I'll do my best, and God will do the rest.*” Or in the bumper sticker seen on many a Christians’ car “*God is my Co-pilot*”! Those phrases sound pious, but they are deceptively and utterly false! As we’ve been seeing in Hebrews the true way is to believe and fully place your trust in God; for it is only in Him who is “***In you both to will and to work his good pleasure***.” Our working is really His working out His will and work for His good pleasure!

**The secret of Christian life is described in verses 19-25 in a very subtle way**. Look carefully at these seven verse and you will see it repeated three times (19,21,22) in that little word “***HAVING***”! Then that phrase is followed by two words based upon the the word “***HAVING***” that give us our marching orders, our responsibility found in verse (22,23,24,) the two words are “***LET US***”! What we see here given by the writer of this letter to his readers is clear: The “**WE HAVE**” tell us our clear and unmistakable “**PROVISION**”, in Christ and the “**LET US**” reminds us of our unmistakable “**PRIVILEGE**” or responsibility to apply our provision. ***So what does the writer reveal to his readers the three things that they never had before that they now have***?

1. **Vs. 19-20 The secret of the Christian life**

Vs. 19-20 **The first thing** the writer reveals that we now have only in Christ that we never had or never will have apart from Jesus finished work is: “***Boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus*.**” This statement requires a bit of Jewish clarification as it relates directly too them. In the tabernacle you will remember that it was divided up into compartments the Holiest of all was behind the veil where the Ark of the Covenant was with its mercy seat where once a year the blood was sprinkled upon it by the High Priest. ***It was only this man once a year that could gain access to God’s presence.*** But here the writer informs his readers that through the sacrifice of Jesus and His blood that has been sprinkled upon the mercy seat in heaven all believers can pass through a “*living way…through the veil that is his flesh*”. Remember that verse in Hebrews 4:14 where we were told that Jesus “***passed through the heavens***” after His death but prior to His resurrection? The reason for this was to make atonement once for all by sprinkling His blood upon the heavenly mercy seat, (Hebrews 9:12). **Jesus’ “*perfect*” sacrifice has given each and every believer *confidence* that since we have taken hold of Jesus we can come through Him into the very presence of God where we will be forever with Him**. No person will ever be able to come into the presence of God on their “good works” “good character” or “church attendance”. This room though is often described as the “sanctuary” in reality isn’t! There is no building that is the House of God, we are the House of God as this is where God dwells. We have the outer court which is our bodies, the Holy Place, which is our souls and the Holy of Holies our spirit. And when we trusted only in Jesus we were able for the first time to operate in the spirit and became complete people! Gone is any trust in religious works as we can now trust in Jesus atoning work and lay hold of the blessed promises. In Genesis 3:24 after Adam and Eve had sinned God put them out of the garden and placed and angels with flaming swords to keep sin stained humanity from coming into God’s presence. But here we are told that Jesus blood has quenched the flaming swords. At Jesus death His body (the veil) was torn and we have come through His torn body into the very presence of God. We can not not only come through Jesus as He is The Door but we can do so with “confidence”. The word here in verse 20 “NEW” is a word in the Greek only used here and means “***freshly slaughtered sacrifice***” Jesus death is a living way because it is the only way in which we can have life! There are those that want to emphasize Jesus “EARTHLY LIFE” but as wonderful as His miraculous life was if He was not crucified they He could not save us. No matter how many miracles Jesus did and how many incredible truths He proclaimed if He didn’t die upon that cross He could never save anyone! As long as His flesh was alive it was a veil, a barrier, but once He died that barrier was torn from top to bottom.

1. **Vs. 21-22 The results of drawing near to God**

Vs. 21 The second unmistakable “**PROVISION**” we have in Christ Further is in verse 21 where we are told that “***having a High Priest over the house of God***”. Here we learn that Jesus has not merely:

* **Shown us the way to God**
* **Provided the way to God**
* **He has taken with Him to God**!

In Hebrews 3:6 the writer reminded His readers that “whose house we are” as he described the indwelling of Christ by the Holy Spirit. This describes the work of Jesus by way of the Holy Spirit as He clothes Himself in our personality, when we “put on Jesus” after having “taken off our old flesh”. True Christianity isn’t some religious effort to try to imitate Jesus in the energy of our flesh! No, it is Jesus living and operating through in His power, He is the Great High Priest over His house “whose house we are”! He alone is our complete provision as we are told in Philip. 3:3 as we have no confidence in the flesh! He has done and is forever our High Priest in heaven! Paraphrasing Romans 5:10 “***Since Jesus death has done so much to save me, imagine what His life must be doing in the presence of the Father to keep me***!”

Vs. 22 Verse 22 offers up the first of of the three “**PRIVILEGES**” or responsibilities to apply our provision, as it starts with the words, “**LET US**”. The first responsibility that should be visible in the believer’s life is that we “***SHOULD DESIRE TO DRAW NEAR WITH A TRUE HEART IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH***”! The Greek word for “***true heart***” means without hypocrisy. Drawing near to God requires genuine commitment! Since there is nothing hindering us from coming into the presence of God the exhortation is that we should ***DO JUST THAT***! We all ought to desire to live in the continual presence of God, this isn’t something that we do just when we engage in “*church activities*” it’s something that we are doing every minute of everyday. **When we do so, based upon the writer’s words in verse 22, we can expect three wonderful results in our life**:

1. ***Full assurance of faith***: This means that we will discover ***a new source of adequacy that will never run out***! We will no longer be dependent upon our weak and fickle abilities. **Gone from our faith will be:** Dependence upon the natural man with his talents, gifts, training and education. **Instead our dependence will now be**: Upon the flowing power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us; described by Jesus as “***a river of living water***”! This tells us that the supply will never run dry! We will be prepared to meet any and every situation and circumstance in confidence that **WE CAN NOW DO**: “***all things through Christ who strengthens us***”! (Phillip 4:13)
2. ***Having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience***: The second wonderful result that we will experience upon drawing near to God is that we will “***EXPERIENCE FREEDOM FROM GUILT***”! So many folks can’t rest, they are all twisted up in the “***should-of’s and could-of’s***” of personal failure. We are prone to guilt because we trust in our resources and abilities and when we fail we automatically go to a guilty conscience feeling that we have either by ***Co-mission*** or ***O-mission*** not done what we ***should of*** or ***could have*** done! So where can we turn to change this guilty conscience? Why Jesus, because we find in Eph. 1:6 that we are “***Accepted in the the Beloved***”. God has no issue with us because of the finished work of Jesus and ***right now this very moment He loves as much as He is ever going to love you*** and does so based only upon the work of Jesus! So if you got nagging guilt of the “***should-of’s and could-of’s***” of personal failure I have a word from God for you, ***get over yourself***!
3. ***And our bodies washed with pure water***: The third and final wonderful result that we will experience upon drawing near to God is that: **We will be wonderfully changed because we have “*been with Jesus*”**! There are those that try to make this passage relate to “*water baptism*” but the phrase isn’t speaking of something outward but rather something inward. First off, when we get baptized we aren’t washing our bodies we are instead identifying with the death and burial of Jesus. And secondly I’ve done a lot of baptisms but never once have I done so in “*pure water*”! This phrase is symbolic and speaks a new dynamic spoken of by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17 where we are told that, “***If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new***.” When we draw near to God one of the unmistakable results is a renewed dependence upon the Word of God. Paul used this very point as a reference to what a husband was to do towards his wife saying in Ephesians 5:26 “***He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word****.*” It is the washing of the word of God that continually changes our old fleshly habits to new Holy habits! What this means is that when we draw near to God we can see that if we are thief’s we will no longer be practicing this, if we are liars we will stop practicing lying. Our whole life is being transformed because we are drawing near to God. As we draw near to God the Holy Spirit works in the word of God changing us from the inside out and this process continues until we are no longer bound by this old flesh! It’s the old statement, “*I may not yet be what I want to be but I thank God through Jesus Christ I’m not what I used to be!*”

We will finish up this glorious passage next week as we continue looking at the “**WE HAVE’S**” tell us our clear and unmistakable “**PROVISION**”, in Christ and the “**LET US’**” that reminds us of our unmistakable “**PRIVILEGE**” or responsibility to apply our provision.

**Hebrews 10:23-25**

**“Provision and Privilege, part 2”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 23 Unmovable**
3. **Vs. 24-25 Stirred up**
4. **Introduction**

In Hebrews chapter 10:19-25 the writer is trying to encourage some of his brethren to remain trusting in the finish work of Jesus upon the cross. He has done so by reminding them first of the limitations of the Levitical sacrificial system and the advantages of Jesus once for all atone. Then last week we noted that he unveiled the “**The secret of Christian life**”. It is subtly revealed in this section by stating **FIRST** what our “**PROVISION**” is found in the word “***having***” as it describes what each and every believer received the moment they simply trusted in Christ. Then **SECOND** we saw in the same section what our “**PRIVILEGE**” or responsibility is in light of our **PROVISION**”. This is given to us by the two words “***let us***”! What we immediately discover is that when we apply our **PROVISION**” we forever destroy religion! To understand and apply the writer’s words would cancel such popular phrases as:

* *Do your best, and let Jesus do the rest.*
* *God is my Co-pilot*.
* *God helps those who help themselves*

These religiously pious phrases are deceptively and utterly false. The first thing that the writer revealed was that the moment we trusted in Jesus’ finished work on the cross we now have “*confidence to enter into the presence of God*”! We don’t have to earn that privilege nor are we limited by how many times we can do so in a life time. Every Believer in Christ has forever gained access to fellowship and communication with their Heavenly Father! The second thing we gained, according to the author of Hebrews was we now have a “***personal high priest***”. Jesus doesn’t just “*show us the way to God*” or even “*provide the way to God*” ***He takes us with Him to the Father and will never leave us from now on in to eternity***! Because of these first two provisions the writer doesn’t want you to wait to open them and enjoy them even though you have more provisions so he told the readers that they could enjoy those blessing immediately as he invited us to ***draw near to God NOW***. To further encourage the reader to do so he lets them know that **this would impact them three w**ays:

1. ***We will discover a new source of adequacy that will never run out***: We will have a new “CAN DO!” attitude as in Phillip 4:13 “*I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me*!”
2. We will “***EXPERIENCE FREEDOM FROM GUILT***”: Gone from our experience will be the guilt of failure as we are “***Accepted in the the Beloved***” (Eph. 1:6).
3. **We will be wonderfully changed because we have “*been with Jesus*”**: This phrase is symbolic and speaks a new dynamic spoken of by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17 where we are told that, “***If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new***.”

Having reviewed these let’s move on in this “**The secret of Christian life**”!

1. **Vs. 23 Unmovable**

Vs. 23 The second “**PRIVILEGE**” or responsibility in light of our **PROVISION** we need to apply to “***Hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.***” The second **PRIVILEGE** we gained because of Gods **PROVISION** has two aspects too it:

1. ***First, this speaks of our security***: If you will, ***trusting in Jesus finished work on the cross has given us sure footing when the ground we have been standing upon in this world is falling apart***. The Greek wording here is quite revealing as it means too: “*Have a firm hold so that what you are holding on to you are the master of it.*” Taken my concealed carry permit I learned the importance of grasping the gun as if you own it. That’s the idea here! The word confession in the Greek means to “*agree with the statement of another*” but it carries the idea of much more than just intellectual agreement it means to ***take it to heart***! This is NOT speaking of something that we do to KEEP ourselves saved but rather evidence that we are saved because we trust Jesus words and works and not our own effort. Because of this there must never be a hopeless follower of Jesus, we are not merely hang on, we are attached the ***Anchor of our soul*** and have our security on the ***Rock of our salvation***! Paul said it this way in Romans 8:35-39 “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”
2. ***Second, it ensures that we will never need to retreat***: Since ***our confidence is in Jesus finished work we can have complete confidence that there will never be a new discovery, some new technology or truth that will cause us to have to abandon our trust in Jesus and go back to our old religious ways***. The Greek has it “*without wavering*” and the phrase means to ***lean backwards***. The idea is best understood in the story of the Israelites who had trusted in God to lead them out of Egypt but when things got tuff started murmuring about going back into slavery. Have our lives anchored on Jesus means that we can move forward in life and never have to go back. When the disciples were facing greater and greater opposition to the point that many of Jesus followers left Jesus asked those who remained if they also wanted to leave to which in John 6:67-68 Peter answered Him saying, “***Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life***.” Of all humans; followers of Jesus must be the most optimistic and full of joy: Because we know that Jesus “***who promised is faithful***”! If you were trusting in me, try as I might not to disappoint you I’m certain that it wouldn’t take much time before you realized that I’m not always faithful, but Jesus is! That’s why I find it so easy to talk about Jesus, I know Him to always be faithful and because of this I know that He will always fulfill each and every promise He has made to us!
3. **Vs. 24-25 Stirred up**

Vs. 24 The third **PRIVILEGE** or responsibility in light of our **PROVISION** “*Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.*” This privilege is all about the body of Christ and considering others before ourselves. The word in Greek speaks of attentive and continuous care for another spiritual growth. It again has two parts to it as two things need to be exercised and stimulated in the Christian:

1. ***Stirring up love***: The Christian is never measured upon their “profession” but rather upon their actions of love. So often people want to make their faith “private” but we are here encouraged to “*make our expression of faith public*” as it is in its very essence God’s love! Our responsibility is to love because He has first loved us. The Church would be far more effective in reaching a lost world if they practiced loving each other more. When question by one of the scribes in Mark 12:28-30, “*Which is the first commandment of all*?” Jesus answered him by saying, “The first of all the commandments *is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.* *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* *This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.*”
2. ***And good works***: Though the believer is not obligated to “good works” to obtain the love of God, we are obligated to “good works” because we have already the received the Love of God. In Luke 12:48 Jesus said, “*For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more*.” Every person has the need to love and be loved it is as basic as are need to breath but only in Jesus is the purity of this available.

These two characteristics are hall marks of true Christianity the question is how and where are we to exercise them?

Vs. 25 The writer suggests two ways to achieve this:

1. ***Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together…but exhorting one another***: This suggests that the charter of the meeting was to be encouraging and exhorting. They were to gather together to not to be entertained or for merely social gathering but instead they were to be challenged and to challenge each other. They were to be meetings where the word of God was taught be the Spirit of God and that there was an expectation that what they heard would be applied. We are here today to be transformed into His image and to celebrate that transformation. Neither was the gathering just to be informational, it was alive with the hope and possibility of becoming more like Jesus! This is where we are to stir up love and good works.
2. ***And so much more as you see the Day approaching***: The “DAY” mentioned here is a reference to the soon return of Jesus. So as evil becomes more visible in our society we aren’t to retreat to caves we are to advance and infiltrate! We are to speak of God’s goodness over the worlds ugliness, God’s truth’s over the world’s lies. So if you think the world is coming to the close then its not time to go on the defensive it’s time to go on the offensive.

We have been given these amazing **PROVISIONS** but they come with great opportunities and **PRIVILEGES** to: Draw Near, Speak Out and Stir Up! That’s what the Christian life is having these amazing **PROVISIONS** so that we can exercise these amazing **PRIVILEGES!**

**Hebrews 10:26-31**

**“The spiritual cancer of non-commitment”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 26-28 Rejecting Jesus**
3. **Vs. 29 Three characteristics of apostasy**
4. **Vs. 30-31 A fearful reality**
5. **Introduction**

The writer issues his fourth of five warnings in this letter as he warns against the ***rejecting the making of a heartfelt decision to trust Jesus in verses 26-31***. And next week in verses 32-39 he tells his readers what they can do to avoid this danger. It is clear from the reading of this fourth warning that the danger is not one that someone can suddenly fall into. The Greek verb tense for “*willfully*” in verse 26 is followed by the phrase “*after we have received the knowledge of the truth*”, indicates that this is not an immediate or sudden act of weakness that has led to the outcome of “*no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.*” This warning was not issued to someone who was about to “*stumble*” nor was it issued to a follower of Jesus who was occasionally falling as they were still learning how to walk with Jesus. Instead the Greek verb tense for the phrase “*sin willfully*” means a ***deliberate, habitual attitude of resistance to*** “**the knowledge of the truth**”! This alone indicates to whom this warning was being issued: **A person who had made an intellectual profession of faith with out ever being spiritually committed**. It is the same group that had received all 5 warnings, (three of which we have already examined and the fourth we are about too and the 5th we do so later):

1. 2:1-4 Rejection salvation alone through Jesus
2. 3:7-4:13 Rejecting Jesus as the only mediator
3. 5:11-6:20 Rejecting Growing in grace
4. 10:26-39 Rejecting making a heartfelt decision to trust Jesus

Apostasy is an intentional falling away or defection and means to “***forsake***”! The writer is addressing this again as there were Jews in the Hebrew speaking church that had moved towards Jesus, right to the edge of trusting Him alone for their salvation. They heard the teaching about Him gladly, they were drawn to His words, works and wonders, they may have even had a deep conviction of their personal sin and had perhaps made a “profession of faith”! But because of several things these “***professors of faith***” had not become “***possessors of faith***”. And over time they had begum to wonder and lose interest in Jesus choosing instead religious works. ***True apostasy is determined by WHO you leave not where you go after you have left***! You can not be an apostate if you leave religion be it true; as was the case of these Hebrews as God had ordained the law and the sacrifices, and especially if it is FALSE. You can only be an apostate if you chose to leave the truth about Jesus and entering into a relationship with Him! Every apostate is an unbeliever, but not every unbeliever is an apostate! An apostate knows the truth where as an unbeliever doesn’t, both are lost but the apostate has chosen to be lost! The two major characteristics of an apostate is:

1. Enough of the truth of the knowledge of the gospel to be saved
2. A willful and habitual refusal to come to Jesus by faith to be saved

There are six situations that may aid a person in being an apostate:

1. **Persecution**: This can often drive a person closer to the Lord but can and has drawn people away from Him. A strong verbal commitment may not endure under adversity, words are easier to say but harder to keep when persecution and adversity arises. A commitment to a church will never last but a surrendered heart to the Lover of our Souls always will. Some apostates that have left because of persecution don’t just turn away from Jesus but turn against Him as well.
2. **False teachers**: Jesus warned as much in Matt. 24:11 where He said, “*Many false prophets will arise, and will deceive many*.” Persecution will frighten unbelievers away from the truth, where false teachers entice them away. Paul warned Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:3 that, “*The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers*.”
3. **Temptation**: The things of the world become more attractive and important the the truth about Jesus and their need for Him. The temporary pleasures of this world and the glittering beads of this life become more valuable then eternity with the living God.
4. **Neglect**: By far the greatest and saddest reason for apostasy is simple neglect. All a person who has knowledge of the truth has to do to deny the Lord is to do nothing, put making a decision off. ***A person can do this until they lose the opportunity, to not make a decision for Jesus is to make a decision against Him***.
5. **Clinging to the old**: Holding on to your religion, or old life style. These Hebrews were clinging to their religion an were in grave danger of apostasy. ***A person’s region is so dangerous because not only can it not save them it often become a barrier to their salvation***!
6. **Forsaking Christian fellowship**: Forsaking true Christian fellowship, where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. Most people when looking for a church to attend don’t ever mention the need for strong exhortational teaching where every believer is challenged to go deeper into their relationship with him. They prefer entertainment, fun and positive messages and social interaction.
7. **Vs. 26-28 Rejecting Jesus**

Vs. 26 The warning in this section requires and explanation of a definition on the word “***apostasy***”! **When the truth of Jesus is presented to a person there can only be one of two responses**: *They either trust Him alone and are saved or they reject the truth and remain committed to religious works as a means to salvation*. The term “*apostasy*” belongs to the person who has chosen the 2nd response. To understand this, we must realize that an “*apostate*” ***can never*** be a person who has never heard or understood the truth concerning Jesus. It can only be a person who has clearly understood the truth but has chosen to reject it. At issue isn’t that they disagree with the truth or lack understanding concerning the truth. Instead they agree that what they have heard is the ONLY TRUTH, but simple choose not to truth Jesus! A person who has never heard or understood the truth about Jesus is still an unbeliever, bound to sin and lost but their condition is based upon ignorance not willful disobedience. The apostle John identified it this way in 1 John 2:19 “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us*.” The fact is that they were for a while among believers and may have even made a profession of faith, but proved they were not spiritually committed when they left. ***What this section reveals to the reader is that knowledge of the truth doesn’t guarantee right decision but it does increase responsibility to make the right decision***. Judas is a prim example of an “*apostate*” as he had “***perfect evidence, perfect truth, perfect example***” for three years as he lived with Jesus, (truth and life incarnate) yet chose to turn his back upon the only One who was truth and life! It is “***The spiritual cancer of non-commitment***.” The refusal to cease from ones own religious works and the refusal of the cross of Jesus and because of this the there remains no further work of the Holy Spirit for the apostate as their problem isn’t ignorance but willful disobedience. ***This is a self imposed choice to live a self centered life behind a Christian veneer, all-the-while refusing the claims of the Lordship of Jesus Christ***.

Vs. 27-28 What the writer is saying is that once that choice has been made (*and by the grace of God this may take years*), there is no way back. It is exactly the same situation faced in Hebrews 6:4. There is certain judgment ahead, “*a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fiery indignation which will consume the adversaries.*” Notice the writer makes his point from stating the less to the greater here: *Since this was true under the shadows of the law, when a person violated even shadows of the substance of Christ and his work, they would suffer death at the mouth of two or three witnesses; how much more shall a person be culpable if he knowingly and deliberately violates the reality which is Jesus Christ*?

1. **Vs. 29 Three characteristics of apostasy**

Vs. 29 This sin of “***apostasy***” involves three things which is a complete offence against all of the Godhead, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

1. “***Trampling the Son of God underfoot***”: First, there is a spurning of the Son of God. This is a sin against God the Father who sent His only begotten Son to be the once for all sin-offering. Notice that the writer deliberately chooses a title that the Jew’s understood for Jesus which emphasized His right to be Lord over their life. There are many today, that readily recognize Jesus’ ability to save them from all the messes they get themselves into and they are quite willing to call Him Savior when they need to be saved. But that is not the same as recognizing His right to be Lord over all our life. This “***apostasy***” was a consistent and continual refusal to submit all of their life to His rule and right to govern their life.
2. “***Counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing***”: This is a sin against Jesus and His sacrifice upon the cross. The word “***counted***” in the Greek is an accounting term that refers to a “***conscious judgment resting upon a deliberate weighing of facts*.**” What this said to the original readers is that an apostate was one that had a deliberately and conscious rejected Jesus’ atoning sacrifice as the Messiah. The words “*common thing*” in the Greek is a word that means “*not set apart for God’s use*”. The idea here by the writer is that ***the apostate considered the blood of Jesus’ sacrifice as having no more specific worth than the blood of any ordinary person***. The difficulty of this passage lies between these two things in the phrase, “***by which he was sanctified***”. First you will notice that the “**HE**” in this section ***is not capitalized*** as it is NOT a reference to Jesus but rather to the apostate who will experience “*worse punishment*” for rejecting Jesus. Second the word “**was**” has caused some confusion. To unravel this, we need to understand that this warning is being issued, to all who make up the Hebrew “professing” church which was made up of saved and unsaved. As this is the context, the writer is saying that “***by which he was PROFESSED TO BE sanctified***”. The rejection is the refusal to ACCEPT Jesus sacrifice for which they had made a profession that they had. Instead of receiving Jesus sacrifice for their sins, which they had professed they insisted upon their religious works and efforts saying that those would be will be accepted by God.
3. “***And insulted the Spirit of grace***”: Some of these professing Hebrews had allowed the Holy Spirit to move them into the acceptance of the truth with regards to Jesus and were intellectually convinced of this truth but had not turned from their sin and away from their religious works and because of this hadn’t come into the surrender of faith and instead were going back to religious works, specifically the Levitical sacrifices. This act is treating the work of the Holy Spirit with “grave indifference” the pleading and wooing of the Holy Spirit. This, is what Jesus was talking about in Mark 3:28-29 where He said, “*Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation*” This is the dread “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,” for which Jesus said there is no forgiveness, neither in this age nor in the world to come. Many people want to know if a Christian commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? The answer to that question lies is two conditions both found in the church today: ***Professing*** and ***Possessing***! It is possible, as clearly the writer of Hebrews is warning ***Professing*** Christians, that if they reject the sacrifice of Jesus by their religious works than they can commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Why else would he and Jesus warn them? But it is not possible for a believer who is “*possessed by the Holy Spirit*” even if they fall into sin occasionally to commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Christian that can never commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the person who is “born of God”.
4. **Vs. 30-31 A fearful reality**

Vs. 30-31 The verse quoted her is out of Deut 32:35-36 and the word rendered “vengeance” is an unfortunate translation as in English it carries the idea of “vindictiveness” which does not reside in the Greek word or in the heart of God. Instead the word means “the full measurement of justice will be carried out by the Lord.” The context of verse 31 is from the perspective of the apostate who has professed Jesus but in truth has trusted in religious works. There are two possibilities:

1. You have put your whole life into the hands of the living Christ
2. Our you have fallen into “*the hands of the living God*”: That happens when a person professes one thing but consistently and deliberately refuses to obey it.

These are great self-evaluating words to all in Christ’s Church. There is a cursed doctrine today that indirectly denies the need for surrender and commitment to Jesus alone. It elevates church attendance and works instead of a relationship and in so doing denies Jesus’ sacrifice upon the cross while professing it. We can not make up the terms of our relationship with Him, He does all we can do is receive it! Our relationship is not seen in words but actions!

**Hebrews 10:29-39**

**“Faith Fence Riders”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 27-29 Three characteristics of apostasy**
3. **Vs. 30-31 A fearful reality**
4. **Vs. 32-34 Recalling and looking**
5. **Vs. 35-39 Confident expectation**
6. **Introduction**

As discussed last week the writer issues his fourth of five warnings in this letter: This warning is against the ***rejecting the making of a heartfelt decision to trust Jesus in verses 26-31***. In verses 32-39 he will tell his readers what they can do to avoid this danger. We already noted that this warning was issued to someone who was making a ***deliberate, habitual attitude of resistance to*** “**the knowledge of the truth**”! By this we learn that the person who was in danger was a “***professors of faith***” but had not become “***possessors of faith***”. We noted that, ***True apostasy is determined by WHO you leave not where you go after you have left***! To be an apostate requires two characteristics:

1. Enough of the truth of the knowledge of the gospel to be saved
2. And a willful and habitual refusal to come to Jesus by faith to be saved

***What this section reveals to the reader is that knowledge of the truth doesn’t guarantee right decision but it does increase responsibility to make the right decision***. It is “***The spiritual cancer of non-commitment***.” The refusal to cease from ones own religious works and the refusal of the cross of Jesus and because of this the there remains no further work of the Holy Spirit. For the apostate, their problem isn’t ignorance but willful disobedience. ***This is a self imposed choice to live a self centered life behind a Christian veneer, all-the-while refusing the claims of the Lordship of Jesus Christ***.

1. **Vs. 27-29 Three characteristics of apostasy**

Vs. 27-28 Before we look at the three characteristics of apostasy; notice the writer makes his point from stating the less to the greater here: *Since this was true under the shadows of the law, when a person violated even shadows of the substance of Christ and his work, they would suffer death at the mouth of two or three witnesses; how much more shall a person be culpable if he knowingly and deliberately violates the reality which is Jesus Christ*?

Vs. 29 This sin of “***apostasy***” involves three things which is a complete offence against all of the Godhead, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

1. “***Trampling the Son of God underfoot***”: First, there is a spurning of the Son of God. This is a sin against God the Father who sent His only begotten Son to be the once for all sin-offering. Notice that the writer deliberately chooses a title that the Jew’s understood for Jesus which emphasized His right to be Lord over their life. There are many today, that readily recognize Jesus’ ability to save them from all the messes they get themselves into and they are quite willing to call Him Savior when they need to be saved. But that is not the same as recognizing His right to be Lord over all our life. This “***apostasy***” was a consistent and continual refusal to submit all of their life to His rule and right to govern their life.
2. “***Counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing***”: This is a sin against Jesus and His sacrifice upon the cross. The word “***counted***” in the Greek is an accounting term that refers to a “***conscious judgment resting upon a deliberate weighing of facts*.**” What this said to the original readers is that an apostate was one that had a deliberately and conscious rejected Jesus’ atoning sacrifice as the Messiah. The words “*common thing*” in the Greek is a word that means “*not set apart for God’s use*”. The idea here by the writer is that ***the apostate considered the blood of Jesus’ sacrifice as having no more specific worth than the blood of any ordinary person***. The difficulty of this passage lies between these two things in the phrase, “***by which he was sanctified***”. First you will notice that the “**HE**” in this section ***is not capitalized*** as it is NOT a reference to Jesus but rather to the apostate who will experience “*worse punishment*” for rejecting Jesus. Second the word “**was**” has caused some confusion. To unravel this, we need to understand that this warning is being issued, to all who make up the Hebrew “professing” church which was made up of saved and unsaved. As this is the context, the writer is saying that “***by which he was PROFESSED TO BE sanctified***”. The rejection is the refusal to ACCEPT Jesus sacrifice for which they had made a profession that they had. Instead of receiving Jesus sacrifice for their sins, which they had professed they insisted upon their religious works and efforts saying that those would be will be accepted by God.
3. “***And insulted the Spirit of grace***”: Some of these professing Hebrews had allowed the Holy Spirit to move them into the acceptance of the truth with regards to Jesus and were intellectually convinced of this truth but had not turned from their sin and away from their religious works and because of this hadn’t come into the surrender of faith and instead were going back to religious works, specifically the Levitical sacrifices. This act is treating the work of the Holy Spirit with “grave indifference” the pleading and wooing of the Holy Spirit. This, is what Jesus was talking about in Mark 3:28-29 where He said, “*Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation*” This is the dread “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,” for which Jesus said there is no forgiveness, neither in this age nor in the world to come. Many people want to know if a Christian commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? The answer to that question lies is two conditions both found in the church today: ***Professing*** and ***Possessing***! It is possible, as clearly the writer of Hebrews is warning ***Professing*** Christians, that if they reject the sacrifice of Jesus by their religious works than they can commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Why else would he and Jesus warn them? But it is not possible for a believer who is “*possessed by the Holy Spirit*” even if they fall into sin occasionally to commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Christian that can never commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the person who is “born of God”.
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1. You have put your whole life into the hands of the living Christ
2. Our you have fallen into “*the hands of the living God*”: That happens when a person professes one thing but consistently and deliberately chooses the opposite of their profession.
3. **Vs. 32-34 Recalling and looking**

Vs. 32-34 In the finial 8 verses the writer tells his readers how they can avoid becoming an apostate.

1. ***Remember your suffering and service***: The writer knew who he was writing too and how they had been involved in their profession of faith. There were two things that stood out that he wants them to remember. These two things don’t alone indicate true faith but they indicate that they were willing to take action on what they said they believed.
2. Vs. 32-33 **Suffering**: “*But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured great struggle with suffering*: *partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated.*” These “professing believers” had already experienced “suffering” by their confession as they had been identified with true believers. The point the writer is making is that their “***faith fence ridding***” had not been discernable to their fellow countrymen who were ***level persecution against intellectual agreement the same as spiritual commitment***. And further more to their credit such treatment had driven them away from what they intellectually believed was true. Since this suffering through intellectual “*illumination*” had happened why not make your faith sure by full inviting Jesus to be Lord and Savior? The argument seems to be that stopping at the edge of commitment hasn’t gained these “professing believers” any advantage so why settle for it? They needed to put their full trust in Jesus and become one of His instead of settling for being a mere “*pretender*”! Their persecution by their fellow religious Hebrews proved two things at the same time: ***Religious works*** was ***threatened*** by ***relational commitment*** (while that didn’t alone prove that ***relational commitment*** was true it did prove that ***Religious works*** wasn’t.) Second it proved that they gained NO ADVANTAGE by mere profession.
3. Vs. 34 **Service**: “*For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven*.” These “professing believers” had already given up worldly opportunity for the hope of heavenly rewards. They had risked: reputation, friends, family and earthly possessions for what they intellectually believed were better things but were now willing to walk away from such an investment instead of seeing it through too true faith and reaping their eternal reward. They had put everything into their service but all they needed to do is ask Jesus into their heart and surrender. ***It is a great shame to witness what unbelievers do for ideology and philosophical views that often the true church won’t. I’ll say right now***: *Oh Lord give me all those who for religious works maintain commitment and when they embrace You, the Living God by faith in You alone, trusting in Your finished work of grace, with changed motives of serving You not to be right because they are right in You, by Your power we will change the world*!
4. **Vs. 35-39 Confident expectation**
5. Vs. 35-38 ***Look forward to your rewards***: “*Therefore do not cast away your confidence which has great reward*.” The writer goes on to explain in verse 36 what they lack in order to “*receive the promise*”, “**ENDURANCE**”. To prove his point, the writer quotes Habakkuk 2:3-4. The warning was to not allow their confidence to waver as too miss the rewards. At issue for these “professing believers” was not a lack of trust in the greatness the promises they knew how superior they were compared to anything the world had to offer, neither were they wavering because they doubted the ability of our Lord to fulfill what He promised. Instead the plea for the writer is that of endurance so that they wouldn’t be persuaded to turn but to the “religious works”. They needed to complete their act of faith and not stop short of making Jesus Lord of their life! The suffering that they had already endured would not last forever, but their salvation and rewards in Jesus would! Jesus is returning and will set the world right at His return, and He is not delaying and nothing and no one can delay His soon return. The way to become righteous is by faith in Jesus alone and the way of the righteous is to live by faith in Christ alone. The basis of our spiritual life and spiritual living is by faith! Knowledge of the gospel is essential, suffering for the gospel is possible, serving God’s people in the name of the gospel is what we are privileged to do. ***BUT ONLY FAITH IN JESUS FINISHED WORK UPON THE CROSS WILL BRING SALVATION AND PRESERVE US FOR ETERNITY***!

Vs. 39 The writer closes the 10th chapter what a note of confidence that those he is appealing too will indeed leave religion and trust alone in Jesus. He is so confident that he writes, “*We are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the salvation of the soul*.” Notice that the writer includes those that he is warning with himself as true believers!

**Hebrews 11:1-3**

**“*A different drummer*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1 No child atheists**
3. **Vs. 2 The testimony of faith**
4. **Vs. 3 Thank God I’m an atheist**
5. **Introduction**

As a young man in the 70’s I became captivated by that TV show that started every program with the same monolog: “*These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations,***to boldly go where no man***has gone before*.” The eleventh chapter of Hebrews describes a group of folks on just such a journey. Their mission wasn’t five-years, it was a life time of exploration seeking out NEW LIFE and creating a NEW CIVILIZATION boldly going where only few dared to go before. The 11th chapter enshrines them as they are commonly called the “***Heroes of faith***”. All of these folks mentioned in this chapter were triumphant because of one simple fact: ***They trusted God***! There is no “*element*” more essential for the maturity of the believer in the “NEW LIFE IN CHRIST” than “FAITH”! It is what separates the Christian from the non-Christian. Henry David Thoreau, once said, “***If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music he hears, however measured or far away***.” ***That statement by Thoreau accurately describes Christians as we are walking differently in this world because we are listening to a different drummer***! Before we examine these wonderful saints the writer will need to clarify what he means by faith. There is a great deal of confusion when it comes to the meaning of this word, ***faith***! ***Because of this confusion it is best to start with four things that faith is not even though these four things are often identified as faith***:

* **It is not positive thinking!**
* **It is not a hunch that is followed!**
* **It is not hoping for the best!**
* **It is not a feeling of optimism!**

Since those four things aren’t a description of what faith is, the writer in the first seven verses describes for us the true definition of faith is. Then the rest of the 11th chapter goes on to demonstrate how faith works. **The writer of Hebrews is not writing about faith in general but specific faith in God**. The context of this passage on faith follows the author’s plea to trust Jesus; it is clear that he realized that by this time Judaism no longer had need of “faith” as it had been replaced by a system of religious works and legalistic requirements that boasted on self-effort, self-salvation and self-glorification. It had become nothing more than a religious cult built upon works. But that is not what God had intended as Habakkuk wrote in 2:4 “*But the just shall live by faith*.” God has never redeemed man by works, but always by faith. This chapter will continue on by showing this starting with Adam. Works have always been a by-product of faith and never a means to salvation.

1. **Vs. 1 No child atheists**

Vs. 1 The first thing I notice is that the author gives the reader a definition in which we see ***three ingredients of faith.*** These three ingredients of faith are visible but are in the midst of things that are unseen and unknowable. Because we have trusted God and His word we have three ingredients that make us different than the rest of the unbelieving world:

* **Substance**: *Of things hoped for*
* **Evidence**: *Of things not seen*
* **Understanding**: *That the worlds were framed by the Word of God*

**This is the only definition of faith in the Bible**. **Faith apprehends as real fact that which is not revealed to the natural senses.**

In Hebrew poetry we call this Parallelism where the same thing is stated two similar ways. The point the writer is establishing is the nature of faith. Faith, is a living hope that is so real that it gives “absolute substance”. It is not wistful longing that something may come to pass but absolute certainty in what the world often considers impossible. The reason for this is found in Titus words in chapter 1:2 where he emphatically states that, “***God cannot lie***”! The word “substance” in the Greek means “***to stand under***” and as such speaks of a foundation or reality. It is used else where in a legal sense to mean a “title deed”, so faith is the title deed for things hoped for. ***The truth is, Faith offers better vision of reality than the best eyesight***! Notice how faith commences with “*things hoped for*”. Faith starts with providing “***substance***” when a person is “***dissatisfied***” with the way things are NOW and are “hoping” for something better! ***No person ever has need of faith in God until they have become “dissatisfied” with the way they are***. This might sound familiar; in Jesus’ sermon on the mount He said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*”. That is why through out the Bible, ***the great enemy of faith is a complacent spirit, an attitude of self-satisfaction with the status quo***. I believe that this answers the great questions we have as to why trials and tribulations come into our lives at times: ***They are allowed into our lives so that we can become dissatisfied with the status quo and begin to long for something better than just existing***! This is why verse 6 says that “*without faith it is impossible to please God*”. Religion, by it’s very nature, seeks to be luck warm and comfortable but in that sate a person will never please God because they are satisfied with the way they are. Ah, but when we demand more out of life than just existing and hope for something better faith becomes engaged! That’s when verse 6 again kicks in as it is in this “*dissatisfied moment*” that “*we come to God*” looking for Him to deepen the veneer of life that we have been satisfied with.

Next the writer says that “Faith” is the “*the evidence of things not seen*”. The Greek word implies a response an outward manifestation to the reality mentioned above. A person not only has to have a desire for “*something better*”, but they have to have an “*awareness that there is of something better*”. ***Faith comes in, as a person becomes aware that there is an invisible kingdom and that which our sense detect is NOT the whole explanation of life***! ***These invisible realities are as real and vital as anything our senses can detect. In fact, according to this statement, they are more real because they are the explanation of the things which can be seen.*** We see this in the words and teachings of Jesus as He spoke to the Father as though he were standing right there, invisible and yet present. Jesus didn’t see the universe as an impersonal machine, he saw it as an invisible, spiritual kingdom.

Verse 6 says it this way: “*He who comes to God must believe that He is*..”, that is to say **that God exists**. Some folks will argue and tell us that believing that God exists is just too hard. But that’s the easiest part as it requires much more “faith” to disbelieve as it defies logic. The truth is ***everyone in the world starts out believing God exists***! No one starts out believing that God doesn’t exist. Disbelief only begins when people become carefully taught to disbelieve. The only way a person can not see “the light” that is all around them is to willingly be blind and every moment of the day reject the “LIGHT”. Light from God is streaming everywhere and all a person has to do is open their eyes to know that God is. That’s why children have no problem the concept of God! ***If the existence of God was so difficult to believe than you would rationally think that all Children would start out and remain atheists***!

1. **Vs. 2 The testimony of faith**

Vs. 2 Next we read of the “*testimony*” of faith as we are told that “*For by* ***it*** (faith) *the elders obtained a good testimony*”. The writer speaks of the saints of old that gained their reputation not fro works but rather from faith. The point he is making is that God has always approved “faith” and not works as the sole basis of righteousness! Faith is **NOT** “one way to God”, it is the **ONLY** way to God! Verse 6 affirms this truth as we read “*Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*”.

