

The Book of Hebrews

By David Cloud

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Series***

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Student Assignments

- a. Each student is required to read the book of Hebrews at least three times during the course.
- b. As you read, have pen and paper at hand and write down any questions you have about the passages. These will be discussed as we deal with each section.
- c. Each student is required to memorize Hebrews 1:3, 8; 3:12-13; 4:12, 16; 6:19; 9:22, 27; 10:14, 19, 24, 38-39; 11:6; 12:28; 13:4, 8, 17.

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREWS

Its Human Author

We are convinced that the apostle Paul is the author of Hebrews, though it is equally true that “the value of no New Testament Writing depends on who wrote it” (W. Graham Scroggie).

1. Following are some of the reasons why we believe that Paul wrote the epistle to Hebrews:

- a. The book was attributed to Paul by many ancient writers, beginning only a few decades after the apostles died. “By about A.D. 150 Pantaenus, the then leading teacher at Alexandria, was referring to it as a generally accredited epistle of Paul--which means that in only seventy years after Paul’s death it was generally accepted as his! The point is not merely that Pantaenus himself believed it to be Pauline, but that at so early a date it was *generally* viewed as such” (J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, p. 275). Adam Clarke lists roughly 80 men, councils, and groups between the 2nd and the 11th century that believed Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. These include Clement of Alexandria (194 A.D.), Dionysius (247 A.D.), Theognostus (282 A.D.), Methodius (292 A.D.), Pamphilus (294 A.D.), Archelaus of Mesopotamia (c. 301 A.D.), Hierax (302 A.D.), Eusebius of Caesarea (315 A.D.), Athanasius (4th century), Adamantius (380 A.D.), Cyril of Jerusalem (347 A.D.), Titus of Bostria in Arabia (362 A.D.), the council of Laodicea (363 A.D.), Epiphanius (368 A.D.), Basil (370 A.D.), Gregory Nazianzen (370 A.D.), Ephrem the Syrian and the churches of Syria (370 A.D.), Ambrose of Milan (374 A.D.), Diodorus of Tarsus (378 A.D.), Jerome (392 A.D.), Theodore of Mopsuestia in Cilicia (394 A.D.), Rufinus (397 A.D.), Chrysostom (398 A.D.), Augustine (399 A.D.), Severian of Gabala in Syria (401 A.D.), and Victor of Antioch (401 A.D.).
- b. A chief evidence that Paul is the author of Hebrews is the reference to Timothy in Heb. 13:23. Timothy was selected by Paul when he was a young man (Acts 16:1-3) and continued to be his “right hand man”

throughout his life. Compare 1 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Th. 3:2; Phile. 1:1. “There is no other one of the apostles who would so naturally have used this term respecting Timothy; and this kind mention is made of him here because he was so dear to the heart of the writer, and because he felt that they to whom he wrote would also feel an interest in his circumstances” (Barnes).

c. Another evidence is the similarity between things in this epistle and those in Paul’s known writings.

(1) See, for example, the phrase “God of peace” (Heb. 13:20) and compare Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 1 Th. 5:23; 2 Cor. 13:11.

(2) See also the phrase “salute all” (Heb. 13:24) and compare 1 Cor. 16:19-21; 2 Cor. 13:13; Phil. 4:21-22.

(3) See also “grace be with you all” (Heb. 13:25). This was Paul’s salutation (2 Th. 3:17-18). Compare Rom. 16:24; 1 Cor. 16:23-24; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 4:23; Col. 4:18; 1 Th. 5:28; 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22; Tit. 3:15; Phile. 25.

d. Another evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews is the location from which the epistle was written (Heb. 13:24). “The writer, therefore, was then in Italy, whither we know Paul was sent a prisoner, and where he resided two years, Acts 28:30; where also he wrote several epistles still remaining” (Adam Clarke).

e. Another evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews is Peter’s statement in 2 Pet. 3:15.

(1) Peter says that Paul had written to the same people he was addressing, which were the Jews who were scattered abroad. Compare 1 Pet. 1:1 and 2 Pet. 3:1.

(2) Peter also mentions the difficult things that Paul had written. It appears that Peter is referring specifically to the book of Hebrews. “It should be noted that the apostle Peter writes to the Jewish believers scattered abroad, as his first epistle makes evident. Therefore, of course, he writes to the Hebrews. His second epistle

was written to the same people. ... Then again in this Hebrew letter to which Peter refers, Paul has written ‘some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction.’ How true is this of the Epistle to the Hebrews! How many thousands of unstable souls have been thrown into greatest agony of mind and perturbation of spirit because of misunderstandings and utterly false interpretations of parts of chapters six and ten. It would seem that Peter could not have indicated more definitely than he has done that he referred to this letter” (Ironsides).

- f. Another evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews is its apostolic tone. “One thing which impresses itself on my own mind all the way through Hebrews is the tone of apostolic teaching-authority. ... It does not merely word the thinking of a disciple; it delivers the firm dicta of an apostle. ... But if it was written by an apostle, then, as Delitzsch asks: ‘Who could have been its author but Paul?’” (J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, p. 277).
- g. A final evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews is the lack of evidence that someone else wrote it. Of the names that have been put forward, four are most prominent: Luke, Barnabas, Clement of Rome, and Apollos.
 - (1) Luke was a Gentile rather than a Jew. His name, Loukas, is Greek. Yet the author of Hebrews is clearly a Jew.
 - (2) Barnabas was not associated with Timothy after he and Paul split up (Acts 15:36-41), so he would not have written what we have in Hebrews 13:23. The only ancient writer to assert that Barnabas wrote Hebrews was Tertullian (A.D. 160-230) and he gave no clear evidence.
 - (3) Apollos was not considered the author of Hebrews by anyone before the 16th century, when Martin Luther theorized that he might be the penman.
 - (4) Clement of Rome was not directly associated with the apostles and we do not see any possibility that he could have been the author of Hebrews.

2. Why didn't Paul sign his name as he does in other epistles? Following are some possible answers to this:

- a. Since the epistle begins with God, Paul didn't want to include his name.
- b. Since the epistle names Jesus as the great Apostle of our profession, Paul didn't want to include himself as an apostle (Heb. 3:1).
- c. Since Paul was particularly the apostle to the Gentiles, he perhaps didn't want to sign this epistle to the Jews (Rom. 11:13).
- d. We should note that the first epistle of John is also not signed.

3. Isn't the writing style of Hebrews different from that of Paul's known epistles? Answer: Much has been made of this point by some Bible scholars, but the fact is that a man's writing style can change dramatically according to the purpose and subject. There is a vast difference, for example, between the style of the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation, though we know that the same man was the human author of both books.

For an excellent overview of this matter and effective replies to those who deny Paul's authorship see B.H. Carroll's *Interpretation of the English Bible*, which is available in an electronic edition entitled "The B.H. Carroll Collection" from Ages Software, www.ageslibrary.com.

Its Recipients

The book of Hebrews is written to the Jewish believers in Judea and those that were scattered abroad. In Heb. 10:32-34 the writer describes the persecution these believers had endured from the beginning. Compare Acts 8:1-3; 11:19.

The Time of Its Writing

We can only be sure that Hebrews was written before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., because the temple was still in operation when Hebrews was written (Heb. 8:4; 13:10).

The Theme

One of the most important factors in understanding any book in the Bible is to identify its theme and purpose. “He who selects a text at random from a given book with little or no regard to the context, failing utterly to grasp the theme and its unfolding, is almost certain to be misled and to mislead his ignorant hearers...” (Ironsides).

Hebrews has a two-fold theme:

1. Hebrews is a warning to Jews who had professed faith in Jesus to continue in that faith and thereby show that they were genuinely saved (Heb. 2:1; 3:12; 4:1, 11; 6:11; 10:38; 12:12-13).

a. The Jewish professors were in danger of turning back because of persecution (Heb. 10:32-35) and the reproach of their fellow Jews (Heb. 13:13). Other Scriptures warn about the danger of trials and persecution. See Luke 8:13; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 2:12; James 1:2-8; 1 Pet. 4:12.

b. Hebrews, of course, is not only for Jews. “Although written particularly for the enlightenment of believers who had come out of Judaism, it is, of course, for all Christians to the end of the dispensation, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek. What is true for one is now true for all. How sad to undervalue so precious a portion of the Word (as some, alas, do, who should know better), on the plea that it is ‘Jewish,’ and does not give the full Christian position; whereas, the fact of the matter is, it was written to deliver Christians from being Jewish, and to bring them into the full light of the glory shining through the rent veil. In this dispensation of the grace of God, when ‘in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew,’ it ought to be evident that all of the New Testament epistles are for all the Church of God, to whomsoever they may have been first addressed” (Ironsides).

2. Toward this end Christ is shown to be superior to all things that unsaved Jews put their faith in -- the prophets (Heb. 1:1-3), angels (Heb. 1:4 - 2:18), Moses (Heb. 3:1 - 4:13), the Mosaic Law and the Priesthood (Heb. 4:14 - 8:5). Christ is presented as better than all of these things.

- a. The key verse is Hebrews 8:6.
- b. The word “better” is used 13 times. Christ is better than angels (Heb. 1:4), offers a better hope (Heb. 7:19), has a better testament (Heb. 7:22), better covenant (Heb. 8:6), better promises (Heb. 8:6), better sacrifices (Heb. 9:23), and blood that speaks better things (Heb. 12:24). The believer has a better substance in heaven (Heb. 10:34), a better country (Heb. 11:16), and a better resurrection (Heb. 11:35). Christ is also said to be “more excellent” (Heb. 1:4, 8:6; 11:4), “more perfect” (Heb. 9:11), and “greater” (Heb. 9:11).
- c. Thus in Hebrews “we see Jesus” (Heb. 2:9) in a special way. Hebrews opens the veil and invites us to gaze upon the throne in the holy of holies on high more plainly than any other book of the New Testament.

Some of the names and titles of Christ in the book of Hebrews:

Son (1:2)

Heir of all things (1:2)

Firstborn (1:6)

God (1:8)

Lord (1:20)

Jesus (2:9)

Captain of our salvation (2:10)

Merciful and faithful High Priest (2:17)

Apostle (3:1)

Christ Jesus (3:1)

Son of God (4:14)

Author of eternal salvation (5:9)

Forerunner (6:20)

Surety of a better covenant (7:22)

Mediator (8:6)

Author and Finisher of our faith (12:2)

Mediator of the new covenant (12:24)
Great Shepherd of the sheep (13:20)

What about the passages in Hebrews that many have used to teach that the believer can lose his salvation?

1. We know that the writer of Hebrews is not teaching that true believers can lose their salvation, because he plainly states that continuing in and persevering in faith is the EVIDENCE of one's salvation rather than the WAY OF salvation.

Consider the following verses very carefully:

Hebrews 3:14 -- *“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”* This verse says those who hold their confidence to the end ARE already made partakers of Christ. The holding is the evidence rather than some aspect of the means of one's salvation. Being a partaker of Christ is a present possession rather than a future possibility that must be gained or kept through “holding out faithful.”

Hebrews 6:9 -- *“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.”* This verse teaches that true salvation is accompanied by certain things. True salvation will demonstrate itself in the believer's life. It produces obedience and perseverance in the faith.

Hebrews 10:38-39 -- *“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”* These verses teach that those who draw back are not true believers, that those who truly believe continue in the faith.

2. In reality, the book of Hebrews clearly and powerfully teaches the doctrine of eternal security:

a. Christ's Purging promises security (Heb. 1:3). Christ purged our sins by

Himself. What could possibly be left for me to do? To lose one's salvation would mean that it is partially dependent upon something I do or fail to do, but that would be a works salvation.

- b. Christ's Rest promises security (Heb. 4:3, 10). These verses say those who believe enter into eternal rest. That is a present position and possession of every true believer. Salvation is not something we have to earn or keep; it is a gift that we enjoy forever.
- c. Christ's Hope promises security (Heb. 6:17-19). These verses clearly state that biblical salvation is a sure thing. The believer's hope is not a maybe-so hope but a know-so one.
- d. Christ's High Priesthood promises security (Heb. 7:25-26). Not only did Christ die to make atonement for the believer's sin, He ever lives to make intercession for him on the basis of that atonement.
- e. Christ's Covenant promises security (Heb. 8:10-12; 10:16-19). He writes His laws into the believer's heart and forgives the believer's sin to such an extent that they are remembered no more. It is sin that brings God's judgment, and if God remembers my sin no more, how could I ever be lost?
- f. Christ's Blood promises security (Heb. 9:12, 26; 10:14).
 - (1) We have eternal redemption through His blood (Heb. 9:21).
 - (2) Sin is put away through His blood (Heb. 9:26).
 - (3) We are sanctified once for all through His blood (Heb. 10:10).
 - (4) We are perfected forever through His blood (Heb. 10:14).

3. The book of Hebrews teaches us that it is possible to come near to genuine salvation without experiencing it. Consider the following examples of this from other parts of the Bible:

Consider Balaam (Num. 24). Balaam "talked a good talk" and even prophesied great things (Num. 24:14-19), but he was in the business for money (2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11) and he sold Israel out to her enemies

(Num. 31:16). Balaam perished with Israel's enemies (Num. 31:8; Jos. 13:22). "Balaam was the man whose eyes were opened (Num. 24:3), and yet with his eyes opened he went down to utter darkness" (Matthew Henry).

Consider the Jews in John 2:23. These "believed in his name," but it is obvious that they weren't saved, because "Jesus did not commit himself unto them" (Jn. 2:24). This is because they were not believing the right thing. They did not believe in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour from sin but as a worldly Messiah who would deliver them from their earthly enemies and prosper them materially. Compare Jn. 6:14-15, 26, 64, 66.

Consider Judas Iscariot. As an apostle he was certainly enlightened and tasted of the good Word of God. In fact, he lived with the Word of God for three years. He tasted of "the powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:5), because he was sent out by Christ with the other apostles and apparently even did miracles himself (Mat. 10:1-4). Though Judas was never saved, the other apostles did not doubt him. Even when Jesus told the disciples that one of them would betray Him, they did not suspect Judas (Mat. 26:21-22-25). Yet he went to his own place, meaning that he was never saved (Acts 1:25). Judas was a hypocrite who lived a secret life as a thief (Jn. 12:6). Like many other Jews, Judas was probably expecting that Jesus would be a worldly Messiah and rescue them from their enemies and establish a kingdom right away and that he would profit personally by being aligned with Jesus, but when Judas understood that this was not going to happen he sold Jesus out for some money.

Consider those described in Matthew 7:21-23. They call upon the Lord, prophesy, cast out devils, and do many wonderful works; but Jesus says, "I never knew you" (Mat. 7:23). He does not say that He knew them at one time but they fell away; He *never* knew them.

Consider Simon (Acts 8:12-24). Simon "believed" (Acts 8:13) but he was not saved because his faith was insincere. He did not believe to the saving of his soul but for the purpose of gaining miracle-working power (Acts 8:18-23).

Consider the Jews in Acts 21:20. There were “many thousands of Jews” that believed but they were also “zealous of the law.” They should have known by then that believers were not under the Mosaic Law. That had been settled at the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15, but we see that these “believing” Jews were doctrinally confused, to say the least. It is likely that many of them were not truly saved. The book of Hebrews addresses this confusion directly and warns such Jews not to return to the Old Covenant.

Consider the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:11-15). Hebrews 6:7-8 points directly to this parable. The Word of God falls upon four kinds of hearts. The rocky heart “*receives the word with joy*” and “*for a while believes*” (Lk. 8:13), but such a person is not saved because the Word of God is not received truly and deeply and therefore falls away in time of temptation. That is what we see in Hebrews 6:8. It is the “*honest and good heart*” that receives the Word and patiently bears good fruit (Lk. 8:15), and this is described in Hebrews 6:7, 9.

Key Words in the Book of Hebrews

“Repetition means emphasis, and so, words which occur often in any New Testament book are of special importance (W. Graham Scroggie).

FAITH and BELIEVE (36 times) -- Heb. 3:18; 4:2, 3; 6:1, 12; 10:22, 23, 38, 39; 11:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 39; 12:2, 7

BLOOD (20 times) -- Heb. 2:14; 9:7, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 10:4, 19, 29; 11:28; 12:4, 24; 13:11, 12, 20

ETERNAL, EVERLASTING, FOREVER (16 times) -- Heb. 1:8; 5:6, 9; 6:2, 20; 7:17, 21; 9:12, 14, 15; 10:12, 14; 13:8, 20, 21

BETTER (13 times) -- Heb. 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24

ONCE (11 times) -- Heb. 6:4; 7:27; 9:7, 12, 26, 27, 28; 10:2, 10; 12:26, 27

HOPE, CONFIDENCE, ASSURANCE (11 times) -- Heb. 3:6, 14; 6:11, 18, 19; 7:19; 10:22; 36; 11:1

PERFECT (10 times) -- Heb. 2:10; 5:9, 14; 7:19; 9:9, 11; 10:1; 11:40; 12:23; 13:21

LEST (10 times) -- Heb. 2:1; 3:12, 13; 4:1, 11; 11:28; 12:3, 13, 15, 16. The word “lest” is usually used in Hebrews in the context of exhortation and warning.

What can Hebrews do?

The following breakdown of some of the things that the book of Hebrews can do strengthens our conviction that this is an extremely important book. Hebrews can help any believer and any church in any culture.

1. Hebrews can help professing Christians resist the temptation to go back to the world or back to some false religion and can challenge them to make certain of their salvation. Examples are those with a background in Roman Catholicism or Greek Orthodoxy or Hinduism or Animism or Voodoo or Islam.

2. Hebrews can greatly deepen the believer’s apprehension of and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, of His deity, His humanity, His sinlessness, His high priestly office, His intercession, His atonement, His superiority over and fulfillment of the Old Testament system.

3. Hebrews can greatly increase the believer’s understanding of the Old Testament, of the tabernacle, the priesthood, the sacrificial system, and many other such things.

3. Hebrews can strengthen discouraged believers and help get them back on the right track in their Christian lives. It is a bold reminder that trouble is an integral part of the Christian life and it teaches the believer how to endure troubles fruitfully.

5. Hebrews can challenge the believer’s faith and encourage him to take new steps of faith.

6. Hebrews can increase the believer’s understanding of the gospel of the grace of Christ and of eternal security.

7. Hebrews can help the believer understand how to interpret the difficult things in the Bible.

8. Hebrews can teach the believer the important difference between apostasy and backsliding.
9. Hebrews can teach the believer the crucial difference between the Old Testament and the New and the difference between the church age believer's association with the New Covenant and that of Israel.
10. Hebrews can instruct the believer about important doctrines such as salvation, creation, angels, atonement, Christ's deity and high priesthood and sinlessness, the divine inspiration of Scripture, heaven, death, judgment, rewards, and tithing, and can teach him the definition of important biblical words such as faith, hope, propitiation, intercession, repentance, grace, law, covenant, testament, mercy, righteousness, redemption, conscience, heart, transgression, sanctify, remission, consecration, holiness, perdition, soul, exhort, chasten, profane, reverence, godly fear, covetous, glory, express image, firstbegotten, iniquity, signs and wonders, temptation, provocation, enlighten, assurance, labor of love, and anchor of the soul.
11. Hebrews can give practical instruction in many important areas of Christian living, such as the church, church leadership, worship, hospitality, holiness, purity, steadfastness, prayer, chastisement, trials, separation, and the ministry of exhortation.

Miscellaneous things about Hebrews

1. Hebrews has been called "the fifth Gospel." "The first four describe what Christ once did on earth, while Hebrews describes what he is now doing in heaven" (Willmington).
2. There are at least 86 direct references to the Old Testament in Hebrews.
3. Hebrews presents the only full discussion in the New Testament of Jesus as the believer's High Priest.
4. The book of Hebrews has been likened to Leviticus. "Hebrews is in Leviticus concealed; Leviticus by Hebrews is revealed. This New Testament letter opens up in a marvellous way the typical teaching of the third book of the law. As that book was given to the people of Israel while still in the wilderness, so this is a letter for wilderness saints; for believers who have left this Egypt world

behind, and are a pilgrim host journeying on to the rest that remains to the people of God. It is the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ from the cross to the coming glory, and therefore it is a call to separation” (Ironsides).

5. It is not possible to understand the Old Testament properly apart from the book of Hebrews. It opens up the typology and purpose of the Old Testament in a way that no other New Testament book does. “If the Old Testament is not read in the light of this Epistle it is misread” (W. Graham Scroggie).

6. The writer of Hebrews holds unequivocally to the historicity and divine inspiration of the Old Testament.

- a. He states that the Old Testament was given by God (Heb. 1:1; 3:7; 9:8).
- b. He quotes from every part of the Old Testament and treats it as historically accurate. He mentions creation (Heb. 1:2; 4:4), angels (Heb. 1-2), the Devil (Heb. 2:14), Abel (Heb. 11:4; 12:24), Enoch (Heb. 11:5), Noah (Heb. 11:7), Abraham and Sarah (Heb. 7:13; 11:8-12), Abraham offering up Isaac (Heb. 11:17-19), Abraham’s meeting with Melchisedec (Heb. 7:1), Isaac (Heb. 11:18), Jacob and Esau (Heb. 11:20-21; 12:16-17), Judah (Heb. 7:14), Levi (Heb. 7:5), Joseph (Heb. 11:22), Moses’ parents hiding him in the river (Heb. 11:23), Moses (Heb. 11:24-28), Aaron (Heb. 5:4), the Red Sea crossing (Heb. 11:29), Mount Sinai (Heb. 12:18-21), Joshua (Heb. 4:8), the walls of Jericho falling (Heb. 11:30), Rahab (Heb. 11:31), the priesthood, the tabernacle, Israel’s wilderness wandering (Heb. 3:8-11, 17), Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah from the book of Judges (Heb. 11:32), and David and Samuel from the book of kings (Heb. 11:32).
- c. He teaches us that Moses gave the Law (Heb. 9:19). This is in direct contrast to the heresy promoted by theological liberals and New Evangelicals today who claim that Moses did not write all of the Pentateuch and that much of Israel’s law as recorded in the Pentateuch was not written until the time of the kings. For example, Bruce Metzger, one of the editors of the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament, says of Exodus: “As with Genesis, several strands of literary tradition, some very ancient, some as late as the sixth century B.C., were combined in the makeup of the books,” and of Deuteronomy, “Its

compilation is generally assigned to the seventh century B.C., though it rests upon much older tradition, some of it from Moses' time" (Metzger, *Reader's Digest Condensed Bible*, introduction to Exodus and Deuteronomy). There is not a hint of support for such a thing in the book of Hebrews.

d. He teaches us that days of creation are normal days and that creation was completed in six literal days (Heb. 4:4).

7. The book of Hebrews teaches us that the Bible is a self-interpreting Book. In the book of Hebrews we have a divinely-given interpretation of the Old Testament tabernacle and priesthood. These were types of Christ and prophecies of the future and we are not left to imagine what they might mean. We are given definite keys to their interpretation.

8. The book of Hebrews refutes the doctrine that the church has replaced Israel and can therefore adopt many of the principles of the Jewish economy. The Church of Rome is guilty of this false doctrine. It sees itself as the new Israel and has priests, temples, candles, incense, holy water, sacrifices, and other things it has adopted from the Old Testament. The book of Hebrews overthrows this error by showing that the Old Testament system was typical and was done away in Christ.

9. The book of Hebrews refutes the Calvinist or TULIP doctrines of unconditional and "sovereign" election and irresistible grace, that God sovereignly chooses who will be saved and irresistibly draws them so that on one hand it is impossible for the non-elect to be saved and on the other hand it is impossible for the elect not to be saved. If this were true, the Holy Spirit would not give such dire warnings and exhortations to professing believers about the possibility of apostasy, because if they are elected they could not possibly perish and if they are not elected nothing they could do would change their status. Consider, for example, the following passages:

a. Consider Hebrews 2:3: "*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.*" -- This exhortation makes no sense in light of Calvinist doctrine. If election is as the Calvinist teaches, how could the elect neglect salvation and how could the non-elect do anything other than neglect it?

- b. Consider Hebrews 3:12-14: *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.”* -- If the elect are predetermined “sovereignly” and if election has nothing whatsoever to do with the sinner’s faith and if he is irresistibly drawn, what could this exhortation possibly mean? How could a sovereignly-elected, irresistibly-drawn believer depart from God, and how could the non-elect do anything other than depart from God?
- c. Consider Hebrews 4:9-11: *“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”* -- How could this exhortation possibly apply to TULIP type election? This passage says the rest of salvation is something that every person must seek to enter into and all are urged to do so, but the doctrine of “sovereign” election teaches us that those elected to God’s rest are predetermined solely by God and they have no choice in the matter and will assuredly enter into that rest.
- d. Consider Hebrews 6:4-6: *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”* -- If TULIP theology is true, why the exhortation? How could the elect fall away? And how could the non-elect do anything but fall away?
- e. Consider Hebrews 10:26-29: *“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden*

under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" -- Again, if TULIP theology is true, why would such an exhortation be given to professing believers? If they are sovereignly elected, they will surely persevere and if they aren't they surely won't. According to Calvinist doctrine, it has nothing to do with them or what they do.

If election is "sovereign" and "unconditional" in a Calvinist sense and the believer has no choice whatsoever in the matter of salvation, these passages don't make sense. If, on the other hand, election involves an element of foreknowledge (1 Pet. 1:2) and involves a personal choice on the part of the sinner ("*whosoever believeth*," Jn. 3:15, 16; 12:46; Acts 10:43; Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 John 5:1; Rev. 22:17; etc.), the exhortations and warnings in Hebrews make perfect sense. Because if this is true, and we know that it is because the Bible everywhere teaches it, then the sinner, being enlightened by Christ (Jn. 1:9) and drawn by Christ (Jn. 12:32) and convicted by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:8) can, because of this gracious divine enablement, either believe on Christ or not and it is also possible for a sinner to come close to salvation without actually possessing it. Therefore the sinner needs to be exhorted to believe on Jesus Christ truly and sincerely and not to turn away before he has been genuinely born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit and adopted into God's family.

10. Various quotes pertaining to the importance of the book of Hebrews:

"It is one of the greatest two theological treatises in the New Testament. Moreover, it is king and leader to a new range of heights, the last group of books in our New Testament, namely, the Hebrew Christian Epistles" (J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*).

"Of the epistolary writings in the New Testament, the one to The Hebrews stands by itself; that is, it cannot be placed in any Group, either Pauline or Catholic. In subject and style there is nothing with which to compare it. ... The Prologue is altogether sublime, and there is nothing comparable except perhaps John 1:1-14" (W. Graham Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*).

“... if we compare all the epistles of the New Testament, we shall not find any of them more replenished with divine, heavenly matter than this to the Hebrews” (Matthew Henry).

“No book of Scripture more fully authenticates itself as inspired” (C.I. Scofield).

“There is no book of the New Testament more important than this, and of course none whose want would be more perceptible in the canon of the Scriptures. ... In no part of the Bible can there be found so full an account of the design of the Mosaic institutions as in chapter 5 through 10 of this epistle; and were it not for this, the volume of inspiration would be incomplete. We should be left in the dark on some of the most important subjects in revelation; we should ask questions for which we could find no certain answer” (Albert Barnes).

“This is evidently an integral part of the Word of God. Cut from our Bibles, it would leave a great gap that nothing else could fill. In its own place, it fills that gap admirably and forms in a most marvellous way the connecting link between the economy of the Old and the New Testaments” (Harry Ironside).

“The Epistle to the Hebrews is of such importance that I rank it beside the Epistle to the Romans (which is excelled by no other book)” (J. Vernon McGee).

“The Epistle to the Hebrews, one of the most important books of the New Testament in that it contains some of the chief doctrines of the Christian faith, is, as well, a book of infinite logic and great beauty. To read it is to breathe the atmosphere of heaven itself. To study it is to partake of strong spiritual meat. To abide in its teachings is to be led from immaturity to maturity in the knowledge of Christian truth and of Christ Himself. It is to ‘go on unto perfection” (E. Schuyler English, *Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews*).

“The Epistle to the Hebrews is a rich part of the New Testament canon. In a unique fashion it exalts the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so, it makes immensely valuable contributions to the doctrines of His Incarnation, His substitutionary death, and His priesthood. Among the other truths to which the epistle effectively contributes are those involving the relationship between the New Covenant and the Old, the interpretation of the Old Testament, and the life of faith. The church would indeed be incalculably

poorer without the teaching of this inspired book” (Zane Hodges, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*).

OUTLINE OF HEBREWS

I. A Better Deliverer -- Jesus (Hebrews 1:1 - 5:10)

1. Christ is better than angels (Heb. 1:1 - 2:18)
2. Christ is better than Moses (Heb. 3:1 - 4:13)
3. Christ is better than Aaron (Heb. 4:14 - 5:10)

II. A Better Purpose -- Perfection (Heb. 5:11 - 6:20)

III. A Better Priesthood -- Melchisedec (Heb. 7:1-28)

IV. A Better Covenant -- Calvary (Hebrews 8:1-13)

V. A Better Sanctuary - An Heavenly One (Hebrews 9:11-28)

VI. A Better Sacrifice - An Eternal One (Hebrews 10:1-18)

Hebrews 10:19-39 is an exhortation that concludes this section

VII. A Better Principle -- Faith (Hebrews 11:1-40)

VIII. Concluding Exhortations (Heb. 12:1 - 13:19)

1. Let us lay aside hindrances and run the race with patience (Heb. 12:1-4)
2. Let us endure chastening (Heb. 12:5-13)
3. Let us follow peace and holiness (Heb. 12:14)
4. Let us beware of failing of the grace of God (Heb. 12:15-17)
5. Let us remember that we are not under the old covenant but the new (Heb. 12:18-24)
6. Let us not refuse the voice that speaketh from heaven (Heb. 12:25-29)

7. Let us practice hospitality and brotherly love (Heb. 13:1-3)
 8. Let us honor marriage and beware of adultery (Heb. 13:4)
 9. Let us beware of covetousness (Heb. 13:5-6)
 10. Let us obey church leaders (Heb. 13:7, 17)
 11. Let us avoid strange doctrines (Heb. 13:8-9)
 12. Let us go forth unto Jesus without the camp (Heb. 13:10-14)
 13. Let us offer acceptable sacrifices to God (Heb. 13:15-16)
 14. Let us pray (Heb. 13:17-18)
- IX. The Benediction (Heb. 13:20-25)

Review Questions on the Introduction to Hebrews

1. In about what year did Pantaeus write that Hebrews was generally accredited in that day to Paul?
2. A chief evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews is the reference to what man in chapter 13?
3. What was Paul's standard salutation?
4. Where was Hebrews written from?
5. What are two reasons why we believe that Peter was referring to the book of Hebrews in 2 Pet. 3:15?
6. What is the two-fold theme of Hebrews?
7. Why were the Jewish professors in danger of turning back?
8. What is the key verse of Hebrews?
9. How many times is the word "better" used in Hebrews?
10. Name five of the titles of Christ that we find in Hebrews.
11. Persevering in the faith is the ----- of one's salvation.

12. What is wrong with the following quotation? "For we will be made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:14).
13. What verse in Hebrews says there are things that accompany salvation?
14. What are the six ways that Hebrews teaches eternal security?
15. Give three examples from the Bible of people who came close to salvation but were not saved.
16. The Parable of the Sower describes the rocky heart. What is its characteristic?
17. Why does the Bible repeat things?
18. What words are repeated 10 or more times in the book of Hebrews?
19. How many direct references to the Old Testament are found in Hebrews?

20. Hebrews contains the only full discussion in the New Testament of what doctrine?
21. The writer of Hebrews refers to every part of the Old Testament. Which part does he describe as unhistorical?
22. According to the writer of Hebrews, who gave the Law?
23. In what way does the book of Hebrews teach us that the Bible is a self-interpreting book?
24. How do the warnings and exhortations in Hebrews refute the Calvinist doctrines of unconditional election and irresistible grace?

A BETTER DELIVERER (Hebrews 1:1 - 5:10)

SECTIONAL OVERVIEW

This opening section of Hebrews shows, in the most dramatic manner, that Jesus is greater than the angels, Moses, and Aaron the first high priest of the Levitical system. These were the things that the Hebrews gloried in, and it was to these that professing Jews were tempted to return because of the pressures of tribulation.

Jesus is greater than the angels because He is very God. He is greater than Moses inasmuch that He who built and owns the house is greater than he who merely served in it. He is greater than Aaron because He is the reality of which Aaron was merely the type.

This section is interspersed with powerful exhortations and warnings about apostasy.

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION (Heb. 1:1-3)

These first three verses form an introduction to the book of Hebrews.

1. The book opens with God (Heb. 1:1).

- a. The Bible never tries to prove the existence of God. He is introduced in the first verse of the Bible, and throughout the Book His existence is taken for granted. “In the book of Hebrews, as in the book of Genesis, no attempt is made to prove God’s existence. Both books assume that there is a God. The Bible makes no effort to try to prove the existence of God. There are courses in seminaries today that try to build up some philosophic system by which the existence of God can be proven. I have been through courses like that, and I know what I’m talking about when I say it is a great waste of time. There is something wrong with you if

you can't walk out and look up at the mountains, or go down to the seashore and look at the sea, or look up into the heavens, and recognize that there is a Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). It is the fool who has said in his heart that there is no God (see Ps. 14:1)" (J. Vernon McGee).

- b. In Hebrews God is seen in His great love, revealing Himself to sinful men. "We can scarcely conceive any thing more dignified than the opening of this epistle; the sentiments are exceedingly elevated, and the language, harmony itself! The infinite God is at once produced to view, not in any of those attributes which are essential to the Divine nature, but in the manifestations of his love to the world, by giving a revelation of his will relative to the salvation of mankind, and thus preparing the way, through a long train of years, for the introduction of that most glorious Being, his own Son" (Adam Clarke).
- c. God is seen controlling the times and the seasons by His great power and for His purposes.

2. God spoke to men (Heb. 1:1-2a).

"From Adam to Moses, through 2500 years, and from Moses to Malachi, through 1100 years, the prophets were speaking for God to man. But at the end of the 3600 years their revelation of God was only partial. Then after a silence of 400 years, when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, and in that Son the revelation of God is perfect" (William Pettingill).

Hebrew's opening statement on biblical inspiration is amazing both in its brevity and its depth. These 30 words in English (18 in Greek) encompass the entire doctrine of biblical inspiration.

- a. The Scripture was infallibly given so that the product is the words of God rather than the words of man. The emphasis here is not that man wrote but that God spoke. The "human element" in the giving of Scripture is not emphasized. We know that men wrote the books of the Bible, but the emphasis must be on the fact that the product is the infallible Word of God. In contrast, modern biblical scholarship focuses on the "human element," vainly attempting to discover what "sources"

the Gospel writers used, exploring endless “documentary” theories, etc. This is both unscriptural and dangerous, for it frequently leads to a lowering of the doctrine of divine inspiration, at least in practice.

b. The Scripture was given over a long period of time. The word “sundry” is translated from the Greek word *polumeros*, which means “in many portions, i.e. variously as to time and agency (piecemeal)” (Strong).

(1) Thus, “sundry times” refers to the progressive nature of Scripture. The Old Testament was delivered gradually over a period of roughly 1,100 years, from Moses to Malachi. It refers to the progressive nature of revelation. “Revelation has been gradual--like the breaking of the day in the east. At first there is a little light; it increases and expands till objects become more and more visible, and then the sun rises in full-orbed glory. At first we discern only the existence of some object--obscure and undefined; then we can trace--its outline; then its colour, its size, its proportions, its drapery--till it stands before us fully revealed. So it has been with revelation. There is a great variety of subjects which we now see clearly, which were very imperfectly understood by the teaching of the prophets, and would be now if we had only the Old Testament” (Barnes).

(2) The progressive nature of divine revelation must be understood when interpreting Scripture. Consider the doctrine of Immortality, of the things pertaining to death, heaven, hell, resurrection, and eternal life. The Old Testament contained some teaching on this (e.g., Job 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2-4), but it was not until the New Testament that the fullest light on the next life was given (2 Tim. 1:10).

c. The Scripture was given by “*diverse manners.*”

(1) This means that God gave His revelation to men by many means, such as the following:

(a) Dreams and visions (Nu. 12:6; Dan. 7:1-2)

(b) Voices (Deut. 4:36)

(c) Stone carvings (Ex. 24:12)

(d) Handwriting on a wall (Dan. 5)

(e) Angels (Heb. 2:2; Dan. 9:21-23)

(2) God also gave His revelation through diverse types of writings, such as narrative, prophecy, poetry, psalms, and proverbs.

d. The Scripture was given to the Jews (“*to the fathers*”). Compare Rom. 3:1-2; Deut. 4:7-8; Neh. 9:13-14; Ps. 147:19-20. The nation Israel was divinely chosen for this purpose and was blessed above measure in being made the recipient of holy Scripture.

e. The Scripture was given chiefly to reveal God to men through Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:2). That is its grand theme. Compare Lk. 24:44, where Jesus taught that every major part of the Old Testament spoke of Him. “He has spoken to us not through a mere human agency, but in the Person of the Son. In other words, it is not now God sending a messenger to man to make known His will and call him back to Himself, but it is God coming out to man in the Son. God is no longer hidden nor at a distance. He has come down into His own world seeking those who have wandered from Him, manifesting Himself in all His infinite holiness and righteousness. In Christ, God is fully told out” (Ironsides).

f. The Scripture was completed in these last days (Heb. 1:2).

(1) The Old Testament revelation is contrasted with the New, not in the sense that the Old is inferior to or less divinely inspired than the New, but in the sense that the New completes and perfects and supersedes it. In both cases God “spake.” See Jude 3, where we see that the New Testament was “*once delivered unto the saints.*”

(2) What are the “last days”?

(a) The “last days,” which is the same as “the latter days,” describes that period of time during which God will complete His plan for mankind. The last days began with the Apostles (Heb. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 Jn. 2:18). It encompasses the Great Tribulation (Isa. 2:10-12; Jer 30:23-24), the regathering and regeneration of the nation Israel (Hos. 3:5), the second coming and glorious earthly

reign of Christ (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1), the resurrection (Jn. 11:25), and the final judgment of the unsaved (Jn. 12:48).

- (b) In 1 Tim. 4:1 and 2 Tim. 3:1 “last days” and “latter times” refers to the last days of the church age, to the time just preceding the return of Christ.

CHRIST IS BETTER THAN ANGELS (Heb. 1:4 - 2:18)

“The angels are introduced here because, the Law having been given by means of them, they were regarded as ‘the highest theocratic authority next to God Himself’” (Scroggie).

See Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Ex. 23:20, 23.

“Christ is the Son; angels are servants. Christ is King; angels are subjects. Christ is the Creator; angels are creatures.” (J. Vernon McGee).

1. How is Christ greater than angels?

Note that the writer of Hebrews begins by viewing Christ in His lowest state (his incarnation) and rises from there to the highest state (sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high). “It is only in God manifested in the flesh that all these excellences can possibly appear, therefore the apostle begins this astonishing climax with the simple Sonship of Christ, or his incarnation; for, on this, all that he is to man, and all that he has done for man, is built” (Adam Clarke).

- a. Christ is better than the angels because He is the Son (Heb. 1:2, 5). “As a son has a rank in a family above servants; as he has a control over the property above that which servants have, so it is with the Mediator. He is the Son of God: angels are the servants of God, and the servants of the church. They occupy a place in the universe, compared with that which he occupies, similar to the place which servants in a family occupy compared with that which a son has. To illustrate and prove this is the design of the remainder of this chapter. The argument which the apostle insists on is, that the title ‘THE Son of God’ is to be given to him alone. It has been conferred on no others. Though the angels, and though saints are called in general ‘sons of God,’ yet the title ‘THE Son

of God' has been given to him only" (Barnes).

(1) The Old Testament also says God has a Son (Prov. 30:4). This speaks of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19).

(2) Hebrews 1:5 quotes from Psalm 2:7 -- "*Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*"

(a) This was fulfilled in Christ's incarnation as He was begotten of God in the womb of the virgin Mary (Lk. 1:35; Jn. 1:14). Afterwards He was called the "only begotten Son" (Jn. 1:18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn. 4:9).

(b) This was also fulfilled in His resurrection. See Acts 13:33. Jesus is the "first begotten from the dead" (Rev. 1:5).

(3) Hebrews 1:5 also quotes from 2 Sam. 7:14 (and 1 Ch. 22:10), "*I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.*" This was spoken pertaining to David's greater son, the Messiah.

b. Christ is heir of all things (Heb. 1:2). In John 16:15, Jesus said, "*All things that the Father hath are mine...*" As the Creator, Jesus Christ already owned everything (Col. 1:16). It was through His incarnation that He became heir of all things. He earned and inherited the position that was lost by Adam. "As God, he was equal to the Father; but, as God-man and Mediator, he was appointed by the Father to be the heir of all things, the sovereign Lord of all, the absolute disposer, director, and governor of all persons and of all things, Ps. 2:6,7. All power in heaven and earth is given to him; all judgment is committed to him, Mt. 28:18; Jn. 5:22" (Matthew Henry). "When the Lord Jesus came to this earth, He became a man. He performed miracles in every realm. He had control of the human body. He had control of nature--He could still storms, and He could feed five thousand people. He recovered what Adam had lost. The Lord Jesus is going to be heir of all things, and we are told in Scripture that we are heirs of God. Romans 8:16-17 tells us, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...'. Joint-heirs is an interesting word. It does not mean equal

heirs. ... the Lord Jesus Christ is the heir, and we are just the joint-heirs. He will be in control, and He may put you or me in charge of a little something in the universe. In that way we are joint-heirs with Christ-- we have an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, and it is reserved in heaven for us” (J. Vernon McGee).

c. Christ is better than the angels because He is the Creator (Heb. 1:2) --
“*by whom also he made the worlds.*”

(1) He is the Creator of all things but He Himself was not created. Compare Jn. 1:3 and Col. 1:16. Jesus existed with the Father before the world was made (Jn. 17:5).

(2) What are the “worlds”? The Greek word is “aion,” which refers to ages as well as to inhabitable worlds, both to worlds of *matter* and to the worlds of *time*. Christ is the Creator of all things visible and invisible, present and future, the heavens and the earth. “Literally, ‘ages’ with all things and persons belonging to them; the universe, including all space and ages of time, and all material and spiritual existences” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

d. Christ is better than the angels because He is God (Heb. 1:3, 8-12).

“These are fathomless utterances; a complete Christology” (Scroggie).

This passage contains three clear statements that Jesus is truly God.

“*being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person*” (Heb. 1:3).

(1) The “*brightness of his glory*” means that Jesus expresses and shows forth the glory of God like the light of the sun shows forth the sun’s glory. “The rays or beams of the sun are its ‘brightness,’ or that by which the sun is seen and known. The sun itself we do not see; the beams which flow from it we do see. The meaning here is, that if God be represented under the image of a luminous body, as he is in the Scriptures (see Ps. 84:11; Mal. 4:2), then Christ is the radiance of that light, the brightness of that luminary. He is that by which we perceive God, or by which God is made known to us in his real perfections” (Barnes).

(2) The term “*express image of his person*” means exactly what it says. Jesus is the perfect image, perfect picture, perfect engraving of the invisible God.

(3) In addition to Hebrews 1:4, compare other statements that bear this out:

Matthew 1:23 -- Jesus is “God with us”

John 1:1 -- Jesus is God

John 8:58 -- Jesus identified Himself as the divine “I Am.” Compare Ex. 3:14.

John 10:30 -- Jesus and the Father are one

John 12:45; 14:9 -- He that has seen Jesus has seen God

Acts 10:36 -- Jesus is Lord of all

Acts 20:28 -- God purchased the church with His own blood

Romans 9:5 -- Jesus is over all, God blessed for ever

2 Corinthians 4:4 -- Jesus is the image of God

2 Corinthians 4:6 -- The glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ

Philippians 2:6 -- Jesus was in the form of God and was equal with God

Colossians 1:15 -- Jesus is the image of the invisible God

Colossians 2:9 -- In Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily

1 Timothy 3:16 -- God was manifest in the flesh

Titus 2:13 -- Jesus is the great God

1 John 3:16 -- God laid down his life for us

“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy

God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Heb. 1:8-9).

- (1) This is a quotation from Psalm 45:6-7. In this Psalm it is obvious that God the Father, Jehovah God, is speaking about the Son. God the Father calls the Son God, and God the Son calls the Father God. This is the mystery of the Trinity. Though we do not fully understand it, we believe it because it is the teaching of Scripture. “Here one person calls another person God, O God. And, if God the Father declares him to be so, he must be really and truly so; for God calls persons and things as they are. And now let who will deny him to be essentially God at their peril, but let us own and honour him as God; for, if he had not been God, he had never been fit to have done the Mediator’s work nor to have worn the Mediator’s crown” (Matthew Henry).
- (2) Christ sits on an eternal throne. “God declares his dignity and dominion, as having a throne, a kingdom, and a sceptre of that kingdom. He has all right, rule, authority, and power, both as the God of nature, grace, and glory, and as Mediator; and so he is fully adequate to all the intents and purposes of his mediatorial kingdom. Thirdly, God declares the eternal duration of the dominion and dignity of Christ, founded upon the divinity of his person: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, from everlasting to everlasting, through all the ages of time, thwart all the attempts of earth and hell to undermine and overthrow it, and through all the endless ages of eternity, when time shall be no more. This distinguishes Christ’s throne from all earthly thrones, which are tottering, and will at length tumble down; but the throne of Christ shall be as the days of heaven” (Matthew Henry).
- (3) Christ wields a righteous sceptre. “*A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*”
 - (a) A sceptre is a staff or wand usually made of wood, commonly overlaid with gold, or of ivory. It was borne in the hands of kings as an emblem of authority and power. See Esther 4:11.
 - (b) Christ’s rule is just and equitable. “He would not be governed,

as monarchs often are, by mere caprice, or by the wishes of courtiers and flatterers; he would not be controlled by mere will, and the love of arbitrary power; but the execution of his laws would be in accordance with the principles of equity and justice” (Barnes). “God declares of Christ the perfect equity of his administration, and of the execution of his power, through all the parts of his government: A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom, Heb. 1:8. He came righteously to the sceptre, and he uses it in perfect righteousness; the righteousness of his government proceeds from the righteousness of his person, from an essential eternal love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, not merely from considerations of prudence or interest, but from an inward and immovable principle: Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity, Heb. 1:9. Christ came to fulfil all righteousness, to bring in an everlasting righteousness; and he was righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works. He has recommended righteousness to men, and restored it among them, as a most excellent and amiable thing. He came to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin as a hateful as well as a hurtful thing” (Matthew Henry).

“And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail” (Heb. 1:10-12).

(1) This is a quotation from Psalm 102:25-27, which refers to Jehovah God, and Paul ascribes it to Jesus. This is irrefutable proof that Jesus is God in the truest sense of the word. “It is of note that this Psalm clearly speaks of *Jehovah* and *El* (the basic Old Testament names for God) and applies these names to the subject here (i.e., Jesus). Simply put, here is another clear and forceful reference to the Deity of Christ. Moreover, the LORD (Jehovah) of the text in Psalm 102 is clearly applied to the Son. In the greater context, the author of Hebrews is building a forceful case that Jesus Christ is

superior to angels in that He in fact is Jehovah God” (David Sorenson).

- (2) Again we see that Jesus is the Creator of all things. As the one who laid the foundation of the earth and created the heavens, Jesus is the One who is spoken of in Genesis 1.
- (3) Here we see that the world is temporal -- *“They shall perish, they shall all wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.”* The word “wax” is an old Saxon-derived English word, meaning to grow or to increase or to become. Isaiah 40:22 describes the heavens as stretched out like a curtain or a tent. Elsewhere we find that the heavens will be rolled together as a scroll (Is. 34:4; Rev. 6:14). “Our visible world (both the earth and visible heavens) is growing old. Not only men and beasts and trees grow old, but this world itself grows old, and is hastening to its dissolution; it changes like a garment, has lost much of its beauty and strength; it grew old betimes on the first apostasy, and it has been waxing older and growing weaker ever since; it bears the symptoms of a dying world. But then its dissolution will not be its utter destruction, but its change. Christ will fold up this world as a garment not to be abused any longer, not to be any longer so used as it has been. Let us not then set our hearts upon that which is not what we take it to be, and will not be what it now is. Sin has made a great change in the world for the worse, and Christ will make a great change in it for the better. We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let the consideration of this wean us from the present world, and make us watchful, diligent, and desirous of that better world, and let us wait on Christ to change us into a meetness for that new world that is approaching; we cannot enter into it till we be new creatures” (Matthew Henry).
- (4) In contrast to the world, Christ is immutable and eternal -- *“Thou remainest, thy years shall not fail.”* “Christ is the same in himself, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever, and the same to his people in all the changes of time. This may well support all who have an interest in Christ under all the changes they meet with in the world, and under all they feel in themselves. Christ is immutable and immortal: his years shall not fail. This may comfort us under all

decays of nature that we may observe in ourselves or in our friends, though our flesh and heart fail and our days are hastening to an end. Christ lives to take care of us while we live, and of ours when we are gone, and this should quicken us all to make our interest in him clear and sure, that our spiritual and eternal life may be hid with Christ in God” (Matthew Henry). “Man may change by caprice, or whim, or by some new suggestion of interest, of passion, or ambition. I go to my friend today, and find him kind and true--but I have no absolute certainty that I shall find him such tomorrow. His feelings, from some unknown cause, may have become cold towards me. Some enemy may have breathed suspicion into his ear about me, or he may have formed some stronger attachment, or he may be sick, or dead. But nothing like this can happen in regard to the Redeemer. He changes not. I am sure that he is always the same. No one can influence him by slander; no new friendship can weaken the old; no sickness or death can occur to him, to change him; and though the heavens be on fire, and the earth be convulsed, he is THE SAME. In such a Saviour I may confide; in such a friend why should not all confide” (Barnes).

- e. Christ is better than the angels because He is the Sustainer of the universe -- *“upholding all things by the word of his power.”* Compare Col. 1:17. The one who created all things sustains all things. This explains the mystery of life. To understand the universe, one must look beyond the physical laws to the One who “upholds all things.” “It is not merely the earth; not only its rocks, mountains, seas, animals, and men, but it is the universe--all distant worlds. How can he do this who is not God? He does it by his word--his command. What a conception! That a simple command should do all this: So the world was made when God ‘spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast,’ Ps. 33:9. So the Lord Jesus commanded the waves and the winds, and they were still, (Mt. 8:26,27) so he spoke to diseases, and they departed--and to the dead, and they arose. Compare Gen. 1:3. I know not how men can explain away this ascription of infinite power to the Redeemer. There can be no higher idea of omnipotence than to say, that he upholds all things by his word; and assuredly he who can hold up this vast universe, so that it does not sink into anarchy or into nothing, must be God. The same power Jesus claimed for himself. See Mt.

28:18” (Barnes).

f. Christ is better than the angels because He is the Saviour who purged our sins -- “*who by himself purged our sins.*”

(1) This is the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Christ purchased salvation for us by taking our place in judgment. Compare 2 Cor. 5:21.

(2) Christ accomplished salvation “by himself.” The sinner does not need anything else. No one and no thing can add to Christ’s salvation (not baptism or sacraments or church membership, not good works, not Mary or the Saints).

g. Christ is better than the angels because He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high (Heb. 1:3). Compare 1 Pet. 3:22.

(1) “Right hand” signifies a position of prestige and power.

(2) The “Majesty on high” is God the Father (Heb. 12:12). He is called “the Majesty in the heavens” in Heb. 8:1. The term “majesty” speaks of God’s power, authority, and glory, the kingly splendor of His presence and kingdom. It is used of the splendor of Solomon’s kingdom (1 Ch. 29:25) and that of Ahasuerus (Es. 1:4). In 2 Pet. 1:16 “majesty” is used to describe the glory of Christ when He was transfigured.

(3) We see that there is a real throne in heaven.

(a) It is a glorious throne. As we have seen, *majesty* refers to kingdom glory and splendor. See Rev. 4:3-6.

(b) It is a throne that rules over all (Eph. 1:20-22).

(c) It is a throne of intercession (Rom. 8:34).

(c) It is a throne of grace, mercy, and help for those who come through faith in the blood of Christ (Heb. 4:16; 10:19).

(4) “This sitting of the Son at God’s right hand ... is never used of His pre-existing state co-equal with the Father, but always of His exalted state as Son of man after His sufferings, and as Mediator for

man in the presence of God (Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20-22)” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

h. Christ is better than the angels because He is worshipped (Heb. 1:6).

(1) This appears to be a reference to Ps. 97:7, “... *worship him, all ye gods*” (“gods,” that is, exalted beings, as angels). The exact phrase “*let all the angels of God worship him*” is found in the Greek Septuagint in Deut. 32:43, but for the following reasons we are confident that the writer of Hebrews was not quoting from a Greek translation:

(a) Paul is writing to the Jews and they would not have respected a Greek translation of their revered Hebrew Scriptures. The phrase “*let all the angels of God worship him*” is not found in Deut. 32:43 in any extant Hebrew manuscripts. Though some Jews in some places would possibly have accepted a Greek translation, Hebrews is addressed to the Jews in many places, including Israel, that bastion of the Hebrew language. Compare Acts 22:2.

(b) This phrase in Deut. 32:43 is omitted in all ancient versions except the Septuagint (and it is even omitted in some of these).

(c) “It is impossible to believe that the passage in question, in Deuteronomy, has any reference to the Messiah. It does not relate to his ‘introduction’ to the world. It would not occur to any reader that it had any such reference. The context celebrates the victory over the enemies of Israel which God will achieve. After saying that ‘his arrows would be drunk with blood, and that his sword would devour flesh with the blood of the slain and of captives, from the time when he begins to take vengeance on an enemy,’ the Septuagint (not the Hebrew) immediately asserts, ‘let the heavens rejoice at the same time with him, and let all the angels of God worship him.’ That is: ‘Let the inhabitants of the heavenly world rejoice in the victory of God over the enemies of his people, and let them pay their adoration to him.’ But the Messiah does not appear to be alluded to anywhere in the context; much less described as

‘introduced into the world.’ There is, moreover, not the slightest evidence that it was ever supposed by the Jews to have any such reference; and though it might be said that the apostle merely quoted language that expressed his meaning--as we often do when we are familiar with any well-known phrase that will exactly suit our purpose and convey an idea--yet, it should be remarked, that this is not the way in which this passage is quoted. It is a proof-text, and Paul evidently meant to be understood as saying, that that passage had a fair reference to the Messiah. It is evident, moreover, that it would be admitted to have such a reference by those to whom he wrote. It is morally certain, therefore, that this was not the passage which the writer intended to quote” (Barnes).

(2) If Jesus were not God He could not receive worship. The Bible teaches that it is idolatry and wickedness to worship any one or any thing other than the one true and living God (Ex. 20:3-5; 34:14; Is. 42:8; Matt. 4:10). The elect angels refuse to accept worship (Rev. 19:10). The apostles also refused worship (Acts 14:11-15). Yet the Lord Jesus Christ was repeatedly worshipped by those who approached Him, and not once does the Bible record that He refused it.

i. Christ is better than the angels because His enemies will be made his footstool (Heb. 1:13). This is quoted from Ps. 110:1.

(1) “The phrase, *to make an enemy a footstool*, is borrowed from the custom of ancient warriors, who stood on the necks of vanquished kings, on the occasion of celebrating a triumph over them, as a token of their complete prostration and subjection” (Barnes).

(2) His enemies will either humble themselves to His will or they will be destroyed (Ps. 2:7-12). Every knee will ultimately bow to Jesus (Phil. 2:10-11).

j. Christ is better than the angels because He was the Lord and His doctrine was confirmed by divine miracles (Heb. 2:1-4).

This is the first of many exhortations in Hebrews. The writer’s method

is to give doctrinal instruction and then to exhort his listeners to obedience based on that doctrine. This is a good example for every preacher. Doctrine and “positive truth” without practical exhortation and plain reproof falls short of God’s will for biblical preaching (2 Tim. 4:2).

(1) What does “*let them slip*” mean? There are three possible meanings and interpretations of this term, and I believe that all three are true.

(a) First, it is to allow something to slip away. The Greek word *pararrhueo* means “to carelessly pass (miss)” (Strong) and “to escape--as from the mind, i.e. to forget” (Barnes). Thus it is like a man in a boat holding a rope that is tied to an anchor or to a dock. If he simply relaxes and lets the rope slip from his hand, the boat will drift away from safety.

(b) Second, it is watching a stream flow by without benefiting from it. “We should not allow them to be like a stream that glides on by us without benefiting us; that is, we should endeavour to secure and retain them as our own” (Barnes).

(c) Third, according to some, “to let them slip” has the meaning of a leaky vessel from which the life-giving water runs out. When the believer finds that there are leaks in his Christian life through which the truth and God’s will is slipping away, he must stop them up at once! “Our minds and memories are like a leaky vessel, they do not without much care retain what is poured into them; this proceeds from the corruption of our natures, the enmity and subtlety of Satan (he steals away the word), from the entanglements and snares of the world, the thorns that choke the good seed” (Matthew Henry).

(2) This warning applies to salvation, which is something that most men allow to slip away. It is a gift that is offered today to all sinners, but it is a gift that must be diligently and properly received. A divine life preserver has been thrown out to drowning sinners, but it, and it alone, must be caught hold of. The sweet waters of salvation are flowing for all of mankind, but each individual must drink of the waters for himself and not merely watch the wholesome river flow by. “There is truth enough to save the world--

but the world disregards and despises it. It needs not great sins to destroy the soul. Simple neglect will do it as certainly as atrocious crimes. Every man has a sinful heart that will destroy him, unless he makes an effort to be saved. And it is not merely the great sinner, therefore, who is in danger. It is the man who neglects his soul--whether a moral or an immoral man, a daughter of amiableness, or a daughter of vanity and vice” (Barnes).

- (a) Consider those in Athens to whom Paul preached. They said, “*We will hear thee again of this matter*” (Acts 17:34). They had heard the glorious truth of Jesus Christ, but their response was to put it off until a later time. In so doing, they were well on the way to letting the Gospel slip away from them for all eternity.
- (b) To “neglect” salvation in the sense of Hebrews 2:1-4 and thus to fail to escape from destruction is more than mere backsliding and carnality (such as that described in 1 Cor. 3:1). The propitiation of Christ provides for all sins the believer might commit (1 Jn. 2:1-2). To “neglect” salvation in the sense of Hebrews 2:1-4 is to turn one’s back on salvation through faith in the blood of Christ. This is made plain throughout the book of Hebrews. It is to have an evil heart of unbelief and to depart from the true and living God (Heb. 3:12). It is to fall away from the doctrine of grace in Christ and thus to crucify the Son of God afresh (Heb. 6:6). It is to count the blood of Christ an unholy thing and do despite unto the Spirit of grace by going back to a works-ritual doctrine of salvation (Heb. 10:29).
- (c) There is no salvation apart from attending to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:3). Sinners do not have to commit some great sin in order to be lost; they are already “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph. 2:1) and already condemned (Jn. 3:18). There is no other way of salvation for those who follow other religions even in the sincerest manner, for “*neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). There is no other way of salvation for “morally upright” or for religious people, for “*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23)

and the “best sinner” needs salvation as urgently as the “worst sinner.” There is also no second chance beyond the grave, for Jesus taught that beyond the grave is either Heaven or Hell.