1. **Vs. 3 Thank God I’m an atheist**

Vs. 3 There is a third ingredient of faith, “*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God*”.

1. Faith kicks in when a person becomes dissatisfied with the ***status quo*** in their life and begins to hope for being someone better.
2. Than faith draws them to seeing what previously they were unaware of; ***an invisible kingdom that is the explanation of everything our senses had detected***. It is here that the “*substance of things hoped for*”; ***the things we are longing to for***, to be a better person than we have been, will be achieved by acting on the revelation of the things unseen. As we act on that revelation we become the things hoped for, someone better. That is the story of the whole eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the story of faith. The cool thing is that this same story is being repeated in us at this very moment!

Ah but the skeptic replies; “*What about the person who never hears the gospel*?” Well the answer is right in verse 6 as they have the opportunity to exercise faith at its simplest level as the writer declares, “***He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him***.” Any person who wants to be better, who believes that God exists and who will obey that revelation and is expecting God to change them will come to the place of knowing Jesus Christ. Because as we are told “*Without that faith it is impossible to please God*.”

Verse 3 also introduces us to a very amazing deduction which reveals the implications of faith. This statement, by the writer, was made in the 1st century when the best scientific minds of the day believed that the explanation of matter was fourfold: fire, water, soil and air. Now, after thousands years of human endeavor in exploring the secrets of the origin of matter, this view has not changed. The writer explains why, “*By FAITH we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible*”. The writer says that, ***we can never explain the things which are seen till we come to grips with the things that are unseen***. The person of faith arrived at exactly the same conclusion as the man of science, only two thousand years earlier? Faith puts a person immediately in touch with reality. Faith deals with facts, truths that were very clearly stated for any person who reads the very first sentence in the Bible, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*.” Faith grounds one immediately on reality.

* ***Science, cannot tell how human history is going to end, but by faith I know.***
* ***Science cannot tell us what’s wrong with humanity, why people through out time continue to act the way they do, but by faith we know.***
* ***Science cannot tell us what lies beyond our earthly existence, but by faith we know what lies beyond.***
* ***Science cannot explain our subconscious, how to realize our dreams, but faith can.***

This is why faith always pleases God, because it comes to grips with reality that God is the Ultimate Realist.

**Hebrews 11:4**

**“The testimony of Abel”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 4a True sacrifice**
3. **Vs. 4b True righteousness**
4. **Vs. 4c True witness**
5. **Introduction**

The theme of the 11th chapter of Hebrews is obviously “FAITH”. In the first three verses the writer defined it for his readers. In verses 4-7 he illustrates the definition by going back into the Hebrew’s history to look at three demonstrations of faith. There are far more than three illustrations of faith through Jewish history, but these first three illustrate ***what faith is***, the rest reveal ***how faith works***. ***These three men (Able, Enoch and Noah) lived by faith and chose to believe God when the world around believed something else***. The result was that each one found ultimate reality and solved the greatest problem of their life, by realizing that their deepest desire was found in a relationship with God. The writer went as far back as he could to bring up the first illustration of faith, Able. He is the first in a long line of faith-filled people who could teach the Hebrews about a life of faith, even though his was cut short. His faith is extremely important as it related to the Hebrew’s because his life reveals that from the beginning God revealed that the only thing He would except to redeem fallen humanity was, “FAITH” and not works! Some may wonder why start with Able and not his parents Adam and Eve? The reason is simple Adam and Eve could not be persons of faith in the same way as their descendants as they had walked with God “face to face” walking and talking with Him in the Garden. Until they sinned they had no need of faith, because they lived with God in His light. And even after they sinned, they still had the memory and knowledge of that relationship with God. Cain and Able were were the first to have need of faith and Able was the first “*man of faith*” as it related to having a relationship with God.

1. **Vs. 4a True sacrifice**

Vs. 4a Based upon this verse we see that Abel’s faith led him to three progressive actions:

1. ***Offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain***: First, Able offered a **TRUE SACRIFICE**. Able offered a better sacrifice not because he was better but because he simple believed what God has made known to them about the sacrifice and offered it.
2. ***Through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts***: Second, because of this offering Able obtained **TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Abel’s sacrifice based upon faith is that which led to God declaring him right with Him.
3. ***And through it he being dead still speaks***: Third, because of the above two Able secured a **PERMANENT AND TRUE WITNESS**. And that declared righteousness is what continually speaks to all humanity throughout every generation.

To examine Abel’s faith it is clear the writer intended it to be compared to that of his brother’s Cain’s, as we are told that “*By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice* **than Cain**..” To do this we will need to discover what made Abel choose this sacrifice compared to Cain? These were the world's first brothers, Cain and Able, sons of Adam and Eve. They lived when the world was young, in the days before income tax and world governments. We first need to examine what they both had known about the right sacrifice based upon Gen. 3:15 where we are told that God said, “*I will put enmity Between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel*.”:

* They both would have known God had put their parents out of the garden because of sin.
* They both would have known that even though judgment sent them out of God’s presence, grace promised a way back. *Within the curse it’s self was a promise of a Redeemer being offered. Judgment was being executed at the same time mercy was being offered and both of these two sons would have known that*. In Genesis 3:15 we are told by God that “*And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel*.” Notice that the word “seed” is singular and not plural.
* This is further brought to light in their two names:
1. **Cain**: Means “*to get* or *I have gotten*” and comes from the statement of Eve in Genesis 4:1 where she exclaims, “*I have acquired a man from the LORD*.” In Hebrew some believe that her statement is “I have gotten, even the Lord” which indicates that Adam and Eve clearly understood the shadow of the sacrifice and the substance being the incarnation. But the son they had thought was the redeemer was the world’s first murder, not it’s savior. What Adam and Eve didn’t understand was that “flesh can only produce flesh” and in Adam all die as the son’s of Adam can not give life which they do not have. Cain was a “*tiller of the soil*” or **farmer**.
2. **Able**: Means “*breath*” and carries the idea of weakness or brevity. It seems that early own after Cain’s birth Adam and Eve knew that Cain wasn’t the answer and named their second soon “weakness”. Able was a “*keeper of flocks*” or **shepherd**.
* Both were conceived after the fall and born outside of Eden, the second and third people to live on earth. As such both were sinners by nature and choice.
* Both had the same natures, inclinations and temptations as every other human born from them on. In other words, neither of them had an unfair advantage over the other to make the right choice.

In Genesis 4:3-5 we are told that, “*In the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell*.” Here we learn that each of these two equally possessed the same three things with regards to worshipping God:

1. ***The time for worship***: “*In the process of time*”! In the Hebrew this phrase means “*at the end of days*” and speaks of a specific period of time. Based upon this it seems that as far as these two sons, their parents had passed down from God a “***designated***” special time for worshipping God. The fact that both boys did so at the same time indicates this.
2. ***The place for worship***: “*Cain* ***brought****…Able also* ***brought***”! Because both sons ***brought*** an offering there was clearly ***a specific place for worship***. There is no mention of them erecting an alter and it could be that one already existed on the east side of Eden, built by their parents. It seems consistent with God’s nature of Grace that He would have provide instruction for one that would have included a mercy seat where they could come and place the shed blood of the lamb for atonement, even though it would have been only a shadow.
3. ***The way to worship***: I also believe that God had clearly established the “*way to worship*”. In Genesis 3:21 we are told that “*for Adam and his wife Eve the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*” So that the sacrifice for their sin was symbolically covered by the shedding of blood of an innocent animal and was something that they knew from the beginning of the fall. These two sons would have known this handed down from their parents. In Genesis 5:4-5 the fact that God accepted only Abel’s animal offering while rejecting Cain’s indicates that the sacrificial pattern had been established and practiced as a pattern of worship towards God as God would not have rejected Cain’s offering if Cain had no way of knowing what to offer. Further more Romans 10:17 tells us that “*faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of God*” Abel must have obeyed the revelation of the Word of God where as Cain rejected it.

Both of these two sons knew the ***time*** and ***place*** for worship and I believe that they both knew the ***way*** to worship was offering a symbolic sacrifice for sin. But only Abel offered what God had revealed to the booth of them. There was nothing wrong with offering grain, fruit or vegetables as an offering to God; the Mosaic covenant included in the future such offerings. The problem was that the “***blood offering***” was always first as Leviticus 17:11 “*For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls;* ***for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul****.*” And Hebrews 9:22 “*And according to the law almost* ***all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.***” Abel presented his sacrifice based upon trusting God at His word (faith) and it was because of this (faith) that the sacrifice was accepted by God. Abel did what God had said and in so doing revealed his obedience while also acknowledging his sin. Cain was disobedient not because of ignorance but willfulness. Able offered a better sacrifice because God had prescribe a “blood sacrifice”.

* **Abel gave God, what God wanted**: Abel acknowledged his own sin! Abel approached God saying, “*Lord, this is what You said You wanted and You promised that if I brought it, You would forgive my sin! I believe You, God*.”
* **Cain gave God, what Cain wanted**: Cain acknowledged his own works! Cain had the same knowledge as his brother Abel but chose instead to say, “*Lord, I know that you say that You wanted a blood sacrifice, but I don’t believe you and I believe if I offer the best of my works it will be good enough because I’m a good person*!”
* **Cain believed IN God, otherwise he wouldn’t have came to God at the right TIME and the right PLACE. He even understood that he OWED God some sort of worship. But though he recognized God, he didn’t OBEY God. Cain believed IN God, but didn’t BELIEVE GOD! Cain thought that he could approach God in the way he wanted and he expected God to be impressed by his WORKS and in so doing Cain became the father of all religion! Religion is by definition is: Trying to come to God by ANY OTHER WAY other than the WAY God has prescribed!**

In Acts 4:12 we are told that, “*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*.” Religion says that there is another name another way to God than the way God Himself has ordained. But Proverbs 14:12 reminds us that, “*There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death*.” Cain didn’t mind worshiping God as long as he could do so “religiously on his own terms, in his own way”! And it is this God rejected. This is why Jude warns his readers in 1:11 “*Woe to them! For they have gone in* ***the way of Cain****,*…” Setting up ones own religious standards and way of approaching God, being acceptable to God apart from the only way God has established. Paul said the same thing in Romans 10:2-3, “*For I bear them witness that* ***they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God*.**” Cain didn’t want to worship God he only wanted to give the appearance of doing so, he wanted to please himself not God. His sacrifice was “religious activity” designed to show off his own self righteousness and worthiness! This is what Samuel told Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22 “*So Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.*”

1. **Vs. 4b True righteousness**

Vs. 4b Second we are told that “*through which he (Abel) obtained witness that he was righteous*..” The only thing that Abel did that obtained righteousness was that, in faith, he did what God had told him to do. It was not how good Abel was but that He trusted in God and showed it by obeying Him. Abel was as sinful as Cain, the difference was in the WAY in they sacrificed: Abel was obedient because he trusted God’s word, Cain was disobedient because he trusted in his works. You can not claim to believe in God and then continually disregard His word. Abel was counted righteous, not because he was righteous, but because he trusted in God’s righteousness!

1. **Vs. 4c True witness**

Vs. 4c Finally we read that, “*God testifying of his (Abel’s) gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.*” Abel’s faith continues to speak for thousands of years, three truths to believers and potential believers:

1. ***Humanity can only come to God by trusting in His word (faith). And never by works***!
2. ***Humanity must accept and obey God’s Word above their own reason, self-effort and works***!
3. ***Humanity’s sin will be judged and no amount of good works, religious effort for a life time will ever be able to atone for it. Apart from receiving Jesus sacrifice on our behalf all of our good works and religious effort have gained us eternity in hell***!

It is as Habakkuk said in 2:4 “*Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.*” ***We cannot receive God’s enablement for our problems until we first lay aside all dependence upon ourselves***.

**Hebrews 11:5-6**

**“The testimony of Enoch”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 5 Enoch’s story**
3. **Vs. 6 A pleasing walk**
4. **Introduction**

As noted verses 4-7 offers the reader three demonstrations of the definition of faith that the writer spoke of in the first three verses of Hebrews Chapter 11.

* In Abel we examined his life and true “WORSHIP” by faith.
* In Enoch, we will examine the true “WALK” by faith.
* In Noah, we will examine what true “WILLING OBEDIENCE” by faith looks like.

Able spoke to us of how “TRUE WORSHIP” by faith will change your ***DESTINATION***!

Enoch will speak to us how “TRUE WALK” by faith will change your ***DESTINY***!

1. **Vs. 5 Enoch’s story**

Vs. 5 Like Able, there are very few verses that give us any insight with regards to Enoch. First to clarify; the Enoch mentioned Genesis 4:17-18 is not the same Enoch mentioned in Genesis 5:18-24. It is interesting that both Lamech and his grandfather Enoch share names in common with their ungodly relatives, Cain’s descendants. Further more these are the only two who did not outlive their fathers and both had words from the Lord. The thought is that they were called to reach out to the Canaanite’s! The first one is in the linage of Cain where the one the writer makes reference too is from the Godly line of Seth who was born when Adam was 130 years old. So including the Genesis 5:18-24 passage Enoch appears in only five scriptures and two of those are just geologies (1 Chron 1:3 and Luke 3:37). So our complete knowledge of him comes form; Genesis 5:18-24, here in Hebrews 11:5-6 and Jude 1:14. Jude 1:14 tells us that he was the ***seventh generation from Adam***. Genesis 5:18-24, we are told that for 65 years he lived like everyone else before him in his day. It is in Genesis 5:20-24 that we gain insight into this man of faith’s life: **Through these verses *we learn three things about Enoch* whose name means “*teaching*”**:

* **A man of faith in whose life was characterized by pleasing God**.
1. Vs. 21-22a His walk started after the birth of his son Methuselah when he was 65 years old. The next three hundred years of his life can be summed up by the phrase “*walked with God*”. In fact, twice in this short account of his life we are told that he “*walked with God*”. The phrase “*walk with God*” in the Greek translation of Genesis 5:21-24 and the phrase “*pleased God*” here in Hebrews 11:5 both use the same Greek word and as such mean the same thing; “***walking with God is pleasing God***”. Now by these words we know that Enoch had a very special relationship with the Lord. Heb. 11:5 Tells us that “*By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God*.” The intimacy in this walk is clearly scene by the words “***by faith***”. His life was one that was centered on trusting the lord, which implies (***obedience, prayer, and heart for God’s word and worship***) all of which “*please the Lord*”.
* **A prophet that spoke of impending judgment upon the pre-flood world.** According to Gen. 6:5-6 the wickedness of the world at the time of Enoch up to Noah was continually consumed in sin; so that it was their every thought of their heart. We are told that God was grieved and sorry that He had placed mankind upon the earth. There is also an interesting message in the meaning of the names of the Godly line from Adam through Seth. These men’s names present a clear presentation of the gospel.

### **Hebrew** **English**

Adam ***Man***

Seth ***Appointed***

Enosh ***Mortal***

Cainan ***Sorrow***

Mahalaleel ***The Blessed God***

Jared ***Shall come down***

Enoch ***Teaching***

Methuselah ***His death shall bring***

Lamech ***Despairing***

Noah ***Rest***

If you put these translations of the names into a normal sentence structure it would read: “**Man *is* appointed mortal sorrow; *but* the blessed God shall come down teaching *that* His death shall bring *the* despairing rest**!”

1. Vs. 22 Apparently Enoch received a prophecy that judgment was coming, and that it was going to happen after his son Methuselah died because he named his *son “His death shall bring*”. Methuselah has often been used as the answer to the trivia question, “*Who is the oldest man recorded in the Bible?*” His age and the fact that his death brought upon the earth God’s judgment speaks of God’s longsuffering in that He is “*not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*” (2 Peter 3:9) If you do your math you will find out that the flood did come in the year of Methuselah’s death in fact some say in the very week of it. So in Jude 24-25 we are told that for three hundred years Enoch “*prophesied about these men*” (**that is this 300-year generation just before the judgment of the flood**). Saying, “*Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him*.”
* **A man who was suddenly taken to the presence of God**.
1. Vs. 24 It does not say that he died as did the other godly ancestors but that suddenly he was no longer on the earth. Heb. 11:5 uses the word “*taken*” or as the KJ versions says, “*translated*”. The word appears 7 times in the NT where it is translated these ways, “***carried back, turning, being changed***”. So what we have here is a rapture like occurrence which is spoken of in 1 Thess. 4:17 where we read that those, “*who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*.” The word “*caught up*” is “*harpazo*” in the Greek, which is translated into Latin with the word “*rapture*”. Now what is interesting, in light of the NT, is that this proceeded God’s judgment upon the earth. Enoch’s being ***carried back*** did not occur at the **mid point** of God’s judgment upon the earth. **Neither was he preserved** as Noah and his family was, going through the judgment. No, he was caught up and carried back being changed instantly as he was brought into the presence of God, so he is a typology of the Church as Noah is of Israel.
2. **Vs. 6 A pleasing walk**

Vs. 6 Enoch’s life ought to be what we see in the Church prior to God’s judgment upon the earth. That is, we ought to have:

* **A walk that is pleasing to God**
* **Mouths that consistently speak the Word of God**
* **Lives that are ready to be instantly in the presence of God**

### The question that this ought to inspire in our hearts is; “***How are we to be this kind of Christian***?” That is where Hebrews 11:6 comes in as we see ***Enoch’s threefold testimony of a walk that is pleasing to God***:

1. Vs. 6a “*Without God it is impossible to please Him (God), for he who comes to God must believe that He is..*”: Enoch had a hearty that consistently desired above all else desired to please God. This speaks that he only did, as Jesus says of himself in John 8:29 “*those things that please Him.*” A life consistently lived in obedience to the word of God! Religion doesn’t “***please God***” as it is a system that **by definition is: Trying to come to God by ANY OTHER WAY other than the WAY God has prescribed!** The first step of faith that Enoch did was to simple believe that God exists the way that He revealed Himself in the Bible. God cannot be proved by science any more than Abraham Lincoln can be proved by science. ***For something to be proved by science it has to be repeatable and history by its very nature is unrepeatable!*** We can learn many things that give evidence of God such as the, “***law of cause and effect***” that holds that for every ***cause***; there must be an ***effect***. So if you keep pushing back further and further you will end up with an “***uncaused cause***” and the ***ONLY UNCAUSED CAUSE is God***! That’s what the writer said in Hebrews 3:4 “*For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God*.” ***The Law of entropy***, says that: ***Everything is running down and therefore is not self-sustaining***. *If it is not self-sustaining than it has to have a beginning and if it has a beginning than someone had to begin it and we are back to God and they uncaused cause*! There is the ***Law of design***: That notes *the amazing complexity of design and the uniformity and functionality of design, all of which speaks of intelligence of God and the uncaused cause*! ***Reason cannot prove the existence of God but like science it gives a great deal of evidence***. *Mankind, being personal, conscious, rational, creative and volitional makes it inconceivable that we could come into being by random chance and chaos. To believe that mankind who is personal and thinking could some how have developed from slime up an imaginable evolutionary chain makes no logical sense! The very idea of God lends substance to the fact that He is and further more the fact that mankind can conceive of God suggests that God has given mankind the ability of such a conception and that there would be a God who exactly fits this conception*!
2. Vs. 6b “*For he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who*”: The next step of faith for Enoch isn’t just to believe that God is moral and just and that He will reward faith in Him! To Enoch God was “NOT merely the man upstairs” He wasn’t an impersonal force. Enoch walked with God and knew Him in a way that was personal and loving. You don’t “WALK” with a “force”; for too years Enoch had consistent personal fellowship with the true living God, who revealed Himself to Enoch as being: Just merciful, forgiving, holy and loving! ***You can not please an impersonal object***! Enoch lived a life that trusted God and not his own insight. Enoch knew and trusted God’s character to always do what was best. Proverbs 8:17 says, “*I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me.*” The reward God gives for faith is our salvation as every good thing that God has, including eternal life is a reward for our faith!
3. Vs. 6c “*diligently seek Him*”: Lastly we see that in both of the above his heart was one of diligence. Enoch’s master passion was to seeking the Lord (***walking with God***), in other words the Lord was fixed upon the throne of his heart. The term “walking with God” in the Bible speaks of a life spent faithfully living with God in “*newness of life*” (2 Corinth. 5:7). A life characterized by the words of Paul in Galatians 5:16 “*Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*” And Ephesians 5:2 “*Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma*.” Enoch walked with God for 300 years in the same way in which he would be walking with God in heaven. A little Sunday School girl said it this way, “*Enoch was a man who learned to walk with God, and they used to take long walks together. One day they walked so far that God said, 'Look, Enoch, it's too far for you to go back; just come on home with me.' So he walked on home with God*.” That is the reality that Enoch discovered by a walk of faith. It was not Enoch’s retirement that gave him a deeper security. At 65 he began to enjoy the continuous presence of an unseen personal God, and he related his life daily to Him. He discovered a fellowship that death could not interrupt.

**Hebrews 11:7**

**“Nutty Noah”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 7a Noah**
3. **Vs. 7b His response to God’s Word**
4. **Vs. 7c His life demonstrating God’s rebuke to the world**
5. **Vs. 7d His receiving of God’s righteousness**
6. **Introduction**

We come now to the third and final demonstration that the writer offers to his definition of faith in the first three verses. To recap:

* Abel’s life was what true ***WORSHIP*** of God by faith looked like
* Enoch’s life was what a true ***WALK*** by faith looked like
* Now in Noah we will examine what true ***WILLINGNESS*** in obedience looks like

It is important to read carefully the writers illustration with regards to Noah as he writes, **“***By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith*.” It is clear that the writers point is ***NOT*** Noah’s ***PRESERVATION*** but rather his ***PREPARATION***. And what we learn initially is that because of Noah’s FAITH in God’s word in which he displayed willingly obedience his “***preparation***” led to his and his families “***preservation***”! **Noah believed God in a prophetic way**; he believed God when “*warned of things* ***NOT YET SEEN***”. He trusted God’s Word that God alone was in control over all of human history. Like the other illustrations offered by the writer it is clear by the brevity of the verse he knew that the original reader would have clearly and concisely understood his point, so much so that he need not go into any further detail. Though I’m certain that was the case with the original Hebrew readers that is not the case for most of the gentile readers today, so we will be going back to look at the pertinent verses with regards to Noah and this illustration.

1. **Vs. 7a Noah**

Vs. 7a “*By faith* ***NOAH***”: First we will need to go back to Genesis chapter 6 verses 8-13 where we find that though wickedness was great on the earth there was a man, “Noah” who looked into the eyes of the Lord and not into the eyes of the world. *Notice that it says that he “****found grace****”*! It ***NEVER SAYS*** he ***earned it***! The truth is that grace found Noah, as God had been searching the earth to show Himself strong on behalf of one who’s heart was fixed upon HIM! There was nothing special about Noah other then he responded to God’s grace. ***Because of God’s grace in the life of Noah we see seven qualities***:

1. Vs. 8 **Position**: “*found grace*”. Noah’s position before God was upon grace, not of works.
2. Vs. 9 **Attitude**: “*just man*”. Because Noah was right with God he was right with the world and showed this by being just.
3. Vs. 9 **Character**: “*perfect*”. The idea of this word is that of being whole. ***Noah was a whole man in a broken world***.
4. Vs. 9 **Witness**: “*in his generations*”. Noah’s life of grace could be clearly seen amongst those whom he lived with.
5. Vs. 9 **Fellowship**: “*walked with God*”. The idea here is that of ***friendship as well as fellowship***. Noah’s best friend was God and he walked with Him daily!
6. Vs. 22 **Conduct**: “*Noah did*”. Noah had habit of obeying God daily.
7. Vs. 22 **Standard**: “*according to all that God commanded him, so he did*”. Noah’s standard was the word of God, what God said Noah did!

In verses 10-12 we see that Noah led his wife three sons and their wives to find grace as well. Four times in this account we are told that mankind was all corrupt and violent. That was the sum of the character of the world’s population during Noah’s day. ***Genesis 6:13 records four things God told Noah about His impending judgment:***

1. Vs. 13 **His plan to destroy the earth**: “*The end of all flesh has come before Me*”.
2. Vs. 13 **The reason why**: “*Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth*”: God’s judgment was not to destroy man from the earth but rather with the earth. Man’s home his security must be wiped out so that those eight people would see how everything must depend upon a relationship with God.
3. Vs. 14-16 **His plans to save Noah and his family**:
4. Vs. 17 **The means to destroy the earth**: “*I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth*”.

***There are three proofs of Noah’s “willing obedience” by faith***:

* ***His response to God’s Word***
* ***His life demonstrating God’s rebuke to the world***
* ***His receiving of God’s righteousness***
1. **Vs. 7b His response to God’s Word**

Vs. 7b **His response to God’s Word**. “..*being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving f his household*”: According to Genesis 7:1-16 ***one hundred twenty years*** passed from the time that God first spoke to Noah concerning the flood and the time in which they entered the ark. During those years he raised three sons saw them marry, built a massive ship on dry land and stored all the supplies that would necessary to care for the living cargo. For one hundred twenty years after that divine warning Noah stayed obedient and faithful to God’s calling and because he did not only did he secured his salvation but that of his households as well. Noah believed God when He told him there was coming a great flood of judgment. 2 Peter 2:5 describes Noah ***NOT as a ship builder*** but as a “***preacher of righteousness***”. I’m certain that when Noah was asked what he was doing everyone laughed, he must have been the brunt of every joke for 120 years. But Noah in willing obedience just kept on building the Arch. That may be unusual today but in Noah’s time it would have been real ***strange for four reasons***:

1. First, he **built it five hundred miles from the nearest ocean**!
2. Second, he **built it because he said that a flood was coming in a time that it had never rained**!
3. Third, he **began building it 120 years before it would be used**!
4. Fourth, he **built it a thousand times too big for his own family, and when he finished it he filled it with supplies and animals**!

I can’t be sure of this but I wouldn’t be surprised if the people in Noah’s day didn’t call him “***Nutty Noah***.” He could have wasted the 120 years of his life had he and his family not responded to God’s words and entered the Arch. ***A lot of folks spend their entire life build a religious ark, which may very well be capable of saving them, but in the end never personally get on board themselves***. They end up drowning outside the boat they built along side those who never picked up a board, nail or hammer a day of their lives. “***It was not building the ark that saved Noah and his family it was getting on board****!*”

1. **Vs. 7c His life demonstrating God’s rebuke to the world**

Vs. 7c **His life demonstrating God’s rebuke to the world.** “*by which he condemned the world*”: Noah’s willing obedience included passing on to the rest of the world God’s message of coming judgment. With every board, nail and pitch applied there was a new message of coming judgment! In Genesis 7:5-6 we are told that Noah’s defining quality was that of obedience as it says that he **did not just** “do” he “***did all***”! The words “*did according to all that the LORD*” is the summation of Noah’s 120 years of doing what the Lord commanded. I have little doubt that as difficult as building the Arch was it was far easier than dealing with preaching to the people who didn’t want to hear or be reminded of the truth Noah was building! Why even Noah entrance in the arch was a rebuke to the world as we are told in Genesis 7:13-16 the order of entrance into the ark:

1. On the first of the week prior to any sign of impending danger Noah and his family enter.
2. Soon after God brought the animals two by two and this continued on through out he week until we are told “*all flesh went in as God had commanded*”.
3. Finally, in verse 16b **God’s gave a final seal of assurance** as we are told that, “*the LORD shut him in*”: ***God’s sealed Noah and his family in the ark so that Noah was not only safe he was secure***. All of which was a rebuke to the world!
4. **Vs. 7d His receiving of God’s righteousness**

Vs. 7d ***His receiving of God’s righteousness*** “..*and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith*.”: Noah’s faith was proved by his receiving God’s righteousness. God looks through the lens of His Son, and He sees us through as He sees Jesus. Because Noah believed God and demonstrated it by willing obedience **Noah proved** that ***God alone controls history***. The inhabitance of the world except for Noah and his family, were the ones who were living by the light of their own reason. Because of this Noah became, “*the heir of the righteousness which comes by faith*”. Based upon Noah we see that ***FAITH does three things***:

* ***Faith lives out, in willing obedience, that there is another dimension to life than that which can be touched, tasted, seen or felt.***
* ***Faith believes that God’s grace, has stepped over the boundary of human history and revealed through His Word great facts.***
* ***Faith then adjusts our life to those facts and walks on that basis.***

**Hebrews 11:8-10**

**“*Abraham’s faith: Deaf, dumb and blind*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 8 The Pilgrimage of Abraham’s faith**
3. **Vs. 9 The patience of Abraham’s faith**
4. **Vs. 10 The reason for Abraham’s faith**
5. **Introduction**

The writer of Hebrews says that man's reasoning invariably misinterprets the evidence of life. He goes on to point out, that God has spoken to man basic truths about life. Without faith we struggle in a confused cycle of bewilderment, boredom and barriers. The writer has made it clear that the revelation of God centers around Jesus. Therefore, the life of faith begins with acceptance of him. Faith, is a very practical thing!

* ***Faith, starts with the desire for something better.***
* ***Then it moves forward with the search that what is missing is Someone and that this Someone is real all the while being invisible to our natural senses. And that this Someone will complete what we have recognized is missing!***
* ***Then faith moves to an assurance that obedience to that Someone will bring us to the something better***.

The writer understood that his definition in Hebrews 11:1-3 needed “*flesh and blood examples*”, “*historical illustrations*” as the 11th chapter gives stories of men and women like us, who faced what we faced in a world like ours, yet mastered their problems and obstacles by faith. This chapter points out characteristics of faith. ***Faith always anticipates, it moves toward an expected event in the future***. It was Kierkegaard that said, “*Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forward*.” ***Without faith, life is a blind march into a mystery***:

* We can not know where we are going
* We do not know what is coming
* We do not see what lies ahead

Therefore, as Spanish philosopher George Santayana said we are left with the only way to avoid an uncertain future as, “***Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it***.” And history has shown time and time again that we humans are those “***who cannot remember the past***” as we continue to “***repeat it***”! The future becomes what Winston Churchill describes Russia as “***A riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma***!” Without faith; anything can happen and all that is left is a sense of anxiety in trying to walk forward into life!

But faith believes that God has revealed something about the future; He has revealed enough for us to move forward in hope and peace. Because of faith in God: ***Our anxiety about our future has been replaced by anticipation of it***. **Faith gives our life a goal, a purpose and as well as a destination**. We see this in Abraham. It is amazing how far Abraham saw. Abraham lived several thousand years before Christ; yet he, looked forward by faith. He believed what God had said and, looked across ***over forty centuries of time*** to a day according to Hebrews 11:10 when God would bring forth on earth a city with eternal foundations and life on earth would be lived after God's order. Abraham saw what John sees in the book of Revelation, a city coming down out of heaven onto earth. That is what ***Abraham longed for, an earth lived after God's order***, where men would dwell together in peace, harmony, blessing, beauty and fulfillment. Because of that he was content to dwell in tents, looking for that coming.

1. **Vs. 8 The Pilgrimage of Abraham’s faith**

Vs. 8a “***By faith Abraham***”. There is much in the life of faith of Abraham that the writer could have drawn from as an example. But he chooses to look at Abram’s life before he was known as Abraham, before the promises of ancestry and blessing of land, back to the time he first heard from the God to leave his nation, culture and family. Genesis 12:1-3 records this story for us and Abram is the focus of Genesis from chapter 12 through chapter 25. He is mentioned 260 times in the Bible and ten of those times his name is mentioned in connection with faith. Paul wrote to the Roman’s (4:13, 16) that **“*the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*” Then in verses 16 Paul continues by saying; “*that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all*” Abram’s life of faith is an example of how we ought to live in Christ.** There are, according to the writer of Hebrews, two examples in this illustration that he wishes to make concerning Abraham and those two examples are followed by the reason why Abraham exhibited this kind of faith. You will note these **two examples by the two-word phrase** “***By faith***” and you will see ***the reason for this*** by the two-word phrase “***for he***”.

**Vs. 8b *The Pilgrimage of Abraham’s faith*:** “*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going*.”The first thing we read in Genesis 12:1 is that, “*The LORD had said to Abram*:” To give you a chronological time table of this; we last read of God speaking the same way 420 years earlier in chapter 9 to Noah. Here we see God calling out to a mankind through a servant named Abram.

The Greek wording here is very exact and ***indicates that Abraham’s immediate obedience to God’s call***. In fact, it literally reads, “*When Abraham was called, obeyed to go out*”, which indicates that **his calling and his obedience were almost simultaneous**. The Greek, further indicates that **Abraham was not concerned as to the nature of where the country was** that he was being called too. **His faith in God had displaced his worry as to where he was going**. It was **NOT the attractiveness of the land of Canaan that made it easy for him to leave Ur**.

Though that is how the writer of Hebrews describes this saying that as soon as God said go “*Abraham started packing*”; Steven, in his message before the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 7 said that**,** “*The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia,* ***BEFORE*** *he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.' "Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his* ***father was dead****, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell*.” ***It is here that we see something very interesting***: Abram’s father Terah was 70 years old when Abram was born and Abram was 75 when he departed Haran to go to Canaan, that makes Terah 145 when Abram left Haran. Based upon Steven’s words in Acts chapter 7, God’s call came to Abram “*BEFORE he dwelt in Haran*”. Abram left with his father sometime after Haran (Terah’s 2nd son) died and moved up from Ur near the Persian Gulf to the city of Haran (*named after Abram’s brother*), which is in modern day Iraq. Steven says that Abram’s departure was after his father Terah died (Acts 7:4); yet Genesis 11:32 says that Terah dies at the age of 205. This means if you do the math that: ***Terah would not die until for another 130 years***! Terah’s name means “*delay*” and the city of Haran means “*parched and barren*”. We can not be sure how long Abram stayed with his father in Haran but we can say that “*his DELAY left him PARCHED and BARREN*!” We are left with only **two conclusions based upon this evidence**:

* *Abram had two calls*? Which there is no evidence of!
* *Abram’s “*immediate obedience to God’s call *“took longer than what we would normally call “immediate obedience”!* I bring this up as this story is the one the author choses to illustrate Abraham’s faith. And it seems to suggest that God “*recognizes the heart above the action*” with regards to “*Abraham’s immediate obedience to God’s call*.”

Notice the threefold call to Abram

This is further illustrated as we examine the threefold call to Abram in the words in Genesis 12:1. The words “*Get out*” are literally “*Go for yourself*” which implies that God’s call of separation was intended to BENEFIT Abram! I mention this as an application point to our examination of Abram’s faith as, *to often we see God’s call separating us as a penalty upon our freedom instead a pathway to blessing*! Abram teaches us that, “*God’s way is the best way; leaving the world is the surest way to be blessed*.” In Genesis 12:3 we see both:

1. There is a *threefold progression of separation FROM the things of the world*
2. And a threefold blessing to what God calls Abram TOO.

*The point for us is that God never calls away from something that He does not call us to something better*. The fact is as Jesus said in John 12:24 “*unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain*.”

Threefold progression of separation *FROM* the things of the world:

1. “*Out of your country*” National: This was the place of Abram’s birth it was his national identity! As this relates to us: Our call is NOT to be American Christians it is to be *Christian Americans*! Abram’s identity was to be found in his faith in the Lord not in what or how they worshipped their god or gods. We must be aware of this danger that seeks to bend our faith in Christ into our culture instead of bending submitting our life into the word of God.
2. “*From your family*” Cultural: God’s call included being called away from the culture that made up the area in which Abram was from. There are a great many things that are cultural expressions from where we are from. Now not all of these are bad but not all fit with in the confines of Christianity.
3. “*And from your father's house*” Family: He was called ought of his family as well. I believe this has to do with what his chief affection was. Jesus said in Luke 14:26 “*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.*” Jesus used the word “*HATE*” to show the comparison of how much greater our love for Him ought to be compared with our love of our families. There can be only one on the throne of our heart and it is only when He is there that we can love our nation, culture and families the way He has called us too.
4. **Vs. 9 The patience of Abraham’s faith**

**Vs. 9 *The patience of Abraham’s faith*:** “*By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise*..” The word “*dwelt*” in the Greek means to “*dwell beside or among*” and indicates “*a foreigner dwelling in a state with out rights or citizenship*”. ***Abraham’s faith inspired him to endure patently in an unsettled life, because he was assured of a permanent home in the future***! Here the emphasis is not upon his pilgrimage but upon Abraham’s patience. And this goes into explain perhaps the delay in **“*Abraham’s immediate obedience to God’s call*.”** As it was producing patience in his life. We pick up the story in Genesis 12:2-3 where we see the words, “*I will.., make you…, bless you.., make your..., you shall be*.” These words are all promises of God’s covenant and we note that they all proceed everything else and tell us that they were not going to be based upon God’s grace and NOT what Abram may or may not be. Paul reminds Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:*13 “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*”

Threefold blessing to what God calls Abram *TOO*:

1. “*I will make you a great nation*” Nation: God calls him out of a nation and in so doing calls him to become a great nation. The nation Abram came out of was idolatrous but God was promising to make from Abram’s obedience a nation that would trust only the true God.
2. “*I will bless you*” Culture: *The culture was a CURSE now it would be a CURE*. All that made up society that was sick would become that which would heal. James 2:23 comments about Abram by saying, “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God*.” God’s promise to Abram started a whole knew culture and identity known as “*friends of God*”!
3. “*And make your name great*” Family: Abram had been part of a family now he was to be the head of a new family, the family of faith. Because of this we see that both Jew and gentile look to Abram as our father. He left his father’s name, Abram means “*exalted father*”, and God will give him a new name Abraham “*father of a multitude*”.
4. Vs. 10 The reason for Abraham’s faith

Vs. 10 *The reason for Abraham’s faith*: “*for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*” The secret of Abraham’s patience was in the hope of the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise. He understood that even if he possessed the land of Canaan in his earthly life time, it was not the ultimate eternal fulfillment of God’s promise. Abraham’s eyes were the eternal NOT the temporal. He wasn’t just looking for a city that had “foundations” but one that had specific foundations: One whose architect was God and whose builder was God. And because of this based upon Genesis 12:2b-3 Abram’s faith in God was a threefold blessing:

1. “*And you shall be a blessing*” Nation: *Abram’s new nation he was NOT just to BE the OBJECT of God’s blessing he was to be the INSTRUMENT of it as well*. *Abram’s life of faith is an example as those who are blessed will bless others*.
2. “*I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you*” Culture: Abram’s cause was going to be the Lord’s cause so how ever the world responded to Abram was either going to be a blessing to them or a woe.
3. “*And in you all the families of the earth shall be blesse*d” Family: Gal 3:9 says, “*So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham*.” We are now of the same family of faith as Abram was.

To devote a whole month to the Lord is one thing because we know that there is a time limit to it but in Abraham we see that his faith was month after month year after year. Here we learn by Abraham’s example that ***True faith is deaf to doubt, dumb to discouragement, and blind to impossibility***! No matter what our senses indicates our faith rests on God’s promises.

**Hebrews 11:11-12**

**“*When I am weak, then I am strong*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 11 Learning to believe**
3. **Vs. 12 At the set time**
4. **Introduction**

The unapologetic statement of Hebrews chapter 11 is that, “***Faith Works***”! Faith is NOT in opposition of WORK; it is **the MOTIVATION of WORKS**! ***Faith is, doing something now, in view of the future***. Some in the Church think that we are called to sit and wait for Jesus to take us home, but that view is **NOT living the LIFE OF FAITH**. The life of faith is what Jesus said in Luke 19:13 “***Doing His business till He comes***”. These examples of faith in Hebrews 11, were set to work by their faith. Their activities of faith changed the course of history; and saints ours can too!

* Faith does **NOT** act blindly, it’s **NOT** just doing **ANY** activity; faith **evaluates**, it **weighs the possibilities**, and **the alternatives**.
* ***Faith gladly sacrifices the present advantage to gain the future promised***. These heroes of faith speak to us today saying, “***Live now in view of the future, and you will gain both the future and the present***!”

One of those “*characteristics of faith*” is found in Hebrews 11:11-12 and Sarah where we notice that “***faith dares***”. We shall see this morning that when God spoke to Sarah***, her faith had to ignore the contrary evidence even though the evidence made her situation absolutely impossible***. To look at this text, we will need to examine the original language as well as take a look at the illustration found when we look at Genesis chapters 15-18 and the fulfillment in Genesis chapter 21.