(3) This warning also applies to the Christian life. We must beware of letting the things of God slip away (Heb. 2:1).

(a) Throughout the New Testament we see similar exhortations (Jesus gave such exhortations, Jn. 8:31-32; Paul gave them, Acts 14:22; James gave them, Jam. 1:21-22; Peter gave them, 2 Pet. 1:5-9; John gave them, 1 Jn. 2:28). We see, then, that great pressure is brought to bear against the believer to drive him away from the truth. These pressures come from the believer’s great enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Letting the things of God slip and backsliding is a very real possibility for any believer. The only thing we have to do to let the things of God “slip” is to do nothing, to relax our guard spiritually.

(b) The believer must, therefore, be alert, aggressive, and diligent in his Christian life. He must give “*more earnest heed*” to the things which he has heard. He must study the Bible diligently (Jn. 8:31-32; 2 Tim. 2:2), take heed to teaching and preaching (Eph. 4:11-14), pursue spiritual growth (2 Pet. 1:5-10), seek God’s perfect will (Rom. 12:1-2), serve the Lord diligently (Rom. 12:3-21). There is no “easy path” or short cut to staying in the center of God’s will.

(c) Neglect is a great danger in every area of life and certainly in the Christian life. This is true in regard to education, one’s livelihood, health, marriage, child training, friendship, you name it. Neglect will result in great loss in the Christian life. One can so easily neglect one’s daily walk with Christ, neglect prayer, neglect Bible study, neglect fellowship with the brethren, neglect church, neglect one’s spiritual ones, neglect growing in grace, and the result is always great loss and tragedy in this world and shame at the judgment seat of Christ. “A man who is in business need not commit forgery or robbery to ruin himself; he has only to neglect his business, and his ruin is certain. A man who is lying on a bed of sickness need not cut his throat to

destroy himself; he has only to neglect the means of restoration, and he will be ruined. A man floating in a skiff above Niagara, need not move an oar or make an effort to destroy himself; he has only to neglect using the oar at the proper time, and he will certainly be carried over the cataract. Most of the calamities of life are caused by simple neglect. By neglect of education, children grow up in ignorance; by neglect, a farm grows up to weeds and briars ; by neglect, a house goes to decay; by neglect of sowing, a man will have no harvest; by neglect of reaping, the harvest would rot in the fields. No worldly interest can prosper where there is neglect; and why may it not be so in religion? There is nothing in earthly affairs, that is valuable, that will not be ruined if it is not attended to; and why may it not be so with the concerns of the soul?" (Barnes).

- (d) There is no neutral position in the Christian life. If the believer is not going forward spiritually he is going backward. It is like floating one's boat on a river. Unless you are paddling against the current you are being carried along by it.
- (e) The believer must put the things of God first in his life and not waste his time on things of lesser value (Mt. 6:33). "We have no time to pray, to read the Bible, to think of religion, for the cares of the world engross all the time--and the opportunities of salvation glide insensibly away, until it is too late" (Barnes).
- (f) The believer must be very careful about how he hears God's Word. He must be careful not only to read and study God's Word but also to do so with all of his attention so that he captures the truth of God's Word into his heart and life. He must be careful not only to attend the house of God faithfully to hear the teaching and preaching but he must listen in such a way that he grows in his understanding of it and brings it into his every day life so that his life is transformed by it. Too many believers are so casual when they sit under the preaching that they gain very little from it. Many do not bring their Bibles and others bring a Bible but do not open it. Many never write anything down. Such are in great danger of letting the things of God

“slip.” “This is a metaphor taken from unstanched vessels; the staves not being close together, the fluid put into them leaks through the chinks and crevices. Superficial hearers lose the benefit of the word preached, as the unseasoned vessel does its fluid; nor can any one hear to the saving of his soul, unless he give most earnest heed, which he will not do unless he consider the dignity of the speaker, the importance of the subject, and the absolute necessity of the salvation of his soul” (Matthew Henry).

(g) This warning reminds us of the brevity of life and that the believer must recognize the great opportunity he has to pursue the perfect will of God and to achieve all of the benefit of his salvation while there is opportunity. “We are often deceived in regard to the importance of objects; and before we perceive their value, they are irrecoverably gone. So it is often with time, and with the opportunities of obtaining an education, or of accomplishing any object which is of value. The opportunity is gone before we perceive its importance. So the young suffer the most important period of life to glide away before they perceive its value; and the opportunity of making much of their talents is lost, because they did not embrace the suitable opportunities” (Barnes).

(4) We see the infallibility of the Old Testament Scripture. It “*was steadfast*” (Heb. 2:2). The Lord Jesus said “*the Scripture cannot be broken*” (Jn. 10:35). This means that every part of it is divinely inspired and authoritative and no part of it can be despised or rejected.

(5) We see the purpose of the Law (Heb. 2:2).

(a) The law was absolute and unwavering in its authority -- “*the word spoken by angels was steadfast.*” “It was not vacillating and fluctuating. It determined what crime was, and it was firm in its punishment. It did not yield to circumstances; but, if not obeyed in all respects, it denounced punishment” (Barnes). The word “transgression” means to go beyond or break the law, which is a definition of sin.

- (b) The law required perfect obedience -- “*every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence.*” This, and no less than this, was what the law required. Compare Rom. 3:19-20 and Gal. 3:10-12. The law was not given to save sinners but to show them their lost condition and to lead them to Christ (Gal. 3:24).
- (c) The law was just in its judgments and punishments -- “*a just recompence of reward.*” “The severest punishment God ever inflicted upon sinners is no more than what sin deserves: *it is a just recompence of reward*; punishments are as just, and as much due to sin as rewards are to obedience, yea, more due than rewards are to imperfect obedience” (Matthew Henry).
- (6) The gospel of Jesus Christ is not “blind faith” (Heb. 2:3-4). It is established upon objective and infallible evidence. Compare Acts 1:3.
- (a) It is based upon eye witness testimony. The truth can be established in a court of law by just two or three reputable witnesses, but the gospel of Jesus Christ was confirmed by hundreds! See 1 Cor. 15:5-8. Not only were these witnesses honest and reputable people, in many cases they sealed their testimony with their own blood.
- (b) It is authenticated by divine miracles. See John 20:30-31.
- (7) Salvation is called “*so great*” (Heb. 2:3). We should never lose sight of the greatness of our salvation in Jesus Christ. It is great to save any sinner regardless of what sins he has committed. It is great because of what it saves us from and great because of what it saves us to. It is great to save the sinner from the everlasting fires of Hell unto the everlasting comforts of Heaven. It brings the believer into a great relationship with God, as an adopted son and heir. It exalts worthless, hell-deserving sinners to eternal glory.
- (a) It stems from God’s great love (Eph. 2:4).
- (b) It is part of a great mystery (Eph. 5:32).
- (c) It was purchased with a great price paid by a great high priest (Heb. 4:14).

- (d) It brings great joy (Philemon 1:7).
 - (e) It is accompanied by great and precious promises (2 Pet. 1:4).
 - (f) It provides entrance into a great city (Rev. 21:10).
- (8) This passage refutes every sort of hyper-dispensationalism that divides New Testament doctrine and salvation into various compartments (Heb. 2:3-4). “Hyper-dispensationalism” is characterized by making an unscripturally sharp division between the ministry of Christ and that of the apostles and of further dividing Paul’s teaching from that of Peter and the other apostles. For example, hyper-dispensationalists claim that the mysteries given to Paul contained a different revelation than that given to Peter, that only Paul’s writings are for the church today, and that the other epistles, such as Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and the epistles of John are not directly for the churches. To the contrary, Hebrews teaches that there is one unified doctrine of salvation found in the teaching of Christ in the four Gospels and in the writings of the apostles who heard him (e.g., Peter, John) and in those to whom they confirmed the gospel (e.g., Paul).
- (9) We see that the Gospel of our salvation did not begin with John the Baptist but with Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:3). John was the last of the Old Testament prophets who prepared the way for the coming of Christ. He was not in the church but he prepared the way for it. It was only after John’s death recorded in Matthew 14 that Jesus said, “*I will build my church*” (Mat. 16:18). This is the first mention of the church in the Bible.
- (10) The miracles of the apostolic era were “signs.” See 2 Cor. 12:12.
- (a) They were not done by all Christians indiscriminately but were done by the apostles in particular (and in a few instances by their close associates). A sign is meaningless unless it is restricted. If all first century believers could do miracles, wherein was “the sign of an apostle”? If I tell someone that I am going to meet them at an airport and that to identify myself I will be wearing a red hat and if everyone in the airport is wearing a red hat that day, my sign is ineffective.

- (b) The miracles performed by Jesus were signs to confirm that He was the Messiah. See John 5:36; 10:25, 37; 6:43; 14:11; 15:24; 20:30. The miracles performed by the apostles were signs to confirm their apostleship (2 Cor. 12:12). See Acts 2:43; 3:1-8; 4:33; 5:12-16; 9:36-42; 19:10-12; 28:8-9. When Tabitha died, the believers in that city could not do anything to raise her from the dead, but when Peter the apostle came, he was able to raise her (Acts 9:36-42).
- (c) The Messianic and apostolic miracles are described as “wonders” (Heb. 2:4). “A wonder denotes a portent, or prodigy--something that is fitted to excite wonder or amazement” (Barnes). When we see the description of these miracles in the Gospels and the book of Acts--the healing of the blind and the deaf and the crippled, the casting out of demons, the quieting of storms, the feeding of the multitudes, the raising of the dead--we acknowledge that they were indeed wonders. Yet when we consider the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement today, there is no “wonder” in their alleged “signs.” It is not a wonder when someone falls on the floor or laughs hysterically. It is not a wonder when something unseen, such as a headache or backache, is healed. It is not a wonder when for every one that is allegedly healed hundreds of the sick go away disappointed. It is no wonder when those who are allegedly healed relapse into the same sickness or disease. A genuine biblical miracle is an observable “wonder,” so do not be deceived by quacks and phonies.
- (d) The signs and wonders of the Messianic and apostolic era are no longer being performed, because their purpose has ceased. Since then God’s people are required to live by faith in the written record of those true signs and wonders (Jn. 20:30-31).
- (e) It is important to understand the distinction between miracles and sign miracles. God has not ceased doing miracles. He often heals in answer to prayer; he often provides for the believer’s needs in miraculous ways; He establishes churches in the most difficult of places; He converts men from darkness to light,

which is the biggest miracle of all. But this is not the same as the sign miracles of the first century. I would love to see a genuine sign miracle with my own eyes, but though I have been saved for 32 years and have attended alleged “signs and wonders” meetings in various parts of the world, I have never seen a genuine sign miracle. And that is for the simple fact that these are no longer being performed. There are no apostles today in the sense of those who performed signs (2 Cor. 12:12). The apostles established the first churches and completed the canon of Scripture and then passed off the scene, their work being complete and their office no longer needed. They laid the foundation, while we are building upon that superstructure (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:10).

(11) The miracles were done according to God’s own will and not according to the will of the believers (Heb. 2:4). Compare 1 Cor. 12:11.

k. Christ is better than angels because though he was temporarily made lower than the angels His humiliation was for the purpose of redeeming mankind (Heb. 2:5). “The humiliation, therefore, of the Redeemer--the fact that he appeared as a man, and that he was a sufferer--so far from being a reason why he should not be heard, was rather an additional reason why we should attend to what he said. He had a claim to the right of being heard, not only from his original dignity, but from the friendship which he has evinced for us in taking upon himself our nature, and suffering in our behalf” (Barnes).

(1) This passage is one of the three most important doctrinal passages in the New Testament on the humiliation of Christ, the others being John 1 and Philippians 2:9-11. Hebrews 2 describes the Son of God as the sinner’s “kinsman redeemer,” who became a man so that he could die for the sinner and bring him out of bondage into eternal glory. Compare Lev. 25:215-29; Ruth 2:20; 3:12-13; 4:9-10.

(2) Heb. 2:6-8 is a quotation from Psalm 8:4-6. It appears to be only a statement about mankind in general, but the writer of Hebrews shows us that it is a Messianic prophecy.

- (3) It is an amazing thing that God has exalted man to such a high degree (Heb. 2:6-7).
- (4) God is mindful of man and visits him (Heb. 2:6; Ps. 8:4). God is not far off or uncaring and uninvolved with His creation. “The favours of God to men all spring up out of his eternal thoughts and purposes of mercy for them; as all our dutiful regards to God spring forth from our remembrance of him. God is always mindful of us, let us never be forgetful of him. ... he comes to see us, how it is with us, what we ail, what we want, what dangers we are exposed to, what difficulties we have to encounter; and by his visitation our spirit is preserved. Let us so remember God as daily to approach him in a way of duty” (Matthew Henry).
- (5) Man has the right to rule over God’s creation (Heb. 2:7-8; Ps. 8:5-6). Man is not merely a part of the earthly creation, he is its master. He is not merely another animal; he is made in the very image of God and rules over the animals. The more radical element of the environmental movement goes astray because it does not understand nor acknowledge this foundational truth.
- (6) Man is crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:7; Ps. 8:5). He is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). He has been given dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26). He is the special object of God’s affections and of the redemption plan in Jesus Christ. A man, rather than an angel, is what God became and will forever be.
- (7) Man is made a little lower than the angels only temporarily (Heb. 2:7-8; Ps. 8:5). It was God’s plan from the beginning to place man over all of creation, but because of the fall this has not yet been fulfilled. Psalm 8:4 obviously looks forward to the Messiah, “the Son of man.” God’s intent for man will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ and those whom He redeems. Though presently made a little lower than the angels, in the resurrection, the believer will be equal to the angels (Lk. 20:36). “And so, as we read these words, we think of Him who delighted in the title ‘Son of Man’ because it speaks of Him as the appointed ruler over the whole earth, who is to deliver it

from the bondage of corruption” (Ironsides).

- (8) There is a “world to come” (Heb. 2:5). This present world system is characterized by sin (1 Jn. 2:15-16) and its god is the devil (2 Cor. 4:4). The present world “passeth away” (1 Jn. 2:17) and will be replaced by a better one ruled by Christ and characterized by righteousness. The believer becomes a citizen of the world to come when he is born again (Phil. 3:20). He enters the kingdom of God spiritually (Col. 1:13).
- (9) Jesus’ humiliation was great. The eternal Son of God, the sovereign Creator who made all things, the One who ruled the universe from His glorious throne in heaven, the Object of the praises of the heavenly hosts, humbled Himself to become lower than the angels (Heb. 2:9), to be born in a lowly manger to a poor family.
- (10) The chief reason why Jesus came into the world was to die on the cross for man’s sin (“*who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death,*” Heb. 2:9). It behooved Christ to suffer (Lk. 24:46). He did not come to earth merely to live a good life or to teach or to be an example for mankind. He came to make atonement for man’s sin and that atonement was made in His death rather than in His life.
- (11) Death was the penalty for man’s sin, and death was the price that Christ had to pay (Heb. 2:9). Compare Rom. 5:12; 6:23.
- (12) Salvation is solely by the grace of God (Heb. 2:9). This means that it is a gift that was purchased by God and that is freely offered to the believing sinner (Eph. 2:8-9). It is God’s will that the believer do good works, but those come after salvation and are the product of salvation and not the way of salvation (Eph. 2:10). To add any works to grace is to destroy grace (Rom. 11:6).
- (13) Salvation is substitutionary; it is an exchange (Heb. 2:9). Jesus Christ took the sinner’s place in death and the sinner takes His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). This passage emphasizes Christ’s death, but elsewhere in Hebrews His blood is also emphasized (e.g., Heb. 10:19). Our salvation required both the death and the blood of

Christ.

- (14) Jesus tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). This means that Jesus died to make it possible for every sinner to be saved. See Jn. 6:51 and 1 Jn. 2:2. This is contrary to the Calvinist doctrine of “limited atonement.” Christ’s atonement is explained in 1 Tim. 4:10. His atonement makes it possible for all men to be saved, but it is efficacious only for those who appropriate it by faith.
- (15) All things exist by God and for God (Heb. 2:10). Man has no true purpose apart from God.
- (16) It was becoming that God would send His Son to suffer for man’s sin (Heb. 2:10). This means that it was fitting and appropriate. It was becoming because He is love (1 Jn. 4:16). It was becoming because He is holy and just and there was no other way to redeem sinful man.
- (17) Hebrews 2:10 is another clear testimony that Jesus Christ is God and a witness to the mystery of the Trinity. This verse says of God “*for whom are all things, and by whom are all things,*” whereas Colossians 1:16 says the same thing of Jesus. Thus Jesus is God and Jesus is also the object of God’s working.
- (18) The goal of salvation is to bring sinners into glory (Heb. 2:10). “Glory” refers to heaven and the splendor of Christ’s kingdom (Mat. 25:31; Lk. 21:27; Jn. 17:24; Col. 3:4; 2 Th. 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:10; Jude 24).
- (19) New Testament believers are adopted “sons” (Heb. 2:10). Compare Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:5-6; Phil. 2:15; 1 Jn. 3:1-2.
- (20) In what sense will many be saved (“*bringing many sons unto glory,*” Heb. 2:10)? Though more men follow the broad road to destruction than the narrow road to eternal life (Mat. 7:13-14), when one considers the big picture it is still true that many will be saved. “Though the sons of God are but a few in one place and at one time, yet when they shall be all brought together it will appear that they are many” (Matthew Henry).

(21) Jesus was made perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:10). This does not mean that He was ever imperfect. It means that His earthly humiliation and sufferings perfected Him to be our high priest. Compare Heb. 2:17-18. “But notice how His glory as Creator is insisted on when His sufferings are in view. ‘It became Him,’ that is, it was consistent under the circumstances for Him, ‘for whom are all things and by whom are all things’--the same as in Colossians, ‘All things were created by Him and for Him’--if He would bring many sons into glory ... to be made perfect, not as to His character, but as to His Saviourhood, by sufferings. There was never any imperfection in Him as Man. He was always the Perfect One, but let it never be forgotten that the perfect life of Jesus would never have saved one poor sinner. In order to become Captain of salvation, that He might lead many sons to glory, He must go by way of Gethsemane and Golgotha, where He was perfected by sufferings. Apart from His bitter passion, there could be no redemption for lost men and women” (Ironsides).

(22) The fact that Jesus is the Captain of our salvation reminds us that the believer is a soldier in an army and is involved in spiritual warfare (Heb. 2:10). The effective soldier must learn obedience and discipline. He must follow his Captain’s orders without hesitation. He must put on the whole armor of God so that he can fight the good fight. He must endure hardship as a good soldier.

(23) The way of suffering was not only the way that Christ had to go but it is also the way that every believer must go (Heb. 2:10). Paul said that it was necessary for him to “*fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ*” (Col. 1:24). He taught the believers that “*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22). “The Lord Jesus Christ, being consecrated and perfected through suffering, has consecrated the way of suffering for all his followers to pass through unto glory; and hereby their sufferings are made necessary and unavoidable, they are hereby made honourable, useful, and profitable” (Matthew Henry).

(24) Sanctified means “set apart for God’s purpose” (Heb. 2:11). There are two aspects to sanctification in the Christian life: positional and

practical. *Positionally*, God has once for all and eternally sanctified the believer in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11), but *practically*, He is daily sanctifying him (1 Th. 4:3-4). Hebrews 2:11 refers to positional sanctification. “God in His electing love, by Christ’s finished work, perfectly sanctifies them to God’s service and to heaven once for all: then they are progressively sanctified by the transforming Spirit” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

(25) Believers are made one with Christ so that not only is He our Lord and Saviour but He calls us brethren as well (Heb. 2:11). Believers are “*members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*” (Eph. 5:30). Consider how Jesus addressed Mary in Jn. 20:17. “He is not ashamed--though being the Son of God, since they have now by adoption obtained a like dignity, so that His majesty is not compromised by brotherhood with them. ... It is a striking feature in Christianity that it unites such amazing contrasts as ‘our brother and our God’” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

(a) Note that though Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren, nowhere does the Bible say that He is our brother. Though it is an amazing and wonderful thing to be adopted in the family of God and for Jesus to call us brethren, we must never forget that our relationship to Him is always different from His relationship to us. We are children of God, but we are not Gods. In the eternal city, there still remains a clear distinction between God and His children. “... *the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him*” (Rev. 22:3). The “Jesus is my buddy” doctrine that is popular in this latter part of the church age is unscriptural. It brings Jesus down to our level and ignores the fact that he is “*holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*” (Heb. 7:26). “And so He owns us gladly as His brethren, though, may I add, nowhere in Scripture is He spoken of as our brother. He says, ‘Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am.’ But He whom we gladly own as Lord, in wondrous grace calls us His brothers” (Ironsides).

(b) Consider, too, that this verse refutes the popular but false doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God. The Lord Jesus said

to the Jewish false teachers, “*Ye are of your father the devil*” (Jn. 8:44). Far from being “children of God,” those who are unsaved are “*without God in the world*” (Eph. 2:12).

(26) Christ is not ashamed to call the believers brethren (Heb. 2:11). “Christ is not ashamed to own this relation; he is not ashamed to call them brethren, which is wonderful goodness and condescension in him, considering their meanness by nature and vileness by sin; but he will never be ashamed of any who are not ashamed of him, and who take care not to be a shame and reproach to him and to themselves” (Matthew Henry).

(27) Three Old Testament passages are applied here to Christ (Heb. 2:12-13):

(a) “*I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee*” (Heb. 2:12) is quoted from Ps. 22:22. This Psalm is a prominent Messianic prophecy. Verse 22 was fulfilled in Christ’s incarnation and it will be fulfilled further in the kingdom of God (Jn. 1:18; Lk. 10:21-22). Christ declared the Father to the church during His earthly life; He is declaring the Father in the churches today; and He will declare the Father in the church of the firstborn through all eternity (Heb. 12:22-24).

(b) “*I will put my trust in him*” (Heb. 2:13) is probably quoted from Ps. 18:2, but it could also be from Ps. 16:1 or 91:2. “That psalm [Psalm 18] sets forth the troubles that David, as a type of Christ, met with, and how he in all his troubles put his trust in God. Now this shows that besides his divine nature, which needed no supports, he was to take another nature upon him, that would want those supports which none but God could give” (Matthew Henry).

(c) “*Behold I and the children which God hath given me*” (Heb. 2:13) is quoted from Isa. 8:18. The Father has given Jesus all who believe on Him (Jn. 6:40).

(28) The Son of God was literally incarnated in flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14). Some heretics have taught that Christ was only a phantom

and did not have a real body, but this verse dispels that myth. The fact that Jesus was incarnated in flesh and blood does not mean that he participated in sin, of course. “But what we are really told here is that inasmuch as the children of faith are human beings, not angels, as the writer points out in verse 16, so in order that He might be the true *Goel* or Kinsman-Redeemer, He in infinite grace became Man and thus took part of the same human nature. This does not in any sense imply that He took defiled human nature. ... And if it be remembered that sin is not inherent in human nature as such, but that it is a foreign thing brought in through the fall, it can be readily understood how it could be said that our blessed Lord ‘took part of the same’ without involving full participation in all that had come in through man’s failure” (Ironsides).

(29) By His death Jesus destroyed “*him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*” (Heb. 2:14).

(a) In what way did the devil have the power of death? “I understand this as meaning that the devil was the cause of death in this world, he was the means of its introduction, and of its long and melancholy reign. This does not affirm anything of his power of inflicting death in particular instances--whatever may be true on that point--but that death was a part of his dominion; that he introduced it; that he seduced man from God, and led on the train of woes which result in death” (Barnes).

(b) In what way has Christ destroyed the devil? The word “destroyed” is from the Greek *kartargeo*, which means “to render entirely useless” (Strong) and is also translated “abolished” (2 Tim. 1:10), “done away” (1 Cor. 13:10), “make of none effect” (Rom. 4:14), “bring to nought” (1 Cor. :28), and “make void” (Rom. 3:31). Christ destroyed the devil in the sense of providing redemption for sinful man so that the believer is no longer under the devil’s dominion and no longer fearful of death. Compare 1 Cor. 15:54-57. Every man is offered this redemption, because Christ tasted death for every man. “That by the merit of his own death, making atonement for sin, and procuring the almighty energy of the Holy Spirit, he might

counterwork [*katarghsh*], or render useless and ineffectual, all the operations of him who had the power [*kratov*] or influence, to bring death into the world; so that death, which was intended by him who was a murderer from the beginning to be the final ruin of mankind, becomes the instrument of their exaltation and endless glory; and thus the death brought in by Satan is counterworked and rendered ineffectual by the death of Christ” (Adam Clarke). “Christ became man, and died, to deliver them from those perplexities of soul, by letting them know that death is not only a conquered enemy, but a reconciled friend, not sent to hurt the soul, or separate it from the love of God, but to put an end to all their grievances and complaints, and to give them a passage to eternal life and blessedness; so that to them death is not now in the hand of Satan, but in the hand of Christ--not Satan’s servant, but Christ’s servant--has not hell following it, but heaven to all who are in Christ” (Matthew Henry).”Having thus become Man, though sinless, our Lord became man’s Champion and went forth as our David to destroy or annul the great Goliath who had terrorized the world ever since the fall, ‘him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil’ ... Satan is a conquered foe and no believer need now fear him, but it is incumbent on us to watch and pray lest he mislead us and hinder our communion with God, though he well knows he can never destroy our life” (Ironsides).

(30) The natural man is greatly afraid of death (Heb. 2:15). This is evident at funerals. “The people who know not God are in continual torment through the fear of death, and they fear death because they fear something beyond death. They are conscious to themselves that they are wicked, and they are afraid of God, and terrified at the thought of eternity” (Adam Clarke).

(31) Jesus came in the lineage of Abraham (Heb. 2:16).

(a) Salvation is of the Jews (Jn. 4:22). To the Jews were committed the Scriptures (Rom. 3:1-2) and the Saviour (Rom. 9:5). Christ came through the tribe of Judah and the family of David.

(b) Compare Hebrews 2:16 in the KJV and in the modern versions. Some who deny the virgin birth claim that the apostles did not refer to this doctrine in their epistles to the churches (as if the clear statements in the Prophets and the Gospels are not sufficient). This claim is wrong. The virgin birth is referred to in Galatians 4:4 and Hebrews 2:16. Galatians says Christ was “made of a woman.” This unusual manner of speech is a reference to the virgin birth, as Christ was made of a woman without the assistance of a man. Hebrews says, “... he took on him the seed of Abraham.” This unusual manner of speech describes the preexistent Son of God taking upon Himself the seed of Abraham through the womb of the virgin Mary. Thus He could be both the Son of God and the son of Man and yet not inherit sin from Adam. But the changes made in this passage in the modern versions remove the possibility of a reference to the virgin birth. In Hebrews 2:16, “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham” is changed to “For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants” in the NIV, ASV, RSV, NASV, etc. Thus, according to the modern versions, Jesus merely helped the Jews, whereas according to the KJV, the preexistent Christ incarnated Himself through the womb of the virgin and became a Jew. This is not a textual issue but a translational one. The critical Greek text reads the same here as the Received Text. The context plainly supports the King James Bible’s translation of Hebrews 2:16. Verses 14-18 describe Christ’s incarnation, whereby he took part of flesh and blood, and demonstrate that by the incarnation He destroyed the works of the devil and became a merciful and faithful high priest to the saints.

(32) Because of Jesus’ humiliation, sufferings, and temptations, He is a merciful and faithful high priest (Heb. 2:17-18). He is able to make reconciliation for our sins and to succour us in our temptations. “The word *succor* means ‘to run when called for’ and was used of physicians. Christ runs to our aid when we call Him!” (Wiersbe). “If there is one thing I hope this study in the Book of Hebrews will achieve, it is to make you and me very conscious that we have an High Priest. He is alive at this moment. He is at God’s right hand,

and, best of all, He is available to us. When I wake up in the dark watches of the night and toss and turn, as I sometimes do, with some burden on my heart, I can look up. My High Priest is up there. He knows me, He understands, and I can take my burden to Him. When that dark moment comes, and you and I go down into the valley of the shadow of death, we have a great High Priest up yonder who will help us. No matter what happens, no matter what the test, He is able to help us. I am afraid that we do not use His services as we should. We forget about Him and try to fight our battles alone. My friend, He is available. He wants you to come to Him” (J. Vernon McGee).

(a) The word “reconciliation,” from the Greek *hilaskomai*, is the same word translated “be merciful” in Luke 18:13. It is similar to the word translated “propitiation” (Rom. 3:25). It means to bring sinful man into a right relationship with God by the satisfaction of the Law. It is on the basis of His blood offering that Jesus can reconcile sinful men to a holy God. It is upon that basis and that basis alone that He can show mercy to sinners.

(b) The word “succour” (from the Greek *boetheo*) means “to aid or relieve” (Strong). It is usually translated “help.” It is the word used by the woman whose daughter was grievously vexed with a devil when she cried, “Lord, help me” (Mat. 15:25). It is the word used in the dream which Paul had in which a man cried, “*Come over into Macedonia, and help us*” (Acts 16:9).

(33) We are reminded that all saints are subject to temptations and that Christ is able to succor them in any situation (Heb. 2:18). “Here observe, First, The best of Christians are subject to temptations, to many temptations, while in this world; let us never count upon an absolute freedom from temptations in this world. Secondly, Temptations bring our souls into such distress and danger that they need support and succour. Thirdly, Christ is ready and willing to succour those who under their temptations apply to him; and he became man, and was tempted, that he might be every way qualified to succour his people” (Matthew Henry).

(34) This verse (Heb. 2:18) speaks to the mystery of suffering. It has

many purposes, and one of those is that the sufferer will learn to help others who suffer in similar fashion. Compare 2 Cor. 11:4-6.

(35) Christ suffered by being tempted, which again shows His immaculate nature as compared to our sinful one (Heb. 2:18). “This brings out most vividly the difference between Christ’s perfect humanity and our sinful nature. To us, sin is attractive and alluring. We suffer in the flesh when we resist it. With Him it was the very opposite. Temptation caused Him the keenest suffering. It was the presentation of that to His holy soul which He abhorred, and even to have to do with it, in the sense of temptation, caused Him pain and anguish” (Ironsides). “Could He have succumbed to the temptation? Could He have fallen? The answer is *no*. When we speak of being tempted to do something wrong, what we actually mean is that we have the *opportunity* to do wrong, and we want to do it. Now the opportunity was the testing, but the desire to do wrong was sin, and a sinful *desire* is itself sin. The Lord Jesus never had that sinful desire” (J. Vernon McGee).

2. Consider what this passage teaches about angels (Hebrews 1-2).

a. Angels are spirits (Heb. 1:7). This is quoted from Ps. 104:4.

(1) This means that angels do not have physical bodies after the fashion of men and do not have the limitations of a physical body. They can assume bodies or perhaps the form of bodies when they appear to men, but they are spirit beings.

(2) They can appear at any place and are not restricted by walls and doors and locks (e.g., Lk. 1:11; Acts 2:7)

(3) They can do mighty feats (e.g., Mat. 28:2; Acts 5:19).

(4) They can fly swiftly (Ps. 18:10; Dan. 9:21; Rev. 8:13).

b. Angels are God’s ministers (Heb. 1:7). This is quoted from Ps. 104:4. This means that they are God’s servants, created to do His pleasure. We see angels in this role throughout the Bible (e.g., Lk. 1:19). Angels had an intimate role in the life of Jesus, announcing His birth to Mary (Lk. 1:26) and to the shepherds (Lk. 2:10), ministering to Him in His temptation (Mt. 6:11), strengthening Him in the Garden (Lk. 22:43),

announcing His resurrection (Jn. 20:12), appearing at His ascension (Acts 1:10).

- c. Angels are flames of fire (Heb. 1:7). This is quoted from Ps. 104:4. The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire (Ex. 3:2). In Judges 13:20, an angel ascended to heaven in a flame.
- d. Angels minister to those who are heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). Compare Ps. 34:7.

(1) The term “*heirs of salvation*” refers to those who are born again. Though the believer is a child of God, he does not yet enjoy all of the privileges of such (Rom. 8:17-25).

(2) We see angels fulfilling this role throughout the New Testament.

(a) Angels ministered to Joseph and Mary (Mat. 1:20; 2:13).

(b) Angels ministered to the apostles in prison (Acts 5:19).

(c) Angels ministered to Cornelius (Acts 10:3).

(d) Angels ministered to Peter in prison (Acts 12:7-11).

(e) Angels ministered to Paul (Acts 27:23).

(f) Angels assist believing children (Mat. 18:10).

(g) Angels accompany believers to Heaven (Lk. 16:22).

(h) Angels will gather the elect at the return of Christ (Mat. 24:31).

3. Concluding lesson from Hebrews 1-2: Note that Paul based his argument both upon what the Bible teaches as well as what it does not teach (Heb. 1:5, 13). He thus taught that no doctrine or law can be established upon the silence of Scripture. Man can only speak as far as God has spoken (Deut. 29:29). Man has no authority to build doctrine or to make laws and regulations that go beyond the Bible’s plain teaching. Compare Rom. 14:10. In this passage Paul taught the church at Rome that they had no authority to judge matters that were not taught in Scripture. The two examples that he gives of unauthorized judging are dietary matters and the keeping of holy days. In both of these cases the New Testament is silent.

Review Questions Hebrews 1:1 - 2:18

1. How does the book of Hebrews open?
2. Why does the Bible not emphasize the human element in the giving of Scripture?
3. What does the word “sundry” mean in regard to the giving of Scripture?
4. How long did it take to complete the Old Testament Scripture from the time of Moses to the time of Malachi?
5. What is the progressive nature of divine revelation?
6. What verse says the doctrine of immortality was brought to light by the appearing of Jesus?
7. What does “diverse manners” mean?
8. What are four of the means by which the Old Testament Scriptures were given?
9. What verse in the New Testament says God committed the Scripture to the Jews?
10. What is the Scripture’s grand theme?
11. In what verse did Jesus say that all three major parts of the Old Testament speak of Him?
12. What verse says the New Testament faith was once delivered unto the saints?
13. When did the last days begin?
14. The last days encompasses what future prophetic events?
15. What verse says the Jews “received the law by the disposition of angels”?
16. What verse in Proverbs says that God has a Son?
17. Psalm 2:7 says, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” In what two ways was this fulfilled in the life of Jesus?
18. What verse says that without Jesus nothing was made?
19. For the test, know the following verses which teach that Jesus Christ is God: John 1:1; 14:9; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:15; 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:3.

20. How does Psalm 45:6-7 prove that Jesus is God?
21. What is a sceptre?
22. How does Psalm 102:25 prove that Jesus is God?
23. What does “majesty” mean?
24. What is a New Testament verse that says it is unlawful to worship anyone other than God?
25. How does the believer avoid letting the things of Christ slip?
26. In Jn. 10:35 Jesus said the Scripture cannot be broken. What does this mean?
27. What level of obedience did the Law require?
28. What verse says the Law was given to stop men’s mouths and to make all men guilty before God?
29. What verse says the Law was a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ?
30. What verse speaks of the signs of an apostle?
31. Why were the New Testament miracles called wonders?
32. Why does man have the right to rule over the earth?
33. What verse says the believer’s conversation or citizenship is in heaven?
34. What was the chief reason why Jesus came into the world?
35. What verse says that if works are added to grace then grace is no more grace?
36. What does Hebrews 2:9 mean when it says that Jesus tasted death for every man?
37. What is “glory”?
38. When Heb. 2:10 says that Jesus was made perfect through sufferings, what does this mean?
39. What does “sanctified” mean?
40. What are the two aspects of sanctification in the Christian life?
41. In what way has Jesus destroyed the devil by His death?
42. What does “reconciliation” mean?
43. What does “succour” mean?

44. What does it mean that angels are spirits?
45. What is a verse that says angels can fly?
46. Name two of the instances in Jesus' life in which angels were involved?
47. What is an "heir of salvation"?

A BETTER DELIVERER CONTINUED

(Hebrews 3:1 - 5:10)

CHRIST IS BETTER THAN MOSES (Hebrews 3:1 - 4:13)

The writer of Hebrews shows that the solution to the problem of being tempted to turn back to false religion is to consider Christ (Heb. 3:1). Biblical salvation is not a religion in the sense of being a way of works and obligations; it is a personal relationship with the Living God. The solution to all temptations in the Christian life, whether by the world, the flesh, or the devil, is to contemplate upon and cleave unto Jesus through His Word.

This section shows that Christ is better than Moses, who was so highly regarded by the Jews. Christ was better than Moses because He built the house and was a son and heir over the house whereas Moses only served in it (Heb. 3:3-6).

1. Lessons about Christ

It is important to form our conception of Jesus Christ strictly upon the Bible's testimony, as we are warned of false christs (Mat. 24:24; 2 Cor. 11:4).

a. He is the Apostle and high priest of our profession (Heb. 3:1).

- (1) The word "apostle" means one who is sent, one who is delegated authority and given a message to speak, an ambassador. The Greek word "apostolos" is also translated "messenger" (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25) and "he that is sent" (Jn. 13:16). The Son was sent by the Father to be our Redeemer and Captain and to lead us into all truth.
- (2) He is also our High Priest. It is solely because of Jesus' high priestly work that we can have a part with God. It is through His blood and death and through His continual intercession that lowly sinners can relate to God.
- (3) As Apostle, Christ pleads the cause of God with us, and as High

Priest he pleads our cause with God.

b. He is Christ Jesus (Heb. 3:1).

(1) “Christ” is the Greek form of the Hebrew title *Messiah*, and it refers to Jesus as the One who would come to fulfill the Old Testament promises and to rule God’s kingdom from the throne of David.

(2) “Jesus” means “saviour” and refers to Christ’s role as Redeemer. It is a name most precious to every believer.

(3) By combining these names, we are taught that Christ is Jesus and Jesus is Christ, that they are the same Person. Some heretics have taught that “christ” is a spirit of sorts and that it came upon the man Jesus at times and that it also comes upon other men, that there have been many christs, but this is a great error. There is only one true Christ and that is Jesus.

c. He was faithful and submissive to the Father (Heb. 3:2). Compare Jn. 8:29. Thus the Father testified, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Mat. 3:17; 17:5).

d. He is God. When we compare Hebrews 3:3, which says that Christ built the house, and Hebrews 3:4, which says that God built all things, we see again that Christ is God. “But as Jesus is the Founder of the Church, and the Head of it, the word GOD seems here to be applied to him; and several eminent scholars and critics bring this very text as a proof of the supreme Deity of Christ: and the apostle’s argument seems to require this; for, as he is proving that Christ is preferred before Moses because he built this house, which Moses could not do, were he to be understood as intimating that this house was built by another, viz. the Father, his whole argument would fall to the ground; and for all this, Moses might be equal, yea, superior to Christ. On this ground Dr. Owen properly concludes: ‘This then is that which the apostle intends to declare; namely, the ground and reason whence it is that the house was or could be, in that glorious manner, built by Christ, even because he is GOD, and so able to effect it; and by this effect of his power, he is manifested so to be’” (Adam Clarke).

2. Lessons about believers (Heb. 3:1)

- a. They are holy (Heb. 3:1). The word “holy” is from the same Greek root as “sanctify.” It means to be set apart and there are two aspects of holiness: *position and practice, standing and state*. The believer is first of all holy or sanctified by eternal position and standing because of what Christ has done for him (1 Cor. 1:30). He has been declared righteous and has been taken out of the family of the devil and placed into God’s family; he is no longer in a standing of condemnation but has been set apart unto a new standing of blessing in Christ. In this sense, the believer’s holiness is eternal and unchanging. Because of this new holy standing, the believer is admonished to live holy in his everyday life. This is practical holiness or sanctification (1 Th. 4:3). In this sense, the believer’s holiness is a matter of daily obedience and of growing in Christ. See Eph. 4:1; 5:8.
- b. They are brethren (Heb. 3:1). The one who believes in Jesus Christ is born into God’s family and is a spiritual brother to every other believer. He is a member of the family of God.
- c. They are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). Not only is the believer destined for heaven, he is already a citizen of heaven (Phil. 3:20). God has prepared a heavenly country for us (Heb. 11:16; Jn. 14:1-3). It is in heaven that our inheritance awaits us (1 Pet. 1:4). “The ‘heavenly calling’ denotes the calling which was given to them from heaven, or which was of a heavenly nature. It pertained to heaven, not to earth; it came from heaven, not from earth; it was a calling to the reward and happiness of heaven, and not to the pleasures and honours of the world” (Barnes).
- d. They should consider Christ (Heb. 3:1). This is the believer’s important occupation and duty. To meditate upon and walk in close fellowship with Christ is the path of spiritual growth, victory, fruitfulness, and reward. “Attentively ponder all that is said of the Messiah. Think of his rank; his dignity; his holiness; his sufferings; his death; his resurrection, ascension, intercession. Think of him, that you may see the claims to a holy life; that you may learn to bear trials; that you may be kept from apostasy. The character and work of the Son of God are worthy of the

profound and prayerful consideration of every man; and especially every Christian should reflect much on him. Of the friend that we love we think much; but what friend have we like the Lord Jesus?" (Barnes).

3. Lessons about Moses (Heb. 3:2, 5)

- a. He was faithful (Heb. 3:2). Compare 1 Cor. 4:2. Moses was faithful to the smallest detail of the revelation that was delivered to him by God. After the tabernacle was built and reared and the priests ordained, the Bible says, "*Thus did Moses; according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he*" (Ex. 40:16). Even the smallest detail, such as the composition of the hooks that held together the curtains in the tabernacle, was followed to the letter. Would that church leaders would be as faithful in that which God has revealed for this day! When the Lord Jesus gave the Great Commission, He required that the churches teach the believers "*to observe ALL things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Mat. 28:20). Paul instructed Timothy to keep apostolic church doctrine and practice "*without spot*" (1 Tim. 6:14). Timothy was instructed to teach "*the same*" to faithful men, who would in turn teach the same to others (2 Tim. 2:2). Thus the same faithfulness that Moses exhibited in his day to keep the details of the Law is required of preachers today in the business of the church.
- b. He was a testimony to things which were to be spoken after (Heb. 3:5). This refers to the fact that the Law of Moses was not an end unto itself but pointed to and laid the foundation for the Gospel and the kingdom of Christ. "Every ordinance under the law was typical; everything bore a testimony to the things which were to be spoken after; i.e. to Jesus Christ, his suffering, death, and the glory which should follow; and to his Gospel in all its parts. Hence our Lord told the Jews, Jn. 5:46: If ye had believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me" (Adam Clarke).

4. Lessons about salvation (Heb. 3:6, 14)

- a. Salvation is *evidenced* by perseverance. Holding fast is not the means of salvation; it is the proof of it. Hebrews 3:6 does not say that we WILL

BE in God's house if we hold fast to the end; it says WE ARE already in God's house if we hold fast. We see the same thing in Heb. 3:14. Thus, the perseverance to the end is not how we are saved; it simply demonstrates that we have been saved. The true believer is born into God's family and has eternal life and will never perish (John 3:16). That is God's plain promise. Salvation is a gift of God's grace and it is not by works; it is not earned by works nor kept by works (Eph. 2:8-9). The believer is kept by God's power (1 Pet. 1:5). If the believer had to hold out faithful to the end, that would be the most extreme form of works salvation. Joshua and Caleb were different from the other 10 spies that were sent to look at the promised land, and the difference was their faith. They were ready to go into the land and conquer it because of their faith. Likewise, the true believer today continues with the Lord through "thick and thin" and has victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil because he has genuine faith and because he is born again and has the indwelling Spirit of God. "We are saved entirely by grace, but we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, as we read in Ephesians, and no one has a right to confess himself a Christian who is not seeking to live for the glory of God. If there be not a nature that delights in the will of God, there is every reason to doubt whether one has ever been truly saved" (Ironsides).

- b. We must not be deceived by the temporary enthusiasm of a false profession. Jesus warned in the Parable of the Sower that some of the Gospel seeds falls on rocky soil. "*They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away*" (Lk. 8:13). "Where piety is manifested through life, or where there is an untiring devotion to the cause of God, there the evidence is clear and undoubted. But where there is at first great ardour, zeal, and confidence, which soon dies away, then it is clear that they never had any real attachment to him and his cause. It may be remarked here, that the 'beginning of the confidence' of those who are deceived, and who know nothing about religion at heart, is often as bold as where there is true piety. The hypocrite makes up in ardour what he lacks in sincerity; and he who is really deceived, is usually deceived under the influence of some strong and vivid emotion, which he mistakes for true religion. Often the

sincere convert is calm, though decided, and sometimes is even timorous and doubting; while the self-deceiver is noisy in profession, and clamorous in his zeal, and much disposed to blame the lukewarmness of others. Evidence of piety, therefore, should not be built on that early zeal; nor should it be concluded, that because there is ardour, there is of necessity genuine religion. Ardour is valuable, and true religion is ardent; but there is other ardour than that which the gospel inspires. The evidence of genuine piety is to be found in that which will bear us up under trials, and endure amidst persecution and opposition” (Barnes).

c. It is every individual’s responsibility to be certain that he has true faith in contrast to so many of the Jews in the wilderness who were God’s people only in name and not in heart (Heb. 3:11, 18-19; 4:2, 6).

(1) To “*labour to enter into that rest*” (Heb. 3:11) does not mean that salvation is difficult and must be earned or kept by the believer, it means that the individual must give up his trust in everything other than Jesus Christ, whether it is trust in one’s own goodness, trust in religious works, trust in false gods, trust in some mediator other than or in addition to Jesus, or whatever. The Jewish professors to whom Paul was writing were in danger of dividing their trust between Christ and Judaism. But faith in Christ plus anything else is a false faith. One’s faith must be in Jesus Christ *alone*. I have talked to many people who profess faith in Christ but who also trust that they are “not such a bad person” or that they are doing the best they can or that they have been baptized and joined a church, etc. There are Hindus and Buddhists who profess Christ but who still hold on to idolatrous practices. I know of a former Hindu who is a member of a Baptist church, but when he built a new house he had an image of a Hindu god constructed in it. If he had truly turned his back to these vanities and knew Jesus Christ as his only Lord and Saviour, he would not have done such a thing. All such people need to hear the warning of Hebrews, “*Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it*” (Heb. 4:1).

(2) “*To labor to enter into that rest*” (Heb. 3:11) does not mean to labor

to be saved but to labor to enter the door of salvation. Salvation is by grace without works and when one has salvation he rests in Christ's works, but the door to this glorious salvation is "strait," meaning narrow and constricted. See Mat. 7:13-14. To enter this narrow door requires that the sinner judge himself in repentance and humble himself in contrition and cast himself wholly upon Jesus Christ, having rejected the broad way that leads to destruction.

d. Salvation is a rest (Heb. 4:3).

- (1) Those who repent and put their trust in Jesus Christ and are born again do not have to fear that they will lose their salvation. Resting is the opposite of fear and uncertainty.
- (2) The Old Testament sabbath is a picture of New Testament salvation in that both are a complete rest from works (Heb. 4:4; Gen. 2:2; Ex. 20:11). Salvation is to rest from one's own works and to put one's trust solely in the work that Christ did for us on the cross (Heb. 4:10).
- (3) God's sabbath rest has no end. It started on the 7th day of creation and has never ended, and it is into this eternal divine rest that the believer enters (Heb. 4:3-5). "[It is] a rest not ending with the seventh day, but beginning then and still continuing, into which believers shall hereafter enter. Hence Moses records the end of each of the first six days, but not of the seventh" (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).
- (4) God's eternal sabbath rest is perfect in every way. "The 'rest' in Heb. 4:8 is from the Greek word 'catapausis,' meaning rest from weariness, as Noah's ark rested on Ararat after its tossings to and fro; and as Israel, under Joshua, enjoyed at last rest from war in Canaan. But the 'rest' in Heb. 4:9, 'sabbatismos,' is the nobler and more exalted. It is the Hebrew sabbath rest, meaning 'cessation,' rest from work when finished (Heb. 4:4). The two ideas of 'rest' combined, give the perfect view of the heavenly Sabbath. Rest from weariness, sorrow, and sin; and rest in the completion of God's new creation (Rev. 21:5). The whole renovated creation shall share in it;

nothing will there be to break the Sabbath of eternity; and the Triune God shall rejoice in the work of His hands (Zep. 3:17)” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

- e. Salvation is a matter of confidence and rejoicing (Heb. 6:6). These are not terms that describe something that is uncertain. The word “rejoicing” is translated from the Greek “kauchema,” meaning “a boast” (Strong). It is translated “glory” and “glorying” five times (e.g. 1 Cor. 5:6) and “boasting” once (2 Cor. 9:3). It refers to the believer rejoicing in Christ in the sense of boasting of and glorying in His salvation. It is God’s will that the believer have perfect confidence in his standing in Jesus Christ and in his eternal destiny because of what Christ has done (atonement) and is doing (intercession).

5. Lessons about Apostasy (Heb. 3:7-12)

This passage describes the premier example of apostasy in the book of Hebrews. The example is Israel in the wilderness. Of the multitude of Israelites who had been given God’s Word and who had seen God’s miracles, only two were allowed to enter the promised land (Caleb and Joshua). In this example we see that apostasy does not refer merely to sin in the Christian life or to backsliding but to persistent and wicked unbelief in the face of everything God can do to bring His people to faith.

- a. Apostasy is hardening one’s heart toward God and to His salvation in Christ (Heb. 3:8).
- b. Apostasy involves persistence in unbelief (Heb. 3:9-10). “*They do always err in their heart...*” The Jews in the wilderness persisted in their unbelief in the face of God’s provision and miracles for 40 years. They steadfastly refused to repent and to believe.
- c. Apostasy is an “*evil heart of unbelief*” (Heb. 3:12). Unbelief is evil because it refuses to accept the testimony of a God who cannot lie; therefore, it is a direct affront to God.
- d. Apostasy is a willful departure “from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). It is not merely struggling with some besetting sin; it is a willful rejection of God and a refusal to believe His Word.

6. Lessons about Scripture

- a. The Scripture is divinely inspired in such a manner that the words of the human authors (quoted from Ps. 95:7-11) are said to be the very words of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 3:7).
- b. The Scripture is the Word of God (Heb. 4:12). This verse has a two-fold meaning.
 - (1) It describes Christ the Word of God (Jn. 1:1). We see from verse 13 that it has this sense.
 - (2) It also describes the Scripture, which is the Word of God written. The book of Hebrews elsewhere uses “word of God” to refer to the written Word (compare Heb. 13:7). It is Christ who activates the written Word.
- c. The Scripture is *quick* (Heb. 4:12). This is an old English word for “living.” The Bible is the only living book in the world. It is not mere words on paper; it is the very living and active Word of God. Thus by its very nature it endures (1 Pet. 1:25).
- d. The Scripture is powerful and able (Heb. 4:12). Compare Jer. 23:29. “When God sets it home by his Spirit, it convinces powerfully, converts powerfully, and comforts powerfully. It is so powerful as to pull down strong holds (2 Cor. 10:4-5), to raise the dead, to make the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. It is powerful to batter down Satan’s kingdom, and to set up the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins thereof” (Matthew Henry).
 - (1) It has the power to accomplish God’s will (Is. 55:11).
 - (2) It has the power to save (2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:23).
 - (3) It has the power to make the man of God perfect (2 Tim. 3:16).
 - (4) It has the power to cleanse one’s way (Ps. 119:9).
 - (5) It has the power to effectually work in the believer (2 Th. 2:13).
- e. The Scripture is the sword of the Spirit and is sharper than any natural

sword; it pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit (Heb. 4:12). The first part of the verse -- "*piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow*" -- is interpreted by the latter part -- "*and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" A sword can only enter flesh, but the sword of the Spirit can cut into deepest part of man's spiritual being. As a sharp sword can flay a man and lay open his innermost parts, even dividing between the bone and the marrow, so the sword of the Spirit can open up and divide between man's innermost thoughts and motives. "It is sharper than any two-edged sword, for it will enter where no other sword can, and make a more critical dissection: it pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, the soul and its habitual prevailing temper; it makes a soul that has been a long time of a proud spirit to be humble, of a perverse spirit to be meek and obedient. Those sinful habits that have become as it were natural to the soul, and rooted deeply in it, and become in a manner one with it, are separated and cut off by this sword. It cuts off ignorance from the understanding, rebellion from the will, and enmity from the mind, which, when carnal, is enmity itself against God" (Matthew Henry).

- (1) What are the two edges of the sword of the Spirit? "The sword of the Spirit has one edge for convicting and converting (Heb. 4:2), and the other for condemning and destroying (Heb. 4:14)" (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown). Compare 2 Cor. 2:16.
- (2) What is the difference between the soul and the spirit? The distinction between the soul and the spirit is probably the distinction between the soulish part of man, being that which is associated with his bodily appetites and emotions (Deut. 12:20; Song 3:1; Rev. 18:14), and the spiritual part of man that which is associated with the things of God (Rom. 1:9). In this sense, the Word of God divides between these things so that the man of God can know the difference and focus on that which is most important. (In another sense, the soul and spirit are used interchangeably in Scripture.) "His word reaches as far as to the most intimate and accurate knowledge of man's most hidden parts, feelings, and thoughts, dividing, that is, distinguishing what is spiritual from

what is carnal and animal in him, the spirit from the soul: so Prov. 20:27” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

- (3) Since the Scripture is likened to a sword, it is evident that the man of God must learn how to wield it. See 1 Tim. 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 2:15. Contrast Heb. 5:11-14. If a man is in a battle, it is not enough that he have a good sword, he must know how to use it. Skilful use of the Scripture only comes through diligent study and application and experience. “Men who preach should endeavour to understand the nature of the mind and of the moral feelings, as really as he who would inflict a deadly wound should endeavour to understand enough about anatomy to know where the heart is, or he who administers medicine should endeavour to know what is adapted to remove certain diseases. And he who has no belief in the efficacy of truth to produce any effect, resembles one who should suppose that all knowledge of the human system was needless to him who wished and who should cut at random, to perform a surgical operation, piously leaving it with God to direct the knife; or he who should go into a hospital of patients, and administer medicines indiscriminately--devoutly saying, that all healing must come from God, and that the use of medicine was only to show its own weakness! Thus many men seem to preach. Yet, for aught that appears, truth is just as wisely adapted to save the soul, as medicine is to heal the sick; and why, then, should not a preacher be as careful to study the nature of truths and its adaptedness to a particular end, as a student of the healing art is to understand the adaptedness of medicine to cure disease? The true way of preaching is, to feel that truth is adapted to the end in view; to select that which is best fitted for that end; to preach as if the whole result depended on getting that truth before the mind and into the heart, and then to leave the whole result with God--as a physician with right feelings, will exert all his skill to save his patient, and then commit the whole question of life and health to God. He will be more likely to praise God intelligently who believes that he has wisely adapted a plan to the end in view, than he who believes that God works only at random” (Barnes).

f. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). It searches out the innermost thoughts and reveals the deepest secrets. It exposes the sinful thoughts and intents so that they can be repented of and forgiven and changed to conform to God's will. "It will discover to men the variety of their thoughts and purposes, the vileness of them, the bad principles they are actuated by, the sinister and sinful ends they act to. The word will turn the inside of a sinner out, and let him see all that is in his heart" (Matthew Henry). "How many have felt this property of God's word where it has been faithfully preached! How often has it happened that a man has seen the whole of his own character, and some of the most private transactions of his life, held up as it were to public view by the preacher; and yet the parties absolutely unknown to each other! Some, thus exhibited, have even supposed that their neighbours must have privately informed the preacher of their character and conduct; but it was the word of God, which, by the direction and energy of the Divine Spirit, thus searched them out, was a critical examiner of the propensities and suggestions of their hearts, and had pursued them through all their public haunts and private ways. Every genuine minister of the Gospel has witnessed such effects as these under his ministry in repeated instances" (Adam Clarke). "Men presume to criticize and to sit in judgment on the Word of God, but here we are told that the Word itself is the supreme critic of our inmost thoughts and inclinations" (Ironsides).

7. Miscellaneous lessons from this passage (Hebrews 3:1 - 4:13)

- a. A building assumes a builder (Heb. 3:4). This is common sense, and it tells us infallibly that the creation, which is much more complicated than any human building, required a Creator.
- b. A willingness to hear is the most important part of obedience (Heb. 3:7). "There is much in a willingness to hear the voice of God. A willingness to learn is usually the precursor of great attainments in knowledge. A willingness to reform is usually the precursor of reformation. Get a man willing to break off his habits of profaneness or intemperance, and usually all the rest is easy. The great difficulty in the mind of a sinner is in his will. He is unwilling to hear the voice of God; unwilling that he should reign over him; unwilling now to attend to

religion. While this unwillingness lasts he will make no efforts, and he sees, or creates, a thousand difficulties in the way of his becoming a Christian. But when that unwillingness is overcome, and he is disposed to engage in the work of religion, difficulties vanish, and the work of salvation becomes easy” (Barnes).

- c. To hear God’s Word properly one must maintain a right heart (Heb. 3:7-8). It is not enough to read the Bible or to attend church and hear it taught and preached. One must guard the heart so that the hearing of God’s Word is intermingled with faith and a humble, obedient spirit.
- d. The heart can be hardened (Heb. 3:8, 13).

- (1) Man is in control of his own heart in this regard. He can harden his heart toward God or soften it (Prov. 4:23).

- (2) How is the heart hardened? “A hard heart is that where the conscience is seared and insensible; where truth makes no impression; where no religious effect is produced by afflictions; where preaching is listened to without interest; and where the mind is unaffected by the appeals of friends” (Barnes). The following four things contribute to the hardening of the heart:

- (a) The heart is hardened when the Word of God is refused or neglected (Heb. 3:7-8). “The idea here is, that a refusal to listen to the voice of God is connected with a hardening of the heart. It is in two ways. First, the very refusal to do this tends to harden it. And in order to resist the appeals of God, men must resort to the means of voluntarily hardening the heart. This they do by setting themselves against the truth; by the excuses which they offer for not becoming Christians; by plunging into sin in order to avoid serious impressions; and by direct resistance of the Holy Ghost” (Barnes).

- (b) The heart is especially in danger of being hardened during trials and difficulties. It was in “*the temptation in the wilderness*” that the Jews’ hearts were hardened. It was when they were hungry (Ex. 16:1-2), when they were without water at times (Ex. 17:1-3), when the going was difficult in a “*great and terrible*

wilderness” (Deut. 1:19), when they did not understand what was happening to them, when the food was not to their liking (Nu. 11:6). It was during these temptations that their hearts were hardened to God and toward their God-given leaders. This earthly life is a wilderness journey for every person, and it is important to guard the heart against becoming hardened against God because of difficult circumstances and things that we do not understand nor agree with.

(c) The heart can be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13). It has been said that sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and exact a greater price than you want to pay. Sin is deceitful. “There is a great deal of deceitfulness in sin; it appears fair, but is filthy; it appears pleasant, but is pernicious; it promises much, but performs nothing. The deceitfulness of sin is of a hardening nature to the soul; one sin allowed prepares for another; every act of sin confirms the habit; sinning against conscience is the way to sear the conscience; and therefore it should be the great concern of every one to exhort himself and others to beware of sin” (Matthew Henry).