1. **Vs. 11 Learning to believe**

Vs. 11a “*By faith Sarah herself*”: The Greek wording of this pronoun “*herself*” emphasizes that it was Sarah who was **previously** “***unbelieving***” of God’s promise of an heir through her that **NOW** responded in faith. To understand this, we need to go back before the writer’s illustration in Hebrews 11 to Genesis 15:1-6. There we are told that Abram had a vision in which the Lord said, “*I am your shield, your exceeding great reward*”, to which Abram respond in verse 2 “**Lord God**” or “*Adhonay Yahweh*” which shows that ***Abram was not doubting God’s power to perform what He promised but questioned HOW this would be accomplished***. Abram’s next words were “*What will you give me*” and should better be rendered as in one translation “*you have given me everything I could ask for,* ***except children***”. Back in Genesis 12:2 and 13:6 God had already promised Abram descendants but ***by this time in Genesis 15, ten years had passed*** and there was still no fulfillment. ***By now he and Sarai were well passed the age of child baring***. In fact, according to the Hebrew the phrase of 15:2 “*I go childless*” is literally “***stripped of children***”. Then in verse 3 Abram speaks to God about his inability to understand how God is going to accomplish that which He promised by saying that the only heir of his entire house was Eliezer (*God is my help*) because he was born in his house. In spite of this question as to HOW God would fulfill His promise, God answers with a further promise and ***not a rebuke***. ***God has told Abram three times*** that He will give him an heir and in verses 4-5 He does so again saying:

1. Vs. 4 “*This one shall not be your heir*”: *He has not forgotten His promise*
2. Vs. 4“*But one who will come*”: *He reminds Abram of His original promise in 12:2, 13:15-16.*
3. Vs. 4“*From your own body shall be your heir*”: *He gives further understanding of His promise so that Abram would not misunderstand what God was going to do*.
4. Vs. 5 “*Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be*”: *Finally, God confirms it with an illustration showing Abram His power to perform the impossible.* *He is the God who made the heavens out of nothing but the power of His word in power and He will have no problem being able to bring forth descendants from a barren womb*.

It’s in Genesis 15:6 we read for the first time in the Bible that someone “*believed*”. The root of the word in Hebrew is where we get the word *amen* and means, “*it is so*”. When you believe you are saying “*it is so*” and NOT “*MAY it be so*”! Abraham’s *Faith took God at His WORD and responded to His Word before He even performed it*. Notice what the object of Abrams faith was, “*in the LORD*”. He didn’t say “*it is so*” based upon *a higher power* or *trusting in his trust*. Faith is NOT the most important factor alone; it is the object of FAITH! Because Abram said “*it is so*” to the Word of the Lord his acting upon this was accounted to him as righteousness.

Vs. 11b “*Also received strength to conceive seed*..”: The Greek phrase means “*throwing down*” and relates to the male seed in the womb. The question to Greek scholars with reference to this is does this refer too Abraham through Sarah “*receiving strength*” with his seed or Sarah “receiving strength” as she was past age? Here again it is helpful to go back to Genesis 16:1-4 where we are told in verse 2 the “*adverse circumstances*” combined with “*appropriate opportunity*” led to six reasons why the two of them came up with the plan to use her maid Hagar to fulfill God’s promise:

1. “*See now, the LORD has restrained ME from bearing children*.” She recognized that the Lord had power over their lives, so she deduces that the problem in fulfilling the promise made was her and not Abram’s or the Lord’s fault.
2. “*Has restrained me from bearing children.”* She believed that the situation was hopeless because she was the problem and she could not be fixed.
3. “*Please, go in to my maid*.” She believed God’s promises but God never said that the Child would come from her only that the child would come from Abraham.
4. “*Please*”: She believed that there was still a way to accomplish God’s promises by spiritual means.
5. “*Go in to*”. Her request involved two good traits:
6. Self-denial: She had to deny herself her own desire of being the instrument of God fulfilling his promise of a child.
7. Self-sacrifice: Though she would still be Abram’s wife she would be promoting Hagar to be his second wife and not just her maid.
8. “*My maid*”. Hagar was the opportunity to accomplish what God had promised but she was unable to produce.

The solution that these two came up with is found in Genesis 16:3-4a. First we need to realize that the act *did not involve romance it was only about conception*, as the handmaid would actually sit on her master’s lap (Sarai) as Abram inseminated her. But even though all this was true it didn’t make it right. *This shows us what links the flesh will go to obtain the promises of God! The flesh will do anything except die to obtain the promises of God.* Let this story forever put an end to the false teaching that: “*God helps those who help themselves*”. This is where we can insert Hebrews 11:11 and Sarah “*received strength*” as she would conceive 13 years later and could have avoided all of this fleshly work as God always keeps His promises. The worst thing was, that their plan succeeded as Hagar conceives. Barnhouse wrote; “*Christian work that is done through the zeal of human effort with out counting the body as dead, may produce great revival campaigns but with few genuine saved, it may produce large numbers in the Church but with many tares in the wheat!”*

Vs. 11c “*and she bore when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised*.” The question is when did this take place? Genesis 17:15-19 reveals that Sarah was taken into the covenant as she is specifically mentioned as being the mother of the child of promise. *The truth was the promise was already hers 13 years earlier and she did everything in the flesh to inherit what was already hers by faith*. According to God’s words to Abraham in verse 16 there is a mystery that is uncovered only when the read the NT. God said to Abraham, “*I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her*.” Sarah had only one child and from Isaac came only one nation, Israel. Yet God prophetically proclaims that Sarah was to “*be a mother of nations*”, how is that possible?

1. Matt. 1:1 We read, “*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*:” Isaac was not this child, he was week through the flesh, the nation that sprang from him never has fulfilled becoming a blessing to all other nations. Isaiah wrote of this light being singular and not the nation. The Psalmist declared something glorious in 8:4-6 “*What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.*” In Heb. 2:9 the person the psalmist spoke about is revealed as we are told, “*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone*.” In Gal. 4:30-31 we are told that “*the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.*”

Thus the mystery of this verse is understood only in light of the incarnation of the only Son of God the divine son of Abraham and Sarah. That means that Sarah being *a mother of nations* speaks of Jesus and that the “nations” is believers! Paul said in Gal. 3:7-8 “*Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed.* In Genesis 17:17 Abraham’s response is to laugh, not in unbelief, but rather of astonishment and joy. He is told in verse 20 that they will give birth to the child of promise. There are four things mentioned in this verse that through Isaac the promise of the godly line would come:

1. “*Sarah your wife shall bear you a son*”: The child would be of faith and not the energy of the flesh.
2. “*You shall call his name Isaac*”: His name will be “*he laughs or laughter*” which is always produced in the hearts of grace.
3. “*I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant*”: The covenant with him would be and everlasting one that their son would be the heir of the promise.
4. “*With his descendants after him*”: The use of these words “descendants” is connected to God’s promises to Abraham over 10 times so they were assured that the blessing of this child was the same blessing spoken to him 25 years earlier.

In Genesis 18:9-15 the Lord asks Abraham twice where Sarah is thirteen years earlier God had told Abraham His promise but now He wishes for Sarah to hear it as well. Moses, in verse 11 interjects to explain the impossibility of procreation apart from the Lord’s intervention. The words “*Sarah had passed the age of childbearing*” literally mean “*the manor of a woman had ceased to be with Sarah*” which meant that she could not possibly be able to have children. Her case was irreversible, she had already gone through the change of life. In verse 12 she listens to the Word of the Lord and laughs within herself as to the impossibility of her having a child. In her head she says, “*After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?*” As Sarah was concerned her problem with this word from the Lord was physical and emotional but in reality her real problem was spiritual. “*What Sarah wanted the most in life (the child of promise) she believed could be produced in the energy of the flesh but doubted it could ever take place in the energy of the Spirit*!” In Genesis 18:13-14 Sarah is taught four lessons about the Lord that she need:

1. She was taught that the Lord is all knowing: Sarah saw her limitations, but the God revealed that those limitations were nothing compared to her lack of trusting Him.
2. Vs. 14a She was taught He was all-powerful: She viewed herself as being beyond nature, what she did not grasp was what He has promised He alone is able to perform.
3. Vs. 14b-15a She was taught that God is a God of grace: He had promised, she had doubted, He had revealed more, she again doubted, He confronts her she denies it. But a year later He will still bring forth the child that He promised. Paul said in 2 Tim. 2:13 “*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*”
4. Vs. 15b She was taught of His holiness: She had lied in her heart yet God clearly knew that she had lied and confronted her with the truth.
5. **Vs. 12 At the set time**

Vs. 12 The final section is in Genesis 21:1-3 where we are told that “*the LORD visited Sarah* ***as He had said****, and the LORD did for Sarah* ***as He had spoken****.*” Num. 23:19 says that “*God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*” The very first word we are told about Sarah back in Genesis chapter 11:30 was that she was barren and had no children. In Genesis chapter 18:12 when she first heard that it was through her womb that the child of promise was to be born she laughed in unbelief that at 90 years old she would have a child. The Lord asked her while she was hidden in side the tent, “*Is there anything too hard for the Lord*?” It had been thirty years since Abraham and Sarah had left Ur in chapter 12, they are now 100 and 90 respectively. Yet we read in Genesis 21:2 that the son of promise was born “***at the set time***”. **What was the set time that Abraham speaks of here?** The “***set time***” ***was the time it took for Abraham and Sarah to both realize that you could not obtain God’s promises by the work and energy of the flesh.*** It 30 years for them to die to self, to learn to trust God and His Word and not themselves. Isaac’s name was originally linked to Sarah’s failure to trust God’s Word, yet in the end it becomes linked to joy in God fulfilling His Word in spite of our lack of trust. They could forever look at this child and say his name and be reminded that “***when I am weak, then I am strong***.” (2 Cor 12:10)

**Hebrews 11:13-16**

**“*Pilgrims Progress*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 13 These all**
3. **Vs. 14-16 The city of God**
4. **Introduction**

The illustrations being offered by the writer are a historical testimony of the characteristics of faith as witnessed by specific people in the Hebrew ancestry. Each person illustrates a vivid picture and in verses 13-16 the writer uses the four he has just written about in verses 8-12 to bring out another characteristic of faith that they all testified of: The ***persistence of faith***. Though these people by faith obtained much from God, the truth was they all died without obtaining the promise they looked for. What this suggests is that ***what they longed for was eternal in nature and not temporal***, ***they were not going to be satisfied with the “hear and now” of personal satisfaction***. What they longed for was to see God's purposes and plans fulfilled on earth, which was something none of them witnessed in their earthly life time! ***They were NOT people satisfied with going to heaven they were looking for heaven to come to earth***! None of the patriarchs saw the complete fulfillment of God’s promises, but only saw afar off what God was doing. A Scottish pastor once commented on this passage saying, “***The important thing is not where we live, but where we are looking to live***!” These saints of old were willing to live in tents because they were waiting for a city whose builder and maker is God, (verse 10). We must remember that, ***God always fulfills His promises some immediately, most ultimately***!

**Vs. 13 These all**

Vs. 13 “***These all***” is a reference to the last five verses of 8-12 and Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob as they had all “*died in the faith*” and can not include Enoch of verse 5 as he walked with God and was not. These four lives were lived in deep conviction that God would fulfill all His promises and that death would not negate their fulfillment and in fact they continued to live life as if what God had promised was already their and indeed was by faith! To Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob; **Canaan remained a “*promised land*” even though they dwelt there**. This section is a summation of the above passage of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob; the point being made is that “THESE” all exhibited the same six characteristics of faith:

* 1. They all died full of faith
	2. They all never received the promises
	3. They all saw them afar off
	4. They all were assured of them and embraced their acceptance
	5. They all confessed that they were mere pilgrims and strangers in this world
	6. They all fixed their hopes on the eternal and not on the temporal

They did these six things voluntarily and had opportunity to return to the world and trust in its rewards but were instead convinced that the promises of God were of far greater value than the temporary benefits of this world. Because of this the God in whom they trusted above this world was proud to be called their God. The writer will focus his attention upon Abraham through out the 11th chapter saying that he:

* Obeyed God
* Sojourned in the land of promise
* Obtained the blessing
* Offered his son

***Throughout Abraham’s life he lived in his own land as if it belonged to another and all of this was because of what was said in verse 10 that he was looking for a city whose builder and maker was God***. **His tent was a symbol of how he saw this life as temporary and transient**. Faith as seen as Abraham didn’t try to build permanent buildings while waiting for the city of God. It wasn’t until 500 years later with Joshua that any Israelite began too truly posses the land of promise. Instead theses four lived as the psalmist declared in Psalm 27:4 “*One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple*.” Looked forward to the day that Jon spoke of in Job 19:25-27 when he said, “*I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*”

The Greek words “*in faith*” are literally “*according to faith*” making this sentence, “*These all died* ***according to faith****, in as much as they did not receive the promises*”. ***They lived and died by faith and NOT by sight***! The Greek word “***embraced***” is a word that means to “***greet or salute***” and in the context says that they “*saw the promises from afar and* ***greeted them***” **like a seaman waving at those upon the shore of a land they will not dock nor visit**! They accepted the fact that they were just “***passing through***” **this life** **gazing upon the landscape without making it their home**! In a 2nd century letter too Di-ag-netus, the writer describes Christians in a similar way saying that, “***They inhabit their own country, but as temporary resident, they take part of all things as citizens but endure all things as aliens, every country is theirs but in every country they are foreigners***!”

1. **Vs. 14-16 The city of God**

Vs. 14 In Genesis 23:4 as Abraham sought to purchase a burial plot for Sarah from Ephron in the land of Canaan he said, “*I am a foreigner and a visitor among you*.” It is clear that **he accepted his status as a pilgrim in the land that was promised to him**. ***The point the writer is making is that if Abraham used language like this saying that the land of promise wasn’t his home than it is obvious that his destination and home was somewhere else***! Canaan was no more Abraham’s home as Ur was which he left to go to a country that “***God would show him***.” **Canaan wasn’t the country God was showing him, instead it was the city of verse 10 whose builder and maker was God**! “***Such a declaration***”, the writer states, IS: “***Proof that Abraham realized that no earthly location was ever going to be his home***!”

Vs. 15 The Greek words “*called to mind*” mean “*habitually remembered*” and the meaning is that “***IF***” they were seeking a country they could have simply returned to the prosperous area of Ur (which was in modern day Iran Iraq) where they had left but that was not their home nor what they were seeking! No one could claim that this was a reference to Mesopotamia ***as they could have easily gone back there***. This point is further brought out in Genesis 24:6 when Abraham was looking for a bride for Isaac and it was suggested that they go back there to find a one and Abraham said, “*Beware that you do not take my son back there*.” Jacob as well had a vision at Bethel where God referred to Canaan as the “*land of his fathers*”!

Vs. 16 *The reason for this is that what they were longing for was not temporal but eternal and because of this* ***God is proud to give them His surname as in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob***! ***So along with a city whose builder and maker is God He is proud to give them the identification of His name***! The truth is no land on this earth is our homeland; by faith we look like Abraham for a city whose builder and maker is God! and Because of this we follow the words of Peter in 1 Peter 2:11 view ourselves as “*sojourners and pilgrims*” or as Pau said of us in Phillip 3:20 “*citizens of heaven*”. This is why we see, as God said in 1 Samuel 2:30 that, “***those who honor Me I will honor***” as **He gives the highest honor any of His creations can ever have to be called their God**! ***To relinquish present things in view of future blessings is openly declaring that you have an eye for something far better***. ***No one will ever let go of what they have now unless they are convinced that have something far better waiting for them! Because of this God is delighted to gave them a name to go along with a new home***!

**Hebrews 11:17-19**

**“*Abraham’s test*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 17 Passing the test**
3. **Vs. 18 Together**
4. **Vs. 19 The Lord Will provide**
5. **Introduction**

The reference that the writer makes in Hebrews 11:17-19 is from the 22nd chapter of Genesis and this example of faith is from one of the most interesting chapters in the entire Bible for two reasons:

* **Theological**: First, it posses the question: Does God ever ask us to do something that is contrary to His own character and nature?
* **Spiritual**: Second, it asks us to ask: What spiritual implications does this story have as seen in the NT?

That is why we will be spending our time largely in Genesis chapter 22. But before we get there we need to ask ourselves why the writer asks this question to begin with? What was he trying to convey to the original readers about Jesus that was best illustrated in the story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac as it related to trusting in Jesus as their Messiah? I submit to you that the reason for this illustration is that Abraham faced their same dilemma and choose to trust God. One of the reasons some of these Jew’s wouldn’t trust in Jesus is because they knew that Jesus had died and they couldn’t comprehend that He would be resurrected from the dead. So the writer pulls out a historical story of Abraham as an illustration of why they should believe in the resurrection.

1. **Vs. 17 Passing the test**

Vs. 17 The opening statement in Genesis 22 verse 1 is, “*Now it came to pass after these things*”. The purpose of this phrase is to get us to ask the question, “*After what things*?” The answer is after the events of chapter 21, which centered around God keeping His promises. We could write above verse 1 of chapter 22, “***After God showed that He always keeps His promises, He tested Abraham!***” The test was for Abraham’s benefit not the Lords. Even though the angel of the Lord says in verse 12 says “*for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me*.” But the words, “*God* ***tested Abraham***”, indicate that God knew what was in Abraham’s heart it was Abraham that did not yet know.

In light of what God instructs Abraham to do with Isaac how does this square with James 1:13 “*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone*.” **God’s tests are designed for us to pass satan’s are aimed at us failing.** This “test” was not a test that would ***produce*** faith it was one that ***revealed* faith**. Abraham was being asked **to place the PROMISER above the PROMISE and it is always the hardest form of idolatry to over come**. There are four things to note here in Genesis 22 verse 2:

1. “*Take now your son, your only son Isaac*”: God declared to Abraham that he only had one son not two. As God never recognizes the offering of anything produced in the energy of our flesh.
2. “*Whom you love*”: This is the first mention of the word love in the Bible and is a reference of a father’s love for his son. Abraham is being asked to give the dearest love on earth he has to God. Abraham will discover that he needed to love God more then even His blessings!
3. “*Go to the land of Moriah, …on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you*”: Moriah was about 30 miles from where Abraham lived and it took three days for them to arrive. Moriah means “*chosen by God*” this mountain range would be the site of the temple built by Solomon and Herod. Geographically the temple mount is the lowest of the hills followed by the Mount of Olives the highest peak would be Calvary where Abraham took Isaac.
4. “*And offer him there as a burnt offering*”: The word’s “*offer* and *burnt offering*” come from the root word that means “***to ascend*** *or* ***be high***”. “*Slaying a sacrifice*” was implied God but He didn’t actually tell Abraham to slay His son. Though prior to the Mosaic Law, this type of offering was known as a “sin offering”.

So was God demanding a “human sacrifice”? The answer to this question is to interpret the difficult passage in light of the plain scripture. In Deut. 12:31 says, “*You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods*.” ***What God wanted was not Isaac’s life but rather Abraham’s heart***. And in obeying the Lord, Abraham showed to himself that Isaac “***the promise***” was not an idol in the way of God “***the Promiser***”. According to verse 3 there was not the slightest bit of hesitation on Abraham’s part:

* He sought no other opinions
* There was no argument from him towards God
* There was no fleece or compromise
* There is no mention of how he felt about this

Abraham’s obedience was not based upon how he felt based upon Heb. 11:17-19 it was based upon a five-letter word **TRUST**! He did not know how God was going to do it but He knew that God was going to do it and if need be God would raise his only son from the dead. The HOW and the WHY were not Abraham’s problem they were God’s. One persons put it this way, “*We must never doubt in the dark what God has told us in the light!*” There are three similarities to Jesus in Genesis 22:5 that the writer of Hebrews knew the readers would see:

* 1. Abraham saddles up the donkey, split the wood by himself. He did not ask his servants to do what God had asked him to do. In verse 4 we are given a great picture of the resurrection as Isaac was dead to him from the moment God had told him to offer his only beloved son and three days passed before they arrived at Mount Moriah.
	2. Abraham calls Isaac a “*young man* or a ***lad***” and in the Hebrew this word refers to ***a young adult***. According to Genesis 23:1 we know that Sarah lived to be 127 and that she was 90 when Isaac was born which tells us that 37 years had passed from Isaac’s birth to Sarah’s death. I’m of the opinion that Isaac was 33 was years-old at this time which would makes him the same age as was our Lord at the time that He traveled this same hill.
	3. Abraham tells two young servants stay while he and Isaac go up on Calvary to worship. Then Abraham says something very interesting, “*And* ***WE*** *will come back to you*”. No one had ever came back from the dead but Abraham believes that God is able. They are going to worship the Lord after the third day of Isaac who is 33 being dead to his father upon a hill called Calvary and Abraham says, “***Both of us are coming down the hill***!” The only thing **impossible** in Abraham’s eyes was that of God breaking his promise of 21:12, “*In Isaac your seed shall be called*!”

Based upon the Greek of Hebrews 11:17 and the word “***tested***” implies that Abraham met the test through faith BEFORE there was any visible evidence of God intervening. He fully expected to offer Isaac and he fully expected God to raise his body from the dead out of ashes. His reason for this was that God had promised that the line of ancestry was to come through Isaac and in the offering it was Abraham’s will that was sacrificed and died not Isaac as his was symbolic!

**III. Vs. 18 Together**

Vs.18 Genesis 22:6 makes it plain that Abraham didn’t know that this was a test as he took the wood upon the back of Isaac, the knife in one hand and the fire in the other. Spurgeon noted that, “*Abraham took the knife up that hill, he did not forget it. As he took that knife and it was cutting into his own heart with every step they took yet he kept walking. Unbelief would have forgotten the knife or dropped it along the way but faith takes it and hangs on to it even though it is cutting your own heart deeper with each step*!”

 We are also told that, “*the two of them went together*”, the phrase in Hebrew means “*the two of them* ***went in agreement***.” Isaac was 33 he could have easily over powered his father. In verses 7-8 Isaac asks a very good question “*Where’s the lamb*?” In the 13th verse we are told that a ram is caught in the thicket by its horns but a ram is not a lamb. Isaac understood that innocent blood must be shed for sinners to be able to approach God thus he asks about the provision for the sacrifice. Literally this phrase in Hebrew is “***God will see the lamb for Himself***”. Hundreds of years later a prophet named John the Baptist looked out across the Jordan river where he was baptizing & on the bank of the river answered Isaac’s question, “*Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*!” (John 1:29) You see there was another father’s son who would walk up that same hill at the same age with wood upon His back only there would be no ram caught in a thicket as God would provide Himself a Lamb.

It was not the twine that held Isaac as it would not be the nails that would hold the Son of God. No it was the love of his father that placed him on the altar atop the wood. A Son lay a top the wood ready to be sacrificed and a father with a knife in his hand was ready to take his son but God will provide a sacrifice. Here is where we are going with this picture: “*Abraham displayed his heart towards God by willing laying his son upon the altar, but God also displays His love towards a sinful world by placing His son upon the altar of the cross*.” As God spoke to Abraham in verse 12 “*now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me*.” We too can say to Him, “***Now I know that you love me, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me***.”

In Genesis 22:11 we see that Abraham was completely willing to act upon the Word of the Lord, as the angel of the Lord have to stop him. “*God takes the heart before He takes the action*”, He takes the “*will for the deed*”. God saw that Abraham was willing to obey no matter what the consequences therefore He did not require the sacrifice. *A lot of folks want to know the will of God before they act; but God wants to see if we will act before He will let us know in which way we are to do so*! Abraham was so living as if nothing but obeying the Lord was important.

 Abraham had said to Isaac that “*God will see the lamb for Himself*” and there was a ram in the thicket but there was also a Lamb there who would take away the sins of not just Abraham and Isaac but the whole world!

IV.Vs. 19 The Lord Will provide

Vs. 19 Abraham “*concluded that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead*”. It doesn’t say that Abraham concluded that if he didn’t do as God had said he would squash him like a bug! Abraham’s actions revealed that his offering of Isaac was in obedience to God’s word not because he thought if he didn’t God would punish him instead bit because it showed that Abraham understood God’s character of faithful, unchangeable, merciful and full of loving kindness. Hebrews 11:9 reminds us that Abraham “*dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country dwelling in tents*”. This tells us that things were not that which was in danger of being seated upon the throne of Abraham’s heart and that the nearest to his heart, what was the child of promise. Think of the emotions that Abraham must have went through when he lifted his eyes and and saw the ram caught by its horns in a thicket. Isaac was dead to him, thus the hopelessness of this moment was no doubt heavy upon his heart, he had believed according to the NT that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead and figuratively this is what God did in providing a substitute sacrifice. What’s interesting to me is based upon Genesis 22:14 you would think that Abraham would have named this hill, trial hill or agony hill but instead he aptly names it “*The Lord will provide*” mount, or as the Hebrew renders it *“Jehovah Jireh*”. This mountain bears the name that testified of God’s presence and provision in providing the Lamb of God. Moses interjects saying that even during his day it was known as God’s provision Mountain. People would go by that place and say, “*That’s the place where God provided Himself a sacrifice*” not knowing that it would the same place that God would provide His Only Son as our sacrifice for our sin. In 1 Cor. 15 3-4 Paul is writing to the Corinthians concerning the importance of the resurrection said, “*I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*”. The key phrase is “*that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*”. You can search the scriptures in the first testament and you won’t find a reference to the resurrection happening on the 3rd day except for this one picture in Isaac. Isaac was reckoned dead the moment God gave the command to take him to Calvary and thus he was made alive “raised” after the third day.

**Hebrews 11:20**

**“*Isaac’s Blessing*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 20a The moving of Isaac**
3. **Vs. 20b The birthright**
4. **Introduction**

Over the next few weeks we will examine three more patriarchs of faith in Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. The purpose of the illustration is again aimed at answering another reason why some of these Hebrews refused to trust in Jesus as their Messiah. Each of these three only *inherited the promises* as none of them ever received the promises passed onto them by their fathers. *Yet none of these three became discouraged or disillusioned when the promises of God went unrealized*. *In fact, these three became more determined to believe in God’s promises as they treated the promises of God as an inheritance to the next generation even though they themselves never experienced the promises themselves*! *Death didn’t detour their faith, nor did it lesson the value of the promises*. That is what was happening to some of these Hebrews as they could believe God’s promises through Jesus because they hadn’t materialized during their life. *Hebrews 11:20-22 goes back and examines in detail what verses 13-16 only summarized*. When you go back and look at the volume of information given to “*these patriarchs*” in Genesis you see something very interesting: *Abraham, Jacob and Joseph each have about 12 chapters dedicated to their life; whereas Isaac only has around 2 ½ chapters that focus on his life.* Then looking directly at Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their lives seem to be centered around three distinct activities that each is known for: “*Building altars, digging wells and pitching tents*”!

* Abraham *Builds altars*: Four times we are told that he did so. Altars were places of worship, and Abraham’s life seems to have centered on the worship of God. Yet it is recorded that he only dug 1 well and pitched 2 tents, (*accept for 26:15 where it is obvious that he dug many wells*)!
* Isaac *Digs wells*: Five times we are told that he dug wells and each time he seems to re-dig the ones that his father had dug. Wells of water in scripture seem to always point to God’s provisions for a healthy spiritual life. In John 4:1-4 Jesus told the women, “*Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst!*” Isaac is a man that emulates the spiritual life of faith of his father. Yet we are told that Isaac builds only one altar and only pitches his tent twice.
* Jacob *pitched tents*: Four times we are told that he pitched his tent. Tents are used to symbolize a person’s abode during their spiritual journey. Jacob is a guy who no matter where he was made his home in the Lord. Yet, as far as the other three activities of his forefathers, he built only one altar and dug no wells.

My point is that we too ought to be “*altar builders, well diggers and tent pitchers*” in our lives. People who:

* Long to sit at the feet of the Lord to worship Him.
* Come and dig deep in His word to be refreshed by Him.
* And find that wherever He has placed us,we are at home.

Our examination this morning will only be Isaac and even though in Hebrews in only comprises one verse the story involves two points I believe the writer wishes to make:

* 1. Vs. 20a Isaac and the life the reader would have known about him found in Genesis chapter 26.
	2. Vs. 20b The direct illustration of the blessing by Isaac of Jacob and Esau in Genesis chapter 27.
1. **Vs. 20a The moving of Isaac**

Vs. 20a Too the original reader Isaac’s name in the list of people who exhibited faith might have been a bit surprising and similar to the mention of Sarah in verse 11. To look at this example, we need to go to Genesis 26 as his life looks a lot like that of his father who had been dead for some time. And unfortunately for Isaac the footsteps of his father Abraham that he chose to emulate were not Abraham’s best foot forward! Yet God was faithful just as He was in Abraham and continued to move Isaac towards the place of blessing. According to Genesis 26:2-3 Isaac, spent far too much time in “*boarder land*” in between the land of promise and the world until God led him back to a place of His presence. This is the 1st time in over 50 years that we are told that God appeared to Isaac, the last time we are told so was the time on Calvary where God confirmed the covenant He made with Abraham. The surprising thing is that Isaac ends up going to Gerar located 10 miles from Gaza on the border with Egypt. As such God has to **warn Isaac not to “*go down to Egypt*” but rather “*stay in the land*”.** *Isaac was to go where God directed and not where the situation dictated***!** The only way Isaac would know where to dwell was to be nearer the Lord! Gerar was a border town afar cry from “*Beer-sheba*” or the well of oath where God would move him by verse 23. ***Isaac first moved towards where he thought the situation dictated before he goes where the Lord directed him***. With all the places Isaac could have chosen to live in the land of promise he chose the closest place to where God told him he could not go. It’s no wonder that he repeats the same sin of lying about his wife as did his father? It isn’t until later in his life that we see that the closer he came to the “*well of oath*” the more blessed he became. And in Genesis 26:12-14 we see the Lord blessing Isaac in-spite of him as he became “*very prosperous*” but the outcome of such prosperity was that “*The Philistines envied him*”. And it was this that the Lord used to move him to where He wanted him. Isaac’s intent was to make each place he moved a place to set down his roots but each time a dispute arises which forces him to move. Isaac did not realize it, but God was leading him home one well at a time. He re-dug the wells his father dug naming them the same thing and in so doing he was unknowingly following the faith steps of his father. It’s also interesting to see that Isaac’s journey towards where the Lord wanted him cause him to dig new wells and their names reveal that God was leading him away from:

* Vs. 20 “*contention*”
* Vs. 21 “*opposition*”
* Vs. 22 towards “*roominess*”

The first two wells were good but in the wrong land, but when Isaac came into where God wanted him to be the wells fit as it was “*roominess”.* Upon further looking at this in 26:23-25 we find that this well of “roominess” was the first place Isaac and Abraham went to upon leaving the mountain of sacrifice in chapter 22:19. ***Isaac finally came to see with his heart where his feet had already been taking him: The land of promise and sweet fellowship with the Lord.*** There we are told in verse 25 that he does four things he hadn’t ever done before:

* Built an altar
* Called on the name of the Lord
* Pitched his tent
* Dug a well

***Before this time in his life he had always sought to be refreshed before he had worshiped now he knows that refreshment comes when he sat at the altar. No matter what the circumstance the best place for him to make his home was at the altar, that’s always the best place to dig a well***.

1. **Vs. 20b The birthright**

Vs. 20b That takes us to the direct illustration of Isaac’s blessing. First we needed go back to Genesis 26:29-34 as this story is set up by the events that are recorded here. The understand of rests upon two things:

1. What was the significance of the birthright?
2. To whom did the birthright normally go?

**First,** the birthright customarily involved a double portion of the inheritance but also involved the leadership or headship of the family. Thus the birthright carried with it a twofold blessing “***physical blessings***” with “***spiritual responsibility***”. The “*birthright*” determined who would inherit the covenant promises that God made with Abraham, which involved a future nation, all the land and the lineage of the Messiah. Esau very much wanted the “*physical blessing*” but without the “*spiritual responsibilities*”.

**Second**, normally the “*birthright*” went to the eldest son accept in case where the father would transfer it to a more deserving son. In this case we have three factors that should have indicated to Isaac that the “*birthright*” should have been Jacob’s and not Esau’s:

1. ***God had told them while they were yet unborn which one He had chosen to receive the birthright***.
2. ***They were twins***: Age was not a determining factor in this case as age didn’t indicate maturity as they were only minutes apart not years.
3. ***Jacob was much more spiritually and emotionally mature then was Esau***. Esau had no heart for the things of God as Jacob did.

In verses 31-34 all of the above was demonstrated as true revealing that Jacob should have been given the birthright as Esau had no heart for the “*spiritual responsibilities*” as future head of the family. Jacob was cooking a stew of lentils when Esau came in faint with hunger. His response to Jacob is “*let me gulp down some of that red stuff*” where he received his nickname “Red”. Esau’s response to Jacob’s offer was to say, “*I’m going to die one day anyway so what use is the birthright to me.*” Esau saw that the birthright only gained him only temporal advantages and would be lost upon death and didn’t want it, not so with Jacob. In Genesis 26:34-35 we see further evidence of what God knew before the womb of Rebekah that Esau was not to be in the lineage of the Messiah as Hebrews 12:6 calls him “*a person just outside the temple*”. Esau had no regard for the things of God as seen in his choice of brides, seeing that he left the practice of monogamy and marries not one but TWO Hittite women whose culture was extremely wicked & idolatrous.

 That brings us up to the actually blessing of Jacob in Genesis 27:18-40 which was all preceded by: ***Isaac and Esau tried to do the wrong thing for the wrong reason and Rebekah and Jacob tried to accomplish the right thing the wrong way. And in the end God produced the right outcome but not for their reasons or employing their methods***. I notice that Isaac was deceived even though he tested Jacob using his five senses: Sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. We often think that if we can touch, see, hear, smell or taste something then it must be as it appears. ***Empirical evidence is great but it does not always guarantee that we won’t get deceived that is why illusionists are so good at what they do. The problem was not in Isaac’s ability to weigh the evidence rather it was in his heart that wanted it to be so***! The worst of Jacob’s lies was verse 20 where he claims that it was God was the One leading him to deceive. Yet still in spite of his doubt Isaac still is lead down the path of deception because of his own hearts wish! In verses 25-27 with the convincing lie Isaac was now ready to bless whom he believes is Esau. The use of the words “*My son*” in verse 26 in Hebrew means my “*favorite*” son, which means finally someone told the truth of what was really in their heart. Jacob could now justify all of his deception because of what his father just said. Isaac’s blessing of who he thought was Esau is twofold:

1. Vs. 29 That who he thought was Esau would be master over Jacob. By saying these words Isaac thinks he can annul God’s will and validate his own. Yet in doing so he unwittingly validates what God wanted all along.
2. In using this blessing we see that it was the same one bestowed upon Abraham in chapter 12:3 with one exception the words “*And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed*.” That is the Messianic element of the blessing, stating that through this person the Messiah will be born. Isaac’s own words betrayed what he knew in his heart, Esau had no heart for the things of God. Interestingly after the veil of deception was lifted Isaac bestows these words upon Jacob, (28:4).

Hebrews 12:16-17 comments upon Esau’s tearful repentance in Genesis 27:34, 38 by saying, “*Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears*.” It sounds as if God did not allow Esau to repent but the word “repentance” means a change of heart and mind, thus what is meant here is that there was no possibility of undoing what had been done God’s mind was made up even though Esau shed tears it was not enough to give him the birthright. The truth was that Esau did not like what he sowed and what he wanted was to change the outcome of his actions.

 This is the story the Holy Spirit chose to use to illustrate the faith of Isaac the “***reluctant patriarch***” as the only time he acted in faith was when he realized that God’s blessing was going to go to God’s choice regardless of his attempt to change it. ***Though the story is clouded by Isaac’s action it non-the-less proves the point of the writer and that is how much Isaac valued and regarded the promises of God even though he never possessed them, as he wanted to make sure they went to the person he wanted them too got towards***!

**Hebrews 11:21**

**“*Jacob journey up the ladder of faith*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 21a If God be with me**
3. **Vs. 21b Two for the price of one**
4. **Introduction**

Though Jacob’s illustration by the writer of Hebrews is only one verse and one example of faith it is safe to assume that the readers would have been fully aware of their ancestor’s history. In many ways Jacob’s life was like his fathers Isaac’s as his spiritual journey had many ups and downs. There is no way this morning we could cover all 12 chapters dedicated to describing those ups and downs but it will be beneficial to examine two of those points that led up to the context of the passage found in Genesis 48:19-22.

1. **Vs. 21a If God be with me**

First place to start our examination of Jacob would be in Gen. 28:16-22. There in verses 16-22 we read that Jacob wakes up at Bethel after fleeing his brother Esau and he knows that the Lord has spoken to him but is unsure what it all means. Though not directly related to our text this morning I can’t help but notice that Jacob’s experience here on what he calls “Bethel” the “House of God” ought to be same for all those who seek its refuge at any church:

1. It ought to be a place where every runaway sinner can collapse upon the Rock of Christ and find rest.
2. It ought to be a place where God’s children can come and be face to face with their “Ladder” Jesus and worship Him for truly He is in every place that has room for Him in their heart!

Of further interest to me and our spiritual journey is that Jacob makes a pillar and takes a vow in Genesis 28:20-22, but he starts this vow with “***IF God will be with me***..” It will take 20 years of heartaches before Jacob will make it back to this spot and remove all the “***IF’S***”. But at least as he made this vow Jacob saw the fact that apart from the Lord’s hand he will not see what God has promised him. Jacob promises to give freely a 10th of all that the Lord gives him and in so doing Jacob is saying that his heart, home, and treasure are all God’s.

But we have got to realize the difference of God’s promise to that of Jacob’s vow as well:

**God’s promise in Genesis 28:13-15**:

* **I am** the LORD God
* **I will** give to you and your descendants
* **I am** with you and will keep you wherever you go
* **I will** not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you

**Jacob’s vow in Genesis 28:20-22**:

* **If God** will **be with me**
* And **keep me** in this way that I am going
* **And give me** bread to eat and clothing to put on
* **So that I come back** to my father's house in peace
* **Then the LORD shall be my God**

***The contrast couldn’t be more obvious as God’s vow was unconditional and Jacob’s was conditional upon God keeping and giving so that he could come back to his father’s house***.

Starting in chapter 29 of Genesis and continuing over the next three chapters, 40 years of the life of Jacob is looked at and what we see is a “*pilgrims process*” as the Lord works on his heart! The tool of choice is a man like Jacob, his uncle Laban. What interests me is the timing of the 29th chapter as it is right after Jacob had a personal encounter with the Lord. That encounter was so powerful that upon his death bed in chapter 48:3 he refers to it saying, “*God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me*”. These next 20 years were the beginning of God taking Jacob to school and his teacher was Laban. In Genesis 29:1-2 with the words “*Jacob went on his journey*” we realize that Jacob was on a journey where he would find more of the Lord in his life and less of Jacob. Through out this section of Jacob’s life we see that: Disobedience does not thwart God’s plan for his life but it did greatly effect how much Jacob would enjoy it! Jacob had spent the night upon the rock and where he gained a new direction and hope. He was no longer walking alone he had a constant companion in God, who had just told him that “*I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you*.” (28:15) The 450 mile, 15-day journey was with a light step because he had a light heart. In Genesis 29:3-6 we realize that there were no road signs saying “*325 miles to Laban’s house*” as Jacob has to ask if he is in the right place. The well was for by permit and only when all other livestock were present so as none could get the upper hand and over water their herds. And Jacob asks these shepherds, “*Do you know Laban the son of Nahor*?” For the next 20 years Jacob would know him as well. Jacob’s interest in coming to Laban was to find a bride from among his own relatives. And in verses 7-8 even though Jacob is 77 years old and Rachael is most likely quite a bit younger he spies the one he has been searching for his whole life in Rachael. But as we know the rest of the story it will many years before he can enjoy this bride. Next we fast forward 20 years to Genesis 32:21-26 and specifically verses 21-23 where Jacob sends the presents over in waves; then at night sends his wives and children over the river Jabbok which means “wrestler”. The river is about 25 miles from where they camped and was only 30 feet wide and waste deep. This left Jacob all-alone with only himself and his fears.

In verse 24-25 we notice the wording as it was a Man that wrestled with Jacob and not the other way around. We are given two clues as to the identity of this Holy Grappler:

1. Vs. 30 “*I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved*.” Clearly Jacob believes that the Man who wrestled with him was God.
2. Hosea 12:3-5 “*He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength he struggled with God. Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke to us; that is, the LORD God of hosts. The LORD is His memorable name*.”