(d) The heart can also be hardened because it does not agree with God’s doctrine. Those who turned away from Jesus in John chapter 6 did so because they said His words were hard (Jn. 6:60, 66). They stumbled at His doctrine, because it did not agree with their own thinking. This is a great danger.

e. God is grieved by man’s sin (Heb. 3:10). Compare Eph. 4:30.

f. God is patient with man but His patience is not endless (Heb. 3:9, 11).

g. Sin and error is a heart matter (Heb. 3:10). Compare Mk. 7:21-22. “They erred in their hearts; and these heart-errors produced many other errors in their lips and lives” (Matthew Henry).

h. There is a day of opportunity in which man can repent and be forgiven, but there comes a time when the opportunity ceases (Heb. 3:7-11). “No man should defer his salvation to any future time. If God speaks today,

it is today that he should be heard and obeyed. To defer reconciliation to God to any future period, is the most reprehensible and destructive presumption. It supposes that God will indulge us in our sensual propensities, and cause his mercy to tarry for us till we have consummated our iniquitous purposes. It shows that we prefer, at least for the present, the devil to Christ, sin to holiness, and earth to heaven. And can we suppose that God will be thus mocked? Can we suppose that it can at all consistent with his mercy to extend forgiveness to such abominable provocation? Reader, it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Adam Clarke).

- i. The heart inclines to evil and is undependable (Heb. 3:12). Compare Jer. 17:9.
- j. An heart of unbelief is a great evil (Heb. 3:12). The natural man thinks that he is good as long as he lives a “good life,” regardless of whether he has faith in the God of the Bible, but God says the unbeliever is evil. “An evil heart of unbelief is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from God; it is a leading step to apostasy; if once we allow ourselves to distrust God, we may soon desert him” (Matthew Henry).
- k. To turn away from Jesus Christ and His Gospel of grace is to turn away from the living God (Heb. 3:12). To turn to false religion and idols is to reject God. Those who worship idols do not worship God but devils (1 Cor. 10:20). To turn back to the world is to reject God, because the devil is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). To turn to false religion is to turn to “weak and beggarly elements” (Gal. 4:9-11). To attempt to be justified by the law is to fall from grace (Gal. 5:4).
- l. Believers have an obligation to exhort one another (Heb. 3:13).
 - (1) This is not only the obligation of preachers and teachers and pastors. “This does not refer to public exhortation, which more appropriately pertains to the ministers of the gospel, but to that private watch and care which the individual members of the church should have over one another” (Barnes).
 - (2) This is a difficult task but a crucial one and a fruitful one when

exercised properly in godly wisdom and by the Holy Spirit. It is not an easy thing to tell someone that they are wrong and to warn them that they are heading in a wrong direction, but to do so is a matter of obedience toward God and love toward one's brethren. See Prov. 27:6. According to the Bible, the parent that does not discipline his child does not love him (Prov. 13:24). The same is true for the Christian who does not exhort his erring brother.

- (3) To exercise a fruitful ministry of exhortation requires two things: *biblical knowledge* and *godly living* (Rom. 15:14). The reason that the believers in Rome were "*able to admonish one another*" was because they were "*full of goodness*" (referring to their Christian lives) and "*filled with all knowledge*" (referring to knowledge of the Bible and of sound doctrine). The believer must be "filled" with these things if he wants to have a fruitful ministry. We need to grow in Christ, to make spiritual progress, which requires great and unceasing diligence and single-minded devotion to the task.
- (a) The believer must have a good Christian life, or others will not listen to him. If he tries to admonish others but does not live a godly life himself, he is a hypocrite and will probably cause more harm than good if he attempts to exhort others.
- (b) The believer also must have knowledge of the Word of God, or he will not have the necessary wisdom for this difficult task. Lacking knowledge of God's Word, he will probably not give the right counsel and might cause more harm than good when he attempts to admonish others.
- (4) We must speak a word of exhortation at the right time while it can be effective (Heb. 3:13). There is a time when a word of warning brings a good result, but the heart can become so hardened that no warning will have an effect. This principle is true in regard to child training. We must be careful to discipline our children while their hearts are young and tender.
- (5) This obligation to exhort one another daily supposes a close relationship with the church (Heb. 3:13). See Acts 2:42 and Heb. 10:25. The believer who is careless and unfaithful in his association

with the New Testament assembly is in great spiritual danger. The church needs every believer, because every believer has spiritual gifts that are necessary for the service of Christ; and every believer needs the church, for fellowship, teaching, and exhortation.

(6) The ministry of exhortation between church members is an important part of preventive or constructive church discipline. Compare Heb. 10:25. There are two aspects of church discipline: preventive and corrective. Preventive or constructive discipline involves everything the church does to build up the saints and to enable them to live godly, fruitful lives so that they do not require correction. Preventive discipline requires a healthy preaching and teaching ministry, but it also requires the personal ministry of exhortation among church members. “The old proverb, ‘An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,’ well deserves our heed. Yet how disgusting it is to find churches and church leaders more concerned about their popularity with a godless world and a bunch of religious hypocrites than they are about doing the will of God and really seeking to keep people out of sin and faithfully warning against all sin. How sad that millions of people go to church every week but never are taught about sin involved in dancing, movies, tobacco, petting, mixed swimming, drinking, gambling, wearing shorts, profanity, desecrating the Lord’s Day, abortion, using dope, living together without marriage, etc. Corrective preaching and teaching would make a lot of rescuing unnecessary” (James Crumpton, *New Testament Church Discipline*).

- m. Exhortation against sin is an important part of good preaching. Good preaching is not only the proclamation of “positive truth” but involves reproving, rebuking, and exhorting. Compare 2 Tim. 4:2. Many preachers today are afraid to warn plainly about sin. They are in the business of tickling the itching ears of apostates (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Instead of preaching God’s Word faithfully, they find out what the people want to hear and then give them that very message.
- n. We must be saved and serve the Lord faithfully while there is opportunity (Heb. 3:13). It soon passes away. “Tomorrow is the day when idle men work, and fools repent. Tomorrow is Satan’s today; he

cares not what good resolutions you form, if only you fix them for tomorrow” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

- o. Sin is deceitful (Heb. 3:13). “The man who commits sin is always under a delusion; and sin, if he indulges it, will lead him on from one step to another, until the heart becomes entirely hardened. Sin puts on plausible appearances and pretences; it assumes the name of virtue; it offers excuses and palliations, until the victim is snared; and then, spell-bound, he is hurried on to every excess. If sin was always seen in its true aspect when man is tempted to commit it, it would be so hateful that he would flee from it with the utmost abhorrence. What young man would become a drunkard, if he saw, when he began, exactly the career which he would ruin? What man would ever enter the room of the gambler, if he saw just where indulgence would soon lead him, and if, at the commencement he saw exactly the woe and despair which would inevitably ensue? Who would become a voluptuary and a sensualist, if he saw exactly the close of such a career? Sin deceives, deludes, blinds. Men do not, or will not, see the fearful results of indulgence. They are deluded by the hope of happiness or of gain; they are drawn along by the fascinations and allurements of pleasure, until the heart becomes hard and the conscience seared--and then they give way without remorse” (Barnes).
- p. Fear has an important role to play both in salvation and in the Christian life (Heb. 4:1).
 - (1) Fear of God’s judgment and hell is not a wrong motivation to flee to Christ for salvation (Heb. 6:18).
 - (2) And fear of displeasing God is a proper motivation in the Christian life. To serve God acceptably requires “godly fear” (Heb. 12:28). “Fear” is mentioned in 80 verses in the New Testament, 48 times in Acts and the Epistles.
- q. In what sense was the gospel preached to the Jews in the Old Testament times (Heb. 4:2)?
 - (1) The gospel was preached in the sense that good news was preached to the Jews. In the context of Hebrews 3-4, the good news

that was preached was the promise of entering into Canaan. The Greek word translated “gospel” is “euaggelizo,” which means “to announce good news” (Strong). It does not always refer to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Rev. 14:6 it refers to the message that will be preached by the angel during the Great Tribulation. “The word *evangelize* means, to communicate good news, or glad tidings; and the idea here is, that the good news or glad tidings of ‘rest’ is announced to us as really as it was to them” (Barnes).

- (2) The gospel of Christ was preached to the Jews in the Old Testament through types, shadows, and prophecies. Those like David, who had an ear to hear, could understand the way of salvation by grace and be saved (Rom. 4:6-8).
- r. Those who hear the Word of God must believe it or it does not benefit them (Heb. 4:2). In a typical church congregation many hear the Word of God preached, but it does not benefit all of them equally. Some hear and are not changed by it, because they do not mix their faith with it. “Though the preacher believes the gospel, and endeavours to mix faith with his preaching, and to speak as one who has believed and so spoken, yet, if the hearers have not faith in their souls to mix with the word, they will be never the better for it. This faith must mingle with every word, and be in act and exercise while we are hearing; and, when we have heard the word, assenting to the truth of it, approving of it, accepting the mercy offered, applying the word to ourselves with suitable affections, then we shall find great profit and gain by the word preached” (Matthew Henry).
- s. Man is responsible to believe God’s Word and will be held accountable for not believing it (Heb. 4:2). Man does not go to hell because he is not of the elect but because he does not believe the Gospel. The Jews of old condemned themselves to die in the wilderness and not to enter into God’s rest because of their own actions.
- t. Salvation was finished from the foundation of the world (Heb. 4:3) in the sense that in God’s mind Christ was already slain. Compare Rev. 13:8 and 1 Pet. 1:20.

- u. Heaven is a place of rest (Heb. 4:4, 9), not in the sense that there is no labor but in the sense of resting from wearisome toil and the troubles that we have because of our own sin and that of the world in which we live. “There will be employment there, but it will be without fatigue; there will be the occupation of the mind, and of whatever powers we may possess, but without weariness. Here we are often worn down and exhausted. The body sinks under continued toil, and falls into the grave. There the slave will rest from his toil; the man here oppressed and broken down by anxious care will cease from his labours. We know but little of heaven; but we know that a large part of what now oppresses and crushes the frame will not exist there. Slavery will be unknown; the anxious care for support will be unknown, and all the exhaustion which proceeds from the love of gain, and from ambition, will be unknown. In the wearisome toils of life, then, let us look forward to the rest that remains in heaven; and as the labourer looks to the shades of the evening, or to the Sabbath, as a period of rest, so let us look to heaven as the place of eternal repose” (Barnes).
- v. Why did the King James Bible translators put “Jesus” in Heb. 3:8 instead of Joshua? Some have claimed that this is an example of a mistake in the King James Bible. In fact, it is a perfect translation of the Greek, which has *Iesous*. Joshua in the Hebrew language is the same as Jesus in Greek. Both mean “saviour.”
- w. Salvation is only for those who believe and thus become “*the people of God*” (Heb. 4:9). There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ. “As sure as the unbelieving Jews fell in the wilderness, and never reached the promised land, so sure it is that unbelievers shall fall into destruction, and never reach heaven. As sure as Joshua, the great captain of the Jews, could not give them possession of Canaan because of their unbelief, notwithstanding his eminent valour and conduct, so sure it is that even Jesus himself, and captain of our salvation, notwithstanding all that fulness of grace and strength that dwells in him, will not, cannot, give to final unbelievers either spiritual or eternal rest: it remains only for the people of God; others by their sin abandon themselves to eternal restlessness” (Matthew Henry).

- x. Hypocrisy and false professions are vain because God sees all things (Heb. 4:11-13). “The design of this and the following verse is obvious. It is to show that we cannot escape the notice of God; that all insincerity, unbelief, hypocrisy, will be detected by him; and that since our hearts are perfectly open before him, we should be sincere, and should not attempt to deceive him. The sense is, that the truth of God is all-penetrating and searching, and that the real thoughts and intents of the heart will be brought to light; and that if there is insincerity and self-deception, there can be no hope of escape” (Barnes).

CHRIST IS BETTER THAN AARON (Hebrews 4:14 - 5:10)

“The apostle here resumes the subject which had been slightly hinted at in Heb 2:17-18, and pursues it to the end of chapter 10. The object is to show that Christians have a great High Priest as really as the Jews had; to show wherein he surpassed the Levitical priesthood; to show how all that was said of the Aaronic priesthood, and all the types pertaining to that priesthood, were fulfilled in the Lord Jesus; and to state and illustrate the nature of the consolations which Christians might derive from the fact that they had such a High Priest. One of the things on which the Jews most valued their religion, was the fact that it had such a minister of religion as their high priest--the most elevated functionary of that dispensation. It came, therefore, to be of the utmost importance to show that Christianity was not inferior to the Jewish religion in this respect, and that the High Priest of the Christian profession would not suffer in point of dignity, and in the value of the blood with which he would approach God, and in the efficacy of his intercession, when compared with the Jewish high priest. Moreover, it was a doctrine of Christianity that the Jewish ritual was to pass away; and its temple services cease to be observed. It was, therefore, of vast importance to show why they passed away, and how they were superseded. To do this, the apostle is led into this long discussion respecting their nature. He shows that they were designed to be typical. He proves that they could not purify the heart, and give peace to the conscience. He proves that they were all intended to point to something future, and to introduce the Messiah to the world; and that when this object was accomplished, their great end was secured, and they were thus all fulfilled. In no part of the Bible can there be found so full an account of the design of the

Mosaic institutions as in chapter 5 through 10 of this epistle; and were it not for this, the volume of inspiration would be incomplete. We should be left in the dark on some of the most important subjects in revelation; we should ask questions for which we could find no certain answer” (Barnes).

1. How is Jesus better than Aaron?

- a. He is the GREAT high priest (Heb. 4:14). The high priest in the Levitical dispensation was never called “great.” Jesus Christ is called “great” to show how superior He is to the high priests under the Mosaic law.
- b. He is passed into the heavens (Heb. 4:14). The high priest in the Levitical dispensation ministered only on this earth, but our Great High Priest ministers in heaven itself.
- c. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities in a perfect sense as opposed to the very imperfect way in which a sinful man could feel another’s infirmities (Heb. 4:15). The breastplate of judgment was carried over the high priest’s heart (Ex. 28:29), signifying the great love that Christ has for His people and how that He always bears them in love before and on the throne. “Our High Priest is not cold and unfeeling. That is, we have one who is abundantly qualified to sympathize with us in our afflictions, and to whom, therefore, we may look for aid and support in trials. Had we a high priest who was cold and heartless; who simply performed the external duties of his office, without entering into the sympathies of those who came to seek for pardon; who had never experienced any trials, and who felt himself above those who sought his aid, we should necessarily feel disheartened in attempting to overcome our sins, and to live to God. His coldness would repel us; his stateliness would awe us; his distance and reserve would keep us away, and perhaps render us indifferent to all desire to be saved. But tenderness and sympathy attract those who are feeble, and kindness does more than anything else to encourage those who have to encounter difficulties and dangers” (Barnes).
- d. He is without sin (Heb. 4:15). The high priest under the Levitical dispensation was a sinner and had to offer sacrifice for himself as well as for others, but our Great High Priest is sinless.

(1) His temptations were not for the purpose of finding out if He could sin but to demonstrate that He could not. “His humanity was not only innocent as was that of the first man, which was therefore subject to failure, but it was holy, repelling evil, for He was the second Man, the Lord from heaven. This precludes all possibility of sin or failure on His part” (Ironsides).

(a) He did no sin (1 Pet. 2:22).

(b) He knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

(c) In him is no sin (1 Jn. 3:5).

(d) He is undefiled, separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26).

(2) In that He was not a sinner He did not have to offer sacrifice for himself (Heb. 5:3).

(3) He was tempted and tried in every way (“*in all points tempted like we are,*” Heb. 4:15). He was poor. He was despised, persecuted, rejected. He was misunderstood. He was maligned and slandered. He suffered hunger, thirst, pain. He preached with little evident results. His good deeds were rewarded with unthankfulness. He was mocked and ridiculed. He had to face the most painful and degrading form of death. He was tempted by the devil in the same three areas in which Eve was tempted. “‘Tempted in all points’ means of course that appeals were made to Him by Satan from the three standpoints whereby alone any of us can be tempted: ‘the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life’ [1 Jn. 2:16]. Tempted on these three points, Eve capitulated completely. ‘She saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food’--the appeal to the lust of the flesh; ‘it was pleasant to the eye’--the appeal to the lust of the eye; ‘and a tree to be desired to make one wise’--the appeal to the pride of life. She failed on every point. To our Lord in the wilderness the same appeals were made. ‘Make these stones bread’--an appeal to fleshly desire; ‘he showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth in a moment of time’--the lust of the eye; then in the suggestion that our Lord should cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to be borne up by angels before the wondering eyes of the populace, we have the appeal to the pride of life. But He met every suggestion of evil by the Word of

God” (Ironsides).

e. He is a priest after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:4-6).

(1) The quotation in Heb. 5:6 is from Psalm 110:4. Jesus is greater than the Levitical high priest because He has an eternal priesthood. We will see more about Melchisedec in chapter 7.

(2) Note that neither Aaron nor Jesus called themselves to the ministry. “He did not selfishly take this honor of the priesthood for Himself. The sons of Korah tried to do this (Num 16) and died for their sin” (Wiersbe). Likewise, it is not enough for a man to desire the office of a bishop in the church (1 Tim. 3:1). He must be called of God and appointed by the church. Ordination is a recognition of God’s call (Acts 13:2-3).

f. He is the only begotten Son (Heb. 5:5). The high priest in the Levitical dispensation was a mere man, but our Great High Priest is the only begotten Son of God. The writer of Hebrews is quoting here from Psalm 2:7. The declaration that Jesus is the begotten Son of God was made at His resurrection (Acts 13:33).

g. He was perfected through suffering and is the author of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:7-9). The high priest in the Levitical dispensation was never perfect, nor was he the author of eternal salvation. It is obvious that the priesthood of Jesus is infinitely higher and better.

(1) Christ suffered in the garden of Gethsemane (Heb. 5:7). See Luke 22:39-44. He faced the fear of the horrible death of the cross and was victorious over it. He did not pray in a demanding way but rather in submission to God’s will (Lk. 22:42). “What a testimony those tears were to the reality of His Manhood! Three times we read of His weeping. He wept at the grave of Lazarus as He contemplated the awful ravages that death had made, tears of loving sympathy. He wept as He looked upon Jerusalem and His prophetic soul saw the tribulations through which the devoted city must pass. And He wept in Gethsemane’s garden as His holy soul shrank from drinking the cup of divine indignation against sin, when He should hang upon the cross” (Ironsides).

(2) In what sense did Christ learn obedience (Heb. 5:8)? He did not learn obedience in the sense that He was ever disobedient; he learned obedience in the sense that He had to learn things in His incarnation through suffering.

(3) Is salvation achieved through obedience (Heb. 5:9)? The only work that brings salvation is the work of faith. See John 6:29. Other works are the product and evidence of salvation. See Heb. 6:9; Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 3:5-8.

2. Lessons on prayer (Heb. 4:16)

This is another of the many exhortations in Hebrews.

a. We are invited to come and to come at any time. The door is open but the believer must take the initiative in prayer.

b. We are invited to come boldly. This does not mean arrogantly, as if I were deserving to come into God's presence in my own standing. It means to have humility in myself but boldness in Christ because of what He has done for me. I am not worthy in myself to enter God's presence, but I have been made worthy by Christ (Heb. 10:19).

(1) We come boldly because we have a high priest who has made the way for us (blood and death) (Heb. 4:14).

(2) We come boldly because we have a high priest who cares for us and is "*touched with the feeling of our infirmities*" (Heb. 4:15)

c. We are invited to come to a throne. A throne signifies kingly authority. We come before the King of kings and Lord of lords. This means that I am coming in prayer before One who can do "*exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think*" (Eph. 3:20), who can do "*great and mighty things, which thou knowest not*" (Jer. 33:3).

d. We are invited to come to a throne of grace.

(1) It is a throne of grace because of the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19).

(2) Therefore we do not come to a throne of condemnation but to a throne of compassion and mercy. "A throne speaks authority, and

bespeaks awe and reverence. A throne of grace speaks great encouragement even to the chief of sinners. There grace reigns, and acts with sovereign freedom, power, and bounty” (Matthew Henry).

(3) There is another throne described in Revelation 20:11-15, the Great White Throne. It is a throne of judgment for those who neglect the throne of grace.

e. We are invited to obtain mercy and find grace.

(1) Mercy is forgiveness of sin, and grace is God’s enabling power in our daily lives. There are two kinds of grace in the Christian life: *saving grace* and *servicing grace*. Saving grace is the free, unmerited favor of God and refers to salvation by faith without works (Eph. 2:8-9). Servicing grace is the ability that God gives to the believer for Christian service. See Eph. 3:7-8 and Heb. 12:28. Servicing grace is God giving the believer everything he needs for his earthly journey. It is strength, encouragement, help, provision, protection, counsel, direction. Following are some of the types of servicing grace that God gives:

(a) Grace for exercising spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6)

(b) Grace for establishing churches (1 Cor. 3:10)

(c) Grace to live a holy life in this wicked world (2 Cor. 1:12)

(d) Grace to give to meet the needs of God’s people and of God’s work (2 Cor. 8:1-2)

(e) Grace to endure trials and difficulties (2 Cor. 12:9)

(f) Grace to minister the Word of God (Eph. 3:7-8)

(2) Mercy is mentioned first in Hebrews 4:16 because this is what we need first. “We need pardon--as the first thing when we come to God. We are guilty and self-condemned--and our first cry should be for mercy--mercy. A man who comes to God, not feeling his need of mercy, must fail of obtaining the Divine favour; and he will be best prepared to obtain that favour who has the deepest sense of his need of forgiveness” (Barnes).

(3) Mercy and grace are always available. They are bestowed from an inexhaustible ocean. The Saviour who purchased this blessing delights in dispensing it and is ever ready to do so; but I must obtain it from Him day by day, hour by hour, need by need.

f. We are invited to find help in time of need.

(1) This refers to times of special need.

(2) This also refers to every occasion, because it is always a time of need in this sin-cursed world. “There is not a day of Our lives in which we do not need pardon; not an hour in which we do not need grace” (Barnes).

“If men are not pardoned, and if they fall into sin and ruin, they alone are to blame. There Is A THRONE OF GRACE. It is always accessible. There is A GOD. He is always ready to pardon. There Is A REDEEMER. He is the great High Priest of men. He is always interceding, His merits may always be pleaded as the ground of our salvation. Why then, oh why, should any remain unforgiven, and perish? On them alone the blame must lie. In their own bosoms is the reason why they are not saved” (Barnes).

Review Questions Hebrews 3:1 - 5:10

1. What does “apostle” mean?
2. Other than apostle, what are two other ways that the Greek word “apostolos” is translated in the King James Bible?
3. What does the name “Jesus” mean?
4. How does Hebrews 3:3-4 teach that Jesus is God?
5. What does the word “holy” mean?
6. What are the two aspects of the believer’s holiness?
7. What verse says it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful?
8. What verse says we should keep the teaching of the apostles “without spot”?
9. What passage says we are saved by grace and not of works?
10. What does Heb. 3:11 mean when it says to “labour to enter into that rest”?
11. What does the Bible mean when it says that salvation is a rest?
12. Why is a heart of unbelief called “evil”?
13. What does the old English word “quick” mean?
14. What verse says the Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart?
15. What are four things that contribute to the hardening of the heart?
16. What two things are required to exercise a fruitful ministry of exhortation?
17. How is the ministry of exhortation an important part of preventive church discipline?
18. In what way is sin deceitful?
19. In what sense was the gospel preached to the Jews in the wilderness?
20. What does the word “gospel” mean?
21. In what sense were the works of salvation finished from the foundation of the world?
22. Why does the King James Bible have “Jesus” in Heb. 3:8 instead of “Joshua”?

23. What did the breastplate of judgment signify?
24. Was it possible for Jesus to sin?
25. What verse says Jesus knew no sin?
26. In what sense did Jesus learn obedience?
27. What verse says that the work of God is to believe on Jesus?
28. What does it mean to come boldly unto the throne of grace?
29. Why is God's throne a throne of grace today?
30. What are two kinds of grace in the Christian life?
31. Why is mercy mentioned before grace?
32. When is a time of need?

PARENTHETICAL EXHORTATIONS

(Hebrews 5:11 - 6:20)

SECTIONAL OVERVIEW

This section is parenthetical and contains more exhortations based on the doctrine that the writer is teaching.

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

1. Beware of spiritual laziness and immaturity (Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3).

- a. Dull hearing is caused by not growing spiritually (Heb. 5:11). Spiritual teaching can be understood properly only by spiritual people. The natural or unsaved man cannot understand it at all (1 Cor. 2:13-14). The carnal believer can only understand it imperfectly (1 Cor. 3:1-2).
- b. Every believer should be a teacher (Heb. 5:12). This is God's express will. It does not mean, of course, that every believer should be a preacher or a church leader; it means that every believer has a sphere of teaching in which he should be involved. Every believer should know the Word of God well enough to fulfill this calling. When we listen to preaching and teaching, we should understand that we do not know what we are hearing well enough until we can teach it to someone else, at least at a basic level.
 - (1) Every believer should have a ministry of exhortation and admonition (Heb. 3:13). This involves encouraging and challenging one's fellow brethren, lifting up the downcast and warning the erring. See Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16; 1 Th. 5:11.
 - (2) Every believer should have a ministry of sharing the gospel with others (Mk. 16:15). The believer should labor to be able to handle the Word of God so well that he can effectively help people understand the gospel. People have questions and arguments that

need to be answered.

(3) Every believer should have a ministry of earnestly contending for the faith (Jude 3). Observe that Jude's command to earnestly contend for the faith is not directed to preachers alone but to God's people in general. Every believer should know the Scriptures well enough to defend its cardinal doctrines, such as salvation by grace alone, the deity of Jesus Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, bodily resurrection, eternal judgment, and such.

(4) Though women are forbidden to teach men (1 Tim. 2:12), they have the very important ministries of teaching other women (Tit. 2:3-4) and teaching children (compare 2 Tim. 1:5 and 3:15).

- c. If you do not grow spiritually you will go backwards (Heb. 5:12). The Christian life is like a boat on a river. As long as the believer is paddling up stream he is making progress, but as soon as he stops paddling he begins to go backwards with the flow. The pressures and temptations of the Christian life always tend to push us backwards unless we face them squarely in God's grace and move ahead.
- d. The Bible is the very utterance of God (Heb. 5:12). The word "oracles" is from the Greek "logion," which means "an utterance" (Strong). It is used of the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2).
- e. Every believer should grow and become strong (Heb. 5:13-14). The new believer is a baby and must feed on the milk of God's Word, but he should not be content to remain a baby.
- f. A chief characteristic of a baby Christian is his inability to use God's word skillfully (Heb. 5:13) and his lack of keen spiritual discernment (Heb. 5:14). "You cannot grow apart from the Word of God. I don't care how active you are in the church. You may be an officer. You may be on every committee in the church. You may be a leading deacon or elder. I don't care who you are, or what you are; if you are not studying the Word of God, and if you don't know how to handle it, you are a little baby. It is tragic to occupy a church office when you are just a little baby. You ought to come on and grow up. It is tragic that there are people who have been members of the church and have been saved for

years, and they are still going around saying, ‘Goo, goo, goo.’ They have nothing to contribute but little baby talk. All they want is to be burped periodically” (J. Vernon McGee).

g. To be strong in Christ requires the following two things:

- (1) It requires becoming skilful in the Scripture (Heb. 5:13). Consider eight great keys to successful Bible study
 - (a) It requires both reading (Deut. 17:19; Rev. 1:3) and study (2 Tim. 2:15). It is not enough to read the Bible and it is not enough to study the Bible. Both are necessary. Studying the Bible requires that the student obtain and use good study tools, particularly a good concordance, Bible dictionary, the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, and carefully selected commentaries. These are explained in the *Advanced Bible Studies Series* course “How to Study the Bible,” available from Way of Life Literature.
 - (b) It requires that God’s Word be made a priority in one’s daily life (“*seek ye FIRST*,” Mat. 6:33).
 - (c) It requires consistency (Jn. 8:31-32). To have a fruitful Bible study requires that I establish a time in my daily schedule during which I meet with God and apply myself to His Word. It is important to keep this divine appointment and not miss it except when absolutely necessary.
 - (d) It requires patience and persistence (Jn. 8:31; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:16; Jam. 1:6-8). “Read the Bible when you feel like it, and when you don’t feel like reading it, read it until you do.”
 - (e) It requires diligence (Prov. 2:1-5). “Most great truths do not lie on the surface. They must be brought up into the light by patient toil” (Frank Thompson).
 - (f) It requires prayer (Ps. 119:18; Prov. 2:3; Eph. 1:17-18). “Prayer will do more than a college education to make the Bible an open and glorious book” (R.A. Torrey).
 - (g) It requires obedience (Ps. 119:133; Lk. 11:28; Jn. 7:17; Heb. 5:14; Jam. 1:22-27; 1 Pet. 2:1-2). In order to make good

progress in my knowledge of God's Word, I must obey that which I learn and apply it's lessons to my daily life.

(h) It requires teachers and the help of a good church (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 4:11-12; Heb. 13:7; Rev. 2:3).

(2) It requires discerning between good and evil (Heb. 5:14).

(a) Spiritual senses must be exercised just like physical muscles. This is how a baby grows.

(b) Spiritual muscles are exercised by discerning between good and evil. The New Testament Christian does not focus exclusively on the "good" or the "positive." He must also reject that which is evil and false. He must develop a keen sense of spiritual discernment. See Ps. 119:128.

(c) Therefore, contrary to the contemporary philosophy, there is much judging to be done in the Christian life. Compare Jn. 7:24; 1 Cor. 5:3; 14:29. The believer must judge all things (1 Cor. 2:15; 1 Th. 5:21): his daily activities, doctrine, philosophy, decisions, friendships, entertainment, you name it.

(d) The believer has an absolute standard for judgment in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

h. The Christian should leave the first principles and go on unto perfection (Heb. 6:1-3). "The appeal 'Let us go on' is literally, 'Let us be borne, or carried, on.' It is the same word translated 'upholding' in 1:3. In other words, the writer is not talking about self-effort; he is appealing to the readers to yield themselves to the power of God, the same power that upholds the whole universe" (Wiersbe).

(1) Perfection does not mean sinless perfection but spiritual maturity and completeness in the will of God.

(a) This is the meaning of the Greek word "teleiotes." It means "completeness (mentally or morally)" (Strong).

(b) "Perfect" is defined in 2 Tim. 3:17, "*That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*" The perfect Christian life is the one that is furnished unto all good works.

- (c) “Perfect” means to be “*complete in all the will of God*” (Col. 4:12).
 - (d) “Perfect” means to be stablished, strengthened, settled (1 Pet. 5:10).
 - (e) “Perfect” refers to the believer who is pressing toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14-15).
- (2) The “*principles of the doctrine of Christ*” refers to the first or basic principles of New Testament teaching. The Tyndale version reads “the doctrine pertaining to the beginning of a Christian man” and the Coverdale version reads “the doctrine pertaining to the beginning of a Christian life.” Some commentators hold that these principles pertain to the basics of the Jewish or Old Testament faith, but I am convinced that they refer to the basics of the Christian faith. The writer of Hebrews does not speak of the principles of the doctrine of Moses; he speaks of the “principles of the doctrine of Christ.”
- (3) The first principles of Christian doctrine are organized into three general categories:
- “*repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God*” (v. 1).
- (a) This refers to the doctrine of salvation.
 - (b) “Dead works” are those works that unsaved people attempt to do in order to earn salvation. They are dead because they are unacceptable before God and therefore are not efficacious. Compare Heb. 9:14.
 - (c) Repentance and faith are the two aspects of receiving Christ (Acts 20:21). “Repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, are connected, and always go together; they are inseparable twins, the one cannot live without the other” (Matthew Henry). Repentance from dead works means to turn from false gospels and false gods.
 - (d) Repentance is mentioned first because it precedes and lays the

proper foundation for faith. Genuine saving faith is repentant faith. Sometimes repentance is mentioned alone (2 Pet. 3:9) and sometimes it is mentioned in association with faith (Acts 20:21) and sometimes faith is mentioned alone (Jn. 3:16), and by comparing Scripture with Scripture we understand that the Bible always assumes that saving faith is a repentant faith.

- (e) Why does the writer speak of “faith in God” instead of “faith in Jesus Christ”? Seven times in the New Testament the gospel of Christ is called “the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Th. 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Pet. 4:17). “There is but one God--‘the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;’ and he who believes in the true God, believes in him as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Author of the plan of redemption, and the Saviour of lost men. No one can believe in the true God who does not believe in the Saviour. Comp. Jn. 5:23; 17:3” (Barnes).

“the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands” (v. 2).

- (a) This refers to basic church doctrine. The New Testament refers to the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 1:5) and water baptism by immersion (Acts 2:41). It also describes baptism by fire or eternal punishment (Mat. 3:10-12) and baptism in suffering (Mk. 10:39).
- (b) The laying on of hands refers to the conferring of power by the apostles (Acts 8:17; 19:6) and to ordination, of which there are three occasions: deacons (Acts 6:6), missionaries (Acts 13:3), and pastors (Acts 14:23).

“of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” (v. 2).

- (a) This refers to basic prophetic doctrine.
- (b) The doctrine of resurrection and judgment describes the future state, which is plainly revealed in the New Testament Scripture. “The question about the resurrection included the whole inquiry about the future state, or whether man would live at all in the future world. This is one of the most important subjects that can come before the human mind, and one on which man has felt more perplexity than any other. The belief of the resurrection of

the dead is an elementary article in the system of Christianity. It lies at the foundation of all our hopes. Christianity is designed to prepare us for a future state; and one of the first things, therefore, in the preparation, is to assure us that there is a future state, and to tell us what it is. It is, moreover, a peculiar doctrine of Christianity. The belief of the resurrection is found in no other system of religion, nor is there a ray of light shed upon the future condition of man by any other scheme of philosophy or religion” (Barnes).

- (c) The New Testament speaks of multiple resurrections and judgments. There is the first resurrection and the second resurrection (Rev. 20:4-5), and the judgment of believers (1 Cor. 3:13-15) and of unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15).
 - (d) God’s judgment is irrevocable and eternal. This is true both for the saved and the unsaved. Compare Mt. 25:46; Jn. 5:29; 2 Th. 1:9.
 - (e) This area of doctrine is effective in motivating the unsaved to flee to Christ for safety and the saved to serve Christ while there is opportunity. After Paul taught on the doctrine of resurrection, he concluded with, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 15:58), and after he taught on the Rapture he concluded, *“Wherefore comfort one another with these words”* (1 Th. 4:18).
- (4) These principles are said to be the basic starting point in the Christian life. This being true, we see how very ignorant many believers are today, because they do not have a proper understanding even of these foundational doctrines.
- (5) We see that doctrinal knowledge is a necessary part of the Christian life. “We should aim to acquire as much knowledge of religious truth as we possibly can, Heb. 6:1-2. True piety is principle. It is not fancy, or dreaming, or visions, or enthusiasm. It is based on knowledge, and does not go beyond that. ... There may be

knowledge where there is no piety; but there can be no true religion where there is no knowledge. If, therefore, a Christian wishes to make advances, he must gain a knowledge of the truth. He must understand the great doctrines of his religion” (Barnes).

(6) It is every church’s duty to train the members thoroughly so that they can progress to perfection. This is what Jesus demanded in the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20). This was Paul’s practice (Acts 20:27). The church should train new converts in the first principles of doctrine and the older members in the things pertaining to perfection.

(7) Why does Heb. 6:3 say, “*And this will we do, if God permit?*” This is an expression of complete reliance upon God. Compare Jam. 4:13-16. “This is not to be interpreted as if God was unwilling that they should make such advances, or if it were doubtful whether he would allow it if they made an honest effort, and their lives were spared; but it is a phrase used to denote their dependence on him. It is equivalent to saying, ‘if he would spare their lives, their health, and their reason; if he would continue the means of grace, and would impart his Holy Spirit; if he would favour their efforts, and crown them with success, they would make these advances.’ In reference to anything that we undertake, however pleasing to God in itself, it is proper to recognise our entire dependence on God” (Barnes).

2. Beware of Apostasy (Hebrews 6:4-9)

This is a difficult passage regardless of how it is interpreted. Following is an overview of the three most common interpretations:

According to Interpretation #1, the passage describes true Christians who apostatize and lose their salvation. Consider Adam Clarke’s New Testament Commentary: “The design of these solemn words is evidently, First, to show the Hebrews that apostasy from the highest degrees of grace was possible; and that those who were highest in the favour of God might sin against him, lose it, and perish everlastingly” (Clarke).

According to Interpretation #2, the passage describes an imaginary case of true

Christians who apostatize, even though such has not occurred and could not occur. Consider Barnes New Testament Commentary: “The passage proves that if true Christians should apostatize, it would be impossible to renew and save them. If then it should be asked whether I believe that any true Christian ever did, or ever will fall from grace, and wholly lose his religion, I would answer unhesitatingly, No” (Barnes).

According to Interpretation #3, the passage describes those who come near to being saved but who turn from it finally and thus are forever lost. Consider Matthew Henry’s New Testament Commentary: “But the falling away here mentioned, is an open and avowed renouncing of Christ, from enmity of heart against him, his cause, and people, by men approving in their minds the deeds of his murderers, and all this after they have received the knowledge of the truth, and tasted some of its comforts” (Henry).

Having studied and restudied the passage countless times over the past 32 years and having read dozens of commentaries on it, I am convinced that Interpretation #3 is the best one, though #2 is also a possibility, and I will give the reasons why I am convinced that Interpretation #1 is impossible.

In my estimation, this passage describes the apostasy of those who have come close to being saved but who do not have true saving faith and who turn finally away from the truth. Compare 1 John 2:19.

a. How do we know that this passage does not describe a saved person?

(1) The context plainly says so

- (a) The writer of Hebrews addresses two different groups of people in this passage: apostates (Heb. 6:4-8) and true believers (Heb. 6:9). “Some object to the thought that anyone could go as far as these apostates had gone without being regenerated, but ver. 9 is proof positive that such is the case” (Ironsides).
- (b) Hebrews 6:8 says those who are rejected are those who bear thorns and briars. That is not a description of a true believer. Compare John 15:5; Rom. 6:22; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:6.
- (c) Hebrews 6:8 says those who are described in this passage are “*nigh unto cursing,*” whereas the true believer is “*blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3).

(2) The rest of the New Testament plainly says a believer is eternally secure. Consider the following important Scriptures: Jn. 3:16; 10:27-28; Rom. 5:9; 1 Cor. 1:8-9. Eph. 1:3-7; 1:13-14; Phil. 1:6; 1 Th. 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; 1 Jn. 5:11-13; Rev. 1:5-6.

b. What about the language describing these apostates? “... *those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come...*” (Heb. 6:4-5).

(1) These terms can apply to an unsaved person.

(a) Jesus enlightens every man (Jn. 1:9) and the Holy Spirit reproves the world (Jn. 16:8).

(b) One can taste without drinking. Salvation is described as eating and drinking (Jn. 4:14; 6:50, 54-55). “These feel something of the efficacy of the Holy Spirit in his operations upon their souls, causing them to taste something of religion, and yet be like persons in the market, who taste of what they will not come up to the price of, and so but take a taste, and leave it. Persons may taste religion, and seem to like it, if they could have it upon easier terms than denying themselves, and taking up their cross, and following Christ” (Matthew Henry). “Now it is one thing to taste; it is another thing to eat. Christ Himself is the Heavenly Gift. How many sinners have been under conviction, have admired the beautiful life of our Lord, have acknowledged that he died for a lost world, have even admitted that they expect one day to accept Him as a personal Saviour, and yet have refused to open their hearts to Him. They are among those who have only ‘tasted of the heavenly gift’” (Louis Talbot, *Bible Questions Explained*).

(c) To be a partaker of the Spirit is not the same as to be regenerated by and sealed with the Spirit. One can be a partaker of the Spirit’s ministry and not be saved. “To be a ‘partaker of the Holy Spirit’ is not at all the same thing as to be born of the Spirit, sealed by the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, or filled

with the Spirit. It is simply to be made aware of the mighty power of the Spirit working upon the hearts and minds of men bringing conviction, and wooing the heart toward Christ. One might tremble under this supernatural power and yet turn away from the message of the Spirit which if truly believed would bring life and peace” (Ironsides).

(d) To taste the good word of God and the power of the world to come is not the same as to receive the Word of God in a true heart and to experience the miracle of the new birth. “They had ‘tasted the good word of God, and the power of the world to come’; that is, they had heard the Word of God, and had seen the dead raised, the leper cleansed, the eyes of the blind opened --enough to convince them that Jesus was their Messiah and Lord” (Talbot).

(2) Following are examples in the Bible of unsaved people who were in this condition:

Consider Balaam (Num. 24). Balaam “talked a good talk” and even prophesied great things, including a great Messianic prophecy (Num. 24:14-19), but he was in the business only for money (2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11) and he sold Israel out to her enemies (Num. 31:16). Balaam perished with Israel’s enemies (Num. 31:8; Jos. 13:22). “Balaam was the man whose eyes were opened (Num. 24:3), and yet with his eyes opened he went down to utter darkness” (Matthew Henry).

Consider the Jews in John 2:23. These “*believed in his name,*” but it is obvious that they weren’t saved, because “*Jesus did not commit himself unto them*” (Jn. 2:24). This is because they were not believing the right thing. They did not believe in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour from sin but as one who would deliver them from their earthly enemies and prosper them materially. Compare Jn. 6:14-15, 26, 64, 66.

Consider Judas Iscariot. As an apostle he was certainly enlightened and tasted of the good Word of God. In fact, he lived with the Word of God for three years. He tasted of “*the powers of the*

world to come” (Heb. 6:5), because he was sent out by Christ with the other apostles and apparently even did miracles himself (Mat. 10:1-4). Though Judas was not saved, the other apostles did not doubt him. Even when Jesus told the disciples that one of them would betray Him, they did not suspect Judas (Mat. 26:21-22-25). Yet he went to his own place, meaning that he was never saved (Acts 1:25). Judas was a hypocrite who lived a secret life as a thief (Jn. 12:6). Like many other Jews, Judas was probably expecting that Jesus would be a worldly Messiah and rescue them from their enemies and establish a kingdom right away and that he would profit personally by being aligned with Jesus, but when Judas understood that this was not going to happen he betrayed Jesus for money.

Consider those described in Matthew 7:21-23. They call upon the Lord, prophesy, cast out devils, and do many wonderful works; but Jesus says, “*I never knew you*” (Mat. 7:23). He does not say that He knew them at one time but they fell away; He *never* knew them.

Consider Simon (Acts 8:12-24). Simon “believed” (Acts 8:13) but he was not saved because his faith was insincere. He did not believe to the saving of his soul but for the purpose of gaining miracle-working power (vv. 18-23).

Consider the Jews in Acts 21:20. There were “many thousands of Jews” that believed but they were also “zealous of the law.” They should have known by then that believers were not under the Mosaic Law. That had been settled at the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15, but we see that these “believing” Jews were doctrinally confused, to say the least. It is likely that many of them were not truly saved. The book of Hebrews addresses this confusion directly and warns such Jews not to return to the Old Covenant.

Consider the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:11-15). Hebrews 6:7-8 points directly to this parable. The Word of God falls upon four kinds of hearts. The rocky heart “*receives the word with joy*” and “*for a while believes*” (Lk. 8:13), but such a person is not saved

because the Word of God is not received fully and deeply and he therefore falls away in time of temptation. That is what we see in Hebrews 6:8. It is only the “*honest and good heart*” that receives the Word and patiently bears good fruit (Lk. 8:15), and this is described in Hebrews 6:7, 9.

- (3) Our own experience witnesses to the truth of this passage. In our missionary work in Asia, we have known many Hindus and Buddhists who have come very close to being saved. They were attracted to the Gospel, to the fact that God loves them and that Jesus died for their sins. They loved to sing hymns about Christ. They read the Bible. They attended church faithfully and even professed Christ. But they were not saved, and the evidence that they were not saved is that they did not continue with the Lord and did not bring spiritual fruit to maturity. Eventually they apostatized and renounced Christ and His Gospel.
- (4) This passage in Hebrews should be a powerful and shocking warning to many professing Christians in our day. “... there are many professed Christians who seem to be in danger of such ruin. They resist all attempts to produce in them the fruits of good living as really as some pieces of ground do to secure a harvest. Corrupt desires, pride, envy, uncharitableness, covetousness, and vanity, are as certainly seen in their lives as thorns and briars are on a bad soil. Such briars and thorns you may cut down again and again; you may strike the plough deep, and seem to tear away all their roots; you may sow the ground with the choicest grain, but soon the briars and the thorns will again appear and be as troublesome as ever. No pains will subdue them or secure a harvest. So with many a professed Christian. He may be taught, admonished, rebuked, and afflicted, but all will not do. There is essential and unsubdued perverseness in his soul, and, despite all the attempts to make him a holy man, the same bad passions are continually breaking out anew” (Barnes).
- (5) This reminds us of how careful churches must be in receiving members. Like John the Baptist, the apostle Paul looked for the evidence of repentance in a person’s life (Mat. 3:7-8; Acts 26:20).

Though we cannot infallibly discern whether a person is a genuine believer, since we cannot see the secrets of the heart, we must use as much wisdom as possible in this matter, because the first way to guard the purity of a church is to guard the door. We must understand that a mere interest in the Gospel, however keen, is not the same as salvation.

- c. What does it mean to “*crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*” (Heb. 6:6)? This is a plain description of apostasy. It does not refer merely to a believer who sins. Every believer sins (1 Jn. 1:8-10), and Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sin (1 Jn. 2:1-2). Apostasy refers to much more than sinning and backsliding and carnality. It refers to a rejection of Jesus Christ. The Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah and crucified Him and put Him to open shame, and those who turn away from the Gospel and turn back to Judaism or to some other false religion treat Jesus in the same fashion. “They declare that they approve of what the Jews did in crucifying Christ, and that they would be glad to do the same thing again if it were in their power. They pour the greatest contempt upon the Son of God, and therefore upon God himself, who expects all should reverence his Son, and honour him as they honour the Father. They do what in them lies to represent Christ and Christianity as a shameful thing, and would have him to be a public shame and reproach. This is the nature of apostasy” (Matthew Henry).
- d. Why is it impossible to renew them again unto repentance (Heb. 6:6)? It is impossible because the apostate has rejected the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the enlightenment of Christ and has openly renounced Him. “Of these it is said, that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Not because the blood of Christ is not sufficient to obtain pardon for this sin; but this sin, in its very nature, is opposite to repentance and every thing that leads to it. If those who through mistaken views of this passage, as well as of their own case, fear that there is no mercy for them, would attend to the account given of the nature of this sin, that it is a total and a willing renouncing of Christ, and his cause, and joining with his enemies, it would relieve them from wrong fears. We should ourselves beware, and caution others, of every

approach near to a gulf so awful as apostasy; yet in doing this we should keep close to the word of God, and be careful not to wound and terrify the weak, or discourage the fallen and penitent” (Matthew Henry). “There is but one way of salvation. Having tried that, and then renounced it, how could they then be saved? The case is like that of a drowning man. If there was but one plank by which he could be saved, and he should get on that, and then push it away and plunge into the deep, he must die. Or if a man were sick, and there was but one kind of medicine that could possibly restore him, and he should deliberately dash that away, he must die. So in religion. There is but one way of salvation. If a man deliberately rejects that, he must perish” (Barnes).

3. Understand that your hope is certain (Hebrews 6:9-20)

This section contains some of the clearest statements on eternal security in the New Testament.

Why is the believer’s hope certain?

- a. The believer’s hope is certain because salvation guarantees that he will not apostatize (Heb. 6:9). Those who are described in the preceding verses are in a different category than those described in verse 9. In verses 4-8, the writer of Hebrews refers to “those” and “they” and “them,” but in verses 1-4 and verses 9-20, he refers to “we” and “us” and “you.” Following are four of the many reasons why the true believer does not apostatize:
 - (1) The saved do not apostatize because Christ lives in them (Col. 1:27).
 - (2) The saved do not apostatize because they have eternal life and shall never perish (Jn. 3:16; 10:27-28).
 - (3) The saved do not apostatize because they are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14).
 - (4) The saved do not apostatize because they have been born again to a living hope; they have an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven; and they are kept by the power of God (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

b. The believer's hope is certain because God accepts his work and labour of love (Heb. 6:10).

(1) The believer's works are acceptable because they are purified by Christ's atonement and are motivated by the love of Christ, but this is not true for the unbeliever, whose works are rejected because they are not acceptable before God and are done from impure, selfish motives.

(2) The believer is saved by grace unto good works (Eph. 2:8-10). The works are prompted from within (Phil. 2:13).

(3) The true believer works according to the royal law, which is Christ's law to love one's neighbor (Jam. 2:8). It is royal because it was given by the King of kings. "Good works and labour proceeding from love to God are commendable; and what is done to any in the name of God shall not go unrewarded. What is done to the saints, as such, God takes as done to himself" (Matthew Henry).

(4) The believer works in God's name rather than in his own (Heb. 6:10). All of the glory goes to God and none to himself.

(5) The believer's works are geared largely toward "the saints" (Heb. 6:10). Compare Gal. 6:10. The collections taken by the early churches were for needy saints rather than for the world at large (1 Cor. 16:1). This does not mean that believers should never help the unsaved; it means that the emphasis we see in the book of Acts and in the New Testament epistles is upon believers helping believers. Nowhere in the New Testament do we see grand schemes of massive indiscriminate giving toward the world such as that we find being done today by organizations such as Samaritan's Purse and World Vision. The International Congress on World Evangelization, which was held in Lausanne, Switzerland, July 1974, stated that "evangelism and socio-political involvement are BOTH part of our Christian duty," but that is not the pattern that we see in the early churches and that is not what Christ taught in the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20). Those organizations that have gone beyond the Great Commission and beyond the example of the early churches have invariably compromised the Gospel in their ecumenical endeavors. For example, World Vision states, "In all World Vision

projects, staff are ready to give a reason for their hope ... *whenever appropriate and desired by the community*. In many countries where we work, formal public evangelism is forbidden by government policy and we respect this” (World Vision web site). In other words, World Vision is content to do social work even apart from the preaching of the Gospel. This is not scriptural and cannot therefore be acceptable to God. What good have we done if we give someone the means to live this life but we do not tell them the Good News of how to escape Hell and live forever in Heaven?

c. The believer’s hope is certain because it is a full assurance type of hope and it perseveres unto the end (Heb. 6:11). As we have seen, the perseverance is not the *means* of salvation but the *evidence* thereof.

(1) Diligent Christian living and full assurance are intimately associated. Assurance is spoken to the heart by the Holy Spirit, and the more diligently the believer serves Him and fellowships with Him, the more clearly he hears that “still small voice” (1 Ki. 19:12). It is when our heart does not condemn us that we have the most confidence toward God (1 Jn. 3:21). We see in 2 Peter 1:2-11 that spiritual obedience and growth is a necessary part of maintaining one’s full assurance. 2 Pet. 1:2-4 teaches us that the true believer (he who has “*like precious faith*”) has all things that pertain unto life and godliness, is called to glory, is a partaker of the divine nature, and has escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Yet 2 Pet. 1:9 says those who do not diligently pursue spiritual growth forget that they are purged from their old sins. The believer that is careless and tends to backslide will often have doubts about his salvation even if he is truly saved.

(2) We see that God requires diligence (Heb. 6:11-12). This is why the book of Proverbs warns so frequently about slothfulness and sluggardism (e.g., Prov. 6:6-11; 10:26; 12:24; 18:9; 19:15; 20:4, 13; 22:29; 24:30-34; 26:14; 27:23-27).

(3) We see that steadfastness and faithfulness and persistence are important matters in the Christian life.

- (4) We see Paul's example of earnestly desiring that every single soul under his watchcare would be found in God's perfect will (Heb. 6:11). Compare Col. 1:28.
- (5) We see that exhortation is a necessary part of Christian growth and victory (Heb. 6:11).
- d. The believer's hope is certain because it is by faith and not by works (Heb. 6:12-15).
 - (1) The only work that is required for salvation is the work of faith (Jn. 6:28-29).
 - (2) We see the example of Abraham (Heb. 6:13), and we know that he was saved by faith without works (Rom. 4:1-5).
 - (a) God's covenant with Abraham was unconditional and depended upon God alone, upon His oath and His works and His faithfulness, and the Gospel is the same sort of covenant.
 - (b) God's covenant with Abraham was sure (Heb. 6:14), and so is the New Covenant in Christ.
 - (3) Patience is a necessary part of the Christian life because it is a life of faith and there are many delays in obtaining the promises (Heb. 6:15). God promised Abraham that his seed would be like the stars of the heavens in number, but he had to wait for many years before even the first son came.
- e. The believer's hope is certain because it is confirmed by two immutable things.
 - (1) This probably refers to the promise of God and the oath of God. "It seems to me, therefore, that the apostle refers to the promise and to the oath of God, as constituting the two grounds of security for the salvation of his people. Those things were both unchangeable; and when his word and oath are once passed, what he promises is

secure” (Barnes).

(2) God’s promise is “immutable” (Heb. 6:17, 18). This means unchangeable. There is not a more certain thing in all the universe than the promise of Almighty God. What God has promised no power in the universe can thwart.

(3) The promise is immutable because of the character of God. Those who come to Christ in repentance and faith and who doubt their salvation are doubting the veracity of God.

(a) Because God cannot lie. Compare Titus 1:2.

(b) Because God swore upon Himself, upon His own eternal existence. Only five times does the Bible say that God swore something in this manner. The first is in Genesis 22:16-18, when God swore to bless Abraham. The second is Numbers 14:21, where God swore that the earth will be filled with His glory. The third is in Numbers 14:28-29, where God swore that the unbelieving Israelites would die in the wilderness. The fourth is in Isaiah 45:23, where God swore that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. The fifth is in Ezekiel 33:11, where God swore that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. “Note here, The wonderful condescension of God towards the infirmity of men, he swears, he swears by himself, he pawns and pledges his Godhead, and if he performs not what he promises and swears, is willing to forfeit it. O happy man! For whose sake God condescends to swear. O miserable man! If we doubt of God’s promise confirmed by his oath, in which he has laid down his Godhead as a stake and pawn, never to take it up again, if he fails in the least jot in the punctual performance of it” (William Burkitt).

f. The believer’s hope is certain because it is described as “*strong consolation*,” an “*anchor of the soul*,” and “*sure and stedfast*” (Heb. 6:18, 19). “Hope accomplishes for the soul the same thing which an anchor does for a ship. It makes it fast and secure. An anchor preserves a ship when the waves beat and the wind blows; and as long as the anchor holds, so long a ship is safe, and the mariner apprehends no danger. So

with the soul of the Christian. In the tempests and trials of life, his mind is calm as long as his hope of heaven is firm. If that gives way, he feels that all is lost” (Barnes).

- (1) Those who think the hope of the Gospel is uncertain do not understand its nature. If someone says, “I hope I will be saved,” he usually means he is not sure, and that is not Bible hope. True Bible hope has no hint of uncertainty. Thus, when the Bible uses the word “hope” in reference to salvation it is used in a different way than it is used in ordinary life. If I say, “I hope we can get all my family together for the holidays this year,” it means I am not sure about it; but this is not what Bible hope means.
- (2) Note that it is God’s express will to give the believer this strong consolation (Heb. 6:17).
- (3) The believer’s hope is described as “an anchor of the soul.”
 - (a) An anchor speaks of strong tides and winds. It reminds us that the Christian life is storm-prone. It is “*through much tribulation*” that we enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).
 - (b) An anchor speaks of safety and stability. When Paul’s ship was driven by the storm, the ship’s crew threw out four anchors and these held them fast until they attempted to drive into a creek (Acts 27:29, 39-40). The anchor of the soul speaks of infinitely greater safety and stability than that of any ocean-going ship. It is anchored in the Rock within the veil (Heb. 6:19). “It is steadfast as to its object; it is an anchor that has taken good hold, it enters that which is within the veil; it is an anchor that is cast upon the rock, the Rock of ages. It does not seek to fasten in the sands, but enters within the veil, and fixes there upon Christ; he is the object, he is the anchor-hold of the believer’s hope” (Matthew Henry). “This hope is the soul’s anchor, not cast into the hold of the ship, that is, dependent upon our own frames and experiences, nor resting upon the shifting sands of human systems of thought; but fastened to the propitiatory, the mercy-seat, inside the veil. This anchor has been carried in by Jesus our Forerunner. So that though we be here on earth

tossed about upon the sea of time, ‘our anchor holds within the veil’” (Ironside).

g. The believer’s hope is certain because he has a refuge in Christ Jesus (Heb. 6:18). In the Old Testament, those who accidentally killed someone could flee to one of the six cities of refuge (Num. 35:11-15). “Under the law there were cities of refuge provided for those who were pursued by the avenger of blood. Here is a much better refuge prepared by the gospel, a refuge for all sinners who shall have the heart to flee to it; yea, though they have been the chief of sinners” (Matthew Henry).

(1) Fleeing for refuge requires that one understand and believe that he is in mortal danger. No Israelite would leave the comforts of his home and flee to a strange city unless he was convinced that failure to do so meant certain death. Likewise, no sinner will repent of his sins and flee from his own religion and self-confidence to take hold of Christ unless he understands that there is nothing but eternal hell outside of Christ. It is the work of the law to show the sinner that he is lost and undone without Christ (Gal. 3:24). Soulwinners must be careful not to be so hasty in their work that they fail to make the sinner see his unsaved condition so plainly that he will understand his true need of Christ.

(2) Fleeing for refuge requires that one understand where the refuge is located. The Israelite who committed accidental homicide had to understand that there were precisely six cities that would provide refuge and he had to know the names and location of those cities. Likewise, the sinner who would be saved must know that only in Jesus Christ is there eternal safety from God’s wrath.

(3) Fleeing for refuge requires diligence. The word “flee” is a strong word. The Israelite who committed accidental homicide had to run quickly to a city of refuge before he was caught and punished by a relative of the one he had killed. He could not dally. Likewise, the sinner who wants to be saved must flee while there is opportunity. To put off salvation, like those who heard Paul preach on Mars Hill or like Felix (Acts 17:32; 24:25), is to endanger one’s eternal wellbeing.

h. The believer’s hope is certain because it was purchased by and depends upon Jesus, and He has already overcome in our place and entered for us

into the heavenly holy of holies (Heb. 6:19-20).

- (1) He has entered “*into that within the veil*” (Heb. 6:19). This is a reference to the veil in the tabernacle that divided the holy place from the holy of holies (Lev. 16:2). Prior to Christ’s coming, only the high priest could enter into the holy of holies and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29-34). Christ fulfilled this by making the perfect, once-for-all atonement through the offering of Himself, and when He died the veil was “*rent in twain from the top to the bottom*” (Mat. 27:51). Having finished salvation in our stead, Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father and to intercede for us.
- (2) He has an eternal high priesthood and therefore saves His people eternally and to the uttermost (Heb. 6:20)!