Then in Genesis 32:25-26 we see three ways Jacob obtained spiritual victory:

1. Vs. 25 Recognize our own inadequacy: It appeared from Jacob’s perspective that he and the Lord were pretty evenly matched but that was in appearance only. Amazingly we wonder how Jacob was able to keep up his strength until day break but when we consider ourselves many of us have been wrestling with the Lord over areas of our lives for years. When the Lord just touched Jacob’s hip he was completely defeated and helpless. Notice that it says that the Lord “*did not prevail*” not that He “*could not prevail*”. That means that God wanted to take the “*fight*” out of Jacob and get him to quit trying to do things in his own strength. Jacob obtained spiritual victory the moment he was at the end of himself, when we realized the futility of using his own strength to obtain what can only be his when we trusted God. It’s interesting that it was Jacob's hip because when the hip is out of place a person can not stand. Paul would say in 1 Cor 10:12 “*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*.”
2. Vs. 26 Trust only in what God has promised: Jacob only asked for what the Lord had promised to bless him. It was God’s word that Jacob wanted to claim, nothing more.
3. Vs. 26 Held onto to God: Jacob had come to the end of himself, he was hopeless and helpless. So he did what we all must do: *Cling to the Lord*. *He was finally totally dependent upon the Lord and had only taken 90 years to get there*. *Saint’s like Jacob it’s essential that we come to the place where we are conquered and broken by the Lord*. Jacob now knew practically what he knew intellectually: *That God was mightier then he*. Hosea 12:4 tells us that Jacob sought God’s blessing as “*He wept*”! *That means that because he was defeated it was when he had lost that he won*!
4. **Vs. 21b Two for the price of one**

With those two brief texts as a background to Jacob we now come to the scripture of the event mentioned by the author of Hebrews which is found in Genesis 48:1-22. The story started out in that chapter in verses 1 where Joseph is told that his father is sick and that his time on earth is drawing to a close. Finally, the death that Jacob had so frequently spoke had opened its door for him, so Joseph takes his two sons to say farewell to their grandfather. We know that based upon chapter 41:50 that Manasseh and Ephraim were not small boys by this time as they were born before the first year of the famine and Jacob had been in Egypt some 17 years so these two boys were in their 20’s. In verses 2-7 Jacob gathers his strength and reminisces about his life which was centered around one place and two great events. The first great event involved a place, Bethel:

1. Vs. 3 “*God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me*”: Luz is also known as Bethel and it was here that God appeared to Jacob three times.
2. First in 28:10-17 when he was fleeing his brother Esau after steeling his birthright.
3. The second time was as he was coming back into the land leaving behind his uncle Laban. It was here that he wrestled with the Lord & was given a new name.
4. The third time in 35:9-12 as he was leaving Shechem after his sons had killed the town in retaliation for the rape of Dinah.

Each of these three times God blessed him and promised to make him a great nation and tells him he would again posses the land of Canaan. Jacob recites the threefold blessing of God’s covenant that was made with him, his father, his grandfather with Joseph’s two sons.

* Promise of a personal blessing
* Promise to make a great nation
* Promise them a land in which to call home

Jacob wants these two grandsons to realize, “***What God had done for him was in spite of his faithlessness and failure***.” **It took Jacob his whole life to realize that what matters most in life is not what we have done for God but what He has done by His grace for us**! In verses 5-6 Jacob informs Joseph of his intent to adopt his two grandsons and make them his sons. In so doing he elevates them to the status of the first and second born replacing Ruben and Simeon who had disqualified themselves from the birthright. We are told why in 1 Chron 5:1-2 “*the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel; he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's*”. ***So in giving these two sons of Joseph an individual inheritance Jacob was giving Joseph a double portion, verse 22***. The second great event involved a person, Rachel.

1. Vs. 7 This great event in Jacob’s life was the death of his beloved Rachel. The mention of this is to reinforce the reason of adopting Joseph’s two sons thinking that has she lived she might have had more children.

Jacob had learned to view the sorrows and disappointments of his life radically different. ***Before life was just a long series of unfortunate disappointments with no real purpose***. He sought peace and prosperity at all costs and he came to realize that the cost was greater then the reward. Now he sees it from God’s perspective; God was not just interested in the temporal blessings and fleeting pleasures of life, ***God was interested in making Jacob holy***! ***We are far to concerned with our happiness and not near enough concerned about our holiness***. Jacob no longer wanted to sacrifice holiness at the altar of happiness and because of this he found peace and joy!

At the end of Jacob’s life, he embraces his grandchildren through a son whom he believed was dead. In Genesis 48:11 we see why this was such a treasured moment as Jacob remembers his failure to trust God and how the Lord worked in spite of his failure to do more then bring Joseph back into his life, God has allowed him to know his grandchildren. Then in verses 12-16 Jacob is guided by the Lord to put the right hand of favor, upon the younger Ephraim instead of the older Manasseh. As you trace these two tribes through out their history you will find that this was a prophetically true. Ephraim became the leader above his older brother and later on Manasseh marched under Ephraim’s banner through out the wilderness wondering. It is interesting to note that their names meant: “***Manasseh***” means “***causing to forget***” and “***Ephraim***” means “***double fruit***”. ***At the end of the wilderness journey God would raise up another leader that would bring the nation into the land of promise Joshua who was from the tribe of Ephraim***. In Isa. 7:8 the prophet refers to Ephraim as he describes the whole northern nation of Israel. In Jer. 31:9 the prophet records the heart of God saying, “*I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn*.” The blessing of verses 15-16 reveals the testimony of grace not merit. Jacob realizes that:

1. God, is the God of his fathers who has always kept His promises.
2. God was the ONE who has fed him all his life, and shepherded him. Adversity was not the enemy but a part of God’s plan to shape him.
3. In verse 16 Jacob looks back to the time when he wrestled with the Lord and says that God has purchased him out of an evil life. ***The evil that Jacob now saw was not the painful experiences of life but rather living a life that falls short of God’s purposes and plans***. Finally, Jacob blesses the two sons and desires in them that his name and the name of their forefathers will live on.

In the final analysis we find that God chose a failure like Jacob to be a patriarch and Joseph who was far more righteous then his father does not even have a tribe named after him. Joseph is not the forerunner to the Messiah instead it is Judah who slept with one of his son’s wife. Joseph won’t be a part of the priestly line, that honor will belong to Levi who slaughtered the men of Shechem. God chooses as He wills and clearly it is the foolish things of the world.

**Hebrews 11:22**

**“*Joseph’s tested faith*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 22a Testing of faith**
3. **Vs. 22b Take my bones with you**
4. **Introduction**

We come now to the last of the patriarchs of faith, Joseph. He, like his father and grandfather, died never receiving the promises but his story is even greater as ***he spent his entire adult life in Egypt outside the land of promise***. ***Joseph couldn’t even claim that he sojourned in the land of promise, let alone inherited it.*** From the time that God first told Abraham in Genesis 12:7 that he would make his seed a mighty nation and that they would inherit the land of Canaan as their home **two hundred years had gone by** without any sign of fulfillment. Further more by the time of Joseph’s death do to the famine in the land of Canaan not one Hebrew remained in the land of promise and would not for over 400 years. Yet with those facts Joseph’s dying words for his fellow Hebrews was that **WHEN** God brought them out of Egypt that they were to take his bones with them. His thought evidently was; ***if in his earthly existence he couldn’t inherit the land then in his death at least the land could inherit his bones***! What a great example to these Hebrews who were using the fact that Israel still was under Roman occupation as the reason to reject the clear teaching and evidence that Jesus was the Son of God and long a waited Messiah. Jesus had addressed this in John 10:36-38 when the religious leaders accused Him of blasphemy saying, “*do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?* ***If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him***.” All three of these patriarchs believed God’s Word in the face of death, their testimony was that through out their life nothing they had experienced ever changed their view of the truth that God had told them.

1. **Vs. 22a Testing of faith**

Like the other patriarchs of faith, we have studied, I believe that these Hebrew readers would have read into this passage their extensive knowledge of their ancestor. It is here that Joseph is a radical departure from his father and grandfather, as he is one of the few subjects that we can not find a negative statement or example in the pages of their life. Instead what stands out in Joseph is his continual response to adversity and the testing of his faith. We shall examine two of those before we get to the text that the writer of Hebrews refers too here in Genesis 50:24 and Exodus 13:19. To gain the understanding that the original readers would have possessed regarding Joseph we will need to only deal with Genesis 39 as this chapter provides great resources for two of the greatest struggles any person can ever deal with in life:

* Suffering
* Temptation

What we learn about Joseph and the two greatest paralyzing trials that test our faith that is quickly discovered when we realize that four times in this chapter we read that despite the situation and adversity we read that: “*The LORD was with Joseph*”. They key to Joseph’s character remaining true to the Lord was a direct result of the Lord being with him! Because of this truth even though the circumstances changed Joseph’s walk did not. *The same qualities that cause Joseph to advance into a successful position in Potiphar’s house in the first six verses were he same ones that land him in jail in the final seven verses*. What Joseph’s life teaches us is that obedience to the Lord does not always bring about prosperity, popularity, or prestige. Many people wonder WHY trials that come our way. Moses answers this question in Deut 8:2-3 when he says, “*God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD*.”

In Genesis 37:36 we were told that “*the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard*.” The 39th chapter of Genesis is the story of what transpired in the house of Potiphar and Joseph tells us two things about this man Potiphar:

1. *He was a “officer” of Pharaoh*: The word here can be translated “eunuch” as it was common to make a leader a eunuch in order to insure their devotion.
2. *He was the captain of the guard*: He was the head of the secret police if you will.

In verse 2 we read the first of the “*Lord was with Joseph*” phrases and *the context deals with Joseph success under Potiphar.* What is not immediately apparent in this passage is the length of time that it took for this success and the subsequent temptation to transpire. According to Genesis 37:2 Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery. Then according to Genesis 41:46 Joseph was 30 when Pharaoh promoted him. When we add in Genesis 41:1 where we are told that Joseph served two years in prison we conclude that *Joseph served Potiphar for 11 years*. *Saint’s it took 11 years for this process of success through God’s blessings to take place*. *We often think that if God is behind something it will transpire in 11 days or 11 months but not 11 years*. Further more the reality of Joseph’s temptation takes on a whole new perspective as this temptation lasted for many years not a just few days. The secret of Joseph’s success in saying no to temptation was the same as his secret to success: “*The Lord was with Joseph!*” Joseph discovered the truth that Jehovah means, “the God that makes and keeps His promises”. Examining Genesis 39:3-9 reveals six things that enabled Joseph to exercise his faith the way he did:

1. Vs. 3 The Lord in his life “*The Lord was with him*”: As already noted in the text *the Lord was in his life, it was what powered him and moved him*.
2. Vs. 4 Diligent in small things “*Joseph found favor and served him*”: Joseph was diligent in the small things. During those 11 years Joseph who was from a different culture and language learned to speak and think like an Egyptian. *He didn’t wait for the Lord to bless him instead he was faithful to do what he needed to be used of the Lord*.
3. Vs. 5a Everything he did was unto the Lord “*The Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake*”: Whatever Joseph did he did as unto the Lord. Joseph did not work for Potiphar he worked for the Lord; he was diligent in serving with excellence because it was all about the Lord.
4. Vs. 5b Desired to be a blessing above being blessed “*The blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field*”: *Joseph worked not for advancement, promotion or notoriety but for the benefit and blessing of others*. The quickest way to be raised up in the Lord is not to care about being raised up.
5. Vs. 6a Operated in the gifts and callings of God “*Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand*”: *Though the Lord was with Joseph; God worked through the natural talents and gifts that He had given Joseph. All Joseph did was operate under the Lords guidance and power while serving in those gifts*.
6. Vs. 9 Gave all glory to the Lord not his abilities “*There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God*?” Joseph recognized that all of the success he had was because of the Lord and not his own abilities.

Joseph’s resume was this, “*Hire me and as I work in the gifts and abilities God has given me by his power your company will be prosperous*!” Because of this we are told in verse 3 that Potiphar saw that the Lord was with him. Joseph witness to Potiphar by being the best worker he had.

Now in Genesis 39:7 we move the second of the great trials we face in life temptation. Although this temptation specifically deals with sexual temptation the principals of dealing with temptation apply no matter what it is that is a temptation to us. This verse gives a three-fold description of Potiphar’s wife:

1. “*His masters wife*”: We are never given her name, just that she is his masters wife. This suggests that she was not a woman of character.
2. “*After these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph*”: This verse suggests that she was not only attracted to Joseph’s appearance but upon Joseph’s power and success.
3. “*And she said, "Lie with me*”: Here we see that her seduction started subtle with long flirtatious looks. Then came attempts to get him to talk to her, which escalated according to verse 10 to her attempting to do this day by day. Verse ten also suggests that Joseph began avoiding her until finally she just became blunt. The fact that he did not respond to her made him all the more attractive and a challenge.

*Remember that this was not a one-time event but rather a daily occurrence that lasted years*. Genesis 39: 8-12 reveals five things that Joseph faith did in dealing with the temptation:

1. Vs. 8a Refused: He simply ignored her advances by way of silence he did not acknowledge her subtle and not so subtle attempts to seduce him.
2. Vs. 8b-9 Reasoned: Realizing she was not getting the hint Joseph tried to reason with her by stating three truths:
3. *Ethical*: “*Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand*. *There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you*.” Joseph’s explains that his position was not only one of power but one of privilege and trust. Thus to sleep with her would be a ethical violation of his masters trust.
4. *Moral*: “*you are his wife*.” Second he reminds her that she is married to Potiphar and such a relationship between them would be immoral, as it would be adultery.
5. *Spiritual*: “*How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*” Lastly, and most importantly he tells her that it would be a sin against God and such a thing would hurt his relationship with the Lord.
6. Vs. 10a Resisted: Even after he ignored her and reasoned with her she still spoke to him every day and asked him to sleep with her yet we are told *he did not “heed her”*. Joseph gave off no mixed signals there was no way that she could conclude that he was softening to her advances.
7. Vs. 10b-11 Refrained: He did not even want to be near her as he sought not to be where she was. He always tried to make sure that someone else was present when she was around.
8. Vs. 12 Ran: Finally, when she grabbed a hold of him he ran.

It is an issue of the heart and Joseph had settled that along time before so that temptation and sin could not get a foot hold.

Genesis 39:13-20 reveals that perhaps the most difficult aspect of the temptation was Joseph dealing with his own heart because even though he did everything right the circumstances went from bad to worse. Joseph left in his underwear but with all of his dignity and relationship with the Lord intact. But stand against temptation could have cost him his life he reasoned it was worth the price. The lie she told her husband was exact opposite of what had happened. Yet *there is no mention of him saying anything in his defense.* *Potiphar could have executed him by way of torture but he did not, which suggests that he did not fully believe his own wife as Joseph’s character spoke louder then her words*. Finally, we see that even in jail Joseph was made the captain of the guard. *The trails and testing of Joseph’s only moved him from the top floor to the bottom floor but it never impacted the way in which he served*. Joseph didn’t just trust God in the good times but also in the difficult times. As we are told that, “the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.” Joseph’s obedience wasn’t tied to his success it was tied only to the Lord. And with that truth we learn that: When we seek to walk with the Lord we will be prosperous no matter what our situation or circumstance.

1. Vs. 22b Take my bones with you

The reference for Hebrews 11:22 is Genesis 50:22-26 where learn first that 54 years passed between verses 21-22 even though Moses placed these two deaths side by side. Moses tells us that Joseph’s life was full at 110. He lived long enough to see his great, great grandchildren and played with them on his knees. I can think of nothing in this life more fulfilling then to enjoy the simple blessings of spending time with those you love. Joseph was not preoccupied with death he loved life and made the best out of every opportunity but in the end was looking foreword to going home. According Genesis 50:24-26 Joseph left specific instructions concerning his death and burial. He did not want his body to remain in Egypt and like Jacob wanted his bones carried back to the land of promise when the nation left. For 350 more years after this death Joseph’s coffin spoke to the Israelites the value and truth of the promises of God to the nation. Joseph’s death was as much of an example as his life had been; a testimony of faith and trust in the God who holds the future in His hand. Death was not Joseph’s end it was but his beginning to be with the One who loved him and those that love Him. And when it came time to leave in Exodus 13:19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with the nation as they departed Egypt. Joseph was a man of faith who made them promise 350 years earlier to take his bones with them when they left. The author of Hebrews uses Joseph’s bones as an example of trusting God to fulfill His word despite the adversities and trials.

**Hebrews 11:23**

**“*Moses birth by faith*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 23a Unfavorable circumstance**
3. **Vs. 23b Saving faith**
4. **Introduction**

We now move in Hebrews 11:23-40 to examples in Jewish history of post-patriarchal faith and here in verses 23-29 we will examine Moses with the emphasis upon his decisions of faith. Since time began life has been about choices: Adam was offered a choice and made the wrong one and all of his ancestors have been living under the consequences of that decision since. In Joshua 24:15 Joshua challenged the people saying, “*Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve….but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*.” Elijah asked the Israelites on Mount Carmel, “*How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him*.” The Greeks had a statue to the god they called Caerus or Opportunity. The the statue was represented as a young and beautiful god because Opportunity never gets old, and like beauty, flourishes for a season. It had hair hanging over its face but was bald in the back to illustrate that opportunity could only be taken when a person is arriving but once opportunity has passed, no one can grasp it and it cannot be recovered. The statue of Opportunity stood on its tiptoe because it was always running, and like Hermes, had wings in its feet to fly with the wind. It held a razor and was balanced on a sharp edge to illustrate the fleeting instant in which opportunities appear and disappear. ***Life is far more about making right decisions than it is falling into favorable circumstances***! This truth was particularly truthful to those Jews who were rejecting the words and works of Christ because the circumstances didn’t fit their view of Jesus 1st coming. To use “***favorable circumstances***” to make decision about following Jesus was a wrong direction. To show this the writer of Hebrews is going to make this case while ***examining five illustrations*** through out the life of Moses. What if Moses the “*law giver*” (who they were choosing above Jesus) would have used “***favorable circumstances***” as the basis of making his choices? All of these points and more will be seen through the five illustrations of Moses life. ***The point of this section by the author of Hebrews is to reaffirm that decisions or the lack of them have irrevocable consequences*** and the some of the Jews decision to reject the finished work of Christ and go back to the Levitical sacrifices would as will. Through theses seven verses of Moses life choices you will see that they were made both in the positive and negative, what Moses chose to do and not do by faith:

1. Vs. 23 Faith chooses to accept God’s plans
2. Vs. 24-26 Faith chooses reject the world’s position, pleasure and prosperity
3. Vs. 27 Faith rejects the worlds pressure to conform
4. Vs. 28 Faith accepts God’s provision
5. Vs. 29 Faith trusts God’s promises

The life of Moses reflects the choices of of making the right decisions; positive and negative decisions he accepted and rejected. The first illustration of Moses life centers around his birth and is more about his parent’s decision then it is his. The story is recorded for us in Exodus chapter 1 verse 8 through chapter 2 verse 3.

1. **Vs. 23a Unfavorable circumstance**

Vs. 23a “*By faith Moses, when he was born…*”: The first thing that we notice in Exodus 1:8 is the situation under which Moses was born as we read, “*Now there arose a new king over Egypt*..” When Stephen told this story in Acts 7 he says that the people grew and multiplied in Egypt “*till* ***ANOTHER*** *king arose who did not know Joseph*.” The word “***another***” in the Greek means ***of a different kind***. The Pharaoh that was in power during Joseph’s time was Egyptian, but according to Isa. 52: 4 the Pharaoh of this time was Assyrian and was a different nationality and he ran out the Hykos who ruled during Joseph’s time. It appears according to Exodus 1:9-10, that God’s blessing upon the Israelites became obvious as the fear and jealousy of the people and Pharaoh was seen in their concern that the enemies of Egypt would exploit the blessing of Israel and join forces with the Israelite slaves. Some times you can tell God is blessing us in the direct proportion to how much warfare we are experiencing! Instead of thinking during trials, “*I don’t know what I’ve done wrong that God is punishing*?”; ***perhaps it is not that we have done something wrong and instead God is preparing us for some greater blessing***!

 The second thing we note in Exodus 1:11-12 is that the first phase of Pharaoh’s plan was oppression as he sat taskmasters over them. They put the Israelite men into work crews forcing them into slave labor into two supply cites where they were forced to make bricks from the straw supplied by the Egyptians. As a side note “*The pyramids were not built by the Israelites as they had already been in existence by this time but these two cites were*”. The problem for Pharaoh was that the more he afflicted the Israelites the more their numbers grew. Because of this according to Exodus 1:13-14 when they saw this they removed the straw from the process. ***The idea of Pharaoh was to get the Israelites preoccupied with the things of the world. And in so doing the children of God would stop trusting in the blessings of God and focus more upon the things that enslave them***. Saint’s that’s still true today, the more people have the more they spend so that they are still living pay check to pay check. That’s what Pharaoh did, he just got them preoccupied with the things of Egypt.

In Exodus1:15 we are told of the second phase of the enemy’s plan, “*killing all the male Jewish boys*.” **This is not new**; satan tried it through Cain when he killed his brother, Herod would try it in Jesus’ time killing all the male children two years old and under. There has always been enmity between Gods seed and satan’s seed. To counter this God rose up two midwives who were over all the other midwives whose names mean “***beauty*** and ***splendor***”. In Exodus 1:16-17 we are told the reason why these two midwifes didn’t head Pharaohs orders as “The fear of the Lord”. The question people want to know is: Was it all right that they lied to Pharaoh? There are *two things we need to realize*:

1.) We **don’t know that they lied to Pharaoh**: Verse 19 tells us that they told him that the Hebrew women delivered faster then did the Egyptian women so the children were already born prior to their arrival. It could be that this was God’s work or that they just decided not to arrive in any hurry; thus what they said was true.

2.) Second there is a higher law to obey, God’s: What God rewards here is not the way in which they acted but rather the reason why they acted, (verse 21). It was that they feared God that the Lord looked upon. Which was a twofold blessing in verses 21-22:

1.) Vs. 20 The nation was blessed by the obedience of these two ladies. Mothers must never think that their role is unimportant, because of your obedience our nation will have a future.

2.) Vs. 21 These two midwifes we believe were barren, yet because they feared God they also were blessed with children. Pharaoh was putting to death male children and the Lord places these gals right with the rest of the mother in Egypt. God often brings us through things that test our hearts.

The third and final part of Pharaoh’s plan is in Exodus 1:22 and it involved getting the rest of Egyptians into his plan. These three parts of Pharaoh’s plan only led up to God bring forth a redeemer in Moses.

1. **Vs. 23b Saving faith**

That is where Exodus 2:1 starts. Remember that Moses is the one who wrote his own story and he does so with out any fan fare. He doesn’t even tell us the names of his parents until the sixth chapter. Where in verses 18-20 we are informed that his fathers name was Amram, “*High people*” and his mother’s name Jochebed or “*Jehovah glorified*”. In Exodus 2:2 The scene is now set for the birth of Moses, the deliver. We are NOT told here that Moses’ parents already had two children, the sister of verse four, Miriam whom we are not even told her name until chapter 15, was most likely 12 years older. And also Aaron who we are not told his name until the 4th chapter, who was three years older (Ex. 7:7) and was ***born before the decree of Pharaoh***. Here verse 2 the Bible declare the fact that Moses’ mother declared him as beautiful. Clearly she saw some wonderful qualities in Moses at his birth that caused her to notice. When we look up all the verses about Moses birth we are told that:

 Ex. 2:2 “*She saw he was beautiful*”

 Acts 7:20 “*well pleasing to God*;”

 Heb. 11:23 “*because they saw he was a beautiful child*;”

***Do these descriptions mean as some suggest that Moses was: A “beautiful baby” and that it was the outward qualities that spurred the faith of his parents to hide him some three months***? ***Or does it mean that some how they were told by God that Moses was to be an instrument of God therefore he was worthy of saving***? The key to understanding this lies in the original language and how that word is used else where. Literally the verse reads that “**she saw that he was good**”. The word is used frequently in the O.T. specifically in the writings of Moses where **it carries the idea of goodness as the result of being made or declared good by God.** It is the same word that is used in the creation account where God declared what He had created “***good***”.

Stephen’s words in the Acts 7:20 passage points to this fact where we are told again that Moses was, “**well pleasing to God.”** It was not that Moses parents recognized some **inward** or **outward** significance’s in Moses, **instead by FAITH they recognized that Moses was God’s child and this prompted them to act in faith**.

 God does not value us based upon outward or inward qualities He does so because of Who He is and the fact that He created us. We are special to Him because we are His creation. ***Moses parents acted in faith because they saw him as God saw him***.

In Exodus 2:3 the faith spoken here and else where is that of the hiding of Moses for three months and not the of placing him in the basket in the Nile. Again go to Heb. 11: 23 says, “***By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command***.” **The high point of faith that the author of Hebrews points to is not the placing of Moses into the water but rather the hiding of him for three months**. The passage on faith in Heb. 11:23 does not even mention the placing of Moses into the basket and on to the river. Acts 7:18-21 is the same where we read, “***he was brought up in his father's house for three months***.” In fact, when Stephen tells this story he uses a word to describe the act of the parents as “***putting Moses out to die***” What this suggests is that the remarkable story of Pharaoh’s daughter saving Moses has much more to do with God’s faithfulness and goodness then it does the faith of Moses parents. God is the One who is faithful, He is the savior of His people, all the more we ought to look to Him and not the faith of others!

 Moses was placed where other baby boys were placed right by the river bank. Moses mother fulfilled the intent of Pharaoh’s law but not the letter of it. The word “***basket***” is the same word used for Noah’s craft, “***Ark***”. From his parent’s perspective hope as well as desperation was what led them to place their three-month old son in a basket. They made sure that it would float and that Miriam Moses sister watched not his mother. She could not bear the thought of watching her child float down stream, but neither could she stand the thought of not knowing what had become of her son.

In Exodus 2:4-10 the story takes an interesting twist as Moses floats along in his ark and his sister looks on. Ask yourself the question in light of the story who would be the worst person to find baby Moses? ***It would have to be the family of Pharaoh who made the decree to begin with, that would have meant instant death***. Yet we are told that it was Pharaoh’s daughter who went down to wash that the ark came floating towards. ***Can you imagine Miriam’s horror***? “*Oh God no not this woman! Please God not this woman*!” Yet we are told in verse 6 that at Moses weeping Pharaoh’s daughter’s heart melted. Yet she clearly knew that this was a Hebrew child. I marvel at God, who takes the worst of possible situations and turns them into a glorious blessing. We are so tempted to rule God out based upon the situation rather then trusting in His ability. We read of Paul’s words in Eph. 6:20 “***to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us***”. How does this story of Moses’ parent’s faith in this decision speak to the Hebrews that the author is writing too? Well it tells them they are to make a decision not upon the the present circumstances but only upon God’s word!

**Hebrews 11:24-26**

**“*The Penny Principal*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 24 Child of the King**
3. **Vs. 25 The truth about Egypt’s treasures**
4. **Vs. 26 The riches of the reproaches of Christ**
5. **Introduction**

The second example the writer issues is a curious one seeing that there in NO First Testament text that the writer refers too, nothing in all the writings of Moses. Instead there must have only been oral tradition as the Jewish Roman historian Josephus mentions a story of Moses throwing down the crown and standing on it. More importantly the writer of Hebrews refers too Moses rejecting his position in the Egyptian court as well as Stephen in Acts 7:20-28. The decision the writer of Hebrews places before his readers isn’t introduced until verse 26 where he describes the choice as between:

* The reproaches of Christ
* The treasures of Egypt

There are several mitigating factors that would have made this decision difficult the first of which is best understood in what based upon these three verses Moses rejected. We are told specifically that they were the three things the the world prizes above every thing in verses 24-26:

Vs. 24 **POSITION**

Vs. 25 **PLEASURE**

Vs. 26 **PROSPERITY**

Further more we are told the sole reason that Moses was able to make this decision as, *he looked to the reward*”.

1. **Vs. 24 Child of the King**

Vs. 24 In Acts chapter 7:20-28 Stephen speaks of Moses life in three 40-year periods.

* Acts 7:20-28 From birth to 40: Here we see Moses as deliver, but Stephen is careful to show Moses failures as he **spent the first 40 years becoming something**. As a baby hidden for 3 months, then brought up in Pharaoh’s house, educated in the ways of the Egyptians; mighty in words and deeds. Moses felt a call on his life at 40 and wanted to identify and help his own people. You remember the story, as he sees the suffering of his people at the hands of the Egyptians he tries to do the work of God in the energy of the flesh and all that happens is that someone dies. The next day he thinks that he accomplished some thing for God as he sees two Jews fighting and instead of being a **deliver** he tries to be a **reconciler** bring the two combatants together. They didn’t receive Moses’ and question him as to whom made him boss. It is evident that there’s a big difference between Moses at this time and Jesus. Moses was willing to kill someone to accomplish his call while Jesus was willing to die to accomplish His call. To the readers of Hebrews, the parallel is obvious the Hebrews rejected Moses to be ruler and judge over them though now they esteemed him. And now they were denying Jesus as ruler and judge over them as well.
* Acts 7:29-36 From 40 to 80. The **next 40 years Moses spends in gentile lands thinking he was nothing**. Moses got married had two boys and changes careers from prince to shepherd. Stephen says at the end of the 2nd 40-year period God comes to him, and says to Moses, “***I have seen, I have heard, I have come***” (verse 34). Moses had 40 years earlier “***seen, heard and killed***”! It took 40 years to work on the heart of Moses so that he would GO in the strength of the Lord not in his own strength. Stephen was showing a pattern in the human heart in the history of their forefather’s Spiritual pride and ignorance which caused them to reject God’s deliverance this was also the same argument that the writer of Hebrews was making. Stephen now further shows how their forefathers rejected those that God had sent by showing that they rejected Moses in the third 40-year period as LAWGIVER.
* Acts 7:37-43 From 80 to 120. The last 40 years of Moses life was **God showing Moses that He can only do something through nothings**. In Acts chapter 6:11-13 the religious leader including Saul of Tarsus had accused Stephen of speaking blaspheme against Moses and the Law. They made this claim because Stephen had spoken so much about Jesus. So Stephen answers their pride because of the law by using three points:
1. Vs. 37-38 By quoting Deut. 18:15. “*Hey, Moses himself spoke of God raising up another prophet like him*.” So they could not claim that God’s truth and plan was limited to Moses alone as the Sadducees believed. The same guy they so honored as the one who brought forth the “living oracles” is the same one who said that God was going to bring another like him.
2. Vs. 39-40 Second point Stephen uses is that their forefathers had rejected Moses even after God had showed them that Moses was the anointed deliver. It wasn’t Stephen who was disobeying the law and rejecting Moses; they were doing just what their father’s had done before them.
3. Vs. 41-43 Stephen pointed out that even after the 2nd time Moses went up the hill to receive the Law and the sacrificial system the people still fell into pride and the worship of idols. Stephen quotes Amos to support this fact of their history. They accused Stephen of blaspheme, yet they were the ones that were blaspheme. **It is not having a Bible that makes you right before God it is obedience to it!**

Moses renounced the status he enjoyed in Egypt as a member of the royal household. He couldn’t identify as both, he had to choose one or they other. Moses gave up the three things the world prizes the most:

* **Vs. 24 Position**
* **Vs. 25 Pleasure**
* **Vs. 26 Prosperity**

To make the choice even more difficult Moses wasn’t just rejecting the benefits of Egyptian royalty he was accepting Jewish slavery and contempt which entailed substantial persecution beyond material disadvantages. According to chronological data given us by the First Testament:

* The Exodus from Egypt occurred 480 years before the 4th year of Solomon’s reign (1 Kings 6:1) and Solomon’s 4th year was 966 BC. This means that the Exodus occurred in 1446-1445 BC.
* Moses was 80 years old at that time of the Exodus (Exodus 7:7) which means that he was born around 1525 BC.
* We know that the Pharaoh at the time of Moses birth was Thutmose I whose daughter was Hatshepsut who married her ½ brother Thutmose II who died after a short reign. She then took over the reign and rule of Egypt for 20 years until Thutmose III was able to unseat her. It is believed by some that this Hatshepsut was the daughter that took Moses out of the water and raised him.

Though only speculation if correct Moses was indeed in line to be Pharaoh or possibly very high up in the Egyptian court. Moses identification is unmistakable proof that he saw himself as a Hebrew not an Egyptian. To anyone evaluating this choice it defies all logic when we employ worldly standards and some could point to Moses’ forerunner in Joseph as a biblical example of the benefits of NOT rejecting such worldly opportunities. The argument is for those Hebrews who didn’t want to choose between the Levitical sacrifices and what they pointed too, Jesus.

1. **Vs. 25 The truth about Egypt’s treasures**

Vs. 25 It is only when we insert the phrase “By Faith” in this verse that we understand the basis of Moses choice of refusing the material benefits of Egyptian life advantages for the ill-treatment of the Hebrews. Moses could have argued with himself from the position of Joseph that he could do far more for his people from a position of the advantages of the Egyptians then from the disadvantages of the Hebrews but faith according to verse 26 didn’t see the disadvantages of the Hebrew condition but their rewards against the temporary fleeting condition of the Egyptians. The writer of Hebrews offers his reader three specific truths with regards with sin:

* **That sin is pleasurable**
* **That it’s pleasure it ultimately unsatisfactory**
* **That it’s pleasure is only temporary**

By faith Moses viewed the Hebrews as not just slaves of Pharaoh the people of God an heirs of the promises. He wasn’t just choosing a national identification but rather a spiritual affiliation as they were the “People of God” and not the “people of Israel”! He was fully aware of the cost of his choice but as far as he was concerned by faith choosing the Hebrews over the Egyptians was a wise investment! The treasures of Egypt were no doubt considerable, the wealth of the 18th dynasty is well known even today but Moses deliberately choose that forever place the treasures of Egypt beyond his reach all because he valued the reproach of Christ of greater value. Moses appears to have a messianic understanding as noted in Deut. 18:15 as such his act of renunciation was prompted by his looking away to his reward. ***The irony was that Jesus was being rejected in part because He didn’t act as a royal king establishing His kingdom on earth immediately and instead choose, like Moses whom they revered, to identify with the suffering Hebrews***! Baron Justinian Von Welz was the son of Austrian royalty who at 40 years of age upon his conversion to Christianity was called to serve as a missionary to Guiana and lay aside his earthly royalty. When questioned about this he responded: ***What does it matter to be know as “well born” when I am “born again”? What does it matter to have the earthly title of “Lord” when I am the servant of THE LORD? And what does it matter to be called “your grace” when I am in constant need of God’s grace?***

1. **Vs. 26 The riches of the reproaches of Christ**

Vs. 26 Moses by faith weighed the temporal benefits of the Egyptians as being of far less value than even the reproach of the world laid upon the people of the promises of God. Saints this ought to enable us too consider how great are the blessing and promises are that the greatest advantages the world has to offer are to be shunned in order to inherit what God has promised us! This is yet another warning by way of illustration for those Hebrews who were considering abandoning Jesus to cling to religion! God is not interested in:

* ***Where we come from***
* ***How much we have***
* ***What honors we gather***

Jesus in Matthew 11:11 spoke of the greatest man that had ever lived, John the Baptist and the reason that he was considered the greatest was because of three things that made up his life:

* He always obeyed the Lord
* He was filled with the Holy Spirit
* He pointed everyone to Jesus his Master

The choice was between what many would consider two opposite values:

* “***The reproach of Christ***”
* “***The treasures of Egypt***”

And such an evaluation is true but the opposite of most would think! The temporary treasures of Egypt are no match for the incredible riches of the reproach of Christ! Had Moses chosen the temporary treasures of Egypt we may have well unearthed his mummified body and been viewing his corpse in a museum today. Instead because he valued the incredible riches of the reproach of Christ though he died on a mountain in Moab he was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Because of this as Vance Havner said, “***Moses chose the imperishable, saw the invisible and accomplished the impossible***.” Which if you were given the opportunity would you choose? A million dollars or 1 penny doubled each day for 31 days? It’s clear from one national survey that most folks would choose the million as people recover yearly 62 million dollars of pennies from landfills each year. But if you stopped to do the math it may surprise you which is of greater value. In ten days your doubled penny would still only be worth $5.21 but when you continued to double that each day for 31 days you would have 10,237,418.24

**Hebrews 11:27**

**“*Under Construction*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 27a Not fearing**
3. **Vs. 27b Seeing the invisible**
4. **Introduction**

We are back to the third illustration of Moses by the writer and this one unlike the last illustration has a first testament passage as well as Stephen’s preaching to fill end the gaps. According to Steven’s words in Acts 7: 22 “**Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds**.” The intellectual development of Moses, was clearly influenced by the time he spent in the courts of Egypt, as he was trained and raised in their culture. According to verse 19 Jethro’s daughters mistook him for an Egyptian which means that he looked like an Egyptian, talked like an Egyptian and acted like an Egyptian. When Moses went any where being the son of Pharaoh’s daughter he would hear the words of his personal body guards as he stepped out of princely chariot, “*bow the knee*” and every body would have to bow the knee. Yet, according to the author of Hebrews Moses, “*when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward*.” There is no doubt that Moses parents had told him of his heritage and the promises of God towards the Israelites. What’s remarkable is that at some point in time Moses was going to be recognized as the next Pharaoh of Egypt, to which we are told here in Hebrews that he refused. **Moses turned down the best that Egypt had to offer, for all the worst it had to give!** ***Suffering was not put upon him, he made a conscious choice to leave the lap of luxury for a life of hardship***. **Moses placed the right value on the right things**. **There was a point in Moses spiritual development that he backed up his belief by how he chose to live his life, “*reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.*”** In Acts 7:23 we read Steven’s account of this as he said, “***Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel***.”

**There ought to be in every believer’s life a time**:

* ***When just saying you are a Christian is not enough***
* ***When just going to church once or twice a week isn’t doing it for you***
1. **Vs. 27a Not fearing**

According to Exodus 2:12 with all the training of the Egyptians behind him and a passion for what God wanted; Moses did what a lot of immature Christians try to do, **conquer Egypt with the principals of Egypt**. It says that, Moses “*looks this way and that way, and saw no one*”. Moses acted with premeditation and passion, trying to fulfill the call on his life by the energy of his own flesh. **He had man’s wisdom and mans power but all it produced was death and a grave**. The question we astute bible students need to ask is; “*If Moses had done what the Lord wanted why did he attempt to hide it*?” ***This suggests to us that Moses knew that this was not of the Lord.***

 Steven in Acts 7:24 again gives us insight into Moses thinking in killing the Egyptian, “***For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand***.” That’s an interesting commentary when we consider Egyptian’s persecuting Hebrews and an Egyptian prince who is Hebrew yet looks and acts like an Egyptian kills an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. *“Yeh, that does it for me and the rest of the three million sheepherders turned brick layers are ready to follow you!*”

In Exodus 2:13 Moses the next day sees two Hebrews fighting one of them oppressing the other and stops the fight. The Hebrew word in verse 11 rendered “**beating**” and the one rendered “**striking**” in verse 13 is the same word. The difference is NOT in the action but the people involved in the action as they are both Hebrews and Moses can’t understand why the one would does this to each other. Steven offers this commentary as to the motive behind Moses actions in Acts 7:25 saying, “***that God would deliver them by his hand****, but they did not understand.”* God would deliver them but it would be His hand working through an X-Egyptian prince turned shepherd. The point being made is that **Moses had to learn how to follow before he could learn how to lead**!

In Exodus 2:14 we see the response of the two combatants to Moses attempt, ***“Who made you prince and judge over us***.” Oh the irony of their statement; **Moses was the prince and judge over all of Egypt**, yet the example he had shown them in the of killing an Egyptian was **trying to lead the people by the ways of the Egyptians but they could only by led by the ways of a shepherd**.

 All the training to lead Egyptians did nothing to lead Hebrews. Moses looked this way and that way but he did not look up towards God. Had he done so he would have found that God was going to deliver His people, His way in His time. It is great to have sincere motives but if those motives are God given ones they must be tempered by total dependence upon Him.