Review Questions Hebrews 5:11 - 6:20

1. What causes dull spiritual hearing?
2. What verse says every believer should be earnestly contending for the faith?
3. Since women are forbidden to teach men, who can they teach?
4. What does the word “oracles” mean?
5. What is the chief characteristic of a baby Christian?
6. What two things are required to become strong in Christ?
7. What are four things that are necessary for successful Bible study?
8. How are spiritual senses exercised?
9. What verse says the spiritual man judges all things?
10. What does Christian perfection mean?
11. What are the first principles?
12. What is repentance toward dead works?
13. How many judgments does the New Testament speak of?
14. Why does the writer of Hebrews say, “And this will we do, if God permit”?
15. What are the three most common interpretations of Hebrews 6:4-9?
16. What verse says the believer is blessed with all spiritual blessings?
17. What are five passages that teach eternal security?
18. How is it possible for a person to be enlightened and yet not be saved?
19. How is it possible for a person to taste of the heavenly gift and not be saved?
20. What are two chapters in the Gospel of John in which salvation is described as eating and drinking?
21. John 2:23-24 says Jesus did not commit Himself to the Jews who believed. Why not?
22. What passage describes people who prophesy and do many wonderful works but they are not saved?
23. Why should churches be careful about receiving members?

24. What are four reasons why the true believer does not apostatize?
25. What passage says we are saved by grace without works but that we are saved unto good works?
26. What passage teaches that spiritual obedience and growth is a necessary part of maintaining assurance of salvation?
27. What does “immutable” mean?
28. What are the two immutable things that confirm the believer’s hope?
29. What verse describes the believer’s hope as an “anchor of the soul”?
30. Where is the believer’s hope anchored?
31. Why would someone flee for refuge in Christ?

A BETTER PRIESTHOOD -- MELCHIZEDEK (Hebrews 7:1-28)

SECTIONAL OVERVIEW

1. Christ has a better priesthood because He was made a priest after the order of Melchisedec, who is mentioned in Genesis 14:18-20 (Heb. 7:1-3). See Psalm 110:4.

a. Melchisedec was greater than Levi, the father of the Levitical priesthood (Num. 3:6), because Levi's father Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec and paid tithes to him (Heb. 7:4-10). This proves that Melchisedec is greater than Levi because the one who blesses is greater than the one who is blessed, and because Levi was in the loins of Abraham as Abraham received the blessing and paid tithes to Melchisedec.

b. The fact that God spoke of a priest who would come after the order of Melchisedec proves that the Levitical priesthood would be changed, superseded (Heb. 7:11-14).

2. Christ has a better priesthood because it is eternal (Heb. 7:15-17).

“the law of a carnal commandment” (Heb. 7:16) -- The Levitical priesthood is described as a “carnal commandment” because it was of the flesh and of this world. “Carnal,” as being only outward and temporary, is contrasted with ‘endless’” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown). “The word carnal means fleshly; and the idea is, that the law under which the priests of the old dispensation were made was external, rather than spiritual; it related more to outward observances than to the keeping of the heart” (Barnes).

3. Christ has a better priesthood because He brings a better hope and perfection (Heb. 7:18-19).

4. Christ has a better priesthood because He was called by an oath (Heb. 7:20-22).

5. Christ has a better priesthood because He does not die (Heb. 7:23-25).
6. Christ has a better priesthood because He is sinless (Heb. 7:26).
7. Christ has a better priesthood because He has offered a perfect, once-for-all sacrifice (Heb. 7:27).
8. Christ has a better priesthood because He is the Son of God, as opposed to the Levities who were mere men (Heb. 7:28).

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

1. Who was Melchisedec?

- a. Some say that Melchizedek was Shem, but while Shem was still alive at this date (he lived 502 years after the flood) the simple fact remains that the Bible does not say that Melchizedek was Shem. Further, we know Shem's lineage whereas Melchizedek had no recorded lineage (Heb. 7:3).
- b. Some say that Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Christ, because the description in Hebrews 7:3 can only fit Christ. I do not believe this is likely because this would mean that Christ in some pre-incarnate state actually lived on earth as a human king. While we know that the pre-incarnate Christ as the Angel of God made appearances on earth nowhere does the Bible indicate that these were more than brief instances.
- c. I believe that Melchizedek was a real human king of Abraham's day who is used as a type of Christ but who was not the pre-incarnate Christ. This best fits the simple description given in Genesis 14. "If any ask, 'Who is Melchisedec?' the only proper answer is 'Melchisedec.' He was not Shem the son of Noah, nor Job of the land of Uz, nor Cheops the builder of the great pyramid, as some have endeavored to prove" (Ironsides).
 - (1) The king of Salem is introduced in the same context that we find the king of Sodom and the king of Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14:17), and both of these were real human kings of that time.

- (2) Hebrews 7:3 does not say that Melchizedek was the Son of God; it says he was “*made like unto the Son of God.*” To me, this proves that Melchizedek was not actually the Son of God but only a type of Him. Further, Heb. 7:15 says Christ was “*after the similitude of Melchisedec.*” How could the Son of God be after the similitude of the Son of God?
- (3) Hebrews 7:3 is not necessarily saying that the Melchizedek of Genesis 14 did not have a father or mother or beginning; it is saying that there is no record of his beginning and in this way he is a type of Christ, who indeed had no beginning.
- (4) Melchizedek was in that lineage of believing men stretching back to the earliest days of mankind who prophesied and offered sacrifices. Abel was a prophet and also a priest who offered sacrifice (Lk. 11:50-51; Heb. 11:4). Enoch was a prophet who walked with God (Heb. 11:5). Noah was a prophet and a preacher (2 Pet. 3:5). Job probably lived after the flood but before the days of Abraham, and he fulfilled the office of a priest for his family (Job 1:5). “Long before the Levitical economy had been established and a special family set apart for the priesthood Melchizedek, like Job and Abraham, offered sacrifices as a priest of the Most High God” (Ironsides).

No matter what position you take on Melchizedek, there are questions left unanswered. We must be satisfied with what the Bible says and also with what it does not say (Deut. 29:29). Though the Bible does not tell us everything that we would like to know about the mysterious appearance of Melchizedek in Genesis, it tells us everything God wants us to know. The writer of Hebrews indicates that there is more than can be said about Melchizedek, but we will have to wait for eternity to know more (Heb. 5:10-11).

2. What does Melchisedec teach us about Christ?

- a. Christ blesses and sustains His people (Heb. 7:1). When Melchisedec met Abraham, he gave him bread and wine and blessed him (Gen. 14:18-19). This is a beautiful picture of what Christ does for His people. He sustains them with every good thing (Heb. 13:5; Deut. 31:8; Ps.

37:25) and He blesses them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3). “He brought forth bread and wine to refresh Abraham and his servants when they were weary; he gave as a king, and blessed as a priest. Thus our Lord Jesus meets his people in their spiritual conflicts, refreshes them, renews their strength, and blesses them” (Matthew Henry). “It is noticeable that the King of Sodom was on his way to meet Abraham when the latter was intercepted by Melchisedec ... Strengthened by the bread and wine administered by Salem’s king-priest, Abraham was prepared to refuse the blandishments of the King of Sodom, representative of the world in all its impurity and debasement” (Ironsides).

- b. Christ is King of righteousness and King of Salem (peace) (Heb. 7:2). There can be no real peace without righteousness (Is. 48:22; 57:21) and the reason there is no peace between God and man since the days of Adam is because of man’s sin. In the Lord Jesus Christ, righteousness and peace have met (Ps. 85:10). He makes peace between God and man because He paid man’s sin debt by his blood and death (Rom. 5:1). “Righteousness must come before peace. We are told in Isaiah 32:17, ‘The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.’ And so in the great gospel Epistle to the Romans we first learn how the righteousness of God has been maintained in the cross before we are told of peace with God which is ours by faith” (Ironsides).
- c. Christ is King of Salem (Heb. 7:2). Melchizedek reigned in Salem (Gen. 14:18). This later became Jeru-Salem, and this is the city in which Christ will establish His kingdom (Ps. 76:2; Zech. 8:3-8).
- d. Like Melchisedec, Christ is both a king (Gen. 14:18; 1 Tim. 6:14-15), a priest (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7-10), and a prophet (Gen. 14:19; Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22).
- e. Christ has no beginning (Heb. 7:3). Melchisedec’s lineage is not given in Scripture, and the reason is so that he could be “*made like unto the Son of God.*” Though Jesus had an earthly mother and a human lineage, He is the eternal Son of God and as such had no beginning (Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2; Jn. 1:1; Col. 1:17; 1 Jn. 1:2).

- f. Christ is mysterious. There is a mysterious aspect to Melchizedek, because the Bible says he had no beginning of days nor end of life (Heb. 7:3) and there are many questions about him to which we do not have answers. Likewise, Jesus Christ is the great Mystery Person, mysterious in His birth, His life, His resurrection, and His ascension; fully God and fully man; the God of David and the son of David; both the root and the branch of Jesse; visible and knowable and yet dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen; born in a lowly manger and yet the eternal Son of God, “*whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*” (Micah 5:2).
- g. Christ has an eternal priesthood (Heb. 7:3, 17-18). Everything about His priesthood is eternal, His Person, the effects of His sacrifice, His intercessory office, and this means that He can save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him.
- h. Christ has brought in a better hope, by which we draw nigh unto God (Heb. 7:19). The Levitical priesthood could only bring men to the outer part of the earthly temple, but Christ brings them into the very holy of holies in heaven.
- i. Christ has been made a priest by God’s oath (Heb. 7:20-21). The Levitical priesthood was not confirmed by an oath, but Christ’s is so confirmed. See Ps. 110:4.
- j. Christ is the surety of a better testament (Heb. 7:22).
 - (1) The word “surety” means “one that is bound with and for another” (Webster). It describes one who pledges to stand for the debt of another. We see an example in Gen. 44:32, where Judah told Joseph that he had pledged to be surety for his young brother Benjamin. “For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.” Judah promised to take charge of and to take full blame for Benjamin. We see another example in Philemon 18, where Paul pledged that he would be surety for Onesimus. “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.” Jesus Christ stands surety before God for the

believing sinner. “In the case of the new covenant between God and man, Jesus is the ‘security,’ or the bondsman. ... He becomes responsible, so to speak, to law and justice, that no injury shall be done by our salvation, though we are sinners. ... his suretyship extends to this point, that the law shall be honoured; that all its demands shall be met; that we may be saved though we have violated it, and that its terrific penalty shall not fall upon us” (Barnes).

(2) Christ’s testament is better in every way. Consider a few of them:

(a) It is better because whereas the Old Covenant was a covenant of works and condemnation, the New is a covenant of grace and blessing.

(b) It is better because whereas the Old Covenant pertained to earthly things, the New pertains to heavenly.

(c) It is better in that while the Old was temporal, the New is eternal.

(d) It is better in that whereas the Old Covenant pertained only to Israelites, the New is offered to all men.

k. Christ has an unchangeable priesthood (Heb. 7:23-24). For this reason our salvation is secure. He ever lives to make intercession for us on the basis of His one offering.

l. Christ is able to save to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25). He saves completely. There is nothing necessary for our salvation that He does not supply. He saves those who “come unto God by him,” that is, those who come to God trusting solely in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. “No one has asked aid of him, and found him unable to render it; no one has been suffered to sink down to hell because his arm was weak. What he has done for a few, he can do for ‘all’; and they who will entrust themselves to him will find him a sure Saviour. Men have gone with a troubled spirit, with a guilty conscience, and with awful apprehensions of the wrath to come, and have asked him to save them. Not one of those who have done this has found reason to doubt his ability; not one has regretted that he has committed the deathless interest of the soul

into his hands” (Barnes). “Salvation to the uttermost here does not simply mean salvation from every kind of sin, but is even greater than that--salvation forevermore. He whom God saves is saved eternally, for He who died for him lives to keep him and to complete the work He began (Ironsides).

m. He makes intercession (Heb. 7:25). This is one of the great passages in the New Testament on Christ’s intercessory ministry.

(1) Intercession speaks of a lawyer pleading one’s case. The reason why Jesus can plead the believing sinner’s case before God the Father is because He has paid the price demanded by God’s law for the sinner’s crimes. The reason why He needs to plead the believer’s case is because he still sins. “One Sunday evening a young man came to me with the question: ‘If, as you say, our Lord’s death on Calvary was a full and final atonement for sin, how is it that He needs now to be ever interceding for us as our Priest in heaven?’ The answer, of course, is that although the finished work of Calvary brings us a full and free forgiveness, we still remain sinners, pathetically disqualified from fellowship with a holy God. The heavenly ministry of our Lord answers the further need. Through His sacrifice on earth we have our forgiveness; through His priesthood in heaven we are kept in fellowship” (J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*).

(2) Intercession speaks of purifying something to make it acceptable. As our Mediator, Jesus brings our worship and prayers acceptably before the Father. It is like dirty water that is purified by a filter. A thrice holy God cannot accept the prayer and praise of a sinful people. When the prayer and praise is offered through Jesus and in His name, though, it is purified and made acceptable, just as dirty water is cleansed by means of a filter. “He presents before God our prayers and praises. Our heartfelt worship ascends to the Father by Him. ‘To all our prayers and praises, Christ adds His sweet perfume, and love the censer raises, these odors to consume.’ WE may often be discouraged as we realize something of the imperfections even of our highest and best efforts to glorify God. Like Cowper, we may exclaim, ‘Sin twines itself about my thoughts, and slides into my

prayers.’ But it is blessed to know that nothing reaches God that is not perfect. Our Great High Priest takes out of our prayers and praises everything that is unholy or of the flesh, everything that is contrary to the nature of the God we adore. Then to what is left, He adds his own infinite perfections and thus presents all to the Father on our behalf” (Ironside).

(3) Intercession speaks of assistance. “The general meaning is, that he undertakes their cause, and assists them in overcoming their foes and in their endeavours to live a holy life. He does in heaven whatever is necessary to obtain for us grace and strength; secures the aid which we need against our foes” (Barnes).

n. Christ is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens (Heb. 7:26). “*For such an high priest became us*” means that He is everything we need; He was fitted to our condition. “In his moral character, and in the great work which he has accomplished, he is just such a Saviour as is adapted to the wants of ignorant, fallen, wretched, sinful man. We need not only one who ever lives, but one who is perfectly holy, and who has no need to bring an offering for himself, and all the merit of whose sacrifice, therefore, may be ours” (Barnes).

(1) Christ is holy and undefiled. He has no sin, has never sinned, and has no propensity to sin.

(2) Christ is “separate from sinners.” This means that He was always holy, always separate from sinners even though He is a friend of sinners. “Though he mingled with them, yet it was merely to do them good; and in all his life there was an entire separation from the feelings, principles, and views of a sinful world” (Barnes). Those who imagine that Christ hung out with sinners in the sense of “partying” with them are deceived. He did not “hang out” with sinners in the normal sense of the term. He ate with them and associated with them and loved them, but only in a holy manner, in a way that left Him undefiled by their sin, in a way that draw them away from their sin and toward His holy standard. He did not become a snowboard bum or a rock & roll “party animal” to reach

those who lived like that. Even when associating with sinners, He was separate from them in holiness. He stood out from the crowd at all times by the way He lived. Even while on earth He remained in intimate communion with heaven. “He has no such union with sinners, either natural or federal, as can devolve upon him original sin. This comes upon us by virtue of our natural and federal union with the first Adam, we descending from him in the ordinary way. But Christ was, by his ineffable conception in the virgin, separate from sinners; though he took a true human nature, yet the miraculous way in which it was conceived set him upon a separate footing from all the rest of mankind” (Matthew Henry).

(3) He is harmless. This means that He has never wronged God or man. He has never been “angry without a cause” (Mat. 5:22), meaning that His anger or judgments toward men were always for a righteous cause.

(4) He is made higher than the heavens. Though He humbled Himself and became a man and was made a servant for a short while, He is no longer in that condition. Today He is seated in the heavenlies on the throne of the universe and all power in heaven and in earth is His (Mat. 28:18). All things are under His feet (1 Cor. 15:27). He sits “*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every named that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come*” (Eph. 1:21). See also Phil. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:22. The resurrected, ascended Jesus is not the lowly Jesus of the manger. The Jesus that John saw on the Isle of Patmos is not the Jesus that John saw on the cross (Rev. 1:12-17).

o. Christ made one acceptable sacrifice for sins forever (Heb. 7:27). The word “once” is used eight times in Hebrews 7-10 in reference to Christ’s sacrifice. We will see more about this once-for-all sacrifice in chapters 9-10.

3. Other lessons from Hebrews 7

a. Consider the tithe (Heb. 7:2-10).

(1) The tithe was practiced from the earliest days of mankind before

the Mosaic Law was given. Abraham practiced it (Gen. 14:20) and Jacob practiced it (Gen. 28:22).

(2) The tithe is a tenth of one's income (Heb. 7:2).

(3) The tithe was required by the Law of Moses (Heb. 7:5; Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:26).

(4) The tithe is offered unto God through God's representatives. It is given to honor God and to support His work on earth. Compare Prov. 3:9-10; Mal. 3:10.

b. Abraham had promises (Heb. 7:6). The believer inherits those promises. "He was one in covenant with God, to whom God had given exceedingly great and precious promises. That man is rich and happy indeed who has an estate in bills and bonds under God's own hand and seal. These promises are both of the life that now is and of that which is to come; this honour have all those who receive the Lord Jesus, in whom all the promises are yea and amen" (Matthew Henry).

c. Levi was in the loins of Abraham (Heb. 7:9-10). Levi was the third son of Jacob and Leah (Gen. 29:34) and was made the head of the priestly tribe (Num. 3:6). This illustrates how that the entire human race could sin in Adam (Rom. 5:12). "And now by this argument of persons doing things that are matters of right or injury in the loins of their predecessors we have an illustration how we may be said to have sinned in Adam, and fallen with him in his first transgression. We were in Adam's loins when he sinned, and the guilt and depravity contracted by the human nature when it was in our first parents are equitably imputed and derived to the same nature as it is in all other persons naturally descended from them. They justly adhere to the nature, and it must be by an act of grace if ever they be taken away" (Matthew Henry).

d. The law has been changed (Heb. 7:12).

(1) The Old Covenant is no longer in effect for the believer.

(a) It was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and after we are in Christ we are no longer under the law (Gal. 3:24-26).

(b) In Christ, the Mosaic Covenant has been done away, abolished (2 Cor. 3:11, 13).

(2) The Old Covenant has been disannulled because of its weakness and unprofitableness (Heb. 7:18-28). “That is, it was not adapted to save man; it had not power to accomplish what was necessary to be done in human salvation. It answered the end for which it was designed--that of introducing a more perfect plan, and then vanished as a matter of course. It did not expiate guilt; it did not give peace to the conscience; it did not produce perfection, and therefore it gave place to a better system” (Barnes).

(a) It was weak because though it demanded perfection it could not make anything perfect (Heb. 7:19), whereas Christ can and does. Christ not only demands perfect, He fulfilled it in our place. His sacrifice is perfect and it makes men’s consciences perfect and frees them to live truly sanctified lives. “The Levitical priesthood brought nothing to perfection: it could not justify men’s persons from guilt; it could not sanctify them from inward pollution; it could not cleanse the consciences of the worshippers from dead works; all it could do was to lead them to the antitype” (Matthew Henry).

(b) It was weak because its priests were mere mortal men who did not have the power to impart spiritual life and blessing, whereas Christ is the eternal Son of God who can impart both (Heb. 7:23-24, 28). “The very law which constituted the Levitical priesthood supposed the priests to be weak, frail, dying, creatures, not able to preserve their own natural lives, but who must be content and glad to survive in their posterity after the flesh; much less could they, by any power or authority they had, convey spiritual life and blessedness to those who came to them. But the high priest of our profession holds his office by that innate power of endless life which he has in himself, not only to preserve himself alive, but to communicate spiritual and eternal life to all those who duly rely upon his sacrifice and intercession” (Matthew Henry).

(3) Since the believer is not under the Mosaic law, does this mean that he is free from the law? No, he lives according to a *new* law.

- (a) It is the law of the Spirit (Rom. 8:2), because the Holy Spirit leads and empowers us to obey God.
 - (b) It is the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), because Christ is our example and our goal (Rom. 8:29).
 - (c) It is the law of liberty (Jam. 1:25), not because we are free to do as we please but because our condemnation fell upon Christ and we are free to serve God without fear of condemnation.
 - (d) It is the royal law (Jam. 2:8), because the sum of the law is to love my neighbor as myself.
- (4) Does this mean that the New Testament believer has no need to study the Old Testament? No, the Old Testament contains instruction and examples for the believer, even though he is not under its law (Rom. 15:5; 1 Cor. 10:1-11).
- e. Christ came out of Judah (Heb. 7:14). See Mat. 1:3. It was prophesied that the Messiah would arise from Judah (Gen. 49:10; Mic. 5:2).

Review Questions Hebrews 7:1-28

1. In what two Old Testament passages is Melchizedek mentioned?
2. Who was Melchizedek? Was he Shem or Christ or a real human king of Abraham's day who is used as a type?
3. How do we know that Melchizedek was not the pre-incarnate Christ?
4. Melchizedek gave Abraham bread and wine. How does this typify Christ?
5. What does "Salem" mean?
6. What city will be the headquarters for Christ's kingdom?
7. List three verses that prove that Christ had no beginning?
8. What does "surety" mean?
9. What are four ways in which the New Covenant is better than the Old?
10. What does "save to the uttermost" mean?
11. What are three things that "intercession" speaks of?
12. What does it mean that Jesus was "separate from sinners"?
13. What does it mean that Jesus is "harmless"?
14. When did the practice of tithing begin?
15. What is the tithe?
16. What chapter in the New Testament says the Old Covenant is "done away" and "abolished"?
17. Why was the Old Covenant weak?
18. What is the law of the Spirit?
19. Does the law of liberty mean the believer is free to do as he pleases?
20. What chapter in the New Testament says the Old Testament contains examples for us?

A BETTER COVENANT -- CALVARY

(Hebrews 8:1-13)

SECTIONAL OVERVIEW

Hebrews 8-10 is one long treatise on the superiority of Christ's sacrifice and covenant. We have broken the section down into chapter divisions merely to facilitate ease of study. In reality, there are no clear divisions within this section.

1. The writer begins by summarizing his argument thus far (Heb. 8:1-6). We have a great high priest seated at God's right hand in the heavens. He is the minister of the heavenly tabernacle, of which the earthly tabernacle was only a shadow. He has a more excellent ministry, is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

2. There is a New Covenant which has replaced the Old (Heb. 8:7-13). God promised a New Covenant because the Old Covenant was not sufficient to make man righteous. In the New Covenant God will write His laws upon men's hearts and they shall know the Lord and their sins will be forgiven.

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

1. The writer summarizes his argument thus far (Hebrews 8:1-6).

a. We have a great high priest in heaven (Heb. 8:1-2).

(1) He is on the right hand of God the Father (Heb. 8:1), who is described as "the Majesty," which means greatness.

(2) He sits in God's very throne (Heb. 8:1).

(3) He is the minister of the heavenly tabernacle (Heb. 8:2). The things in heaven were built by God Himself -- "*which the Lord pitched.*"

b. The Levitical priesthood was a type that pointed to Christ (Heb. 8:3-5).

(1) The earthly tabernacle and priesthood were examples and types of heavenly things (Heb. 8:5). They are called “*the example and shadow of heavenly things*” (Heb. 8:5), “*a figure for the time then present*” (Heb. 9:9), “*patterns of things in heaven*” (Heb. 9:23), “*figures of the true*” (Heb. 9:24), “*a shadow of good things to come*” (Heb. 10:1) We see that we must interpret the Old Testament Levitical system (priesthood, tabernacle, sacrifices) typically, and the book of Hebrews gives many lessons on how to do this.

(2) Every detail of the tabernacle system was important (Heb. 8:5). See Ex. 25:40; 26:30. The same is true for the church. See 1 Tim. 6:13-14.

c. Christ has fulfilled all things and has a more excellent ministry (Heb. 8:6). He has a better ministry, a better covenant, and better promises.

2. There is a New Covenant that has replaced the Old (Hebrews 8:7-13).

a. What is the reason for the New Covenant (Heb. 9:7-9)? God promised a New Covenant because the Old was not able to make man righteous and bring him into perfect relationship with a holy God.

(1) When Hebrews says the first covenant was not faultless, it does not mean, of course, that there was any imperfection in the Old Testament Scriptures.

(2) The Old Covenant was not defective in itself; the defect was with men (“*finding fault with THEM,*” Heb. 9:8). The Mosaic Law was true and righteous, but it was not able to make man righteous; it could only condemn him because he could not live up to its holy requirements.

(3) The Old Covenant required perfection and was therefore broken by the sinful people to whom it was addressed (“*they continued not in my covenant,*” Heb. 9:9). Compare Gal. 3:10, 12.

b. What is the superiority of the New Covenant (Heb. 9:10-12)? Under the New Covenant we find three things that we did not find under the Old:

(1) God writes His laws upon men's hearts rather than merely in stone and paper ("*I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts,*" Heb. 8:10). This describes the New Birth whereby the believer receives a righteousness nature and the Spirit of God resides within him to be his teacher (1 Jn. 2:20, 27; 3:9).

(2) Every man personally and individually knows the Lord ("*they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest,*" Heb. 8:11). Only some of the individuals who lived under the Old Testament, such as David, knew God personally through the exercise of faith (Rom. 4:6-8), but every individual under the New Covenant knows the Lord personally. Born again believers need to teach one another the things of Christ but they don't need to teach one another to know Christ.

(3) Their sins are entirely and forever forgiven ("*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more,*" Heb. 8:12).

(a) We see that the forgiveness of sins under the New Covenant is by God's mercy and not by man's desert and works.

(b) We see that under the New Covenant God forgives every type of sin, all unrighteousness, all sins, and all iniquities.

(c) We also see that the forgiveness under the New Covenant is very great. If God remembers our sins no more, they are surely and forever gone! This speaks of the utter sufficiency of Christ's one offering for sin.

c. Who is the recipient of the New Covenant? Both Jeremiah and Hebrews say that God will establish the New Covenant *with Israel* (Heb. 9:8, 10).

(1) In addition to its spiritual promises, the New Covenant also has national aspects.

(a) Israel will be blessed and enlarged (Jer. 31:4-6, 27-28).

(b) Israel will be regathered (Jer. 31:7-11).

(c) The city of Jerusalem and will be blessed (Jer. 31:12-14, 38-40).

(d) Jeremiah 32-33 says even more about the national aspect of the New Covenant.

(2) The New Covenant will be established with Israel when the Messiah is exalted and Judah will be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell safely (Jer. 33:14-16). “But in the fulness of times, when the day of Israel’s blessing shall arrive, the new covenant will be confirmed to them and they will be born of God--‘a nation shall be born in a day’--and He will own them as His covenant people. His laws will then be instilled in their minds and written upon their hearts, and they will render to Him glad, happy service, not in order to make themselves worthy of covenant blessing, but because of the gladness of their souls when they know Him as their God and realize that they are indeed His ransomed people. The day of their blindness will have gone forever” (Ironsides).

(3) The Apostle Paul plainly taught that the New Covenant would be literally fulfilled *following* the church age (Rom. 11:25-27).

d. What association do church age believers have with the New Covenant? Jesus’ taught that there is an association (Mat. 26:28). Paul taught the same thing in 2 Cor. 3:6.

(1) *New Testament believers participate in the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant* through Christ’s atonement.

(a) We see this in Heb. 8:8-11 (quoted from Jer. 31:31-34), where the writer cites only the spiritual aspects of the New Covenant.

(b) We see this in Heb. 10:15-18, where the writer again mentions only the spiritual aspects of the New Covenant.

(2) Nowhere does Hebrews say that this covenant has been transferred from national Israel to “the church” or that the physical aspects of the covenant should be spiritualized. The new covenant that God will make with Israel does not reach as high as the position that God has given the New Testament believer. “The new covenant says nothing of entrance into the Holiest, as we know it; nothing of

being raised up together and seated together in Christ Jesus in the
heavenlies; nothing of union with Him as members of His Body by
the indwelling Holy Spirit. The new covenant is blessing for the
earth and on the earth in the coming day” (Ironsides).

A BETTER SANCTUARY - A HEAVENLY ONE

(Hebrews 9:1-28)

SECTIONAL OVERVIEW

1. The first covenant prepared the way for the New (Hebrews 9:1-10). The earthly tabernacle system was a figure and shadow and type of the heavenly one (Heb. 9:8-9). The earthly tabernacle system was temporary (Heb. 9:10). “The apostle, having declared the Old Testament dispensation antiquated and vanishing away, proceeds to let the Hebrews see the correspondence there was between the Old Testament and the New; and that whatever was excellent in the Old was typical and representative of the New, which therefore must as far excel the Old as the substance does the shadow. The Old Testament was never intended to be rested in, but to prepare for the institutions of the gospel” (Matthew Henry).

2. Christ is the minister of a Greater Tabernacle (Hebrews 9:11-28). He made one sacrifice which has provided eternal redemption for those who believe (Heb. 9:12). The theme of this passage is the once-for-all better atonement of Jesus Christ. The word “once” is used 7 times in Hebrews 9-10 in reference to Christ’s sacrifice and the word “blood” is used 15 times. The words “for us” are repeated three times in Hebrews 9-10, describing the substitutionary nature of the Gospel (Heb. 9:12, 24; 10:20).

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

The first covenant foreshadowed the New (Hebrews 9:1-10).

Here the writer of Hebrews gives an account of the tabernacle, which was an earthly type of the heavenly sanctuary. The description of the tabernacle’s design is given in Exodus 25-27. It is exciting to realize that we can look upon the unseen heavenly things by means of the patterns that God has given us in His Word.