 What’s interesting to see is that the Exodus 2:14 statement saying, “***Moses* FEARED** *and said*, *surely this thing is known*” which seems in a direct contradiction to the wrier of Hebrews statement with regards to Moses where we are told that “***By faith he forsook Egypt***, **NOT FEARING** ***the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible***.” Stephen doesn’t clarify this as his only comment is that “***at this saying (by the two Israelites that he was a murder)***, **Moses fled** *and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons*.” The seeming contradiction is cleared up when we realize the context of the writer of Hebrews point is: ***NOT Pharaohs anger at the CAUSE of Moses actions (the murder of the Egyptian) but instead the lack of fear at the CONSEQUENCES of Moses actions which was forsaking Egypt***. Moses departure from Egypt showed that he had renounced his former life as a prince of Egypt and had embraced his life as an Israelite. The two fears are different:

* 1. “***He feared and therefore fled***”: The fear mentioned in Exodus is the fear that arises from the discovery of the slaying of the Egyptian.
	2. “***He feared NOT therefore he fled***”: The lack of fear in Hebrews is of Pharaohs anger on discovering that Moses had left Egypt.
1. **Vs. 27b Seeing the invisible**

As far as the illustration in Hebrews there remains only one last statement, “*for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible*”. We need to resist our knowledge of this story when we interpret this statement as it is not a reference of Moses encounter with God at the burning bush as that wouldn’t happen for another 40 years, recorded in Exodus 3. Instead this statement deals with Moses endurance for 40 years in Midian because he had already saw BY FAITH He who was invisible and was rewarded for this 40 years later in Exodus chapter 3 at the burning bush. Exodus 3:15 fills in the blanks of the brief statement by the writer of Hebrews and in we learn a more about Moses in his defeat and failure then we can in his victory. First immediately after Moses failure we see two things immediate consequences to Moses failure, one was positive the other was negative:

1. vs. 14b **Moses feared**: The first thing that ***Moses lost was his self confidant*** as he is now afraid. In the case of Moses this wasn’t a bad thing for his confidence was in himself instead of the Lord. But this can happen for the believer as well when we get out of the plan of God all our confidence in God goes.
2. b.) vs. 15 **Moses flees**: Notice that the second casualty in Moses was ***all the passion for his people left when he failed***. Because Moses confidence was in himself when he failed he ***quit and ran***! I see this a lot with Christians, when people with a passion go for it with all the fleshly energy they can muster only to not achieve what they wanted, the first thing that leaves them is the passion to continue. Moses failure was because he attempted to Gods work in his power and he has lost his taste for Gods call but the good news was God was not done with him.

In Exodus 15 we are told that Moses fled to Midian. We are tempted to brush this destination as unimportant but I believe that the destination was hand selected for Moses because God knew the right place to send him to prepare him for the next work:

1. It was the land of Abraham’s younger sons through Keturah his wife after Sarah died. They settled on the southeastern Sinai in what today we would call west central Arabia.
2. The people of that land the Midianites, were monotheistic and believed in the same God as the Hebrew people did. In fact, his father in laws name (Ruel) means friend of God.
3. The land of the Canaanites had an extradite treaty with Egypt, so that Moses knew that if he had fled their he would of been brought back to justice.

***Moses must have felt like big failure, he had abandoned his people, his call, his way of life***. The name Midian means “***strife***” and I think that the strife was that warring in Moses members. Moses was in the desert and it was all a part of Gods plan to strip Egypt from Moses; it was easier to Get Moses out of Egypt than the 40 years to get Egypt out of Moses. Though we may not like the strife in the desert it is here that victory is always won! *If you find you are in Midian (****STRIFE****) right now, stop trying to leave and start learning the lessons of it for you won’t be leaving it until you do*.

* ***Moses came to Midian a prince but he would leave as a shepherd 40 years later***.
* ***Moses came to it a son of the queen he would leave it a son of a slave.***
* ***Moses came to it wealthy, he left it poor.***
* ***Moses came to it a mighty warrior, he left it a meek man.***

***Oh how one day we will thank God for our Midian experiences in life as they fit us for service***.

It is interesting symbolically in Exodus 2:15 to see Moses after his failure ending up at a well of water, as this is biblically a symbol of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing like failure it to make us realize that we need the Holy Spirit. The word “*dwell*” means to settle there and I believe the key to Christian living is sitting down and making our home by the well of the Holy Spirit.

The next thing we notice in Exodus 2:16-17 is that God does not put Moses on the shelve there. Jethro had seven daughters and no sons, and his daughters would have to get there real early and remove the stone that covered the well to start watering the sheep. But each time they would be bullied by the other shepherds who would come later and this was an, every day occurrence ***until Moses stepped in to deliver them***. **God is showing Moses that His call on his life is still their but that he needs to learn how to lead**. The word here “helped” in Exodus 2:17 means to **deliver in the Hebrew**. Notice that Moses didn’t take it upon himself and kill one of them! Instead he just stood up, the root word here means to “***abide***”. Moses just refused to move from the place of the well and stood his ground. ***The victory was not about Moses killing some bully shepherd, he just abided by the Holy Sprit and let Him do the work***.

In Exodus 2:18-20 Jethro’s daughters tell the story and as he eats dinner we see in verse 19 that Moses drew water for all the ladies and their sheep. ***Only a few days in the desert and Moses is already starting change, he has gone from doing it his way to doing it Gods way and becoming less of a prince and more of a servant.*** People will always follow a servant before they will ever follow a prince.

In Exodus 2:21-22 at the naming of his first son Gershom, “***an alien here***” Moses still has more to learn and it will take 40 more years for he to be prepared. Moses thought of himself still as an Egyptian and 40 years would pass until he would see himself not as an Egyptian but as a Hebrew longing to take his people home to Canaan.

**Hebrews 11:28**

**“*A trusted Sacrifice*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 28a The need**
3. **Vs. 28b The Sacrifice**
4. **Introduction**

There are times like two weeks ago in Moses illustration where we see that we can deliberately choose wrongly and suffer the consequences of our actions. Such is the case before us with Pharaoh and the Egyptians. With that said, their wrong decision to this day has become the basis of the greatest celebration in Israel (Passover). ***It is the greatest for-runner to the work of Christ in all the Bible***. What we have before us today is the source of praise songs to God, yet those praise songs include the wiping out of Egypt’s firstborn sons. According to 12:30 “*there was not a house where there was not one dead*.” The point of this illustration to the original readers is a warning that the failure to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior would lead to the same outcome as if the Israelites of Moses time if they had failed to participate in the first Passover. This morning we will go back to Exodus 11-12:13 and examine the story in greater detail to glen the truth that will transform our hearts and lives as well.

**II.) Vs. 28a The Need**

The writer starts with, “*By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood*..” To understand this, unlike the original readers, we will need to go back to Exodus to examine the reference. The first thing we notice in Exodus 11:1-11 is the so called “***preamble***” to the Passover. To understand the 11 chapter of Exodus we need to realize that Moses does not place this chapter in chronological order. Instead Exodus 11:1-3 happen right before Exodus 10:24-29 where Moses went in to Pharaoh to hear his final offer. Further more Moses’ speech to Pharaoh, (11:4-8) happen in between Exodus 10:26-27. Then lastly Exodus 10:28-29 happen right after Exodus 11:8a where Moses explains that the Egyptians will say, “***get out***!” That’s how the 11th chapter of Exodus unfolds chronologically. ***With this picture we can see the responsibility that Pharaoh and the Egyptians had to their own destruction***.

1.) Through out the 9 plagues God had been revealing to Pharaoh and Egypt the futility of worshiping their gods. God said in chapter 12:12 that, *“against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am LORD*.” What Pharaoh, the Egyptians and the rest of the world is really worshiping is **Themselves**! God was destroying the images of themselves that they set up to worship. His jealousy is for us not against us as He in His mercy wants us to realize that these images of ourselves are not able to sustain or provide for us. ***In the death of Egypt’s firstborn sons, they would be forced to realize the fact that they are not in control, which is why they were still enslaving the Israelites***. ***God was making a distinction that it was far better to be His child then to be fatherless.*** ***If instead of running from His judgment if they would have run to His mercy and grace they would have been granted life***!

2.) God gave Pharaoh and Egypt a choice, and they choose not to obey the Word. All of Egypt knew what God had said, they even thought of Moses as, “***great***”. They could have done just as the Israelites had done and the angel of death would have passed over them as well. ***In fact, some no doubt did as we are told in 12:38 that a “mixed multitude” went out with them***. God did not kill the first born sons of the Egyptians their own pride did!

God blessed obedience two ways:

1. Vs. 1-3 **Grace**: ***He gave them what they don’t deserve***. First God had the Israelites women to go to the Egyptian women and ask for articles of silver and gold. This was a payment for a debt owed them but it was Gods grace which provided it. Moses reflects back upon what God had said in chapter 3:21 *“****I will give*** *you favor in the sight of the Egyptians and you shall not leave empty handed*.” Back wages for 400 years of forced slavery. God had promised Abraham in Gen. 15:14 that they would leave Egypt with “great possessions”. God provided back all of what was owed His children. You can never out give God.
2. Vs. 4-8 **Mercy**: ***The Lord clearly warns Egypt what awaits them***. The death of the “***first born***” has three elements to it.

A. Vs. 5 It was **without discrimination**. All of the first born sons would be effected equally, from the highest to the lowest would be taken. The judgment was not based upon position or personal stature.

B. Vs. 6 That it was **unparalleled**: They could not look at this as some coincidence. The way this judgment fell upon those Egyptians they could not deny that it was super-natural as ***ONLY those first born sons were effected***.

C. Vs. 7 It was **selective**: Only the Egyptians who did not take part in the Passover were judged. A dog did not even bark in the houses of the Israelites.

I list those things to say that Israel was just as sinful as was Pharaoh and Egypt; ***Israel was not getting what they deserved and it is based upon the obedience to the word of the Lord***. This is true in our lives; we are no different then people in the world, we are sinners just like them. ***The only difference lies in the fact that we have appropriated the free gift of the blood of Jesus, which was offered to everyone freely.***

**III.) Vs. 28b The Sacrifice**

The second part of the text and reference of the writer of Hebrews in 11:28b is, “*lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.*” So here we will need to turn to to Exodus 12:1-3 where we see several things that God wanted Moses to convey to the “*congregation of Israel*”. The first has to do with the ***TIMING OF THE EVENT***: The Jewish nation had two separate calendars but both are according to a lunar calendar; today most of Israel only recognizes the civil calendar. This is why the Jewish Passover differs from year to year and is not always related to our Easter.

1. ***The civil calendar, which starts in our September – October at the end of harvest season***. It is during this time that Jewish people celebrate their new New Year “***Rosh Hashanah***”. But this falls of the 7th month of their religious calendar.
2. The second one is sacred and and it is this one that we see the Lord instituting here. It would start in the month of Abid which was changed after the Babylonian captivity to Nisan which was a Babylonian name for the same time period.

***What God is saying is saying is that as far as He was concerned they were having a spiritual “new birth”.*** ***He wanted them to realize that time was starting over for them as He was delivering them out of bondage***. God choose Spring because it is in the Spring that “new life” is made visible. **God was telling them that as far as He was concerned the year starts at the time of their redemption.** ***The same is true with us; we have a “new beginning” in Jesus and we are to continually see ourselves as new creatures in Christ***.

The second thing that God didn’t want the people to forget was in Exodus 12:3 and that is that **redemption always involves a sacrifice**. **The concept of redemption, is FREEDOM**, and there must always be some form payment for our freedom. Every year we celebrated “***Memorial Day***” which is the day in which we remember those who have laid down their lives for our freedom. The price for human redemption is death and there were two kinds of death’s represented here.

1. ***The death of the first born***: To reject the Lord is to pay the price. Which of coarse not accepted.
2. ***The second, is seen in the Passover lamb***: Both of these are fulfilled in Jesus who according to John 3:16 was Gods “first born” Son, who on the cross became the Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). **There were four things that every family that participated in this Passover need to realize**:
3. vs.3 ***It was personal***: There was a lamb for every house. God did not want some lamb that was outside of each family. He didn’t want any of the families not to understand the price of their redemption.
4. Vs. 3, 6 ***It was to be precious***: This lamb was to live with them for four days. They became fond of the lamb, it was part of the family and everyone in that house new that this little lamb was going to die for them. They saw that the lamb was innocent and had done nothing deserving death.
5. Vs. 4 ***It was to be private or intimate***: The gathering for the Passover was centered around the family. If the family was to small, then they were to get with the family next door. God desired that the lamb would be closes enough to each person, so they would understand individually the cost being paid for their redemption. The lamb was according to each mans, need. And this reveals that we all have the need to be redeemed.
6. Vs. 5 ***It was to perfect***: The word blemish means an “*acquired defect*”. ***It could not have gotten tangled up and damaged by the world in which it lived in, it had to have remained perfect***. No scars, but ***Peter says that Jesus was without a spot and this means that Jesus was also without any inherited defects as well***. **Jesus didn’t have any ACQUIRED defects from the world or any INHERITED defects from fallen humanity**.

**There are two more things that I want you to see in Exodus 12:5-7**:

1. Vs. 5,6,7 First, notice that Moses did not say you shall keep “***them***” but you shall keep “***it***”. The words “it” (**singular**) speaks of the lambs (**plural**). ***Moses was speaking of sacrificing 1000’s of lambs that night yet as this is written every one of those lambs points to only one Lamb, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world***.
2. Vs. 6 Second, all the assembly was involved in the deaths of the lamb: All of us are responsible for the death of Jesus as it was for all our sin that He dies. ***The only difference lay in appropriating His blood.*** ***There was not one person who could claim that they were good enough to not have the Passover lamb be sacrificed for them.*** The only ones that thought that they did not need to sacrifice the lamb were most of the Egyptians as they didn’t choose a lamb to die so their sons did not have to.

Exodus 12:7 tells us that they were to take the blood and place it upon the doorposts of the home. ***In so doing the blood would have formed the points of the cross***. ***It was the life of the lamb that saved them from the judgment of death***. Moses would latter write in Lev. 17:11 “*without the shedding of blood there is no remission*”. ***It was not enough that they knew that the lamb had to be killed, they had to apply it or they were to be judged right along with the Egyptians***. ***They couldn’t just watch their neighbors apply the blood and & not do it, the act of what their neighbors did could not save them***. ***It is the same with Jesus’ sacrifice we must personally apply the blood of Jesus to the door posts of your heart***! Paul said in Gal. 2:20 “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*.”

In Exodus 12:8-10 we are told that they were not to boil the lamb it because not a bone was to be broken and to put it into a pot would mean that you would have to break its bones. The lamb was to be roasted in the fire which was t remind them of judgment of fire. Bitter herbs, was to remind them of the price of their redemption. Leaven or yeast speaks of sin and that they were to leave that old life style behind and no longer be slaves to sin. They were leaving Egypt and nothing was to be left behind in the former life.

Finally, in Exodus12:11-13 we see that sacrifice is associated with moving or walking. If, Pharaoh and the Egyptians would have obeyed the command they too would have been saved. God said, “***When I see the blood, I will pass over you.***” **There was not a person saved that night who was sincerely doing their best, or because they were honest and good**. God said, “***I’m only looking for the blood***!” They were not to look out the window if they did they would have died. This speaks to us of the truth that nothing could be taken away or added, it was simple trust in God’s only provision.

**Hebrews 11:29**

**“*Which way to the promise land?*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 29a I’ve got them right where I want them**
3. **Vs. 29b A God-focused obsession**
4. **Introduction**

Hebrews 11:29 concludes the testimony of Moses with regards to faith with the truth that Israel demonstrated trust in God’s provision and promise even when it didn’t look like they were going the right way. The story the author uses is again a familiar one as it is the Red Sea crossing described in detail in Exodus 14. It is again assumed by the writer that his readers were well versed in this story as he contains all 31 verses in 22 words.

To understand the illustration, we will need to go back to Exodus in 13:17 where we are told clearly that God was “*leading*” Israel and that is was God who directed Moses “*not to lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer*.” We are even told the reasoning from God for this as, “*Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egyp*t.” ***The Exodus was the Israelites first experience of being led by God***. And God knew that, not unlike Pharaoh, the Israelites also had commitment and control issues. As such we are told in Exodus 13:19-21 that God was going to do three things in guiding them:

1. Vs. 19 **He would lead them by faith:** Joseph’s bones were a testimony of one mans trust in God’s promises above what he could understand or see. They needed to learn to trust Gods word in spite of the consequences. Someone once said that “**Faith was believing God’s Word in spite of the evidence**.” That’s not faith that’s *SUPERSTITION*! No! **“Faith is believing God’s word in spite of the consequences.**”
2. Vs. 20 **He would lead them step by step**: We all like to have every bit of information we can before we make a commitment to go, but God does not tell us everything. Instead He was getting them use to moving one step at a time
3. Vs. 21 **He would lead them by His presence**: today we don’t have a cloud by day and fire by night directing our every move. We have something much better the “*sure Word of God*”. Ps. 119:105 says, “***Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.***”
4. **Vs. 29a I’ve got them right where I want them**

That takes us to the actual journey by faith found in Exodus 14:1-9 and what is clear in

this section is three things:

1. Vs. 1-2 God was the one that changed their coarse. “*Now the Lord spoke…saying turn the camp before “Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. Camp there along the shore, opposite Baal-zephon*.”
2. Vs. 4 God had a reason of why He was changing coarse: “*I will gain honor over Pharaoh…that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord*.”
3. Vs. 3, 5, 6, 8, 10 God knew how Pharaoh, Egypt and Israel would see this change of coarse: “*They are bewildered by the land…why have we let Israel go…so he made ready 600 choice chariots and took his people with him and pursued Israel…and overtook them camping by the sea.” “And when Pharaoh drew near...Israel saw that the Egyptians marched after them…so they were very afraid…and….cried out to the Lord*.”

We are given some strong clues of what this change of direction looked like based upon how **Pharaoh saw it** (***a military advantage***) and **Israel saw it** (***a military disadvantage***). But this change of direction means nothing unless you have a grasp of ancient Egypt geography. But the reason for these views is geographically God directs them to a place where their backs were to the sea and on the sides were two mountains. ***God placed them into a cul-de-sac, which there was only one natural way out and that was the way in which they came***. Pharaoh clearly saw it as a very bad military decision which left Israel trapped. Israel however, didn’t seem to recognize this until 600 chariots closed off the mouth of the valley in which they camped.

 ***Here we need to go back and realize the above facts***: God had already directed Israel away from the sea route and into the wilderness. God knew that they were not ready to fight for their freedom. These 3 million Israelites didn’t comprehend that God was taking them away from the natural choices. He wasn’t leading them the normal direction, but since there were no problems they went along with it. As they are heading out in the wilderness, uncharted territory, God suddenly leads them back the road they came in on, to a place that hems them in. ***From their perspective it looked as if they were totally lost while being led by the Lord***. Have you ever felt as though God was making a bad decision in your life as you are following Him? This reminds me of the old T.V. show “***Get Smart***”. Don Adams, who played agent 86 “Maxwell Smart”, would always find himself in these situations where chaos, the evil organization, had him pinned in. Then he would call Control on his shoe phone saying, “***Chief, I’ve got them right where I want them***!” Folk’s that seeming dead end place that you find yourself in right now is not an accident, neither is it a demonstration of God’s poor ability to lead you; **It is a place designed by Him to show you that He alone is Lord and that you follow Him not because you understand the places He takes you in life, you follow Him because of Who He is!**

1. **Vs. 29b A God-focused obsession**

Kent Hughes book, “*Liberating Ministry from Success Syndrome*”, he writes: “*There never has been and never will be a thoughtless action of God towards me. There is not a single item of evil in His plans for His people, neither in motive, conception, revelation, or consummation. This does not mean that we are shielded from hardship or misery, it means that God’s plans are never for evil in the believer’s life, instead they are always with an eye towards their well-being and wholeness – always*!” There must be as Kent Hughes says, “*A God-focused obsession in our lives if we are to fully experience the benefit of His promises*.”

Exodus 14:10-14 we have Israel’s reaction to God’s guiding them into this trap. Not surprisingly their response is similar to how our flesh responds when we are not trusting the Lord’s guidance.

1. Vs. 10 **Fear**: They were not afraid until Pharaoh’s army sealed of the mouth of the valley. As long as they could see some way of getting out of their situation they were not afraid, but the moment they were beyond the scope of their intellect they were, “greatly afraid.” Trusting God’s leading is no problem as long as you can understand the whys.
2. Vs. 11 **Unhappiness**: Egypt was known for pyramids which are nothing more they huge crypts. So the Israelites ask Moses, “*Did you lead us out here because there was not enough room to bury us in Egypt*?” They not only question the action of Moses they question his motivate as well.
3. Vs. 12 **Bitterness**: Finally, they remind Moses that they told him back in chapter 5 that they just wanted him to leave them alone.

Those normal reactions of the Israelites lead to ***Moses fourfold exhortation of how to***

***handle the crises of doubt and unbelief***:

1. “**Do not be afraid**”: **Fear will either energize us or paralyze us either way it can be destructive**. So the first thing Moses tells them is not to react but rather respond. Don’t react to the wave of emotionalism, don’t give in to the desire to react to fear. If you allow fear to be your guide, then your reaction may cause you to make a decision you will regret the rest of your life. It appears by the next statement that Moses makes, that their reaction was going to be to run as he next says, (stand still).
2. “**Stand still**”: This is the Lord’s answer to those in a crises of faith. ***FEAR will demand that you retreat or advance. IMPATIENCE will tell you to do it now. PRESUMPTION, will tell you do what is right before it is time. But FAITH says, stand and while your standing be still***! It is as though God says, “*Hey, don’t go out in your own strength and effort, but do go out in Mine*!”
3. “**Look up**”: It is interesting to look at these verses in the Hebrew because the word salvation is the Hebrew equivalent for the name of Jesus. This sentence literally says “*See the Jesus of God.” “Don’t go out and do it in your own strength,* ***instead look for Jesus your salvation that is God***.”
4. “**Be quiet**”: Finally, Moses tells them ***not to complain about their troubles***. All that whining does is show everybody that you are not trusting in the Lord. Before they are ever to take a step the first thing they are to do is shut their mouths.

The last section of Exodus 14:15-31 reveals the outcome of this exhortation. Egypt had brought 600 chariots and placed them at the mouth of the valley. Pharaoh clearly thought that he was going to exact some revenge. As soon Moses is done talking to Israel for God, he talks to God for Israel. But with God there had been a time for prayer and seeking Him but it was now time to act on His answer. As verses 16-22 the “angel of the Lord” which is equated to the Lord being in the pillar of cloud and fire, (13:21). Which a preincarnate manifestation of Jesus surround them, in verse 19. ***The Lord was not only there to guide them He was there to protect them from the advancing Egyptian army***. Further more what was light to the Israelites was darkness to the Egyptians. Next we are told that in verses 21-22 that the Red Sea which is the region north of the Gulf of Suez part of what is now the Suez Canal, which links the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea, became dry land. An article appeared in the L. A. Times in 3/14/92 titled “Research supports Bible’s Account of Red Sea Parting” by Thomas H. Maugh saying, “*Because of the peculiar geography of the northern end of the Red Sea, researchers report Sunday in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, that a moderate wind blowing constantly for about 10 hours could have caused the Sea to recede about one mile and the water level to drop 10 feet, leaving dry land in the area where many biblical scholars believe the crossing occurred*.” I love it when science is actually correct.

The final thing to notice is in Exodus 23-31 where we see the pride of Pharaoh and the Egyptian army. One has to wonder why they would go after the Israelites knowing what had happened to them during the plagues. I think there are three reasons for this and they leave us with three negative examples looking at the Egyptian army of the effects of pride:

1. Israel had the fire by night guiding them so clearly they could see the pillar of water on either side, but to the Egyptians all they saw was darkness. They were following several thousands foot prints with out looking on either side. ***Pride blinds you of danger***.
2. Vs. 24 Tells us that it was only during the mourning watch that they saw what awaited them. The mourning watch goes from 2 am. tell sunrise. ***Pride keeps us from seeing the light***!
3. Vs. 25 Tells us that it is then that they tried to turn around and head back only to have their wheels fall off. ***Prides makes it impossible to turn around without our wheels falling off***!

**Hebrews 11:30-31**

**“Faith, the most dangerous safe place”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 30 Receiving the victory**
3. **Vs. 31 Rahab’s steps of faith**
4. **Introduction**

The next witness for the author of Hebrews for his readers of why they should continue by faith in trusting in Jesus is found in verses 30-31. The first is the example of the Israelites as they faced the walls of Jericho which is found in Joshua chapter 6. The second illustration is closely related to the first but relates to Rahab who first appears in chapter 2 of Joshua. Since these illustrations are intertwined we will look at them together. Before we examine these stores in detail the point the author is making is that God’s way of faith is never the easy way out, the path of least resistance, and in never proposes to be so; no God’s way of faith is the ONLY WAY!

1. **Vs. 30 Receiving the victory**

Hebrews 11:30 simple declares that “*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days*.” It is again assumed that the original reader would have complete knowledge of this historical event as recorded in Joshua but we don’t so back we go to Joshua 6. The first thing we need to bring into reference is that, ***Jericho was not an exceptionally large city; but it was an important, formidable fortress city***. Excavations of Jericho indicate that the city was protected by two high parallel walls, which stood about fifteen feet apart and surrounded the city. According to Deut. 1:28 and Numbers 13:28 it was the sight of cities like Jericho that convinced ten of the Jewish spies 38 years earlier that Israel could never conquer the land. One of the amazing truths about faith is found in God’s reassuring words in 6:2 where we read the tense of the verb, “I ***HAVE given*** *Jericho into your hand*” in other words **the victory had already been won**! All Joshua and his people had to do was claim the promise and obey the Lord. The plan for advancement beyond the walls left no room given for human schemes or military tactics all they could do is obey the Lord in bring down the walls. These plans went against what Moses had instructed previously on most every point:

1. ***They were to use priests yet we are told that priests were exempt from all military duty.***
2. ***They were told to take the Ark into battle but else where we learn they were never to take the Ark into battle.***
3. ***They were to blow seven rams horns but we are told in Numbers 10 that they were to blow two silver horns.***
4. ***They were told to walk around Jericho seven times on the seventh day which would have been the Sabbath yet we know that according to the law they were forbidden to travel on the Sabbath.***
5. ***Finally, they were told to engage on battle on the Sabbath yet we know that the law forbids such a thing***.

***How are we to unravel this seeming contradiction***? The answer is found in a prophecy in Zech. 14:3 where we are told that “*Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle*.” **This is a word about a future time when the Lord Jesus will fight in the battle of Armageddon but just when did Jesus fight before**? We never see Jesus draw a sword, yet when we consider that prophetic word in light of this passage we realize that it was Jesus who was the Commander of the army of the Lord. So then it was Jesus who placed His word above their law.

That brings us to the 2nd part of this story and the instructions on how walls were to come down. ***Based upon verse three they were to walk around Jericho one time each day for six days then on the seventh day they were to walk around in seven times.*** Think of those soldiers as they walked around each day for six days then seven times on the seventh day and nothing changed; ***the walls didn’t shrink; white flags didn’t start waving from the inhabitants of Jericho***. ***They had no doubt become mentally exhausted thinking of every human means to breach those walls***. ***I think God allows us to go in circles so that we can come to the end of ourselves and realize that the only way to see the walls come down will be by the hand of the Lord***. God’s instructions were that the armed men march around Jericho once a day for six days, followed by seven priests each blowing a trumpet. The priests carrying the ark of the Lord would come next, and the rear guard would complete the procession. The only noise permitted was the sound of the trumpets. On the seventh day the procession would march around the city seven times, the priests would give a long blast on the trumpets, and then the marchers would all shout. God would then cause the walls to fall down flat so that the soldiers could easily enter the city. The Jews used two different kinds of trumpets, those used by the priests to signal the camp when something important was happening and those used primarily for celebrations. The Hebrew word for “*trumpet*” is ***shofar***; but the Hebrew word for “ram’s horn,” it is ***jobel***, which is the root of the word ***jubilee***. **Here we see that the Lord had them blow the horn of celebration instead of the trumpet to get their attention**. ***Israel was not declaring war on Jericho, they were announcing the celebration of the arrival of Israel in their new land***. They were shouting with a great shout of victory ***BEFORE the walls fell down not after they did***. **In faith: we fight FROM victory, not FOR victory**! We see ***three things the Lord would have us remember in dismantle our walls***:

* ***The question isn’t whose side the Lord is on; the question is, are we on the side of the Lord***.
* ***We must come to the place where we are at the end of ourselves, done with trying to scale over, dig under or go around our walls***.
* ***We need to celebrate the victory of the Lord before the walls fall down not just after they do.***

I’m impressed by the lack of hesitation from Joshua, the priests and the people as clearly this was no ordinary way to see walls fall down. The circling of Israel once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day would have left them extremely vulnerable to attack from the inhabitants of Jericho and they had to do so when it didn’t make much sense to continue. After six days of silence they were told at the appropriate time to shout for the “*Lord has given you the city*”. ***This shout was God’s power demonstrated through man’s silence!***

1. **Vs. 31 Rahab’s steps of faith**

The out come of Israel’s and Rahab’s obedience is given us in the the rest of chapter 6 verses 17-21 where we are first told verse 17 that “*the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who are in it.* ***Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent*.**” We are first introduced to the Amorite Rahab in chapter 2 which happens to be an entire chapter written about a prostitute who lives on the wall and contains nothing strategically necessary to defeat the enemy! Yet after meeting this woman the two spies will proclaim that “*Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.*” There is no report of them doing any espionage; they simple come into the city stay at the house of a prostitute on her roof for a day then leave and confidently declare to Joshua that not only was Jericho going to be defeated but all the lands and all the people. There are several key parts to Rahab’s salvation the first appears right here in 2:12 as we see that she did two things:

1. First, ***she acknowledged that the God of the Israelites whom she names specifically is the only one that can save her***. Many people say they believe in God and even use His name but they do so without regard to His nature and character. That is not what Rahab did as she used the name used by the Israelites, which implies that she wasn’t trying to make a god fashioned to her own making.
2. Second, ***she recognizes that she and her family is equally deserving of God’s judgment as were the rest of the inhabitants of Jericho***. There is no indication that she feels that she some how deserves God’s salvation, only that she has done the works fitting her repentance.

There is no argument that she and her family are “*good idol worshippers*”. Instead she lumps her family in with herself as equally needing to be delivered. Rahab doesn’t have it all together, ***what she does have is an awareness that she is a sinner and that only the God of the Israelites can save her***. Rahab was forsaking all she had ever known leaving her culture and people behind. What’s interesting is that ***the only stories she heard about were ones that involved God’s judgment but to her they also spoke to her of God’s love***! ***The same Joshua that would judge most of the people was the savior to Rahab and her family simply because she trusted and obeyed***. In Joshua chapter 2:18-20 the spies promise her that if she would show three signs to them that they would honor her request and spare her life and those of her family.

1. Vs. 18a **Visible Transformation** “*when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down*”: She needed to make a visible sign of where she was at. There are those who profess to know Christ but there has been no visible fruit of that profession no personal transformation.
2. Vs. 18b-19 **Verbal Conformation** “*unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home*.” She had to make her confession before others, in this case her family. By gathering at her place it was an indication that they believed as she had.
3. Vs. 20 **Consistent Alienation** “*And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you made us swear*.” Finally, Rahab couldn’t go back on her commitment, she couldn’t just say the words and then go back to the way she used to live.

Based upon Joshua 2:15 Rahab’s house was part of the wall. **The most dangerous place to be for the rest of the city was the safest place to be for Rahab and her family**. It wasn’t necessary for the spies to look for a window with a red cord hanging from; because the only house that was left standing was her house. God saved and protected Rahab because of her faith and she led her family to trust in God so they were also saved. Their faith brought them into the nation of Israel and Rahab would marry Salmon and became an ancestress of King David and of the Messiah! Rahab and her family were willing to do what the rest of the residents of Jericho weren’t willing to do even though their hearts were melting at the pending judgment. **Rahab’s salvation wasn’t based upon knowledge but obedience and their disobedience was not based upon ignorance but rather willfulness**. It is the cross of Jesus that saves us from our past, it is the cross of Jesus that changes our path and is the cross of Jesus that saves us from the destruction we rightly deserve.

**Hebrews 11:32**

**“Gideon faith”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 32a Clothed in Gideon**
3. **Introduction**

Near the close of the 11th chapter of the “***Hall of Faith***” the writer begins his conclusion in verses 32-34 with six names of men (*and a host of others not named as only part of their exploits of faith is mentioned*) none of which are in chronological order but who all served as rulers or judges of some type. Several of them are quite well known in our Bibles and others are not. Some of them we know specifically the story of faith the writer is eluding too, others there are far too many illustrations to choose from. What is interesting to note is that none of the six are praised for their position instead they are famous because of their faith! This morning we will continue on our journey of faith exploring Gideon and Barak’s faith then next week we will continue with the rest of the six names given. The context the writer mentions with regards to these names is in his statement “*What more shall I say*? *For time would fail me to tell of…*” This suggests that his illustrations are far more general and brief and so shall our examination be.

1. **Vs. 32a Clothed in Gideon**

***Gideon***: The story of Gideon’s faith is found in Judges chapters 6:11-8:35. More is devoted to Gideon in the book of Judges (100 verses) than to any other judge (Samson is a close 2nd with 96 verses). According to the last verse of chapter 5 of the book of Judges, Israel had 40 years of rest from their enemies after Deborah’s defeat of Sisera but in Israel’s prosperity came complacency as Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. ***The introduction of Gideon doesn’t make him out to be much of a man of faith*** as we are told in Judges 6:11 that the Angel of the Lord came to Gideon wile he threshed wheat in the winepress which was both very difficult and humiliating. Wheat was threshed in open spaces, typically on a hill-top so the breeze could blow away the chaff. Wheat was not normally threshed in a sunken place like a winepress. Initially God needed to prepare Gideon, this country bumpkin named “***hacker***” which in the Hebrew describes a person who destroys his own stuff and Webster’s defines as “*one who is inexperienced and unqualified at what he does*”. Yet we are told that the Lord calls out to him saying, “*The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor*!” Don’t you love how the Lord sees us? Gideon didn't look much like the Lord was with him and he didn't act like he was a mighty man of valor. ***He is in a hole with a stick beating wheat, defeated, discouraged, a man full of doubts, not the typical picture of a man of faith***. So many people look at what people aren’t, our flaws and failings, the Lord is not ignorant of those things He looks beyond them and says, “*Oh he is my mighty warrior because that is what I’ll transform him into*.” **God is more than a visionary with regards towards us; He is also a God with infinite patience and sensitive love as He knows our frame as we shall God deal with Gideon**. The Lord tells Gideon “*Go in this might of yours*”! God never asks us to go in something that He hasn’t already provide and no matter how week and inadequate it may be in God’s hands He will deliver a nation! **Gideon had six things he was mighty in**:

* **Gideon had the might of humility**: *He was threshing wheat in a winepress*
* **Gideon had the might of compassion**: *He cared about the low place of Israel*
* **Gideon had the might of Word**: *He knew God did great things in the past*
* **Gideon had the might of the spiritual hunger**: *He wanted to see God do great works again*
* **Gideon had the might of being teachable**: *He listened to what the Angel of the Lord said*
* **Gideon had the might of being weak**: *And God's strength is perfected in weakness*

In Judges 6:13-15 Gideon says, “*I’m a nobody from nowhere how can I be the someone that you can use to do great things*?” Saint’s never forget that, God specializes in using “*nobody’s from nowhere*”? God’s response is ***NOT*** to boost Gideon’s “*self confidence*” it’s to build his FAITH in Him as He tells Him “*Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man*.” ***It’s great that we know that God sent us but its better still that we know that God is with us***! I believe God allows Gideon to express his concerns as they uncovered **two truths about Gideon that he needed to realize**:

1. Vs. 13 They are found in the three words “***IF, WHY, WHERE***”: These three words reveal that Gideon was a discouraged, defeated man. ***His discouragement was not that God COULDN’T work but rather that He WOULDN’T work.*** Most Christian’s I know don’t doubt the power of God they struggle with why He is not working on their behalf NOW. Gideon didn’t realize that the problem was not with God but with Israel. It is far easier to blame God for our problems than to except the responsibility. Now in verse 14 the Lord answers that question by saying “***Go in the strength you have***”. If we want to see the Lord work like you read about in the past then, “***Go, right where you are at***!” The Lord says, “*The Lord is with you…Am I not sending you…I will be with you*.” God’s antidote to discouragement is the promise that He is right beside us every step of the way, His power and presence only requires us to “***Go with what we have which is, NOTHING but HIM***!”
2. Vs. 15 The key here is to see that Gideon sees that this calling has to come from himself: **Gideon struggled with inadequacy because he still saw his adequacy as coming from himself and not from God.** Paul said in best in 2 Cor. 3:5 when he wrote “*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*”. **To answer this problem of sufficiency God says in verse 16, “*I will be with you, and you will and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man****.*”

Gideon’s response is so much like mine, “*Uh, look Lord, you got the wrong guy, why I’m a nobody and my family is a bunch of nobody’s*.” “*Who am I, Lord*?” But the Lord’s response is to tell Gideon “***That’s not the issue Gideon, the issue is “Who I Am***!” Saint’s the issue isn’t who we are or aren’t the Issue is who God is. It’s not about us; it’s about God and what He alone can do through you! I think Gideon was a lot like most of us: “***Don’t want to move without God, but don’t want God in charge just in case we don’t like His plan***!” God was asking Gideon to fight the most difficult battle first the battle in his backyard! ***Faith is not obeying without fear; faith is obeying despite fear! Trust is not made visible by the observation that we are fearless but rather by the fact that we still obey even when we are afraid!*** The battle was fought not by the 32,000 men Gideon assembled to fight against the Midianites and Amalekites but instead with 300 men who were outfitted for the battle with trumpets, pitchers and torches. We are told that this transformation was accomplished Gideon in 6:34 as the “*Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon*”; the Hebrew reads that the “***Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon***”. The Spirit of the Lord wore Gideon as a man would put on a suit! ***God did not give Gideon guidance He reveals Himself as his Guide!*** God loves to work in the realm of the impossible, it is for this reason that He puts us in situations where we can’t see any way out, then He comes in and delivers us! Gideon’s men were already over matched (32,000 against 135,000 Midianites) facing 4 to 1 odds when God says, “*Gideon the odds are still too good that you will think that you did this on your own*!” ***Oh how different God looks at things then us, to Gideon his army was too small yet to God it was too big***. The first test whittled it down to 10,000 men. Having already reduced the army from 32,000 to 10,000 it now goes down from 10,000 to 300 as there were still too many for God's purpose. When 22, 000 left then 9,700 **the odds went from 4 to 1 to 14 to 1 at the first departure and by the time they were down to 300 the odds were 450 to 1 against**! In 1 Samuel 14:6 Jonathan (Saul’s son) told his armor bearer, “*Nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few*.” The army was now less than 1% of its original size and the proportion was 400 Midianite soldiers to each Israeli soldier which meant that Gideon could now only trust in God. You see ***God eliminated the first 22,000 because their “heart” wasn’t in it and the 2nd 9,700 because their “head” wasn’t in it***! So saint’s as I see it this is where faith must bring us to ask ourselves: **Is your heart towards the Lord and not upon the size of the enemy? Are we teachable; is your head on straight not on your immediate circumstances but on the horizon and the victory?** Some say the 300 were chosen because they needed to drink but they never lost sight of the possibility of attack from the Midianites. Ah but it could be that these fellows were to broken down, too out of shape to get into the water, their backs were to bad their knees wouldn’t bend and God was saying, “*I want the cast offs, the old fellas that can’t bend over and give me 20, give me 300 the world’s casts offs, the unqualified I’ll take them*!” Why is this a possibility? Well because God does great things with those whose hearts are right and their heads are on straight. ***Based upon the promise of God in Deut. 32:30 where God says that one soldier would put to flight 10,000 all Gideon needed was 27 men to defeat the Midianite army of 135,000 but God gave him 11 times more than he needed***. Far too many Christian’s measure effectiveness on statistics but such numbers mean nothing to the Lord!

**Hebrews 11:32**

**“Barak’s faith”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 32b Pegging Barak’s faith down**
3. **Introduction**

Several weeks back I told you that near the close of the 11th chapter of the “***Hall of Faith***” the writer begins his conclusion in verses 32-34 with six names of men none of which are in chronological order but who all served as rulers or judges of some type. Several of them are quite well known in our Bibles and others are not. Some of them we know specifically the story of faith the writer is eluding too, others there are far too many illustrations to choose from. None of the six are praised for their position instead they are famous because of their faith! This morning we will continue on our journey of faith exploring Barak’s faith then next week we will look at Samson. The context the writer mentions with regards to these names is in his statement “*What more shall I say*? *For time would fail me to tell of…*” This suggests that his illustrations are far more general and brief but for us we will need to spend a little more time in our understanding of their illustration of faith.

1. **Vs. 32b Pegging Barak’s faith down**

***Barak***: His story chronologically proceeds Gideon’s as you will read about him and Deborah in Judges chapters 4-5. We are told nothing of Barak’s background and the chapters in Judges deal more with Deborah. It was Deborah the judge who God promised would deliver Israel from the Canaanite King Jabin and his military commander Sisera that had 900 chariots as Barak assembled only 10,000 men fro only the two tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. Deborah describes the situation in her song in chapter 5 of Judges where she says in verse 8 “*There was war in the gates; not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel*.” Militarily, Israel was in a hopeless situation as they had no weapons facing a nation armed to the teeth but that wasn’t **their biggest problem, it was that they had left the true and living God**. They didn’t need the weapons of the world they need the very present power of the Living God. Barak’s faith is demonstrated in that he realized that God granted them grace but did so in a humbling way by raising up a woman to deliver them. A mother because they were acting like children! (Jud. 5:7) What Israel needed was spiritual revival not mere religious reformation. There is a big difference between “***religious reformation***” and “***spiritual revival***”. **Reformation only temporarily reforms outward conduct while revival permanently alters inward character**. The trouble was that Israel had waited until oppression you drove them to seek “***religious reformation***” and then ***settle only for comfort instead of asking for cleansing***! The actual battle was conducted by Barak in which the nation had three certainties going into the fight:

1. **They were out manned:** *Israel had 10,000 soldiers, Sisera had 900 Iron chariots plus foot soldiers.*
2. **They were out-supplied:** *Deborah wrote that Israel did not have a shield or spear among forty thousand in Israel.*
3. **They were out-positioned:** *Mount Tabor rises 1,300 above the valley floor and their backs were against it.*

Yet that is exactly what God had commanded them to do. ***Ever notice that God does His best work when we can’t do ours?*** God wanted to teach the nation that it wasn’t the things the world looked to it was faith in God that produced the victory. In verse 15 we are told that the Lord “*routed*” Sisera and the word there means to “*cause confusion*” how did this happen? The Canaanite god Baal was the god of storms and this must have added to the confusion in the mind of Sisera and his army. As we are told in chapter 5:4-5 and 5:21 we are told that “*The earth trembled and the heavens poured water and the torrent of Kishon swept them away, that ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon.*” God brought about the victory by bringing a flash flood which caused muddy conditions making the chariots of iron a hindrance, not a help in the battle. There was only one thing left to happen and that was the fulfillment of Deborah’s prophecy. Sisera left on foot and ran into a non Jewish tent and a lady whose name means “*mountain goat*”. Sisera has every reason to think he was safe as he and Heber had an agreement and Jael acted like she was there to protect him. Verse 11-12 suggests that it was Heber and Jael that warned Sisera that the Jews were about to revolt as they were gathering an army. It seems as though this family was playing both sides for their own benefit. Thus Barak was out done by a gentile woman using a household tool as it was the women’s job to set up the tent. Jabin and Sisera controlled the Kenites so he was thinking that Heber and Jael would still be under their control as Sisera headed to the house for protection. Jael has a plan to take care of Sisera that involved the most unlikely weapons:

* ***A blanket***
* ***A warm glass of milk***
* ***A tent peg***

As Sisera was ordering Jael around, “*give me a drink of water*” she was about to pin him by pegging him down. Now spiritually I like this as this is how you deal with the old nature that is ordering you around coming into you tent to tell you what to do:

1. ***Put the “Blanket” of God grace over it!***
2. ***Pour into it the “milk” of the word of God!***
3. ***Pin it down by “pegging” it through the thought life!***
4. ***Pound it down by “grounding” it in the love of God***!

***This was the last thing that went through Sisera’s mind, it is where we get the phrase walk softly and carry a big stake!***

The 5th chapter of Judges is where Deborah celebrates in the song the destruction of Sisera at the hand of Jael in the same way one might rejoice in Hitler’s death! Jael didn’t let Sisera live in her tent, she pegged him down. How about it are you allowing we allowing Sisera’s of our life to live in our tents and he doesn’t want anyone else to know that he is there? Deborah sings of Sisera having been finally nailed down, no longer oppressing the people. She is again thankful towards all who served to defeat these tyrants saying in verse “*Let those who love Him be like sun when it comes out in full strength.*” Saint’s that’s faith enables us to do, Nail down the enemies in our life, “*the flesh, the world system and satan*.” Chapter 5:7 of Judges doesn’t say that Deborah was the “*mother* ***OF*** *Israel*”, it says that she was a “*mother* ***IN*** *Israel*”. Here was a lady that was a prophetess, a poet, a judge but **she saw as her greatest asset was that she was a mother, she knew how to care for children**. Her mother’s heart caused her to solicit a military man to help in the gathering of 10,000 men to go up against an enemy that outmanned, out armed and out positioned them. I love the fact that in Judges 5:12 that Deborah includes Barak in the song of those who took action even though he didn’t seem to be too into it to begin with. Saints, there is an old proverb that says, “***It is true that the early bird gets the worm, but it is the 2nd mouse that gets the cheese!***” Deborah gives us two lists the “***Roster of the Willing***” and the “***Roster of the Reluctant***”. The 6 tribes the came with the right response to God’s call; Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir (which was the ½ tribe of Manasseh who lived west of the Jordan), Zebulun, Issachar and Naphtali. She even singles out the tribes that deserve special mention:

1. Vs. 15 **Issachar**: ***Who went rushing into battle into the valley where they would have been most vulnerable to the 900 Iron chariots***. Interesting to note that Barak was with them.
2. Vs. 18a **Zebulun**: ***Who risked their lives to the point of death. It seems as though each of those men in that company put their lives on the line***.
3. Vs. 18b **Naphtali**: Who stood on the heights of the battlefield. ***Which suggests that they chose the “hot spots”*** in the fight and were the “*Navy Seals*” or “*Green Berets*” of the fighting men?

***I believe that this is a great picture of many in the church who rush in to serve even when they are most vulnerable, those who are willing to risk, whole heartedly take on the “hot spots”***. I’m afraid there are far too many in the Church today who are only willing to give God the “**leftovers**” of their lives to the One who gave them His only begotten Son. ***The problem is that there is to much duty in our service and not enough devotion***! Deborah, is thankful towards all who served to defeat these tyrants saying in verse “*Let those who love Him be like sun when it comes out in full strength*”. ***The problem with those 4 ½ tribes that didn’t serve was not the QUANITY of their service but rather in the QUALITY of their*** ***relationship with God***. That is what Jesus told Peter in John 21:15 “If you love Me, feed my lambs.” ***Saint’s, faith dictates that there must be***: **No, retreat, no reserves, no regrets in our life**!

**Hebrews 11:32**

**“Samson’s “However” faith”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 32c Faith’s strength in weakness**
3. **Introduction**

Samson is NOT mostly remembered for his faith but rather for his physical strength and moral weakness. Yet with that said the author of Hebrews places his name among those heroes’ in the Hall of Faith. His story is found in chapters 13-16 of Judges and contain one on the best known stories in all the Bible. Before we begin this study we need to clear up a few things generally misunderstood about him.

1. ***Great Strength***: The first has to do with his perceived strength and the belief that he had rippling muscles. When most folks think of Samson they think of a guy that looked like a body builder but the reality, according to the text, is that Samson didn’t draw any attention to his physical strength by the way he looked. There is quite a bit of circumstantial evidence that indicate this. **First** and foremost, we are told over and over is that his super natural strength came as the result of the fact that the “***Spirit of the Lord that came upon him***” not his time in the Gym. **Second**, this is proved by the fact that neither Delilah, the Philistines nor the Israelites seemed to know what the source of his great strength was. I venture to say that if it was his bulging biceps and rippling muscles everyone would have known.
2. ***Great weakness***: The 2nd misconception centers on his failures. The first verse of chapter 13 speaks of the oft repeated cycle of sin with Israel that “***they again did evil in the sight of the Lord***.” When Samson’s time as judge is compare with Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah; you will find that in their case the nation of Israel “*cried out to the Lord*” for deliverance. But during Samson’s time as Judge; at no point during the 40 years of the nation be under occupation did they ever “**cry out**” for deliverance. Neither is there any mention of the people of God forming an army to help Samson in his battle against the Philistines. What we realize based upon this is that: **This was one man’s war against oppression that the nation didn’t want to fight against**! Though the Philistine’s were among the earliest to learn how to smelt Iron they didn’t use their technology to militarily over run Israel instead they used two palatable weapons that were very effective in destroying the people; “***trade and intermarriage***”. ***Israel was being enslaved by spiritual and cultural seduction***. It was ***Philistine ASSIMULATION combined with Hebrew APATHY*** that led to God using Samson. **Israel hadn’t repented and didn’t want a liberator**, **so God sent to an unrepentant nation a rugged individualist who instead of fighting national battle was fighting personal ones that had national implications**. Samson always fought alone, was never joined by even one person in battle. Without minimizing our disgust at his personal moral failure we must understand that that Samson alone resisted the dangers of Philistine occupation.
3. **Vs. 32c Faith’s strength in weakness**

InJudges 13:1-25 we learn that what preceded Samson’s birth was another downward cycle of sin for the nation and the forty years of oppression was the longest period God sent Israel and Samson was Judge for 20 years of it. According to 1 Sam. 13 the Philistines had disarmed the Jews and Judges 15 tells us that the Israelites were content to allow them to rule over them and even bound Samson up to deliver him into their hands. Samson’s life would be influenced by four women and **only his mother’s relationship will be positive**. The Lord announced that his mother was to engage in a preemptive Nazirite vow. The word Nazirite comes from the Hebrew word “***Nazar***” which means “***separate***”. This was meant to be a living demonstration for the nation of a lifelong separation of the nation to God. The problem was that ***Samson lived his life separate from things but never separate too God***! ***Samson was dedicated to the will of God but never dedicated to the God whose will it was***. Judges 13:24-25 reveals the source of Samson’s strength in that “*the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon Him*”. Samson is what Churchill described the Russians as “***A riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside and enigma***”:

* **Bold before men but weak before women!**
* **Empowered by the Spirit yet yielding to fleshly appetites!**
* **Declared war on the Philistines, but hung around them and even tried to marry one!**
* **Fought the Lord’s battles by day, and disobeyed the Lord’s commandments by night!**
* **Name “Sunny” he ended up blinded by his own darkness! For 20 years he played like a champion but for 20 years he failed to act like a leader!**

In Judges 14:1 we read ***a phrase that is******repeated for us five times:*** “*went down*”. Though this is a geographical phrase in the case of Samson it has **spiritual implications**. He was called to be a deliverer while he was still in the womb but these chapters reveal a man who is **always “*going down*” the wrong path in life**. Samson is lived in a time described in Judges 17:6 “*when ..everyone did what was right in his own eyes*.” The first recorded words of Samson in Judges 14:2 indicate this as they are “***I have seen a woman***!” Apart from the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him Samson never makes a right decision, he sees a woman and knows nothing about her and tells his parents “***Get her…she pleases me***!” To Samson she is only an object whose sole purpose is to please him. Samson’s problem was NOT that he was attracted to beautiful women it was that he didn’t take that attraction to the Lord’s control. Samson is literally “*going down*” the wrong road to Timnah and somewhere along the way he finds himself in a vineyard and with being a Nazirite you would have thought that this might have been a sign to him but it wasn’t. He is a man that was struggling being separate from the world because he had not ever been separate to the Lord. Samson is in a place where he shouldn’t be heading to be near a gal he shouldn’t be around and a lion comes out to devour him when the Spirit of the Lord enabled him to kill the Lion. Samson’s problem was he went back through that same vineyard! ***Friends never forget that God sends His Holy Spirit upon our lives for far more than ripping apart lions, He sends His Spirit so that we can live powerfully for the LION of the Tribe of Judah***! This will be a parable of Samson’s life as ***he will continually reach into that which is forbidden for whatever temporary sweetness he can gain***. Next we see Samson toying with the vows he made to God at his wedding party as he throws a 7-day drinking vest. He lost control of his tongue and created a riddle out of the breaking of his vow. With only six cryptic words Samson was convinced that there was no way he could lose. His bride first ***enticed him*** then she ***controlled him*** finally she ***betrayed him***. Samson could kill a young lion with his bare hands but was overcome by the manipulative tears of a woman he lusted after.

No one could call Samson a coward as he was never reluctant to engage his enemies despite the odds against his success. The problem was not cowardice but rather ***self centeredness*** as every battle was always about him. In Judges 13:5 we were told that Samson’s calling and purpose was to “*begin to* ***deliver Israel*** *out of the hand of the Philistines*.” And although this was accomplished through Samson I’m convinced that it was never his intent to do so***. Samson does not put God’s calling first nor does he put his countries honor first, what should have been a God- given mission was reduced only to personal vendetta’s***. We never see Samson rallying the troops to march against the enemy for God and country. Instead he is a one-man army, fighting only for his own perceived rights. Yet with that said he was the only one of his kind: “***A man with fighting passionately for personal freedom in the midst of a society committed to compromise***”. It is in these two truths about Samson that we understand how he could be so morally compromised and yet be so powerfully used. ***Samson simply did the right things for all the wrong reasons***! ***He teaches us that it is far more important for Christians to be wise in their calling and purpose than just powerful in their gifting***! In spite of his personal failure Samson continued to enjoy success as seen in Judges 15 where in a moment of desperate need that the “*Spirit of the Lord*” rushed upon Samson and he snapped the new ropes like burnt threads and picked up the new jawbone and in the hand of Samson that jawbone “*did all the talking*” in the end 1,000 Philistines found themselves on the wrong end of an ass. The weapon used would have been under the ban of the Nazirite vow. And again we see that Israel enjoyed ***A great victory through a compromised instrument***! Finally, in Judges 16 we see Samson travels 45 miles south to Gaza the southernmost city of Philistia all for the sole purpose of self indulgence. Saint’s pay attention here, ***Samson didn’t fail because the temptation was to strong or inescapable, he failed because he toyed with it, seeking it out until he paid the price***. **He burst the fetters of his foes but not the cords of his lusts, burned the crops of his enemies but failed to extinguish the flames kindled by his own lust**. Samson had to know that going to Gaza (*one of the 5 major cities in Philistia*) would put him into a very dangerous situation as he was feared and hated, a wanted man. What this tells us is that ***Samson deliberately exposed himself to the enemy and that his self-confidence was the spiritual weakness to go along with his moral weakness*.** The sad reality is that Samson’s confidence was without any regard to the empowerment that he had received from the Lord. He simply acquainted his invincibility to his ability instead of the Lord’s. In verse 2-4 the Philistines quickly learn of Samson’s whereabouts and post guards outside the brothel and at the city gates. The city gates would have been massive studded with iron and covered in metal to make them fireproof and once locked there would have been no way out of the city. But Samson carried those enormous gates miles up hill and the Philistines must have been terrified upon awakening and finding the gates moved 4 ½ miles. But beneath this amazing feat of strength and courage is a man who had power without purity, strength without self-control. Samson believed that God was not concerned with broken promises moral failings and the proof was he was still being used! Samson sees a lady and we are told her name was Delilah and that should have been a clue to him as her name means “***to weaken or impoverish***”. Each of the 5 major city’s had a lord over it and it seems as though they all band together to make Delilah an offer that was equivalent to 550 years of wages for the average worker. Despite all the evidence of her betrayal he not only refuses to leave but tells her the secret. This tells us that his problem was not ignorance, in fact for 40 years he had broken every part of that vow except one, “the cutting of his hair”. His life had been hanging by a thread of that hair for a long time. There was no magic in his hair it was a symbol of his supposed separation to God but with is shaved his weak relationship would crumble. One of the most tragic verses in the Bible is here in verse 20 where we read “***But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.***” How could he be so dumb not to see that Delilah was setting him up after three attempts? Vs. 21 This verse is a ***great illustration of what sin does in our lives***:

1. “***Put out his eyes***”: First sin “***BLINDS***” us to the fact **there are consequences for the sinful choices we make**. **It was Samson’s eyes that had gotten him in trouble to begin with and now he finally had the physical blindness to go with his morally and spiritual blindness**.

2. “***They bound him with bronze fetters***”: Second we see that sin “***BINDS***” us, holding us captive, no longer able to move around as we once did. Sin offers its self as “*freedom*” but it is those very “*freedoms*” that eventually hold us captive.

3. “***He became a grinder in the prison***”: Finally, we see that sin “***GRINDS***” us around and around! Sin grinds our lives away all to which at first presented its self as freedom. *Samson, became a circus attraction chained doing the work of a slave women because he was a slave to women*.

But Judges 16:22 is what I believe the author of Hebrews was thinking about with regards to Samson as the verse starts off with the biggest little word: “***However***”! Oh how thankful I am for the “***Howevers***” in the bible! Even in this failed state God had not abandoned him as his hair begins to grow back ***an indication of God’s abounding grace and Samson’s willing repentance***! ***Saint’s we all should have been shaved because of our shame and failure but God is not the God of just the 2nd chance but the 2 billionth chances***. In Judges 16:23-31 we see that though Samson had lived never learning from his repeated mistakes, so preoccupied with himself that he never saw himself as failing. He had broken his vows, sinned against the word of God and never lived up to his God-given potential. “***However***”; ***God can take the most humbling experiences and use them for the syringe to distribute His grace***. God had to strip him from his flesh before He could cloth him in His righteousness. Samson is a man who:

* ***Had dedication without devotion***
* ***Has authority without accountability***
* ***Had power without purity***

This leads to what Hebrews 11 refers to his moment of faith in Judges 16:28 and only the 2nd time we hear Samson pray. We can see **three things in his prayer that reveal his heart of faith**:

1. Vs. 28 “*O Lord God, remember me, I pray!*” **Samson prayed as a man who had accepted God’s forgiveness, he wasn’t just remorseful, the past was the past and he WASN’T asking God to strengthen him for the past but rather for the present**.
2. Vs 28b “*Strengthen me, I pray, just this once*”: Samson **trust was totally in God** as he didn’t say, “*If I try real hard I know I can do this now that my hair is growing*”. He uses three different names for God in verse 28 which emphasize this Yeh-ho-vaw, Ad-o-noy and El-o-heem. That’s a new man talking, a man who is relying upon the Lord and not himself. Yet even in this there is a bit of self-centeredness in his request as it’s about his eyes not God’s honor.
3. Vs. 28c “*O God that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!*” Samson’s request was ***not done in private but in front of a blood thirsty mob*** ***and instead of being paralyzed by regret he saw his situation as an opportunity***.

Samson was being led about by a boy and asks if he can be put next to the pillars that held up the stadium which the boy thought nothing of. Folks, the reality is if Samson still had his sight he would have never been allowed anywhere near those pillars. ***God was better able to use Samson in his weakness than he was in his strength***. The grace of God took the results of Samson’s failure and turned them into a great victory! Dear ones listen up, “***restoration is not based upon performance***!” When Samson had the physical capacity he was a miserable failure but now that “*his*” powers were gone God could use him. The truth is God uses, blinded, broken, forgiven sinners even when the above is a result of our own down fall. ***Samson’s death was not a defeat it was a victory and the only thing that died that day was his failure as he died a hero***! A closer look at Hebrews 11 and the list of names that appear there suggests that perhaps it should be call “***The Hall of Reclaimed Failures***”. Even though we struggle with mediocrity, are prone to big blunders God can still use us!

**Hebrews 11:32d**

**“Jephthah a wanted man of faith”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 32d Bandit to leader of the band**
3. **Introduction**

Jephthah proceeded Samson as a Judge with his main task of defeating the Ammonites in stead of the Philistines. His story occupies the 11th and 12th chapter of Judges but yet he finds his name mentioned in the Hebrews Hall of Faith. There is nothing about Jephthah that was normal. His life for the first 28 verses of the 12th chapter of Judges describes the fact that Jephthah had been dealt a bad hand. He was a man with deep emotional scars that seemed to direct his choices in life. Through our examination of him it must be noted at the offset that we neither recommend this kind of upbringing nor can we condone Jephthah’s responses to it. What we can do is appreciate our God who in spite of it can still reach into a person’s soul and not only redeem him but use him to redeem others. The chapter records five stages of development in the life of Jephthah:

* **Vs. 1-2 Outcast**
* **Vs. 3 Outlaw**
* **Vs. 4-11 From bandit to the band leader**
* **Vs. 12-28 From street fighter to diplomat**
* **Vs. 29-33 Spiritual leader**

Judges 11:1-2 records Jephthah’s being a “*mighty man of valor*” but it doesn’t coincide with his upbringing. His mother was a harlot, a ***heathen prostitute***. His father “Gilead” (***rocky***) gave this child a “***rocky***” start in life. This situation would be difficult in any time but Israel was a “*Theocratic*” nation in which all of life centered on the worship of God. His father did the “*right thing*” by taking him into his home but he nonetheless grew up unwanted by his step mother and siblings as they drove him away and he fled to the frontier area of Tob where other outcasts and drifters lived, forced to make his own way in the world (verse 2-3).

 Yet in Hebrews 11:32-34 the author says, “*For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and* ***Jephthah****, …* Jephthah whose name means, (***Whom God sets free***) was “*free indeed*” and is mentioned in the “***Hall of Faith***” as a man who “***through faith*** *subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*” At the start he certainly would not have been a person voted “***Most Likely to Succeed***”. Reading through our bibles causes me to realize **that God loves to fish in the pond of “dysfunction”. He finds and then develops by His love the most affective servants from the most unlikely places.** ***Our God is in the business of making unusable people usable and ugly people beautiful***.

1. **Vs. 32d Bandit to leader of the band**

According to Judges 11:3 Jephthah went from “*outcast*” to “*outlaw*” which seemed like a natural path following his family’s rejection. ***He was unwanted and unloved and built walls around his rejection that kept him imprisoned in his insecurity***. The guy becomes a thug, a gang leader as he hung around “*worthless men*” doing nothing but raiding folks as he surrounded himself with likeminded thugs and hit the streets of Tob; 15 miles from the Sea of Galilee (Good). It was a place where the Israelites and their enemies lived in constant conflict; all of which was normal to Jephthah. You could probably picture these young men dressed in black riding their loud “***Harley Donkeys***” with the insignia on their backs that read “***Tob Mob***”. Jephthah served as the “*Robin Hood*” of the area along with his band hardcore thugs who for a price would protect the Jews from attacks from their enemies. It was in this wilderness of isolation that he graduated from the “***school of hard knocks***”.

It isn’t until Judges 11:4-11 that we learn the condition of Israel to which Jephthah inherits as a judge. For 18 years Israel was under the oppression of the Ammonites and it had reached the point where God questioned the nation’s confession and they realized that they need to submit to His authority and destroy their idols. When the Ammonites once again moved into the region of Gilead (*part of modern day Jordan*) the Israelites had a counter-response using the eastern tribes. It was then that the nation needed him and sent a delegation 80 miles to recruit him. The people were desperate they needed a deliverer and they need one now. There was no mention of prayer only a declaration that “*Whoever is the man that will fight against the Ammonites will be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead*”. Though they sought him out they reduced his job title from “*head over all the inhabitants*” in 10:18 to “*commander*” of the army in 11:6 something that he is quick to point out in verse 9. Jephthah hadn’t applied for the position it was the nation that came calling based upon 10:17-18 the search for a leader was quite extensive. The nation chose a bully to beat a bully and what they didn’t realize was that God was behind the scene putting Jephthah right in place all along. The one thing that Jephthah did well was fight but **he had never fought for *something* he had always fought against *something****.*

In Judges11:12-28 we see that in a few days he went from outcast to leader of the band and was now standing negotiating with the enemy face to face. He sent his messengers with a simple message, “*What’s your problem*!” His accusation was that they were demonstrating unwarranted aggression against a peaceful nation. The Ammonites sent back word that it was not unjustified as Israel had stole their land and they were here to take it back by force. Jephthah was no dummy with regards to Israel history as he knew that 300 years earlier when the nation passed this way they asked permission from king Sihon of the Amorites to pass through his land on the way to the promised land. Not only did Sihon refuse, he picked a fight against the nation but God was with His people and the Amorites went down to defeat and the land became Israel’s. Jephthah did not react by name calling nor did he argue on any other ground except fact. Saint’s, we will never win the world to Christ by fanning the flames of our opinions or stating our claims by our experiences. No we will only demonstrate the truth of our convictions by living by the facts of our resurrected Lord.

 In Judges 11:29-40 we see the Spirit of the Lord coming upon the illegitimate son of a pagan prostitute who had become the leader of a gang. Maybe you know of a person who is the leader of the Mob from Tob and you have long ago given up that their life will ever be anything other than worthless. I’ll never forget what my saved older brother told me before I received Jesus, “*You’ll never come to Jesus; you’re going to go to hell.*” I love to remind him of those words 37 years later. Jephthah prayed, “*Lord if you give us the victory and I’ll give you whatever I see first when I come home.*” I’m certain that he wasn’t thinking in terms of his daughter but a lamb or a calf. This was a foolish and unnecessary vow in an attempt to get God “*on his side*.” **It is far more important to be on God's side than to try and persuade Him to be on your side**. What this reveals is that even a Spirit-filled man can do foolish things. Hebrew scholars, translate this as “*I will consecrate it to the Lord. If it be a thing fit for a burnt-offering, it shall be made one; if fit for the service of God, it shall be consecrated to him.*” Human sacrifice was strictly forbidden by the Mosaic Law in passages such as Lev. 18:21 and Deu. 12:31. **Saints, your past may read like that of Jephthah’s; you may think your education and experience has left you completely unfit for use but God can use even the worst of us to accomplish the best of His purposes.**

Judges chapters 11:34-40 and 12:1-15 give us four stories: ***The first three stories centers around Jephthah who had great zeal for God risking his own life to save others yet such zeal was no guarantee that he wouldn’t fall into spiritual ignorance with regards to the character of God***. God transformed Jephthah into a “*mighty man of valor*” because the “*Spirit of the Lord came upon him*” but such transformation doesn’t secure that a person will not fall back into poor decisions. Our transformation is a continual process degree by degree over the rest of our earthly existence.

In Judges 11:34-36 we see that the vow Jephthah made was completely voluntary and God was not requiring a vow or any sign to fulfill his promise. **It was completely unnecessary to manipulate God in doing what He already wanted to do** “*deliver His people though Jephthah*”. “*You can never use diplomacy with God who knows the thoughts and intents of our heart*. ***God doesn’t want to make a deal with you, He wants unconditional surrender***!” The problem with Jephthah ***was not the sincerity of the vow*** ***or the zeal to carry it out***. It was he fell out of touch with the nature and character of God and thought that to get what he wanted he would need to make a deal and carry it out. Folks, all we need to do to ensure God’s promises for our lives is simply believe that He is who He said He is!

I’m afraid that many have adopted a ***Physical workout mentality*** to spiritually that says “***No pain, no gain***” but the truth of the matter is that it is “***His pain that has caused us to gain***”! Jephthah thought that if he committed himself to something that was extremely unpleasant he could “***buy***” God’s grace. God’s grace is not for sale because it’s already been lavished upon us while we were still sinners. Jephthah still had the scars of the abandonment of his childhood and felt like he had to prove himself worthy to the only One who is worthy. What should have been a joyous occasion of the victory of God became a time of mourning because Jephthah had a faulty view of who God. Jephthah had made a foolish vow and keeping that vow would directly affect his daughter yet she says, “*Dad, you’re a man of integrity don’t go back on your promise to God even if it changes my life*.” (verse 36)

People want to know in 11:37-40 Did Jephthah really kill his daughter? **Three things indicate that he didn’t**:

1. Jephthah knew his bible and therefore he would have known that to do such a thing would be against God’s word.
2. Based upon these verses “*She went with her friends, and bewailed her virginity . . . She knew no man,”* These phrases indicate that Jephthah set his daughter aside for the tabernacle service and never married. What was at stake was her ever marrying a man and continuing on Jephthah’s genealogy.
3. Jephthah is listed in the hall of faith and I doubt that in only serving 6 years he would have made that list if at the end he participated in a human sacrifice and surly Israel would not have a lament for four days commemorating human sacrifice.

This vow meant that his only child would remain a virgin and serve in the temple never knowing marriage or motherhood which means Jephthah would never be a grandparent and there would be no one to maintain his inheritance which you recall his brothers had ripped him off from.

 In Judges 12:1-4 we read of a national crisis as the prideful and obnoxiousness of the Ephraimites come complaining that they didn’t get enough recognition for the victory which they had chosen not to participate in. They were the kind of folks who ***talked tough after the battle***! They had made the same mistake 85 years earlier with Gideon but totally miss read Jephthah. Nothing grinds God’s work to halt more than complaining and it is usually on the heels of a great victory. The Ephraimites took “***firing Jephthah***” to a whole other realm as they wanted to “***burn***” him out watching him literally go up in flames. **The Ephraimites were critics who were content to sit in the pews and direct “*gospel traffic*”**. Jephthah’s problem was that his actions gave them the power that they didn’t deserve. Someone once came up to D.L. Moody and said, “*Mr. Moody I don’t much care for the way you teach*!” Moody said, “*Well please tell me what I can do better*?” The person replied, “*Oh I don’t have any specific suggestions*!” To this Moody said, “*I’ll tell you what I like the way I teach better than the way you don’t!*”

In Judges 12:5-7 we see in the battle with the Ephraimites that this wasn’t Jephthah’s fault. As the Ephraimites began streaming back across the Jordan river Jephthah wanted to make them “***eat their words***”! When they came to the river’s edge he asked them to pronounce the Hebrew word for stream, they had an accent and couldn’t pronounce the “***sh***” sound. The mispronunciation of the word caused 42,000 to die on the spot. Jephthah killed more of his brothers than all the other Judges combined killed the enemy, with exception of Gideon. With this ***Jephthah became his own worst enemy***! Jephthah had been a recipient of the grace and mercy of God in his own life but was unwilling to extend that grace towards others. He became hardheaded which caused him to become hardhearted. Far too often we Christians make what we differ on what divides us then we treat each other as enemies instead of brothers and sisters.

**Hebrews 11:32e**

**“David’s development of Faith”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 32e David’s development**
3. **Introduction**

To conclude this chapter, the writer finishes with One King (David) and the first of the prophets (Samuel) as he bridged the Judges to the Kings. Then the writer moves to speaking just of incidents that these people of faith accomplished by trusting in God like: ***Subduing kingdoms, working righteousness, obtaining promises, and stopping the mouths of lions etc***. Those statements give way to the truth that NOT all of these people of faith outcome was positive as some were: ***Tortured as they didn’t accept deliverance, still others stood trial, were mocked, scourged and endured chains and imprisonment***. All of which the writer says proves that the “***world was not worthy of them***”. They obtained a good testimony through faith even though they didn’t receive the promise in their lifetime and they did this to provide something better for us and will be made perfect with us.

1. **Vs. 32e David’s development**

***David***: ***Our focus will be on David’s development of faith not upon the evidence of faith described throughout his life***. We start our research of David in 1st Samuel 16. David is a man who doesn’t lack illustrations of faith throughout his life, in fact we are challenged to pick what stories to choose. David’s life covers forty chapters of the Bible covering most of three books and glimpses of 73 of the psalms he wrote. Yet with this being true I’ve noticed something about greatness as it relates to us mortals; we ascribe it very differently then God does:

1. We recognize it upon outward things: We evaluate greatness upon a person’s deeds rather then their character!
2. Second we wait to ascribe greatness only after a person’s deeds warrant such applause: We wait to award the trophy until after the season is over. ***What we fail to realize is that greatness is not awarded it is rather forged***.

Because of this we fail to see that that the number one reason most people who aspire for greatness seldom attain it is because: ***We don’t see the connection of the product of greatness with the inevitable* process that proceeds it**! **David is a man whose greatness was in his inward character forged by going through the process**. But don’t miss understand me this life of faith didn’t guarantee that he NEVER made mistakes or failed. ***We can get a bit of insight into David when we break down the 23rd Psalm written by David as a refection of his time as a shepherd boy and we can see that early on God had done six things in David’s heart***:

Vs. 1 “*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want*”: **Believing heart**

Vs. 2 “*He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters*”: **Patient heart**

Vs. 3*“He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake*”: **Holy heart**

Vs. 4 “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me*”: **Confident heart**

Vs. 5 “*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over*”: **Grateful heart**

Vs. 6 “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever*”: **Fixed heart**

It should also be recognized that the initial anointing of David by Samuel is the first of three and after this first anointing Samuel simply leaves him and goes home. ***There was no attempt to place David on the throne and it would yet be another 25 years before he would reign***. Reading through Samuel’s account of David reveals that he was a teenage shepherd in a home where he was the youngest and appears to have been overlooked by his father and brothers. Simply put **it was adversity and obscurity that David majored in growing up**. I have often heard it said that life boils down to choices but the outcome depends far more upon how we respond to those choices then weather they were right or wrong decisions! Then there is that the timing of the departure of the Spirit of the Lord from Saul which corresponded at the same time in which the Spirit of the Lord came upon David (verse 13). The beginning of David’s national prominence was not upon what one would consider the normal battlefield as Saul had a “troubling spirit” and one of his advisers though that “music therapy” as the thought seems to have been if, “*Music tames the savage beast why not the troubled Saul*?” and David was brought in for this. So David’s first service for the nation was as a **worshiper before he was seen as a warrior**. It is no accident that we see David in his humility where he learns to worship God before he becomes a soldier, servant or king. If a person is not first and foremost a worshiper of God, they will not be much good at anything else. Based upon 1 Samuel 16:18 we can already see **six visible characteristics about David made from observations others** which led to his selection to sooth the king. This was not David’s resume; these qualities were clearly visible in his life. What’s more impressive is that they will be visible through out his life. At the very end of David’s life in the 23 chapter of 2nd Samuel the nation morns for the soon departed David as they call him the, “*the sweet psalmist of Israel*”. Not the mighty king, the great warrior, the most impressive quality of David’s life was seen in his devotion towards the Lord! *This list of six qualities is in reverse order from the least important to the most important.* As I think we would all agree that having the “*Lord with him*” is the most important.

1. “**Who is skillful in playing**”: This of coarse has to do with technical ability but when you think about it this ability lie’s more with attitude then it does with talent. Take a gifted person who is unwilling to practice and improve on their gifting and you will have a talented player but not a skillful player. Becoming a worshiper is something you grow into, something that we can practice and improve in. All of which suggests that we need to spend time getting better at worshipping the Lord!
2. “**A mighty man of valor**”: This is an interesting quality as it tells me is that a worshipper is in the middle of a battle field! We worshipper’s need to “*put of the full armor of God*” ready to do battle with our ego’s and flesh. We need to boldly deal with the attitudes of our hearts that would hinder us from true worship.
3. “**A man of war**”: David had not yet fought the giant, and there was no evidence that he had battled anyone save the lion and the bear that stole his father’s lamb (17:34-35). I suggest to you that a true worshipper of God is a man of war in as much as he makes war in his worship against an unseen realm. *David had won many a victory in praise as he plucked the strings of his lyre long before he took up those stones in his sling*. “*Could it be we lie defeated on the battlefield of life because we have not taken time in the battle of worship*?”
4. “**Prudent in speech**”: David knew not only what to say but when to say it! Worship begins inwardly but it can not remain there. David would reveal his inward heart by being a man not over taken by his emotions or passions he could just be quite or say the right word that would lead others to want to know of His devotion! All to often the body of Christ has fought over content rather then having a right heart!
5. “**And a handsome person**”: Now we may be tempted to say that very few of us would qualify if appearance is necessary for being a worshipper. Yet I think we narrow this far too much. I think this speaks of two things both balanced:
6. First I think this speaks of coming before the Lord presentable. In 1st Peter 3:2-4 as Peter speaks to women who are trying to win their unbelieving husbands to the Lord he exhorts them to do so by the; “*hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God*.”
7. Second, I believe that as we worship the Lord it is our invisibility next to the Lord’s visibility that is beauty! It is when His character and nature is seen in our lives that we become beautiful and this is what people saw in David! It is for this reason in the N.T. that we Christians are told continually to “*put on the Lord Jesus Christ*”!
8. “**And the LORD is with him**”: There was a clear visibility of the lord’s presence in and upon David’s life. No matter what we may say of the above five qualities apart form this one no of them would matter. David had learned early on that spending time in the presence of God was what made sense of life. It is there that we learn that what we have we can be thankful for as in Him we are safe! We see that “*He has made everything beautiful in its time*.” (Eccl. 3:11).

***David is summoned from the pasture to the palace, yet I find it comforting that after Samuel’s anointing that David simply returns to the sheep. Even after being summoned to the palace he splits his time between the palace and the pasture!*** That tells me that David was content to allow the Lord to raise him up as well as keep him up. **David saw in the work of God upon his life the wisdom of the Lord’s processes!** Between the 16th chapter and the 17th chapter David grows and matures to becoming a man as Saul does not recognize him (17:58).

 Further more David grew in his ministry as he starts out as the worship leader then in 1st Samuel 16:21 we are told he becomes Saul’s armorbearer. This may not mean too much to us but this was a soldier’s chief assistant and their success in battle depended upon the faithfulness of their armorbearer, kind of like a parachute packer for as skydiver! David learned in these days have what it meant to be King and what it did not mean from Saul. Saul on the other hand found comfort from the David’s ministry but did not learn the key to peace as seen in his life. We must not ever become to old and set in our ways that we can not learn from others even those whom are under us what it means to worship the Lord! Now one final note concerning what comforted Saul as David played. Look at David’s Psalm’s and you will discover that they are scripture set to music. Yeh so? Well this tells us that it is possible to be comforted by the word and yet remain unchanged, untransformed by its truths.

 All of this will lead us to the conclusion of our investigation of David’s ***development of faith*** as we come to one of the most familiar stories in the entire Bible the battle between David and Goliath. We too face giants in our lives, those areas where the obstacles to our victory cause us too cower at their mere presence. We mount up the courage to stand upon the hill with the champion of our past victories only to become greatly afraid by the challenge of our giant’s shouts. “*Where is our champion, our David*”! Christian, our champion is not to be found in a technique, it is to be found in a person who like David had the “*Spirit of the Lord come upon Him*”. And by His wondrous grace His victory is our victory. All we do is stand upon His hill and shout the praises of His prowess and then chase the slain enemy back to whence they came! Paul wrote of our champion in Romans 7:24-25 when he said, “*Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord*!”

 King Saul had gone from a man who upon “seeing” the strongest bravest man took him on too a man who just hearing the words of Goliath was already whipped. Goliath sought a man who would fight him in his own strength and Saul and the army of God could not see to fight any other way. Ah but young David in the 1st Samuel 17:45proclaims, “*You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But* ***I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied***.” Yet another lesson learned at the expense of Saul and the giant*. It is not me against the giant; it’s the poor giant who has to take on the God I serve! Don’t give the giants you face a mere man to fight give them the God they mock*! It is here that we will stop our study of David’s development of faith by noting three things about him as he went before Goliath in 1st Samuel 17:12-21:

1. Vs. 12-14 ***David was both young as well as inexperienced***. He was the youngest of eight sons; further more his brothers were already off in battle and dad was too old to train him to fight. His brothers were big strapping fellows named “*Elias = “****God is father****” Abinadab = “****father is noble****” Shimea = “****fame***”. And David is the “least of these” and here in lies his strength for we are told *“when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor 12:10).
2. Vs. 15-17 ***David was humble and a servant***. By now David was already the worship leader in Israel and splitting his time between the palace and the pasture. And yet you don’t hear any words of David to his father*, “Hey dad I don’t do seep any more I’m a worship leader*!” Instead David was content to split his time and only came to the palace when needed. ***It is not until after Goliath is defeated that David is given a place to stay in the palace***. We need to be faithful in the small things. It is Jesse who sends David with supplies hoping for news about his three sons. It was David’s father Jesse who hopes to present the captain with the food perhaps getting his older sons an advancement. Goliath taunted the army twice a day morning and evening and that means that David must have caught the morning show as the Giant was dead by night fall. My point is this; David must have got up very early to start on his 8-mile journey to the front with the supplies. But before he left he made sure that those sheep had a keeper to tend them. ***David had a shepherd’s heart and nothing left in his care would be well taken care of***.
3. Vs. 19-21 There is one last thing to note in the development of David and that has to do with the difference between what David did and what the rest of the nation did. Saint’s ***there is a big difference in shouting at the enemy and fighting against him***. We are told that Saul and all the men of Israel were fighting against the Philistines but in reality all they were doing was going to out shout and argue the enemy. You can’t merely out shout and insult the enemy ***they must be slain***. You can’t out posture them and threaten them ***they have to die***!

**Saul could not see God doing anything apart from him and David could not see himself doing anything apart from God**! There is a very important detail that speaks to the work of God in the heart of David: David left the safety of the hill and walked down into the valley where Goliath was without having any stones for his sling. I’ve been to this sight in Israel and it is a good walk to this brook. Here is my point **David took a walk of faith before he was equipped with the provisions to defeat the giant**. David was unarmed when he went into that valley to face the giant. We often want the Lord to give us everything we need before we leave the comfort and security of our hill and what **David recognized is that he had everything he needed when he left the hill because the Lord was with him**! This is why David had already rejected Saul’s armor and the tried and true method of fighting for two very important reasons:

1. “*I cannot walk with these*”: We can see this young man trying to walk around in Saul’s armor and not being able to do so. Much of the focus of the comments on this passage are from the perspective of David recognizing that he could not put on another man’s armor to do what God wanted him to do. I do not disagree with this view but I find it interesting to look at this verse from the perspective of Saul who wanted to send out David in his armor without risking anything himself. I would be very much content with sending out God’s provisions for warfare on someone else and staying on the hill and watching them work! I’m not always that eager to by stretched in my faith even though I’ll talk about God’s provisions and even help others put them on. Ah but God will have none of that as **security is not in the provisions but rather in the Lord who has provided them in the first place**!
2. “*I have not tested them*”: David’s second comment is also penetrating as twice we are told in this verse that David had no experience in Saul’s (*or for that matter any other man's*) armor. I’m not suggesting that we can not learn from watching how others do battle but what I am suggesting is that the greatest asset we have is our own learning to trust the Holy Spirit as He moves in and through our lives. Every battle we have gone through tests us and strengthens us. It is a glorious thing to see the natural way in which the Holy Spirit posses a human but it is not something that we can duplicate. No we must allow Him to have all of us then and only then will we experience the victory that He has accomplished through others.

**Hebrews 11:32f - 40**

**“The World was not worthy”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 32f-34 Samuel and the prophets**
3. **Vs. 35-38 Whom the world was not worthy**
4. **Vs. 39-40 Something better**
5. **Introduction**

The heroes of the Hall of Faith stand enshrined in scripture as evidence of God’s power as they are honored for simply trusting in God. These people were called to “***subdue***” literal nations as God worked through His people Israel as they preformed acts of righteousness on His behalf over God’s people. Many of them obtained what God had promised, others never lived to see it. This section is placed by the writer as a reminder to his readers that ***faith is not limited; it is equally valuable to a person as it ENABLES as well as EQUIPS: A person of faith can suffer and be strong***. ***The accomplishments of faith as evidenced in Hebrews chapter aa from our perspective may seem to be varied and valued differently; but all indicated to the fallen world that it was not and never will be worthy of those who have trusted a Mighty God and to us they serve as a reminder that this NEVER has been or ever will be our home!***

1. **Vs. 32f-34 Samuel and the prophets**

Samuel is added to this list of the people of faith though he was a prophet and not a king or warrior. Samuel fought the fight of faith equal to any battle that a soldier faced as he squared off against the two greatest enemies of the faith a nation can fight against, ***national idolatry and immorality***. ***His call was to stand up in the middle of a polluted society and speak the truth of God’s Word to a nation that didn’t care to listen***. ***The battles he fought were not against the Amorites of the Philistines but rather against his own people.*** **It takes far more faith to stand up for God against your family and friends than it does those who outwardly oppose the faith**. ***Look out upon the horizon of the enemy’s attacks against truth and you will notice that he has gained far more territory through social pressure than he has military attacks***. Yet, through out Samuel’s life from the time he wore the lien ephod in 2:18 until his death he stood for God’s Word against a nation that didn’t want to listen to it.

Next the author mentions “***The Prophets***” who are unnamed except for Samuel but non-the-less risked everything for the Lord. They didn’t fight on the battle field made of dirt but won victories against the opposition as they trusted God. The exploits of verses 33-34 are general but we can adequately guess some of the references as being: ***Daniel, who stopped the mouths of lions.*** And Daniel’s three friends ***Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego who quenched the violence of fire***. The Greek word for “***subdued***” means to “***fight down or to overcome***” and signifies a desperate contest where as “***worked righteousness***” is speaking of a personal virtue but also of how this personal virtue was on display in public. ***Faith was evident in these servants by the way they exhibited their influence in what God had called them to do***. The writers point is show that these people of faith accomplished through their trust in God what ever was needed be that political or overcoming enemies. ***God works through those that trust Him and the obstacle no matter how large or small can not stand against Him***!

1. **Vs. 35-38 Whom the world was not worthy**

Vs. 35-38 “*Women received their dead raised to life again*..” is a reference to both **Elijah** (***who brought back from the dead the widow of Zarephath child in 1 Kings 17:8-23***) and his predecessor **Elisha** who did the same for ***the Shunammite woman’s son in 2 Kings 4:18-37***. The point the author is making is that both of these prophets and mothers believed God for the resurrection and God did as He had promised. These women suffered through the loss of their children but because they trusted God their pain was alleviated when they witnessed their children raised back to life. God may not always work this way but for the believer He will always raise those who trust Him alone back to life and not this mere resuscitation that these two mothers went through as their children like Lazarus would die again. “***Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection***.” Some afflictions mentioned in verses 36-37 God gives power by faith **THROUGH the trial** instead of **OVER the trial**. ***But it is a greater victory when God grants by faith power to endure THROUGH a trial than to triumph OVER the the trial as He walks with them through out its entirety. Oft times it requires more courage to “HOLD ON” then it does too “FIGHT ON” to “ENDURE” than it does to “ESCAPE” and when this is true it will require faith.*** **Some of the scenarios mentioned in in 36-37 would have be totally escapable for the non-believer but are unavoidable for the person of faith. Those of faith suffer because of God’s Word and their trust in Him and it would be a far greater torture to to deny God and His Word then it would be to endure the punishment of the world for their faith**. As such **they would not accept the terms for their release even if it meant their death or imprisonment**. The word “***tortured***” in verse 35 is a word that indicated a person being stretched over a drum and beaten with clubs until they died. **The true believer would rather be beaten to death then compromise their faith; not willing to sacrifice on the altar called immediate for the promise of the future in Christ**. ***These are willing to accept the WORSE the world can distribute so they can receive the best God has in store for those that trust Him.*** They did all of this because they believed that they would receive a better resurrection then being spared the temporary alleviation of suffering!

 Some endured “***mockings and scourgings***” which ***speaks of both mental as well as physical suffering***. We can’t be sure but **Jeremiah was one who went through both of these as he was emotional abused as well as physically abused and was known as the weeping prophet but his weeping WAS NOT for what he endured at the hands of his own countrymen but for the people he was called to speak the Word of God too as they rejected his message.** Others went through imprisonment and the embracement that accompanied such a thing as they were numbered with the transgressors. Some received capital punishment of stoning which was a Jewish punishment like Zechariah the son of Jehoiada (2 Chron 24:20-22) while others like Isaiah was sawn into according to tradition during the reign of Manasseh. All of which was a result of people becoming so irritated by the message that they were called to deliver. They weren’t able to make a living and wondered from place to place having nothing but animal skins to ware and were “***destitute, afflicted and tormented***”. **The world wanted to rid themselves of such people but in their so doing all that they proved was that God agreed with the them in as much that the very people they believed shouldn’t be allowed to live among them God said that they weren’t worthy of them**! Peter said of them in 1 Peter 1:4that they were headed“*to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven.*.” ***Their primary concern was not for the safety of their lives but rather for the safety of their faith***! ***The world drove them out, believing them unworthy to live, but God saw the world unworthy of have having them!*** The word for “***caves***” in verse 38 is a word in the Greek that means a hole or a place you can see through, it is the same word used for Moses in Ex. 33:22 where God placed him in the “*Cleft or hole*” when His presence passed by him.

1. **Vs. 39-40 Something better**

Vs. 39-40 These saints held onto a living hope and had the courage to count the cost through faith of the salvation God had promised! ***What happened to them during this life was not what they were concerned about “as they obtained a good testimony through faith” even though they didn’t immediately “receive the promise***.” **The failure to obtain the promise was not due to either God’s lack or their lack of faith; instead it was due to the fact that God’s plan had something better in view and that was that such a delay was for their perfection**. And **their perfection was dependent upon our perfection**! **Their faith was not about an immediate fulfillment, it was all about the permanent and ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises**! God had provided something better for those under the New Covenant which not until the time of Jesus finished work on theirs and our behalf their salvation would not be completed. **With out Jesus’ perfect work of atonement NO salvation was complete no matter how much faith they may have had. Their faith was based upon what Jesus WOULD DO while our salvation is based upon WHAT JESUS HAS DONE.** **They were looking forward and we are looking back; they trusted in a promise and we trust in a completed historical fact the finished work of Jesus and the results of such trust is the same for both**. Though their salvation was not completed in their lifetime they are no 2nd class believers. Jesus said to Thomas in John 20:29 “*Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*.”

**Hebrews 12:1-2**

**“Running the race of faith”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1a Right motivation**
3. **Vs. 1b Right Training**
4. **Vs. 2 Right Coach**
5. **Introduction**

The 12th chapter starts with a glance back as well as one forward both through an illustration of a foot race. The word for ***race*** here is where we get our English word for “***agony***” which describes anything but a passive stroll. **This race will require self-discipline, determination and perseverance.** But in context to this letter which is written not just to believers but to those who are intellectually convinced but have yet to become spiritually committed to Christ the first step is that they need to get into the race by faith. Some of the Hebrew speaking church were just pretenders Paul had address people like this before in his letters like 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 where he wrote, “*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*” The exhortation has to do with true faith that properly motivates as in athletic events if you don’t have the proper motivation you will have little or no desire to win. I think many in the professing church today are suffering no desire to win, they are content to be spectators in the stands of the church simply waiting for the spiritual contest to end so they can enter into the celebration as winners. This is why Paul continued on in 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 saying, “*Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*.” The “***competition of the Christian***” is **different in two important ways**:

1. ***First, we DON’T compete against other believers, some how trying to outdo each other in works or church pursuits so as to receive more recognition. Our race is not of works but of faith. We compete only by faith not with each other but against the enemy of our souls and his world system and even our own flesh all which does everything it can to defeat our faith***.
2. ***Second, our success is not because of our superior strength or training instead our strength comes from the Holy Spirit and our training of daily dying to our self centeredness***.

The writer mentions three truths that can help the believer run a successful race of faith:

1. Vs. 1a **Right motivation**
2. Vs. 1b **Right training**: The writer mentions three things that will enable to run faster:
	1. ***Shedding the pounds***: “*Let us lay aside every weight*..”
	2. ***Right equipment, “less is more”***: “*and the sin which so easily ensnares us..*”
	3. ***The race is a marathon not a sprint***: “*and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us*.”
3. Vs. 2 **Right Coaching**
4. **Vs. 1a Right motivation**

Vs. 1a The writer mentions our **right motivation** to continue our race; namely the cloud of witnesses that were mentioned in 11:4-40. The phrase “*surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses*” can cause some to try to place these saints of the 11th chapter in the stands above us as we run our race. ***A cheering section of spectators rooting for us as we make our way around the course set before us***. While this may appeal to us it DOESN’T fit the picture at hand for three reasons:

* 1. ***These are not mere spectators they are those who have only just finished the race themselves***.
	2. ***They do not rest in the defined stands but instead they gather around the course set before us so numerous as to be unable to define their beginning or end***.
	3. ***Their testimony is not the indistinguishable applause or roar of an entertained crowd. But the specific exhortation of those that know the race we are presently on because they have just finished it themselves and have themselves gathered around the course to shout words of exhortation, encouragement and instruction to us***.

The Greek word for cloud is **NOT** the detached defined cloud that we here in Montana are familiar with but rather the great mass of clouds that covers the sky with out definition or distinction. There only distinction is that they are known as “***witnesses***” and the Greek word is “*martus*” which means “*one who testifies to what they have seen and heard.*” The word doesn’t include the meaning that this was their assessment of themselves but that is what others regarded them as. They can testify of the effective way of faith to reaching the prize and goal of salvation and victory. These are NOT people who just watch others run but are instead our fellow “***teammates***” who know first hand how to run the race we are currently running and to do so effectively through the long haul. These men and women all ran our same race and are examples of people who kept running no matter the cost, they through faith never gave up. We can glean much about our own race by reading about theirs and the encouragement is that the writer is saying through their life of faith; “***Run like they did! You can make it if you run by faith the race the way that did. These people had less equipment and light by which to run their race of faith, if they can do it so can you***!” These heroes of our faith are not “***spectating fans in the stands***” ***and we are not trying to impress them with our effort***! They are there for us as witnesses of faith in the Living God whom they trusted to the end, they are our examples not our onlookers! They are **NOT** looking “***DOWN***” on us, we are looking ***UP*** at them and their lives as living examples to follow. There is a reason that we go on the internet and look up people who have successful completed projects that we are in the midst of doing….*it’s because we can watch them and become encouraged to trust that if we follow the course prescribed we too will finish*. We trust in the same God who “***stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword and out of weakness were made strong.***” Since God accomplished all of that through those before us of faith then He can do so now!

1. **Vs. 1b Right Training**

Vs. 1b The next thing the writer mentions is that the race we are on requires **right training** and he makes his readers aware of ***three things that effect the way you run by either being a hindrance or will stop your race altogether***:

* ***Shedding the pounds***: “*Let us lay aside every weight*..” The word in the Greek for “*every weight*” is a word that means “*bulk or mass*” and can be in other circumstances harmless but in a race of faith slows us down. Our excess pounds of flesh divert our attention and energy as well as saps our endurance which can lead to a lack of enthusiasm. ***We can not win when we are carrying excess weight***. It can be a certain habit that on its own there is nothing wrong with it but the problem is not the habit or the extra weight it is what having is does, slow us down. Speed and endurance are both equally effected by excess weight.
* ***Right equipment, “less is more”***: “*and the sin which so easily ensnares us..*” Another hindrance is found in the phrase “***so easily ensnares us***..” The Greek word implies these snares as “*quickly, effectively and cleverly*” encircling the runner. Much ***like a long flowing robe would on a runner would soon cause the runner to fall***. To much clothing is an obstacle that those that run a race soon discover. Fancy sweatsuits may look cool as you approach the race but they will only hinder your run once you begin. ***There are far too many believers concerned more about how they “LOOK” on the race then how well they are running!*** I believe that as it relates to this letter the “LOOK” that many of these people in this letter were wearing was ***the robes of religious righteousness***. They needed to strip the rags of religion and strip down to running in Jesus’ righteousness instead. Paul wrote this in Galatians 2:20 when he said, “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*.” He again warned them in Galatians 3:3 “*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh*?” Unfortunately, there are some on the track with us that are not content with just not running their race effectively they have decided that they want to hinder those running and lay down on the coarse to keep others from winning the race. The context here is “**THE** ***sin***” and not a long list “SINS” thus the passage would be “**THE** ***sin of unbelief***”. It was this sin that was keeping the unsaved reader from coming to faith in Jesus as High Priest.
* ***The race is a marathon not a sprint***: “*and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us*.” The final thing mentioned about training is to make certain that the runner realizes that they are in a marathon not a sprint. ***If all you have done in your Christian life is thrived on the enthusiasm of lively Christian entertainment put forth on Sunday, you may soon find yourself discouraged as you have only been equipped for a sprint all the while you are on a long distance road that will require the exercise of moment by moment faith***. They start off way ahead on Sunday after the worship concert and the dynamic pep talk only to quit by Monday. Some realize this and head back to mid week for another quick sprint lesson on how to run fast for a short distance instead of training for the marathon they are really on. Every Coach worth his or her salt will tell their athletes “***How you practice is how you will perform***!” Is it any wonder that the Church isn’t performing well when most of the Coaches have become super stars and are encouraging no or little practice? There is nothing more discouraging for a professing Christian than to run a 100-yard dash and think they have completed the race only to find out that have just begun!
1. **Vs. 2 Right Coach**

Vs. 2a The last point the writer makes about our race of faith has to do with our Coach whom he identifies as “***Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith***”. With this description of our Coach the writer started with the exhortation to his readers to “*look unto Jesus*”. The Greek word for “***looking***” means to “*turn one’s eyes or mind away from other things and fix them unto Jesus*”. This exhortation describes a running technique letting the runner know that they can ran faster if the distractions from the stadium are minimized by their fixed gaze upon Jesus. If the runner takes their eyes off of Jesus, their stride and gate will slow down and be less efficient. The warning is to avoid becoming preoccupied with themselves by paying to much attention to what they are doing instead of keeping their eyes fixed upon what our Coach Jesus has done. We can also get our eyes unto the other Christians on the road with us and start trying to either emulate them or criticize them both of which can slow us down. The point is that Jesus our Coach doesn’t want us to focus on anyone but Him so we won’t stumble!

Next our Coach Jesus is described in reference to our faith as: Both the “*author*” and “*finisher*” of our faith. The word “***author***” is misleading in the English as in the Greek the word is a compound that means “***to lead***” and ***“the first***”. Thus the idea is that ***Jesus is the chief leader and alone has furnished the example of how to run the race***. All those who encircled our course have learned to run from fixing their eyes upon Him. He alone is the perfect example of faith and those runners described in the 11th chapter learned to follow His example. He is also the “***finisher***” of our faith and the Greek has it as “*to carry completely to the finish perfectly*.” He alone has carried the race through to completion, He has said so in John 19:30 with those words “*It is finished*”! Since Jesus is our chief example of how to finish our race of faith perfectly we are told two things that we can glean from examining His race.

1. ***Who FOR the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross***”: The normal interpretation of this passage says that, “*Jesus endured the cross* ***in order*** *that* ***He might obtain certain joy*** *which was placed before Him as a reward for His sufferings.*” But the problem with this interpretation is the wrongful interpretation of the word “**FOR**” which in the Greek at this time meant “***instead of***”. That coupled with the Greek word “***set***” which means “***lying before***” means that the “JOY” was ***the full glory that Jesus had in His preincarnate state with God the Father before the world began and in exchange for this He accepted the cross and shame that went with it***. The idea is that ***we can see the heroic nature of Jesus*** has **He renounced the JOY already in His possession in exchange for shame and death upon the cross.** This coincides with Paul’s statement in Philippians 2:6-8 where we read that Jesus, “*who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*” What this tells us is that: ***We are to run our race in His never ending love for us!***
2. “***And has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God***.” The words “*has sat down*” are in the perfect tense in the Greek which indicate that after His work of providing a salvation that it was forever finished and Jesus demonstrated this by sitting down and remaining seated. The reason for this is that He never again needs to repeat His sacrifice for sinner as it was “once for all”. Further more His seated position is one of preeminence at the right hand of the Father. What this says to us is that: ***We are to run our race with the knowledge that once we have finished we will have forever received His victory as our own***!

**Hebrews 12:3-11**

**“Father knows best”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 3-8 The way of Jesus**
3. **Vs. 9-11 Father knows best**
4. **Introduction**

The writer answers a very important question that every person running on the part of the course of difficulties and disappointments asks themselves: “*Why am I having to run on this section*?” As I stated last week the challenge for us “***Faith Athletes***” is **more mental than it is physical** and without dealing with the motivation we are easily discouraged. So to these harassed and persecuted Christians who are battling discouragement the writer offers encouragement. ***The illustration changes in verses 3-11 from a spiritual marathon to that of a family.*** ***Though the Christian life involves running, working and enduring it does so within our relationship to God and other believers***. The emphasis of this section is how we are trained to run the race and why we need to stay under God’s training no matter how difficult it becomes. First and foremost, we must understand that God’s training or discipline is never punitive towards His children it is instead always corrective in nature, designed for our benefit. All our punishment has already been placed upon our Lord at the Cross, therefore we know that what discipline we now are growing through is for our benefit not our punishment.

1. **Vs. 3-8 The way of Jesus**

Vs. 3-8 The first thing the writer says is in verses 3-4 “***It could be worse***!” He reminds his readers that they had not yet resisted to the point of shedding their blood. Instead of complaining they ought to be praising God for having been spared. In Romans 8:32 Paul said, “*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things*?” When Jeremiah began to complain about his course the Lord said to him in Jeremiah 12:5 “*If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?*” The writer has told his readers that Jesus is the greatest example of the life of faith again exhorts his readers to consider him by way of comparing him in five ways:

1. Vs. 3 ***What they suffered and why they suffered it***: “*Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls*.” This first comparison is that of what Jesus suffered and why; against what these persecuted readers were suffering and why. Jesus endured suffering from the very hands of the sinners He was being sacrificed to saved. Paul wrote of this in 2 Corinthians 5:21 saying, “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*.” These persecuted Hebrews were being mistreated and persecuted by their own fellow Jews because they refused to participate in the temple sacrifices that only pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus. The point is they were only being asked to continue to trust in His sacrifice, where as if Jesus hadn’t endured there wouldn’t have been any sacrifice to trust in! Jesus has made the ONLY WAY possible for us in which we can be saved and all we need to do is CONTINUE TO TRUST HIS SACRIFICE! This was the exact point Paul wrote about in his letter to the Roman believers in Romans 8:35-39 when he said, “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*.”
2. Vs. 4 ***The amount of suffering compared to that of Jesus***: “*You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*” ***The second comparison has to do with both the type of suffering and amount of suffering when compared with Jesus***. The Greek word of “*resisted*” means to “*stand against*” and we see the writer saying that their “***stand***” ***was against the temptation of renouncing their professed faith in Jesus in order to avoid persecution and as of yet it had not yielded bloodshed***. Jesus suffering wasn’t against the temptation of professed faith but “***striving against our sin***”! ***The Greek words describes an agonizing fight to the death against OUR SIN in which in order to defeat our sin He had to die in the fight***!
3. Vs. 5-6 ***The purpose of the suffering***: The writer now quotes Proverbs 3:11-12 to consider these persecutions as instructional allowed by God for the purpose of training, educating and encouraging them of the value of Jesus’ sacrifice and against returning to the temporary sacrifices of the temple. In a sense these persecutions verified the validity of Jesus true sacrifice as why else would satan fight so hard against it? The context is that of the way in which our earthly fathers would discipline us as a way of training us and educating us in a particular path.
4. Vs. 7 ***What suffering reveals about whom we belong***: The Greek word rendered “**IF**” in this verse is unfortunate as it should be rendered “***IT IS FOR CHASTENING THAT YOU ARE ENDURING.***” The letter was written to the “***professing***” church made up of both saved and unsaved and both groups were being persecuted because both had left the temple sacrifices and identified with Jesus but only those who remained under the persecution would demonstrate that they were the child of God and those who returned to the sacrifices proved that they were as John said of them in 1 John 2:19 saying, “*They went out from us,* ***but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us****; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us*.”
5. Vs. 8 ***Suffering is instructive not punitive***: Israel had understood suffering only from the perspective as a sign of God’s displeasure and therefore punitive in nature instead of a sign of His love and relationship with them. The early church also was being tested in this way viewing their persecution as punitive instead of instructive. In an earthly relationship everyone knows that you don’t discipline the neighbor children and it is a sign to us that as we would submit to God’s discipline that we are indicating that we see Him as our Heavenly Father and are under that relationship. Before we were a part from the family of God now we are apart from the family of God.
6. **Vs. 9-11 Father knows best**

Vs. 9-11 The second thing the writer reminds them is that ***difficulties prove our relationship to our Heavenly Father***. Every child knows that their ***parents don’t discipline the neighbor children***. The point is if we are going through struggles then we need to thank the Lord because He is showing you that you are His child. And when this happens with or earthly parents and we show them respect how much more shall we do so to our Heavenly Father? Our earthly parents did so at at their discretion doing what they thought was right when perhaps it wasn’t. But our Heavenly Father is never wrong and always does what is right. He can only send us what we need at the right time. Someone has well defined God’s children as those who are ***completely fearless, continually cheerful, and constantly in trouble.*** The word “*furthermore*” indicates a new subject to consider but it is still a contrast but this time it deals with the contrast between our earthly fathers and our Heavenly Father.

1. Vs. 9 The first area to compare has to do with how we valued, respected and loved our earthly fathers instructive discipline. We didn’t doubt their love for us, we believed that such discipline was for our benefit even though it came from mere human limited wisdom. So why do we doubt God’s intentions for us when His knowledge and love for us is “***universal***” and ***without any possibility error***? Furthermore, our earthly father’s disciplined only concerned things that are temporary where as our Heavenly Gather’s discipline is not only for earth but through out eternity.
2. Vs. 10 The second comparison has to with two aspects of our discipline:
3. ***It’s Duration***: Our earthly fathers discipline is both imperfect as well as limited in scope. It primarily is centered upon a brief time of our human development during our youth. Furthermore, it is based upon human wisdom and insight as it was “***what seemed best to them***”. Its aim was to get us to only adulthood and offered nothing beyond that. Not so with our heavenly Father’s discipline as its aim reaches past our youth, through our adulthood and on into eternity. It also was not based upon what “seemed best” but what “IS BEST” for us and not reasoned through limited wisdom and experience but unlimited.
4. ***It’s Dedication***: Here the view is short sided and fallible nature of earthly discipline when compared to that of our Heavenly Father whose passion is only for our benefit and that we might be partakers of of His holiness. Submitting to God’s discipline is the truest and shortest course to maturity that will never be out of style.

Vs. 11 Finally God doesn’t rejoice in our troubles but He in His wisdom knows what trouble ultimately does for us. He doesn’t want us to fake a “***Hallelujah, it hurts!***” What ***He does want you to understand is this present discipline has an end and a purpose***. “*It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been rained by it*.” This reminds us that it is possible to go through trials and never have them produce their desired blessings in our lives. We can spend all our energy and time trying to get out of the trial instead of “***getting everything out of the trial***!” If you need to go through the trial of God’s discipline, then don’t complain your way through in gain you way through it! The final evaluation has to do with permanence of what God’s discipline produces in us. There is no such thing in the midst of discipline as it being pleasurable be that human parents or our Heavenly Father. What the child of God is encouraged to do is not look at the tool but what it creates in us namely the “*peaceable fruit of righteousness*”.

**Hebrews 12:12-17**

**“Demonstrating Jesus to the world”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 12-13 Designed to take a beating**
3. **Vs. 14 Loving people, loving God**
4. **Vs. 15-17 What the Grace of God is missing**
5. **Introduction**

The writer started out in the 11th chapter by providing historical ancestors who went before the Jews, successfully completing the race of faith. The 12th chapter is an exhortation towards endurance and to do this the writer answers the pressing question as to “***Why, these trials are necessary for the believer.***”

1. First, the writer makes the argument that the “***POSITION***” of the believer in light of these trials is the indication that we ARE God’s children because they are not punitive in nature but guiding and instructional. Along those same lines he reminded them that such instruction was not limited in scope or duration as family discipline is as it is not only concerned with 12 years and making an adult but reaches into eternity with all the wisdom of God the Father. The focus of this was to show the “***INWARD***” purpose of persecution as it **develops maturity**!
2. Now in this section the writer mentions more reasons for the trials of persecution. The purpose here is not to teach truth but to encourage the exercise of it. Instead of the “***Position of Persecutions***” for the believer the writer moves from the positional to ***PRACTICAL*** and answers what **the immediate PRACTICAL PURPOSE OF TRIALS beyond making us more like Jesus**. The focus of this section is “***OUTWARD***” as we learn that such trials are used by the Lord for ***demonstrating Jesus to the world***!
3. **Vs. 12-13 Designed to take a beating**

The primary practical results of persecution and trials in a person’s life outwardly is: ***Making a visible demonstration of the advantages of living life by trusting in Jesus Christ***! Oft times all the world sees with Christians is negative in their estimation as they notice that followers of Christ are those folks who “*Don’t do what they used to do*!” *The world sees us as those that sucked the wind out of what they consider essential for living and having fun*! Though believers have stopped many practices that enslaved us and destroyed us, doing so isn’t what attracts non-Christians to Christ. ***Instead, what causes the world to stand up and take notice is what Followers of Jesus can do that they are unable to do, it’s how we handle the trails and difficulties of life that separates us from others in this world***!

* 1. Vs. 12-13 First the writer uses very descriptive language saying: “*Strengthen the hands and which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet*.” The writer goes back to his marathon metaphor and is saying that Jesus in our lives will strength our hands and feeble knees: ***The trails and difficulties in the lives of ordinary people tend to cause them to immediately lose their productivity (hands that hang down and feeble knees) and their reason for continuing on as they lose their purpose and passion***. But saints this ***ought not be true with believers in Christ as the things that weaken the purpose and passion for living for non-believers has the opposite effect upon followers of Jesus as we are strengthened by these things as nothing can separate us from the love of Christ for when we are weak then we are strong***. The other aspect of this phrase is that trials and tribulations in the life of non-believers tend to make their journey far more difficult to travel upon, their course becomes full of obstacle's instead of opportunities. The Greek word for “path” refers to the tracks a cart or chariot makes and it use suggest that we are living a path to follow an example to others so its best that we make sure we are running a straight race. Where as the ***trials have a strange way of removing the clutter of the world for the believer and our direction straightens right out***. Saints, ***Christians are built and designed for the obstacles of life and we are trained and empowered by the Word of God and the Spirit of God to travel this course. So where the world sees only obstacles and their life grinds to a halt the believer’s life sees the obstacles as opportunities and overcomes them in stride***! That is why the wrier says, “*so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed*”.

**III.Vs. 14 Loving people, loving God**

* 1. Vs.14 Second the writer says, “*Pursue peace, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*.” This phrase has caused some confusion as to the meaning but it is clarified in the Greek as “*holiness*” is a word that is also translated “*sanctification*” which is defined as being ***set apart for it’s proper purpose***. It specifically is used to describe the temple instruments that had a designated purpose in the temple. What this verse is saying is that ***trials enable the world to observe two distinct qualities in a believer that they don’t see in anyone else***:
1. ***Pursue peace with all people***: **Loving people**! ***Persecution gives those in the world the opportunity to see transformed humanity’s interaction with their follow man.*** When the world is under duress we often see the worst in man’s inhumanity to their fellow man. There is no civility, no love for others it is replaced by self serving hatred. But when trials come upon Cristian’s we ought to witness an other’s centered mentality that considers others better than one’s own self. ***Persecution upon the follower of Christ brings out the best in them towards humanity even those that mistreat them and spitefully use them***. It’s a powerful witness to the work of Christ upon a heart as believers become more giving and compassionate towards others when they are themselves suffering!
2. ***And holiness, without which no one will see the Lord***: **Loving God**! The next quality is that they better fulfill what their true purpose is upon this earth. The question is; “***What is the purpose of the Christian***?” Jesus tells His disciples what that is in Matthew 5:14-16 when he declared to them, “*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*.” You see without persecutions and trials humanity would never witness us treating them better than we do our selves while in the worst of circumstances and they would never see is exercising our purpose of bring Jesus’ light and love to a broken world!

**IV.Vs. 15-17 What the Grace of God is missing**

* 1. Vs. 15-17 Third the writer says, “***looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God***”: This verse again call attention to the fact that as believers we are living out our lives in front of the world. There is a reality and authenticity to our lives that can not be faked or manufactured and the writer calls it the unmistakable “***grace of God***”. Rather than trying to define it in positive ways the writer describes two things that the “grace of God” in our lives is absent of:
		+ 1. **Vs. 15 Bitterness**: “*lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.*” The grace of God in any life will always be devoid of bitterness, no one can say that they are full of God’s grace and be bitter towards others. Resentment, envy and bitterness are always a byproduct of the flesh and old carnal nature. These things are highly contagious and if one person becomes bitter and continues to be so with an unforgiving spirit it will spread and cause others to be infected by the same condition. It is impossible to grow in the grace of God if a person remains bitter as such a heart condition affects a whole person’s life. So you can always diagnose your heart in the “Grace of God” as it will mean an absence of bitterness.
			2. **Vs. 16-17 Indifference**: “*lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.
			For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears*.” The other thing that will be absent in a believer’s life that is full of the “Grace of God” is that ***they won’t take the things of God lightly***. Esau becomes the poster boy of what an “***indifferent heart***” looks like. The unfortunate story of Esau is found in Genesis 25:29-34, 27:1-40 where we are told that he sold his birth right being the first born for a bowl of red lentils soup. The birth right had two parts to it, the right to the property and the right to the spiritual leadership of the family. Esau had no interest in spiritual truth, we see this not only in selling his birth right but his polygamist marriage to Canaanite women. Esau lived for the here and now and didn’t think that the things God had for him or his family were of any value. Persecution causes people to realize the value of the things of God especially when come too the things God has given each person; TIME, TALENT and TREASUE! Esau’s life centered around self gratification in which the above three gifts were given over to those pursuits instead of the things of God. The grace of God in a believer’s life will always lead them to invest TIME, TALENT and TREASUE in spiritual pursuits not worldly ones. Esau’s pursuits revealed where his heart was and wasn’t. ***The truth of this story is often forgotten as Genesis 25:23 where God had already chosen which of the two twins would have the birth right when He declared to Isaac and Rebekah that the older Esau shall server the younger Jacob. Esau knew this, but in spit of this professed to have what he didn’t posses and that demonstrated that he wasn’t in possession of it all along by selling it for a bowl of soup***! The phrase saying that Esau, “*found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears*.” Is best understood in the Greek when we consider the different Greek words for “repentance” the first word means “***regret or remorse for one’s actions because of the consequences***” where the other means a “***change of mind consisting of a reversal of moral purpose***”. Esau was sorry for the consequences of his actions not because they were wrong but because they didn’t turn out the way he had wanted them too.

**Hebrews 12:18-24**

**“Exceeding Endurance”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 18-21 Mount Sinai**
3. **Vs. 22-24 Mount Zion**
4. **Introduction**

The writer has given his readers both the position as well as the purpose of trails and persecution: ***To inwardly bring about maturity and spiritual growth and to outwardly be a witness to an unbelieving world for the hope that lies within***. Next in verses 18-24 we immediately recognize the personal appeal of the writer as he writes, “***For you***” as the focus here is not upon the position and purpose of persecution but rather to motivate the person who is in the midst of it as the writer was writing. Many of these professing Hebrews were facing extreme pressure and were having to make a decision to neglect their tradition, they were facing persecution and loss even of their life of they continued with Jesus. The writer doesn’t deny such real fears but instead of those fears he warns them of something far worse than this and that is the fear of God’s judgment! The fear of accepting Jesus and the persecution which may follow if they do should be contrasted with the judgment that they would receive from God by rejecting His Son and His sacrifice. Their fear should not be of coming to Mount Zion but of turning back to Mount Sinai! Every person will be judged on one of two bases. Either by the law of grace, by their works of Jesus finished work, by the provisions of Sinai or the provisions of Zion. God has two sets of books, one is recorded every name that rejected Jesus and in the other are the names of those that trusted God’s only Son and His sacrifice. Those whose names are in the “Lambs book of life” are judged by Jesus righteousness and those whose names aren’t there are judged by their own righteousness which Isa 64:6 tells us are a filthy rag.

1. **Vs. 18-21 Mount Sinai**

Vs. 18 The mention of Esau in verse 16 leads the writer to speak of other first testament comparisons with the New Testament. And this one involves the response to two different mountains Sinai and Zion. Sinai is the Mountain that “*may not be touched*” and the word in the Greek means superficial contact, this along with the description given by the writer of Mount Sinai as “*burning with fire and to the blackness, darkness and tempest*” are all meant to describe the fear associated with the first testament. The contrast is this description when compared to coming to Jesus as the Messiah and His work on the cross.

 The old covenant is associated with Mount Sinai because that is where God spoke to Moses and the Covenant was instituted. It was the covenant of judgment and fear as it said, “Do this, or don’t do that, or you will be judged.” To this the writer says “*You have not come to this mountain.*” No sinner could come near to this mountain as they couldn’t witness God’s holiness and live. The purpose of this Old Covenant encounter at Mount Sinai was to convince the people of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. The people were understandably terrified as they stood at a distance and trembled as they plead with Moses and said “*You speak to Him, least we die.*” The reason the writer brings this up is to warn some of these Hebrews about going back to the covenant of the law with the knowledge of Jesus’ sacrifice. Paul called it in 2 Corinthians 3:7 “*the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones*..” At Mount Sinai a sinful and unforgiven person stands at a distance from an infinitely holy and perfect God. The purpose of this covenant is that forever shows a person is an awareness of their own sin and failure, to bring people face to face with their own sinfulness with no place to hide. The law makes no allowances for sin, no exceptions or justifications nothing less than perfect obedience. Paul said of the law in Romans 7:9-11 “*I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.*” And in Galatians 3:10 he writes, “*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.*” These first testament Hebrews were obedient from a position that didn’t want lose something from God instead of the position of grace that realize that they already had been given everything from God. Over time they naturally concluded that they “deserved” God’s blessings by their works. The writer uses two mountains and the Israelites response to these mountains, “Mount Sinai” and “Mount Zion”. The comparison is more than geographical it’s relational as the writer is saying, “***You have come, not to Mount Sinai (the place of fear and trembling), but to Mount Zion, the place of grace; the new Jerusalem, the city of the living God***.”

Vs. 19-21 The writer continues to describe the scene of the Israelite wonders upon their revelation of the law at Mount Sinai as the delivery of the law was accompanied by terror, the reason for this walk down memory lane is so that the reader would recall the reaction of those ancestors who first witnessed the giving of the Law so that they would not go back to that dispensation of how God initially dealt with sinful man and instead would go past the terrifying shadow and move on to the grace-filled fulfillment of Jesus’ sacrifice. To touch or handle the mountain where the law came down from was to profane it and even Moses according Deut. 9:19 was frightened away from it.

1. **Vs. 22-24 Mount Zion**

Vs. 22-24 The writer contrasts the 1st testament Jews what the ones that had heard and responded to the message of Jesus as they had come into a new relationship through the door of Jesus. Instead of “returning to Mount Sinai” the reader is encouraged to continue to approach Mount Zion, described as the “***city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem***.” The mountain of the New Covenant is Mount Zion and it represents the heavenly Jerusalem. It is opposite of Mount Sinai:

* ***Sinai is untouchable, Zion is approachable***
* ***Sinai symbolizes the law, Zion symbolizes God grace***
* ***Sinai was terrifying, Zion is inviting***
* ***Sinai is closed to all, Zion is open to all***
* ***Sinai was covered in darkness, Zion is the city of light***

Believers are being told they HAVE COME to Mount Zion as they were already of the gracious mountain, they were already citizens of heaven, already dwelling in the presence of God. Because they were believers in Jesus they they enjoyed seven blessings of Mount Zion:

* + 1. ***The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem***: Coming to Jesus is synonymous coming to heaven, as He is the only “Door” by which a person can enter in. That is where out treasure, hope and inheritance is! Currently He is here with us in our heart but soon He will take us bodily to be where He has been preparing a place for us, that where He is we shall always be. We are on earth now as His ambassadors, representing Him to people in a foreign country.
		2. ***An innumerable company of angles, to the generable assembly***: This describes a public gathering of a festival. There were an innumerable number of angels at Sinai but they weren’t their celebrating, they were blowing trumpets of judgment. When we come to Zion we are gathering for a celebration with the angels. Paul said in Romans 8:21-22 “*creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*.”
		3. ***Church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven***: This is the body of Christ, those who have received their inheritance, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus. These are those who are “enrolled in heaven” whose names are written in the Lambs book of life! (Rev. 21:27)
		4. ***To God the judge of all***: On Mount Zion, we come directly into the presence of God, as Luke 23:45 tells us the “veil of the temple was torn in two”. God’s presence in Christ has been opened because of Jesus’s sacrifice. This concept was completely incomprehensible to the Jews.
		5. ***To the spirits of just men made perfect***: These are all the First Testament saints who were looking forward to forgiveness, peace and deliverance. We will join Abraham, Abel, Moses and David in the household of God. We will not be inferior in righteousness with any of them because like them our righteousness is by faith in Jesus alone!
		6. ***To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant***: Supremely we come to Jesus who is the mediator of a new covenant with the promise of 1 John 3:2 where we are told that, “*Now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*.”
		7. ***To the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel***: To come Zion is to come to the atoning blood of redemption in Jesus’ own blood. And the readers by faith will join Him there as Jesus is the mediator of a better agreement where His blood speaks of ***vindication*** and ***victory*** instead of Abel’s blood which spoke to God about ***vengeance***.

***Because of Jesus there is no problem between man and God that is not settled by his blood.*** There is no longer any question of guilt. We are as Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus that “***to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the beloved***.” Gone forever is the slippery slope of maintain works to be accepted, our acceptance is in Jesus work not our own! ***What is in view with regards to our security is not our continual failure but instead Jesus Finished success***! Further more because of Jesus work we have all of His resources at our disposal all operated through the power of the Holy Spirit! This is the same power available to use that raised Jesus from the dead! This is why Paul proclaimed the victory in Romans 8:31 “***If God is for us, who can be against us?***”

**Hebrews 12:25-29**

**“*God behind the shadows*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 25-27 See to it**
3. **Vs. 28-29 The work of Fire**
4. **Introduction**

We come to the fifth and last great warning in this book! They are:

* **2:1-4 *First warning of rejecting the salvation through the Son***
* **3:7 – 4:13 *Second warning of rejecting a mightier mediator***
* **5:11 – 6:20 *Third warning of rejecting spiritual maturity***
* **10:26-39 *Fourth warning of forgetting faith***
* **12:25-29 *Fifth warning against escaping endurance***

This final warning was written to remind his readers that difficult times have a special purpose. Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 “*But know this, that* ***in the last day’s perilous times will come****: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*” The very fact that such “***perilous times***” are ***times,*** reminds us that they are ***temporary in nature*** and **not permanent**; it also reminds us that ***they have a threefold designed purpose***! As we have already noted the first two purposes the last two weeks:

* 1. Vs. 12-17 ***They cause inward maturity in the believer***!
	2. Vs. 18-24 ***They provide an outward observable witness to the non-believer of the hope that lies within***!
	3. Vs. 25-29 And this week we shall note that: ***They also are God's way of showing humanity what is passing and what is permanent***!
1. **Vs. 25-27 See to it**

Vs. 25 “*See*” in the Greek literally means “***see to it***” the word is in the present imperative which means that it is continuous action, meaning that is something that the reader needs to “***ever be seeing to it***.” The word “*refuse*” in the Greek is a word that means ***to prevent the consequences of an act by protesting against it and disavowing it***. The “*They*” *refers to the Jews of Exodus and the words*, “*if we turn away*” is speaking of and action going on presently. After giving the contrasts between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, the writer says, in effect, “***Here is what you must do***;” “***See that you do not refuse Him who speaks***.” In the very first statement of this letter the writer said in 1:1-2 “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds*.” The point he now makes is that “*Since your ancestors were held accountable for hearing and obeying God when He warned them from Mount Sinai how much more will you be held accountable to hear and obey since God has been speaking to you from Mount Zion*?” Unbelieving disobedient Israel never entered the Promise Land and neither will unbelievers today see the true promised land of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The blessings of the second covenant are immeasurably greater than those of the first covenant but so are the consequences for refusing to obey!

Vs. 26 The writer in verse 26 quotes the prophet Haggai in chapter 2:6 where we read the LORD of hosts say: “*Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land*.” He does so by reminding the reader that the earth shook because of the events from Mount Sinai but he tells them that that is nothing compared to Munt Zion as all heavens and earth will shake. Revelation 6:12-14 describes just such a scene when we are told that after Jesus opens “*the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place*.” Haggai wrote the 2nd shortest book in the First Testament (1,131 words in 38 verses in 2 chapters) and his prophecy was the first chronologically of the post-exile prophets (Zechariah and Malachi being the other two). But **Haggai was a prophet of action** as God called him to prophecy to the people who had begun to repatriate the land of promise after the Babylonian captivity during the reign of Darius the Great king of Persia who has issued a decree to return during Nehemiah and Ezra’s time. Based upon Haggai’s prophecy we learn that his ministry only lasted for four months from September 1st too December 24th and was only comprised of three sermons ***each a call to action*** (five times in two chapters he says that they need to “***consider***”). ***That’s what the writer of Hebrews wants his readers to do “CONSIDER” as God was about to shake the heaven and the earth to see what would fall out!*** Have you noticed that God periodically shakes the inhabitants of the earth up a bit? He does so to cause those who dwell on this whirling ball in space to lose security in the temporal so they can refocus their attention on the eternal and permanent. People are trusting in things and those things can never produce true security. In August of 1935 President Roosevelt signed into law the “Social Security Act” a general welfare and insurance program to pay retired workers age 65 and older a continued income after they retire. Now 83 years later I’m not certain anyone would call the “***New Deal***” Social or Secure! Humanity thinks that it can form an organization that will govern themselves and do what is best for their fellow man but because the organization refuses to understand their own sin nature the organization inevitably becomes self serving to specific people in the organization to the determent of the rest of humanity. The organization just gets bigger and bigger and more and more intrusive to dominate more and more of life. And when it all falls apart, which it inevitably does, people will again realize that we trust in the the wrong thing instead of the Right Person! When our economy falls people realize that praying to “***Our Father which art in Washington..***.” is not where we need to be placing our trust. These superficial things are shaken up by God so humanity can see what will remain and is permanent and eternal. The truth is we humans are not smart enough to run our lives. That’s what this passage makes clear. God is shaking the things that can be shaken in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

Vs. 27 The words “*Yet once more*” indicate that the words of the prophet Haggai where he predicted the “***shaking***” was to be final as it proceeds the new heaven and earth of Rev. 21:1. The word “***removal***” in the Greek is a word that means to “***transfer to a new basis or to change***” It refers to ***the act of God transferring to a new basis this present universe which is currently under Adam’s fall, to a universe that is perfect with out the effects of sin***. The “***whole creation***” of Romans 8:22 that “*groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*” speaks not just of the earth but of everything in the celestial realm as well. That tells us that the effects of Adam’s sin, was far greater than just this planet and encompassed everything part of God’s creation the sun moon and stars included. So if there were aliens out there in space craft they wouldn’t be very happy with humans! Everything physical (of those things which can be shaken) will be destroyed and only those things which are eternal will remain.

**III. Vs. 28-29 The work of Fire**

Vs. 28 The word to the Christian is in verse 28, “*since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*” God is light and God is love, and when you put those two together you get fire. Fire is both light and warmth. ***Fire will destroy what it cannot purify, but it purifies what it cannot destroy.*** That describes what is presently happening during trials and tribulation: ***We are passing through the fire which is designed to destroy that which can be destroyed, or to purify that which can never be destroyed.*** God is leading us through these trials and through the difficulties of our day, in order that we may learn to cry what Job, did in his book in Job 23:10 “***He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.***” Jesus replied to Pilate in John 18:36 saying, “***My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.***” Thus our response to this world being shaken ought not be surprise or fear but “*let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*.”

Vs. 29 The closing statement of this chapter is a sever warning: “***For our God is a consuming fire.***” Some of these professing Hebrews had come to the very edge of trusting alone in Jesus finished work on the cross. But going back now no matter how close they had come to believing **IN** Jesus instead of just believing **OF** Jesus would be a worse judgment. They were being told ***NOT to go back religion*** as a worse judgment than Sinai was at hand described not as a mountain consumed with fire from God but God Himself! These folks were described in this very letter in Hebrews 6:4 “***those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit***”. There in that passage we discovered that the:

1. ***Once enlightened***: ***This phrase makes no reference at all to salvation***. There is no mention of new birth or regeneration and to make the “*once enlightened*” as “*born again*”, without any connecting phrases any where in the Bible is a stretch NOT implied in the text or else where. None of the normal New Testament terminology is used to indicate salvation. ***What we have here is two words of a phrase that will indicate who the writer had in mind when he wrote it***:
2. First the word “***once***” in the Greek it means “***once for all***”. This means that the “***enlightening***” **never needed repetition**. From the writer’s perspective to the original readers, **these Hebrews who had listened to the message of the New Testament had experienced the the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment in their minds and hearts to clearly understand what they had heard**. The writer is declaring that this happened to the readers and it never needed to be repeated for the purpose of the lack of understanding or to make it clearer.
3. Second the word “***enlightened***” in the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures always has to do “***intellectual perception of biblical truth***”. The word means to be “*mentally aware of something, to be instructed or informed*”. ***The word carries NO CONNOTATION of response, neither acceptance or rejection.*** ***These Hebrews who the writer is addressing had natural knowledge of factual information***. The only conclusion you can make of **these Hebrews is that they were “*enlightened*” but not saved**!
4. ***Tasted the heavenly gift***: At issue in this advantage is the understanding of what the writer meant by using the word “*tasted*” and what he meant by the phrase “*heavenly gift*”. The word used to describe the advantage given to them by the Holy Spirit was a “***taste***” and it is worthy to note that if the writer intended to describe those he was writing to as believers then why did he say that they merely “***TASTED***” of the “*heavenly gift*” instead of saying that they “**RECEIVED** the heavenly gift”? ***The writer is clear on this, the “heavenly gift” was not feasted on He was only sampled which had left an impression of the distinct flavor of his goodness.*** The interpretation of the words “*heavenly gift*” can be one of two persons, the Holy Spirit as He is spoken of as such or it can be a reference to Jesus who is the greatest “*heavenly gift*”. I believe that these Hebrews had tasted of the blessings of salvation in Christ but had yet to feast upon Him fully as they hadn’t received Him.
5. ***Become partakers of the Holy Spirit***: Here the main issue is what does the word “***partakers***” mean in reference to the Holy Spirit? The word in the Greek in reference to the meaning of “***partakers***” is not to a “**permanent**” state but a mere fact of a work of the Holy Spirit. “***Partakers***” of the Holy Spirit doesn’t mean “***possessors***” of the Holy Spirit. They weren’t indwelt by Him, He had NOT taken up His permanent residence in their hearts, they were not sealed by Him, born again by Him, or baptized by Him into the body of Christ by Him! Instead they were mere participators in His work co-operating in His pre-salvation work that was ***leading*** them to the act of repentance from their sins and trusting alone in the finished work of Jesus for their atonement. These Hebrews didn’t “***possess***” the Holy Spirit, they were only “***partakers***” of His work.
6. ***Tasted the good word of God***: At issue in the fourth advantage is two phrases “*tasted*” and “*word of God*”. The word “***tasted***” is the same as above and refers to ***having “sampled” the word of God but didn’t eat of it***. What I find interesting is what the “sampling” is; the writer doesn’t use the normal reference to the “word of God” “***logos***” in the Greek but instead uses the word “***rhema***” which emphasizes the parts of the word rather than the whole! These Hebrews had sampled parts of the word of God and may have done so with enthusiasm. There is nothing wrong with “*tasting*” as it is the first step to eating but if all you ever do is taste and never eat you will eventually die of starvation.
7. ***(Tasted) the powers of the age to come***: Same word “tasted” is implied here as well but we will need to understand what the writer meant by the phrase “*the powers of the age to come*”. The word “powers” in the Greek is repeatedly used to refer to miracles, wonderful works or mighty works. The word “age” in the Greek refers to a period of time characterized by miracles. It differs from this present age in which we live where “mighty works” are not the common every day norm. What the writer is saying is that these Hebrews had witnessed “mighty works” from the apostle’s healings and other “wonderful works” that will be common in the millennial kingdom of Christ. Yet though they had tasted of such things they had not come to faith in Christ.

**Hebrews 13:1-4**

**“*Sympathy, Empathy and Harmony*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. Vs. 1 The Standard is LOVE**
3. **Vs. 2-4 Making love visible**
4. **Introduction**

The first 11 chapters of Hebrews are doctrinal in nature and address Jews specifically but the 12th and 13th chapters are fully of practical exhortations that apply to Christians. This is a common pattern with most New Testament letters as they seemed to always be ***doctrinal then duty, position before practice***. On my outline of this letter I’ve called this section “***Faith that Functions***” as the exhortation is directed at the church.

* 1. Vs. 1-4 Here we are given three areas where Christians need to exercise love; ***strangers, the suffering and marriage***. Applying; ***Sympathy, Empathy and Harmony***
	2. Vs. 5-9 Next we see how the church needs to behave in society, without covetousness, being content with their position and processions.
	3. Vs. 10-21 This last section the writer deals with how they are to practice their faith among others by not trying to offend those who disagree with you, by being a blessing and praying for folks.
	4. Vs. 22-29 The final section is the writers closing remarks.

It is interesting to read this section with its “*practical exhortations that apply to Christians*” in light of the first century Christians position in society as they were viewed as they were rebuked by the immoral societies in which they lived. ***The reason for this was that these believers lived up to the standards that their doctrine demanded***. This is what was behind Peter’s statement in 1 Peter 2:15 where he wrote, “*For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*”. The standard of Christian behavior is brought forth in the 13th chapter and they are done so with ***two presuppositions***:

1. ***These standards are based upon biblical truth established in the first 12 chapters of this letter.***
2. ***These standards apply only to the true Christian believer***.
3. **Vs. Vs. 1 The Standard is LOVE**

Vs. 1 Paul wrote to the church in Rome, in Romans 12:2, “*…do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*.” ***The world is unloving and Jesus is calling His followers to not conform to this but rather be transformed by His love***! The follower of Christ is not to live isolated from those that are unloving towards them they are to live among them loving them anyway. We are not to exclude ourselves from people living life hiding behind the walls of the church we are called to infiltrate society and penetrate their hatred with love. There was no mystery to Jesus’ intentions for His Church when He said in Matthew 10:16 “*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves*.” We are to be IN the world just not OF the world! ***The primary standard for Christian behavior is LOVE and the specific word used here is Philadelphia or brotherly love.*** The fact that the writer says that it should “***continue***” suggests that **such love already existed among the body of Christ.** They were ***not*** being told to “***make it happen***” but ***allow it to continue which tells us that such affection was a natural condition that accompanied faith in Christ***! The apostle John in his first letter said, “*He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes*.” The believer’s life is not to seek God’s blessings but to distribute them to others. 2 Peter 1:3tells us that, “*His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness*..” We have no need to ask for God’s blessings but that such blessing be used by us for others. We in correctly sing the song “***more love, more power***” as if our problem is that we have used up all that was given us from God but truth be told our problem is not a “***supply problem***” from God it is a “***distribution problem***” from us! We need to distribute what is already ours in Christ, that’s the statement that the writer makes here in 13:1. Such love is first on the list in the authors exhortation for three reasons:

1. John 13:35 “*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” **God has given the world the right to evaluate our authenticity based upon how we treat each other**! It is of critical importance that each and every believer follow Paul words in Philippians 2:3-4 “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit,* ***but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*.**”
2. 1 John 3:14 “*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.*” ***God has chosen love as the basis that reveals our true connection and spiritual identity too Him.*** The proof of our salvation is His love within our hearts that loves others. We can and should ask ourselves, “*Do I have a greater concern for others than I do myself*?”
3. Psalm 133:1 “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*!” ***God has chosen Christian love as the basis behind our unity and joint fellowship.*** We truly love each other to the degree that we lay down our lives for each other.

***Biblical love only grows in the garden of humility and never in the weeds of sentimental and superficial affection***. ***It has no room to grow where Self-righteousness and self-pity occupy the heart.*** Such **love is illustrated in three social venues**:

1. Vs. 2 “***Sympathy to the stranger***”
2. Vs. 3 “***Empathy to the oppressed***”
3. Vs. 4 “***Harmony in the marriage”***

**III. Vs. 2-4 Making love visible**

Vs. 2 “***Sympathy to the stranger***”: A stranger can refer to unbelievers as well as believers. ***A stranger is by definition is someone that you don’t know personally***! The First area on display is in the are of hospitality towards strangers where we are to display Sympathy and comfort in their situation. Hospitality was something that the ancient world practiced as people would put up guests for the night as there weren’t many Inns. Christians are being exhorted to be no less hospitable than the world even thought they were far more miss treated by the society. It was being included as a mark in which ALL Christian’s should practice as it is a basic trait. The phrase, “*for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels*” is ***NOT being put forth as a motivation for such hospitality but for the sake of aiding God’s glory***! We can never know what a simple act of hospitality can help further God’s work in human hearts. In a real sense ***we are not ministering too mere angels but Jesus Himself as we are told in Matthew 25:40*** “*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren,* ***you did it to Me***.”

Vs. 3 “***Empathy to the oppressed***”: This is closely related to the above practice but ***looks beyond just the stranger and has a heart for the oppressed***. The Christian needs to do their best to identify with those in need, to put ourselves in their place. We must not look like the Pharisee of the parable of the Good Samaritan who, out of a sense of religious concern, shut their eyes to the need of the stranger and walked by on the other side, and thus earned the scathing rebuke implied by the Lord Jesus. ***This verse serves as a warning against spiritualizing and sanitizing the Christian life where we like some Eastern Religions don’t touch the person who is in pain and going through oppression***. There are far too many Christians that when they see the need of the oppressed make a call to the church as if that alone resolves their participation! They need to remember the words of JFK when he said, “***ask not what your country can do for you—ask******what******you can do******for******your country.***” ***The church has no message to the world accept the gospel and it has no action towards the world that is not centered upon brotherly love***! ***The Christian isn’t called to have just a vocabulary of nouns; they must have with those nouns verbs***! One of the greatest cures for pity and “woe is me” attitude is loving service to others. It was not uncommon to see Christians in the first century to sell themselves in slavery to get the money to free another believer. We can demonstrate empathy in three ways:

1. ***By simply being there for another***: To listen, encourage and strengthen a person who is being oppressed.
2. ***By giving direct help***: Paul thanked the Philippians for sharing in his affliction by giving financial support to carry on his ministry. Such practical and financial help encouraged Paul spiritually to continue on.
3. ***By prayer***: Paul wrote in Colossians 4:18 “*This salutation by my own hand--Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen*.” He encouraged prayer as a basis empathy towards his suffering.

Vs. 4 “***Harmony in the marriage”***: “*Marriage is honorable among all*” ***may have been written to counter the reaction of some that instead of the sanctity of marriage were pushing the sanctity of celibacy***. Paul would warn in that some would in 1 Timothy 4:3 “*forbidding to marry*..” But here we are told that God not counts marriage as “*honorable among all*” but the bed as undefiled among the norm of promiscuity. God showed His intent for marriage by honoring it, Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding and the Holy Spirit used it as an illustration of the church as the bride of Christ to Jesus. The bible gives three reasons for marriage:

1. ***Propagation of children***: Creation of mankind was commissioned by the command of God to be “*Fruitful and multiply*” Gen. 1:28.
2. ***Prevention of sin***: Marriage is also provided as a means for the prevention of sexual sin and immorality. Paul in his letter to theCorinthians said in 7:2 that, “*because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband*.”
3. ***Partnership and companionship***: In Genesis 2:18 “*The LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him*.”

***Marriage is honorable in three ways:*** The husband being the head as demonstrated by Jesus being the head of His church. By the wife loving yielding to her husband as the church does to Christ and by both husband and wife in mutual love for each other living together in respect and care for each other.

 Finally, marriage is God’s way to promote purity and security in a relationship so that the God given plan for intimacy would not be manipulated into just pleasure without love. Go use two words to describe the worlds view of sex in “fornicators and adulterers” both of which find their root words in the Greek in the word “pornia and pornos”. It is in the Christian marriage where God has ordained the idea of security and fidelity where sexual drives are channeled though Christian love. When the purpose of God is acted upon in obedience intimacy as God intended is realized.

**Hebrews 13:5-9**

**“*Being content in a chaotic world*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 5-6 New circumstances by JOY**
3. **Introduction**

As noted last week the author follows the New Testament letters format of ***doctrinal then duty, position before practice***. The final chapter being that duty and practice of “***Faith that Functions***” an exhortation directed at the church. Last week we noted in the first 4 verses the concise purpose or witness of the church, “***Let brotherly love continue***” as it was to be visible in three social arenas: ***strangers, the suffering and marriage***. Applying; ***Sympathy, Empathy and Harmony***. Now we take up the next 5 verses (5-9) as we see how the church needs to behave in society, namely ***without covetousness, being content with their possessions and position***.” There are two primary areas in which a person deals with covetousness:

1. ***Possessions***
2. ***Position***
3. **Vs. 5-6 New circumstances by JOY**

Vs. 5-6 **The first examination as it deals with covetousness in verses 5-6 is in the area of possessions**. There is today a danger of materialism but that is not the only thing that we can covet as we can along with desiring more possessions also desire a better position. I suppose that the recipients of this letter would be naturally susceptible to such covetousness as they were undergoing sever persecution and would long to be out of it through a change of circumstances. I believe that the context of this letter goes far beyond the current of “keeping up with the Joneses” as I don’t believe they were concerned with such. Theirs was not a desire to be like the world but a desire to avoid the harsh persecution and the constant thought that if their position or processions were different they could avoid their current situation. ***But in general the exhortation remains the same and that is in believing that be content or full of joy we need to have more than what God has already granted us***. It is easy to fall into this trap of covetousness instead of lusting after more of His love or becoming greedy for His grace. God in His wisdom by way of our transformation has caused the follower of Christ to be radically different with regards too our happiness as it is far more secure that the unbelievers happiness which is based upon favorable circumstance: ***God does not create joy by new circumstance He creates new circumstances by JOY!*** He transforms our hearts which makes it unnecessary for removing us from our adverse situations and circumstances. Our happiness, if you will, isn’t as fickle as our feelings it has the security of God’s presence in the midst of our turmoil! This isn’t the Christian’s “vow of poverty” and you won’t find such a thing anywhere in the New Testament. Our poverty would be another’s riches and it is clear that God has allowed differing levels of prosperity among His children.

 In these two verses the writer reveals three things that we will need to examine: ***The exhortation, The reason and The consequences.***

1. ***The exhortation***: “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have.*” The word “***conduct***” was originally translated into English in 1611 by the word “***conversation***” and at the time the meaning in English had a broader meaning to include “***manor of life*** or ***behavior***” hence the interpretation “***conduct***”. The Greek word “***without covetousness***” is a phrase that means “*without the fondness for silver*” as the exhortation is against coveting the love of money. The word “***content***” means “*to be possessed with unfailing strength*”. The thought is that ***the believer should be satisfied with that which God has provided that meets our needs instead of striving for that which feeds our desires***. The word “*content*” **means more than the believer being** “*satisfied*” as ***it refers to Christian being dependent upon the Holy Spirit and therefore independent of favorable outward circumstances***. The phrase “*with such things as you have*” in the Greek means “*the things which are currently around you*” and refers to the circumstances you find yourself in. The exhortation is plain for the believer: ***Don’t let your life be consumed with the pursuit of financial gain as a means of escaping unfavorable circumstances and situations instead depend upon the Holy Spirit to strength you through your present circumstances***. Admittedly such an exhortation, **apart from the reason,** falls into the category of “***easy for you to say***”.
2. ***The reason***: “*For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you*.” The reason the follower of Christ can have this perspective and heed this exhortation is because of what the writer says here: “*For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you*.” The phrase “*For He Himself has said*” tells us that the following promise and guarantee was spoken directly by God! The Greek word for “***leave***” is not the usual word for leave instead it is ***proceeded by two negatives*** which in the Greek don’t make a positive but instead further strengthens the negative of the Greek word that means ***to loosen or let slip***, This promise in the Greek is: “***I will not, I will not ever cease to sustain you and uphold you!***” The word “***forsake***” is also proceeded by three negatives and is a word that means to reject or be helpless or abandoned or left destitute or to let one down. This is a triple assurance that says: “***I will not, not ever, no never, let you down, leave you you destitute or abandoned***.” Or God promises to rescue us when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances.
3. ***The consequences***: “*So we may boldly say: The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me*?” The consequences of the above promise are found in Psalm 118:6 where we can say as the Greek says for the word “boldly” or we can say courageously *“The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me*?” When the first word is “Lord” the last word “man” has no has nothing to cause us fear. The point the writer is making is NOT that there is something wrong with prosperity but instead that we must learn to be content with what God has given: ***Contentment is not in having what you want; it is wanting only what you have***. The secret is not in trying to define the “standard of living” but as the author writes, coming to the personal realization that Jesus will “***never leave you or forsake you***” and this has nothing to do with a dollar amount! ***The promise of God is that He is our great and unending resource and will never fail us.*** The strongest negative in the New Testament that is a positive is that: “***I will never, never, ever, under any circumstances, leave you or forsake you.***” The Apostle Paul said it best in Romans 8:31 “***If God is for us, who can be against us***?” We already have the greatest resource anyone could ever want, “The Lord”! There is that wonderful story in Genesis 14:23 when Abraham returned from battle with the five kings, having recovered the wealth of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which had been taken by the invading armies. Abraham brought this wealth back to the king of Sodom, who offered him a great reward. But Abraham said, “***I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'-- h”*** Abraham was saying, “***I will only take what God is content to give me. I don't want riches from any other source.***” That is the attitude that the author of Hebrews is saying these followers of Jesus needed to adopt, “***If God grants me increase, fine; I'll take it. But I am not going to struggle after it. This is not my goal. I will not make the increase of money my purpose for living, for I am content with what I have***.” Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:6-7 “*godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*.” This kind of contentment causes the believer to not only be content but also, uncritical to those who have been granted by God to have more possessions. We won’t be judging those who have more than we have, instead we will be thankful for what God has granted them and content with what God has granted.

**Hebrews 13:7-12**

**“*Positional Security*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 7-9 Don’t covet their position, imitate their faith**
3. **Vs. 10-12 We have an Altar**
4. **Introduction**

Last week we began our look at the authors 2nd exhortation and how the Church and Christians needed to be viewed in society. The content of this view was through the lenses of persecution as the Christian was being exhorted to, ***not let their life be consumed with the pursuit of financial gain as a means of escaping unfavorable circumstances, instead they were to continue to depend upon the Holy Spirit to strength them***. As noted the exhortation was followed by the reason for it as well as the consequences of having heeded it. ***The reason for the exhortation was the guarantee of God that is established upon a positive double impossibility***:

* 1. **That God will never let you slip from His grasp; He will always uphold you**!
	2. **That God will never let you down, leave you or abandon you**!

The consequences of believing those promises is given to us in the form of a quote from Psalm 118:6 as we boldly ask in light of those promises: “*The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me*?” It is here that we discover that **the immediate consequence** for our believing God’s promises is a security that can not be broken as we will be people who have found that true, “***Contentment is not in having what you want; it is wanting only what you have***.” ***The promise of God is that He is our great and unending resource and will never fail us.*** It is this promise that causes the Apostle Paul to write in Romans 8:31 “***If God is for us, who can be against us***?” This is also what Abraham was saying in Genesis 14 when he said, “***I will only take what God is content to give me. I don't want riches from any other source.***” This kind of contentment causes the believer to not only be content but also, uncritical to those who have been granted by God to have more possessions. That exhortation based upon God’s promise not only covers the ***pursuit of financial gain as a means of escaping unfavorable circumstances*** it also includes ***the pursuit of another person’s position as a means of escaping unfavorable circumstances***.

1. **Vs. 7-9 Don’t covet their position, imitate their faith**

Vs. 7-9 **The second area that we deal with the covetousness is in the area of position**. The exhortation is to remember how those leaders who have died lived and spoke the word of God to them. Verse 8 This verse is commonly translated out of context but doctrinally correct. Yes, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever but what is at issue is not the unchangeableness of Jesus but rather the faith of those who had held of to Jesus as the Messiah even at the cost of their own life.

The body of Christ is full of diversity and as Paul would write in Romans 12:4-8 that, “***we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function****, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*” There need’s to be diversity without division as we are inter connected to each other by the gifts that God has given to each believer.

**The first thing we discover is that there is a structure of leadership within this body.**

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. Verse 17 we remind us to, “*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who give account*. *Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*” The writer says that the readers were to “remember the lives of those who poured the word of God into you, who they lived their lives among you.” ***Don’t covet their position, imitate their faith***! That’s the context of the statement about Jesus Christ as being the same yesterday and today and forever. What Jesus was to people who went before us is tremendous encouragement for us today as those saints went through like trials. It is this changeless Jesus that those who went before us found as the great refuge for believers in a changing world. It wasn’t the “***powerful faith***” of the Luther’s, Wesley’s, and Moody’s, it was the ordinary faith in a “***power filled God***” that made all the difference. Life in the body of Christ also involves a simplicity of belief.

 The final warning in covetousness is with teaching and to be taking captive by strange teaching that would bolster or benefit someone’s adherence to it. The word here is “*stop being carried away*” by false teaching that apparently emphasized external religious activity. Theses religious teaching of works seemed to offer to those under going persecution a “technique” or practice that they could do to change their situation. It appears many of these were tied to dietary restrictions that some taught had spiritual value. Over the course of church history, we have seen these fades come and go such as “*as giving up meat for Lent, burning candles for certain observances, counting beads in the rosary*”. Through this letter the writer told us again and again that such biblical observances were shadows pointing towards the substance in Christ and that the shadows had no real value other than that.

1. **Vs. 10-12 We have an Altar**

Vs. 10-12 Chapter 13:10-14 are some of the most difficult to interpret in entire book of Hebrews, the reason for this is that they are written to Jew’s very familiar with the sacrificial system and would have comprehended the point the author was trying to make. The author reminds his readers that you can’t have both “***shadow and substance***” religion and relationship.

First in verses 10 we read, “***We have an altar***” the author says, “*from which those who those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat*.” At issue in this statement is who is the “WE” that the writer includes himself as and what altar is he referring too described as “*those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat*.” I believe that the “WE” is Christian Jews and the altar mentioned is the specific sacrifice of Christ in which none of the sacrifice was to be eaten afterwards. That sacrifice was the atonement for sin in which the remainder of the sacrifice was to burned outside the city. This took place on the “*Day of Atonement*”! It seems as though the believers are being told that Jesus’ sacrifice was being placed by some of the Hebrews as being less than an atoning sacrifice and as such they could still believe in Jesus and the Levitical sacrifices as well. The author of Hebrews makes it clear that those Jews who persisted in adhering to the sacrifices can and will have no part in the blessings of the New Covenant. These two sacrifices as a basis of right standing before God are mutually exclusive. The writer uses the phraseology of the ritual of partaking of the sacrificial meal.

There are far too many that were following religion that was pointing to the reality in the symbols which was Jesus and decided follow the symbols! The writer is asking his readers to look carefully at those following symbols instead of the substance and see if they are better off? With all those dietary restrictions are they indeed healthier? Does following their legalism make them more loving are gracious towards their fellow man? Their diets didn’t strengthen their hearts, build up their love but following the substance which is Jesus does! Grace accomplishes what legalism never can but you can not follow the symbols once the substance has come; if you value the temporary and the external than you will never find the reality in the eternal and the substance!

 The writer uses the illustration of the tabernacle, when the sin offerings were brought into the tabernacle the priests were forbidden to eat of them as the sacrifice was the sin offering and were taken outside the camp and burned there. The priest could eat of the meat of the burnt offerings, and the other offerings, but not the sin offering. Those bodies were cast outside the gate and there burned. Thus it was with the Lord Jesus when he came. They took him outside the city of Jerusalem and put him to death on a cross outside the gate. The point is that religion puts its emphasis upon the external and is ignored by God. We can only experience our proper function when we receive what God has done in Christ, without any need for religious observances, lighting candles etc., but by a quiet act of faith. That is the simplicity of belief in Jesus Christ. It is so uncomplicated, so simple, so available to all.

**Hebrews 13:13-25**

**“*Sacrifices to God*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 13-14 What to offer God?**
3. **Vs. 15-21 Four characteristics**
4. **Vs. 22-25 Closing words**
5. **Introduction**

The appeal has been made, “***The chief sacrifice***” has been once for all offered not by temple priests but by “God the Son” the offering of Himself out side the temple the fist testament has been fulfilled by Jesus as He had said in, Matthew 5:17-18 saying, “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*” **Is there nothing left for these Hebrews to sacrifice to God? What offering do followers of the Jewish Messiah now make**? This is the closing words being written by the author of Hebrews as he answers this question.

1. **Vs. 13-14 What to offer God?**

Vs. 13-14 The Author takes his final few words to exhort his 1st century Hebrew believers to not follow the false teachers back to placing their faith in the sacrificial Jewish system. I can only imagine how difficult it was for some of these Hebrews who were being torn from their traditions to stay with trust in Jesus alone, to do so would “bear His reproach” which would have meant exclusion from their Jewish brethren.

The mention of not having “**HERE**” a “*continuing city*” is speaking about “***here on earth***” is reminding them that they they are being threatened with exclusion from public worship in Jerusalem, the “*Holy City*” they will not be excluded from worshipping a **the true** “*Holy City*”. Yes, the temple was an ancient wonder of the world and they would no longer be permitted to enter through the “*Eastern* or *Golden Gate*” because they had embraced Jesus who is far more beautiful they they earthly gate. He said of Himself in John 10:7-11 that He Himself was, “*the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*” Their fear was that they would no longer e able to abide in the tabernacle when they ought to remember Jesus words in John 15:4 that they were to, “*Abide in Jesus…. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*” ***The fear was in losing the losing the symbols when the substance had come; in losing religion while gaining heavenly relationship***! The point being brought out is that followers of Jesus must be willing to go out from the Levitical system even if doing so would bare reproach by their fellow Jews. They couldn’t keep the Levitical sacrificial system and by a follower of Jesus! The moment Jesus dies upon the cross the veil of the Temple was torn in two, and the Levitical sacrifices ceased to be a part of God’s plan as the substance replaced the symbol.

1. **Vs. 15-21 Four characteristics**

Vs. 15-16 This letter was written to the Jew’s and sacrifice was extremely important to them; they were purified by sacrifices, sin was dealt with by sacrifices such acting was ingrained in their life through obedience to the First Testament. They no doubt wondered what part “sacrifice” was to play in their life in the New Testament, did God still demand obedience to the sacrificial system if not for atonement in some other way? The simple answer is YES! Hebrews 13:15 “***Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name***.” A “***sacrifice of praise to God***” ***is now what they and us are to offer to God but what does such an offering look like?*** Verses 15-19 give us **four characteristics** of this “***sacrifice of praise to God***”!

1. Vs. 15a ***BY HIM CONTINUALLY***: There are two things I notice to start with about this “***sacrifice of praise to God***” that is different: ***First*** is that ***where*** such “***sacrifice of praise to God***” ***ORIGINATES*** as we are clearly told that that what we offer is “***BY HIM***”! Yes, ***we offer to Him but we can only do so BY Him***! ***Second*** the “***sacrifice of praise to God***” is **not situational** but are to be offered **CONTINUALLY**! We are not to be evaluating whether such “***sacrifice of praise to God***” is warranted because it meets our criteria and expectation. Instead we are to offer to God as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 “***in everything give thanks****; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*” Losing the right to no longer be able to offer animal sacrifices from the Aaronic priesthood wouldn’t stop or hinder the offering of the sacrifices of praise that all believers were to offer. This was something that the Rabbi that was before the Christian era in Alexandria Egypt spoke about saying, “*They offer the best sacrifice who glorify with hymns the Savior and benefactor, God*.”
2. Vs. 15b-16 ***WORD AND DEED***: The first thing we note about our “***sacrifice of praise to God***” is that it is NOT just verbal but based upon verses 15-16 that it is to be in Word and Deed. God no longer wants a grain offering, He wants the fruit of your lips. The Psalmist said in Psalm 7:17, “*I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High*.” The sacrifice to God is praise from our lips as the word “PRAISE” is “hallelujah” and that is what God wants us to offer to Him continually our “hallelujahs”. But God doesn’t just want our “***sacrifice of praise to God***” from our mouths He wants them in our actions as well. If our verbal praise is not matched by our physical action of doing good and sharing, then it’s not a “***sacrifice of praise to God***”. True worship involves action if it is to honor God. Out LIPS must match our LIFE as theses are to be inseparable. James said in 1:27 that the “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world*.” The “***sacrifice of praise to God***” that we offer is with our hands as much as it is with our lips as we do good to one another and minister whenever, wherever and whatever to the needs of others in Jesus’ name. Having said that they have offered a better sacrifice because it is of praise, the author now speaks of the obligation that such praise should generate practically to our fellow man. “doing good” must be the byproduct of our praise to God. The word “share” in the Greek means to make one’s self a partner with those who are in need. These persecuted believers are being told that true praise towards God is made visible when we share what God has given us to others. To be clear I’m not speaking of **communism** which says, “***What’s yours is mine***!” Instead we are talking about **Common-ism** which says, “***What’s mine is yours***!”
3. Vs. 17 ***UNITY***: The author writes, “*Obey those who rule over you*” and then goes on to clarify chiefly whom he had in mind as “*they watch over your souls*”! Clearly this is a reference to those who teach the word and the contrast is against those whom some of them have obeyed that were teaching false doctrine. The phrase “*Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you*”; suggest that there is a direct benefit to the hearer of truth as there is for the speaker of truth! The unity that is associated with “***sacrifice of praise to God***” has to do with leadership in the body of Christ and specifically with submission given to Church leadership. Those that were given the responsibility to feed and lead God’s flock were to be given a respect that was seen as a “***sacrifice of praise to God***”! ***This in no way was to suggest that such submission to leaders excused what can be blind obedience to tyrants but what the author was writing about was submission to godly appointed leaders were they were to be obeyed because they didn’t serve themselves but God and His people!*** Such leaders are seen in that they are caring for the welfare of God’s people and they alone will give account for their labor! The apostle John’s last letter tells it like it is when he wrote, 3 John 1:4 “*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*” Pastor’s average stay at any church is between 5-7 years and the large reason for this is a lack of unity and maturity in the body he is called to serve. The sacrifices that is required upon God’s servant can be great and when no spiritual progress is made many a servant can become overwhelmed and look for somewhere else to serve. The phrase, “*Let them do so with joy*” is aimed NOT at the pastor but at the sheep as it is the congregation’s responsibility to help their pastor’s out by obeying the Word of God taught through their pastor’s and allowing the Holy Spirit to cause their own maturity. Again this isn’t a statement that suggests that pastor’s are “***infallible***” only that they act in manor that Paul wrote about in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 saying, “*we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves*.” ***You will find a joy filled pastor when joy find a joy filled church and you will find a joy filled church when you find a joy filled church***!
4. Vs. 18-21 ***PRAYER***: The phrase, “***Pray for us.***.” indicates that the author was familiar to some of his readers. Further more the words, “***that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably***”, is an allusion to the authors conduct and heart towards them and the truth and suggest that some of these readers were being told lies about the writer and he wants them to not believe the lies and instead commit him to their prayers. Verse 19 tells us that at the current writing of this letter the author was under arrest and but was anticipating his soon release. Here are the specifics; prayer for the leaders in the church as prayer is what makes things move forward in the power and spirit of the Lord. The author isn’t being arrogant when he writes in verse 18 “*Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably*.” What he is saying is that to the best of his knowledge that he had only ministered to the people faithfully not that he had done so perfectly! He had a clear conscience that he had acted and taught the people faithfully. Further more such faithfulness had made him a target and he had suffered for it and longed to be freed so that he may continue in it. Verses 20-21 describe what that faithfulness looked like as it would bring about their peace operating through God’s power as they present God’s truth! The author saw that the first testament was pointing to the new testament and as such was transitory as sinful humanity needed a “Living Priest” not just a dead prophet Jesus is like Aaron’s rod that budded.
5. **Vs. 22-25 Closing words**

Vs. 22-25 The close of this letter is again an exhortation desiring them to heed what he has just written them. The author appeals with the readers not to become impatient with the counsel of this letter, he even makes an apology based upon the brevity of his words in this letter. The “*few words*” is under 10,000 which is far shorter than both Romans and 1st Corinthians and can be read from start to finish in just under an hour. Yet this is one of the most doctrinally rich letters in the Bible. We aren’t given the specifics of Timothy’s imprisonment but it is not surprising. The closing words are open to debate and not a clear understanding of where the readers resided. It could mean that the author was writing from Italy or that the author was with those Italian believers at the time of the writing.