The writer of Hebrews shows that the earthly system was inferior in every way to the heavenly. “The object is to describe the tabernacle in which the service of God was celebrated under the former dispensation, and to show that it had a reference to what was future, and was only an imperfect representation of the reality. It was important to show this, as the Jews regarded the ordinances of the tabernacle and of the whole Levitical service as of Divine appointment, and of perpetual obligation. The object of Paul is to prove that they were to give place to a more perfect system, and hence it was necessary to discuss their real nature” (Barnes).

The writer describes the tabernacle rather than the temple because he is writing in the context of believers who are on their wilderness journey in a strange country on the way to their heavenly home. This is the picture that is drawn in Exodus. The people of God had left the bondage of Egypt (depicting redemption) and were on their journey in the wilderness to the Promised Land (depicting the believer’s journey through this present life). The Temple, on the other hand, was set up in the days of Solomon, at the height of the glory of Israel’s kingdom and depicted the Messianic kingdom to come. “It will be noted throughout that he has the tabernacle in view rather than the temple. This is not, as some have supposed, because the construction of the temple was any less divinely ordered than that of the tabernacle. David plainly declared to Solomon, in giving him the plan of the more permanent sanctuary, ‘All this the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern’ (1 Chron. 28:19). But the temple types evidently prefigure millennial glory and blessing and will be fully entered into and understood in that day of Jehovah’s power. The tabernacle, on the other hand, which was a temporary dwelling-place, picturing truth for a pilgrim people, has its application to the present times when the Holy Spirit, typified by the cloudy pillar of old, is leading the new dispensation company through the wilderness of this world, on to the rest that remains for the people of God” (Ironsides).

Note that this section contains another strong reference to the divine inspiration of the Scripture (“*the Holy Ghost thus signifying,*” Heb. 9:8). It is the teaching of the apostles that the entire Mosaic economy was given under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. A higher view of the divine inspiration of Scripture could not be conceived. The Pentateuch has been under special attack by biblical scholars since the 19th century, and today it is common even for

“evangelical” scholars to claim that Moses did not write the Pentateuch and that it was not edited into its present form until the time of Israel’s kings. This is a blatant denial of its divine inspiration through Moses and should be rejected out of hand by every person who accepts the authority of Jesus Christ and His apostles.

Note, too, that the Bible is a self-interpreting Book. In the book of Hebrews we have a divinely-given interpretation of the Old Testament tabernacle and priesthood. These were types of Christ and prophecies of the future and we are not left to imagine what they might mean. We are given a definite key to their interpretation.

1. The tabernacle was divided into two compartments (Heb. 9:1-5).

Note that the tabernacle is described as “worldly” (Heb. 9:1), not in the sense that it was unspiritual (as the word is used in Titus 2:12), but in the sense that it was of this present world and as a contrast to the heavenly tabernacle which it typifies.

- a. The first compartment is called “the sanctuary” in Hebrews (called “*the holy place*” in Exodus 26:33). This compartment contained the following:

- (1) The golden candlestick (Ex. 25:31-39). There was only one light in the holy place and the holy of holies, and that was the light from the candlestick with its seven lamps. It was made of pure gold and had a main shaft and three branches out of each side, with a lamp at the end of each branch and one on the top of the shaft, seven in all. The candlestick depicts Christ as the light of the world (Jn. 8:12), the only and all-sufficient light to enlighten sinners (Jn. 1:9) and believers (Jn. 12:46). He is that perfect light, as depicted by the seven-fold lamps on the one candlestick. It is only by Christ’s enlightenment that any sinner sees and understands and progresses in the truth. Believers are called “*light in the Lord*” because they reflect the light of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:8). We know what the candlestick in the second temple (called Herod’s temple and existing during the days of Jesus) looked like, because it

is depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome. The oldest surviving arch in Rome, it was dedicated in 85 A.D. to the Emperor Titus, who had died four years earlier from the plague after being on the throne for only two years. It commemorates the victory of Titus and his father Vespasian over Jerusalem and the defilement of the Temple. A bas-relief on the left inside of the arch depicts the spoils from the Jerusalem Temple carried in a victory procession after Jerusalem's fall to Titus in 70 A.D. Clearly seen are the candlestick and the table of shewbread. "Josephus says expressly that the candlestick was altered from its original form [in the tabernacle]" (Barnes).

(2) The table with shewbread (Ex. 25:23, 30). The table, which was about 3 feet long, 1.5 feet wide and 2.25 feet high, was made of shittim wood overlaid with gold. On it were placed twelve loaves of bread for the twelve tribes of Israel.

(a) The bread depicts Christ as the bread of life, supplying every need of His people through their wilderness journeys.

(b) The bread was replaced each sabbath (Lev. 24:8), depicting the freshness and perpetual availability of Christ's provisions.

(c) The bread was eaten by the priests (Lev. 24:9), depicting the holy priesthood of the believers (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

(d) The shewbread also depicts the Lord's people as part of His body. "... the twelve loaves of the showbread represent the twelve tribes of the nation, presented as a community before God consecrated to Him (just as in the Lord's Supper believers, the spiritual Israel, all partaking of the one bread, and becoming one bread and one body, present themselves before the Lord as consecrated to Him, 1 Cor. 10:16,17)" (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

(3) The incense altar (Ex. 30:1-6). We will say more about the incense altar in a moment.

b. A veil divided the compartments (Heb. 9:3; Ex. 26:31-33). It was called "*the second veil*" because the first veil covered the entrance to the first compartment. The first veil, which was the door to the tabernacle

proper, was called “*the hanging for the door of the tent*” (Ex. 26:37-37). The second veil was made with the same materials and colors as the first veil, except the second had the addition of embroidered cherubims (compare Ex. 26:31 and 36).

(1) The second veil is called “*the veil of the covering*” in Ex. 40:21, because it covered the Holy of Holies and barred entrance to everyone except the high priest on the day of atonement.

(2) This is the veil that was rent from top to bottom when Christ died. The veil represented Christ’s body (Heb. 10:20).

c. The second compartment behind the veil was called the Holiest of all or the Holy of Holies, because this is where God’s presence dwelt (Ex. 25:22).

(1) In this room was the ark of the covenant that contained the tables of the covenant, the ten commandments that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 25:10-16; Ex. 34:28-29; Deut. 10:2-5). It was also called “*the ark of the testimony*” (Ex. 26:33). The ark, which was about 3.75 feet long and 1.5 feet wide and 2.25 feet high, was a chest or box made with shittim wood overlaid with pure gold, depicting Deity. A crown of gold ran around the top, signifying Royalty.

(2) Covering the ark was the mercy seat (Ex. 25:17). The word “mercy seat” is from the Greek word “hilasterion,” which is also translated “propitiation” in Rom. 3:25. It means to cover or to expiate. The mercy seat covered the law in the ark of the covenant and it was before this seat that blood was sprinkled on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:14). This typifies the atonement of Christ which satisfies the demands of God’s holy law so that God is propitiated and the believing sinner can approach Him without judgment. “It was an eminent type of Christ, and of his perfect righteousness, ever adequate to the dimensions of the law of God, and covering all our transgressions” (Matthew Henry).

(3) Inside the ark of the covenant was the golden pot containing manna (Ex. 16:33-34) and Aaron’s rod that budded and blossomed

as proof of his divine call (Num. 17:1-13). These disappeared by the time that Solomon's Temple was dedicated (1 Ki. 8:6-9). It is possible that they were removed at Bethshemesh (1 Sam. 6:19).

(4) Over this were the carvings of the cherubims (Ex. 25:18-20). There were two cherubim on the ark, one at either end, facing each other and looking downward toward the mercy seat. Their wings covered the mercy seat. It seems that the cherubims guard the very presence and glory of God. They appear two other times in Scripture. They guarded the tree of life (Gen. 3:24), and they were seen by Ezekiel (Eze. 10:1-22). It is in Ezekiel's vision that we find the most instruction about the cherubim.

(a) They are associated with the glory of God (Eze. 10:4).

(b) They have wings which make a great sound when they fly (Eze. 10:5).

(c) They have hands like a man's (Eze. 10:8).

(d) They have many eyes (Eze. 10:12).

(e) They have four faces, one like a cherub, one like a man, one like a lion, and one like an eagle (Eze. 10:14).

(f) They have wheels that accompany them wherever they go and in which is their spirit (Eze. 10:16-17). The wheels appear as a wheel in the midst of a wheel and they are the color of a beryl stone, which is sea green (Eze. 10:9-10). In light of the wheels, it is interesting that the cherubim in Solomon's temple had a "chariot" (1 Ch. 28:18). "The beryl is a gem of a green colour, passing from one side into blue, on the other side into yellow" (Adam Clarke).

(5) What about the golden censor (Heb. 9:4)? Why does Hebrews say that the golden censor pertained to the Holy of Holies, when the Old Testament says it was in the first compartment (Ex. 40:20-27)?

(a) First, it is probable that Hebrews is referring to the golden censor that the high priest used on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:12; 1 Ki. 7:50; Lev. 16:12). Hebrews 9:4 says the Holiest of

all “had” the golden censer, which might mean that the censer was associated with the Holiest of all and not necessarily that it was actually kept in that room or it might mean that it was actually kept in the Holiest. “As the golden censer was to be used only once in a year, it would naturally be laid away in some secure situation--and none would so obviously occur as the most holy place. There it would be perfectly safe. No one was permitted to enter there but the high priest; and being preserved there it would be always ready for his use” (Barnes). If the golden censer mentioned in Heb. 9:4 is not the golden incense altar, this means that the writer of Hebrews chose not to mention that altar. In that case, he apparently supposes (without specifying) the existence of the altar of incense by mentioning the golden censer, as both were associated with the incense and both depict the same thing.

- (b) If the “golden censer” mentioned in Heb. 9:4 is indeed the golden incense altar, I believe the proper answer is given by Harry Ironside as follows: “Now observe carefully the change from the expression ‘wherein’ (Heb. 9:2) to the altogether different term ‘which had’ (Heb. 9:4). ... why did the writer not say it was in the Holy Place? Why does he plainly connect it with the Holiest? The answer is perfectly simple. It belonged to the Holiest because it typified Christ’s Person and intercessory work in the Holiest of all. But during all the Old Testament dispensation it must stand outside the veil where it could be approached by the priests, and yet so near the veil that the moment this curtain was rent in twain from the top to the bottom the fragrant smoke of the incense entered the Holiest. The apostle does not say it was in the Holiest, but he does declare it belongs to the Holiest ‘which had the golden incense altar’” (Ironside, *Hebrews and Titus*, pp. 104, 105).

2. The priests went into the first compartment daily and ministered (Heb. 9:6; Ex. 27:21; 30:7-8). In this capacity they typified Jesus Christ our great high priest who continually provides enlightenment, nourishment, and intercession for His people.

- a. They kept the candlestick lit (Ex. 27:20-21). They attended to the candlestick in the morning and again in the evening (Ex. 30:7-8).
- b. They kept fresh bread on the table (Lev. 24:5-8). The shewbread was replaced every sabbath.
- c. They burned incense at the altar (Ex. 30:7-8).

3. As for the Holy of Holies, only the high priest entered it (Heb. 9:7; Lev. 16:2-3).

- a. He entered only once per year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:2-3). This typified Christ's once for all sacrifice. Though the high priest entered the Holy of holies at least thrice on that one day (once with incense, Lev. 16:12-13; once to sprinkle the blood of the bullock before the mercy seat, Lev. 16:14; and once to sprinkle the blood of the goat, Lev. 16:15), he only entered on one general occasion during the year and that is why Hebrews says he entered once. The three entrances on that day are regarded in Hebrews as parts of the one whole.
- b. He did not enter without blood (Heb. 9:7; Lev. 16:4-16). This typified the necessity of the blood and symbolized Christ's blood which was shed for our sins and applied once for all in the heavenly sanctuary.
- c. The earthly high priest offered sacrifice for his own sins and those of the people. The word "errors" is from the Greek *agoema*, which means "a thing ignored, i.e., shortcoming" (Strong). Sins are indeed great errors! In contrast, Jesus had no need to offer sacrifice for Himself, as He had no sin.

4. All of this testified to the insufficiency of the first tabernacle system (Heb. 9:8-10).

- a. The first covenant signified that the way to God was not yet made manifest (Heb. 9:8). The way was not opened until Christ died and the veil was torn in the temple (Mat. 27:51).
- b. The first covenant could not make the conscience perfect (Heb. 9:9). Compare Heb. 10:1-4. "They could not expiate guilt; they could not

make the soul pure; they could not of themselves impart peace to the soul by reconciling it to God. They could not fully accomplish what the conscience needed to have done in order to give it peace. Nothing will do this but the blood of the Redeemer” (Barnes).

- c. The first covenant was an imposition (Heb. 9:10). Compare Acts 15:10.
- d. The first covenant was temporary (“*imposed on them until the time of reformation,*” Heb. 9:10). Compare Acts 3:19-21.
 - (1) “*carnal ordinances*” -- The word “carnal” here does not mean sinful but of the earth as opposed to the heavenly things of the New Covenant. The sacrifices of the first covenant were only able to “*purify the flesh*” (Heb. 9:13). They pertained only to the external and could not purify the spirit and the conscience.
 - (2) “*meats and drinks*” -- This refers to the meat and drink offerings as well as to the various dietary restrictions (Lev. 11:2-47).
 - (3) “*divers washings*” -- See Ex. 29:4; 30:19-21; 40:12; Lev. 14:8; 16:4; 17:15; 21:6; Deut. 23:11.

Christ is the minister of a Greater Tabernacle (Hebrews 9:11-28)

This section concludes the doctrinal teaching of Hebrews and shows that Christ’s tabernacle is better in every way than that of the earthly tabernacle and that because of its perfection “*there is no more offering for sin*” (Heb. 10:18). Thus, the Old Covenant and old priestly system being on the verge of passing away, it would be vain for any of Paul’s readers to go back to it. This section shows the manifold ways by which Christ ministers in a “*greater and more perfect tabernacle*” (Heb. 9:11). In contrast to the old system which offered the blood of goats and calves, Christ offers His own blood (Heb. 9:12). In contrast to the old system which required a continual offering, Christ made one offering forever (Heb. 9:12, 26-28). In contrast to the old system which purified only the flesh, Christ purifies the conscience (Heb. 9:14). In contrast to the sacrifice of animals as under the old system, Christ sacrificed Himself (Heb. 9:26).

Hebrews 9-10 contains some of the most important verses in the New Testament. Consider the following:

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”
Heb. 9:12

“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” Heb. 9:22

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”
Heb. 9:27

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Heb. 10:10

“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Heb. 10:12

“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”
Heb. 10:14

1. Christ’s tabernacle is greater because it was made without hands (Heb. 9:11).

- a. Christ’s tabernacle is both greater and more perfect (Heb. 9:11). The strongest possible language is used to emphasize the superiority of Christ over the old tabernacle system.
- b. Christ’s tabernacle speaks of His body that was made by God the Father in the womb of the virgin Mary (Heb. 10:7-10) as well as the tabernacle in heaven in which He ministers.
- c. Christ promises good things to come (Heb. 9:11). Some of the good things to come for the believer are as follows:
 - (1) The resurrection and the glorified body (1 Cor. 15:35-57). The believer will have no more sorrow or pain or discomfort (Rev. 21:4).
 - (2) Ruling and reigning in Christ’s kingdom (Rev. 20:4)
 - (3) Participating in the eternal worship of the Lamb (Rev. 4:21-11)

(4) The new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21-22)

(5) Serving God forever (Rev. 22:3)

- d. Christ's tabernacle is not made with hands and is not of this building (Heb. 9:11). The heavenly tabernacle was made by God and is not of this world.

2. Christ's tabernacle is greater because it was sanctified by His own blood (Heb. 9:12-22). In contrast to the old tabernacle in which the blood of animals was offered, Christ offered His own spotless blood.

a. Christ entered with His blood into the holy place in heaven (Heb. 9:12). There is no reason why we should not understand this literally. The language is literal. Since the earthly tabernacle incorporated blood, it stands to reason that the heavenly tabernacle also incorporates blood. We believe that Christ applied His own blood in the heavenly holy of holies.

b. Christ made the atonement with His blood once for all (*"by his own blood he entered in once,"* Heb. 9:12).

c. By that one atonement Christ obtained eternal redemption for us (*"having obtained eternal redemption for us,"* Heb. 9:12).

(1) The words "for us" are in italics because they are not directly in the Greek but they are implied and are thus necessary in English.

(2) Consider the amazing and wonderful efficacy of Christ's one offering!

(3) The teaching of Hebrews exposes the error of the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of the Mass. Consider the following statement of that doctrine from the Vatican II Council: "For in the sacrifice of the Mass Our Lord is immolated when 'he begins to be present sacramentally as the spiritual food of the faithful under the appearances of bread and wine.' ... For in it Christ perpetuates in an unbloody manner the sacrifice offered on the cross, offering himself to the Father for the world's salvation through the ministry of priests" (Vatican II, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*,

Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, “Introduction,” C 1,2, p. 108). Hebrews plainly teaches that the sacrifice of Christ was made once and provides eternal redemption. It does not need to be and indeed cannot be perpetuated through human priests. In fact, the New Testament nowhere refers to a special priesthood in the churches. Rather, all believers are priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). “If Christ indeed made one sacrifice for sin, once and for all, the ‘bloodless sacrifice’ for sin offered endlessly by the Roman church is a travesty, heresy, and blasphemy” (David Sorenson).

(4) The doctrine of eternal security could not be more strongly expressed than it is here. The term “eternal security” is not used in the New Testament, but the concept is there. In Hebrews 9:12 it is called “*eternal redemption*.” Elsewhere it is called “*eternal life*” (Rom. 5:21), “*everlasting consolation*” (2 Th. 2:16), “*eternal salvation*” (Heb. 5:9), “*eternal inheritance*” (Heb. 9:15), and “*everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20).

(a) The believer knows that he is eternally secure because he has eternal life and his redemption is described as eternal (Jn. 3:16; Heb. 9:12). The word “redemption” is from the Greek “*lutrosis*,” meaning “a ransom.” It means to purchase with a price. It is the picture of a slave being purchased from a slave market. The sinner was in bondage to the Devil because of sin, but Christ redeemed him by the great price that He paid, which was His blood and death, and that redemption is eternal. The believer forever belongs to his new Master.

(b) The believer knows that he is eternally secure because his salvation is a gift that was purchased entirely by Christ (Heb. 9:12).

d. The blood of animals merely “*sanctified to the purifying of the flesh*” (Heb. 9:13). The Old Testament system pertained only to the external and could not purify the spirit and conscience. “The efficacy of the blood of the legal sacrifices extended to the purifying of the flesh (Heb. 9:13): it freed the outward man from ceremonial uncleanness and from temporal punishment, and entitled him to, and fitted him for, some external privileges” (Matthew Henry).

e. What is the significance of the ashes of the heifer (Heb. 9:13; Num. 19:2-21)?

(1) The ashes of the heifer typifies the completion and permanency of Christ's atonement. Ashes are produced when something is burned up and therefore speak of the judgment of fire which fell once upon Christ and will never therefore fall upon the believer. A heifer was sacrificed and burned and the ashes were laid up to mix with water "*for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin*" (Num. 19:9). "Ashes in this connection became eloquent indeed. They cried aloud, as did the expiring Saviour, 'It is finished!' For ashes tell of fire burned out never to burn again" (Ironside).

(2) The blood and the ashes depict the two-fold aspect of sanctification. The blood symbolizes the atonement of Christ which has eternally sanctified the believing sinner in a positional sense, and the ashes symbolize the ongoing sanctification process in this present life. The ashes of the sacrificed heifer were mixed with water and applied as needed to purify those who had become unclean. This mixture was called "*the water of separation*" and it was "*a purification for sin*" (Num. 19:9). We see the same teaching in John 13:8-10. Jesus taught the disciples that there is one bath for salvation but repeated washings for continual, day by day sanctification. The one bath signifies the new birth into God's family, whereas the daily foot washings signify confession of sin and cleansing for fellowship. 1 John 1 presents the same teaching. The believer has an eternal relationship with the Father through Christ but in this life he maintains fellowship with the Father by walking in the light and confessing his sin. God sees the believing sinner in Christ, and that is his eternal position and relationship, but the believer is still a sinner as he walks through this present world, so he needs daily cleansing for fellowship.

f. Christ offered Himself without spot to God (Heb. 9:14).

(1) Christ's offering was made unto God. It was the holy God and His holy law that had to be propitiated. Theological liberals deny the propitiatory atonement of Christ, claiming that God does not need

to be propitiated, but the Bible plainly teaches that He does. His law has been broken and this required a satisfaction. If the law can be broken and there is no satisfaction, the law becomes ineffectual. God's broken law was perfectly satisfied by the offering of Christ, so that by this means "*he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*" (Rom. 3:26).

(2) Christ offered Himself without spot. The only reason that He could take our place and satisfy God's law was because He was the sinless Son of God (1 Pet. 1:19). The sacrificial lamb had to be without blemish (Lev. 22:20; Deut. 15:21) and without spot (Num. 28:3, 9, 11).

g. Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14). It was the Spirit that sanctified Christ's offering to the Father. This teaches that the Holy Spirit is eternal, which is one of the characteristics of God. In this verse, therefore, we see the Trinity: the Son offering Himself through the Spirit to the Father.

h. Christ purges the conscience from dead works so that the sinner can acceptably serve the living God (Heb. 9:14). "Note carefully, he does not say consciousness of sins but conscience of sins. The distinction is most important. Today I may be conscious of sin in thought, word, and deed, but confessing my sins, I look up into the face of my Father with confidence, knowing that for these very sins the blood of Christ has answered, and thus my conscience is freed from condemnation" (Ironsides).

(1) The "*dead works*" are works that God does not accept and works that do not justify the sinner before God. Works that are done with the objective of justifying oneself before God are dead because God does not accept a sinner's impure self works. He only accepts Christ's perfect works and those works that the sinner does after he is purified by Christ's atonement. Works that are done by an unregenerate sinner are dead, because he is "*dead in trespasses and sins*" (Eph. 2:1).

(2) The believing conscience is purged by the blood of Christ because

the Spirit of God gives confidence that the payment was sufficient and that it has been accepted. Thus the Holy Spirit gives confidence to the believing sinner that he is a child of God (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). “They could not remove that which troubles a man when he recollects that he has violated a holy law and has offended God, and when he looks forward to an awful judgment-bar. ... The only thing, therefore, which ever disturbs the conscience, and makes death dreadful, and God an object of aversion, and eternity awful, is GUILT. If that is removed, man is calm and peaceful; if not, he is the victim of wretchedness and despair” (Barnes).

(3) Even though the living God is thrice holy and a just judge of every sin and though “*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:31), the believing sinner can serve Him acceptably because he has been purified and brought nigh and adopted through Christ’s blood.

- i. Christ is the one Mediator and He is the Mediator on the basis of His offering (Heb. 9:15). Compare 1 Tim. 2:5-6. It is blasphemous to claim that any mere creature could be a mediator between God and man.
- j. Christ provided redemption for the transgressions that were under the first testament (Heb. 9:15). God has saved men through all ages on the same basis, and that is upon the basis of Christ’s sacrifice. He was foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20), the “*Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8). He was “*delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” (Acts 2:23). Thus, when God accepted Abel’s faith offering at the dawn of history in Genesis 4 and justified Abraham by faith before the law in Genesis 15 and David by faith under the law (Rom. 4:6-8), He did so on the basis of that sacrifice which had been ordained in His eternal counsels. All believers of all ages are justified on the basis of the that same offering. Men have never been justified on the basis of animal sacrifices. Those were mere types that pointed to the “*Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world*” (Jn. 1:29).
- k. Those who are called receive the promise of eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15). This refers to all who have been called from the beginning of

man's history and all who will ever be called. In the present dispensation all who hear the Gospel are called (2 Th. 2:14). It is the express will of the Father that everyone who believes on the Son may have everlasting life (Jn. 6:40).

l. A testament is not in force until after the death of the testator (Heb. 9:16-17). This is the normal rule of life. A testament is "a solemn authentic instrument in writing, by which a person declares his will as to the disposal of his estate and effects after his death" (Webster). It does not become operative until the death of the testator. Thus, Jesus sealed God's New Testament by His own death.

m. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Heb. 9:18-22).

(1) The word "remission" is from the Greek "aphesis," which is also translated "forgiveness" (Acts 5:31; 13:38; 26:18; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), "deliverance" (Lk. 4:18), and "liberty" (Lk. 4:18).

(2) Hebrews 9:12 is a reference to Lev. 17:11, which says, "*For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.*"

(3) The atonement required both death (Heb. 9:15) and blood (Heb. 9:22). Death was required, because "*the wages of sin is death*" (Rom. 6:23). Yet Christ's death alone was not sufficient to atone for our sins; He also had to shed His blood. When the New Testament speaks of the blood of Christ, it is not merely symbolic of death. The literal shedding of Christ's blood was required for our salvation. "It is universally true that sin never has been, and never will be forgiven, except in connexion with and in virtue of the shedding of blood. It is on this principle that the plan of salvation by the atonement is based, and on this that God in fact bestows pardon on men. There is not the slightest evidence that any man has ever been pardoned except through the blood shed for the remission of sins. The infidel who rejects the atonement has no evidence that his sins are pardoned; the man who lives in the neglect of the gospel,

though he has abundant evidence that he is a sinner, furnishes none that his sins are forgiven; and the Mohamadin and the heathen can point to no proof that their sins are blotted out. It remains to be demonstrated that one single member of the human family has ever had the slightest evidence of pardoned sin, except through the blood of expiation. In the Divine arrangement there is no principle better established than this, that all sin which is forgiven is remitted through the blood of the atonement; a principle which has never been departed from hitherto, and which never will be” (Barnes).

(4) The first covenant was dedicated with blood (Heb. 9:18-21). See Ex. 24:5-8.

(a) The blood was offered with water (Heb. 9:19). The blood and water signified the two-fold action of Christ’s atonement: forgiveness and cleansing, as did the blood and water that flowed from His side on the cross (Jn. 19:34). These two aspects are signified in the churches by the ordinances of baptism (which depicts the washing of salvation) and the Lord’s Supper (which depicts the blood that Jesus shed).

(b) The blood was offered with scarlet wool and hyssop (Heb. 9:19; Lev. 14:4; Nu. 19:6). The scarlet wool perhaps symbolized Christ’s royalty (compare Mat. 27:28). The hyssop symbolized the believer’s faith by which he applies Christ’s atonement to his life (compare Ex. 12:22).

(c) The blood was sprinkled upon everything, the book of the testament, the tabernacle, the people. Without the application of Christ’s blood, the sinner has no part in anything pertaining to God. Christ’s blood is required for everything. The book of Exodus does not record everything that the writer of Hebrews mentions here (compare Heb. 9:19, 21 with Ex. 24:4-8). Exodus does not mention the water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, nor does it mention the sprinkling of the book nor the sprinkling of the tabernacle and its vessels of ministry. It is obvious, though, that the Jews of Paul’s day understood by their traditions that all of these things occurred. Otherwise he would not have mentioned them, because his objective in Hebrews is to prove from the

Jews' own sacred and accepted writings that Christ is the fulfillment of their tabernacle system. Thus the Spirit of God guided the writer to mention things that were extra-biblical and to thus put His divine stamp of approval upon these things so that we can be assured that they did indeed occur, though not recorded in the Old Testament. "... nothing is more probable than what is here stated. If Moses sprinkled 'the people'; if he read 'the book of the law' then (Ex 24:7), and if this was regarded as a solemn act of ratifying a covenant with God, nothing would be more natural than that he should sprinkle the book of the covenant, and even the tabernacle and its various sacred utensils. ... The mere omission by Moses cannot demonstrate that it was not done" (Barnes).

- (5) The second covenant was also dedicated with blood, but it was blood of a much greater value (Heb. 9:23). The first covenant was sealed with blood, as Moses said, "*Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words*" (Ex. 24:8; Heb. 9:20), and the second covenant is also sealed with blood, as Christ said, "*For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Mat. 26:28).

3. Christ's tabernacle is greater because He appears in heaven itself for us (Heb. 9:23-24).

- a. Again we see that the Old Testament tabernacle and sacrifices were types of heavenly things. They were "*patterns of things in the heavens*" (Heb. 9:23) and "*figures of the true*" (Heb. 9:24).
- b. The "true" tabernacle is in heaven itself (Heb. 9:24).
- c. Christ appears before God "for us" (Heb. 9:24).
 - (1) This refers to the substitutionary nature of His atonement. He suffered in our stead and bore our just punishment.
 - (2) This also refers to Christ's intercession for us.
 - (3) This also refers to the utter sufficiency of our salvation. Christ

appears in the presence of God for us that He might usher us into that presence.

4. Christ's tabernacle is greater because He made one sacrifice for sins forever (Heb. 9:25-28). In contrast to the Old Testament system, which required continual sacrifices, Christ has made one sacrifice forever. The word "once" appears three times in this brief section.

- a. Christ made His one sacrifice "*in the end of the world*" (Heb. 9:26).
 - (1) The time since the coming of Christ is called "*the last time*" (1 Jn. 2:18).
 - (2) The phrase "*the foundation of the world*" reminds us of the divine creation. This world is not eternal; matter is not eternal; this world had a beginning and it will have an end.
- b. Christ's one sacrifice "*put away sin*" (Heb. 9:26). If the believer's sin has been put away by the sacrifice of Christ, how could he possibly "lose" his salvation? If the believer could lose his salvation it would be because Christ's sacrifice was not sufficient. Those who believe such a thing do not understand the sufficiency of His atonement. The same is true for the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. If purgatory is true, it means the cross of Christ was not sufficient in itself to purge sins. At an ecumenical conference that I attended with press credentials in Indianapolis in 1990 I heard Roman Catholic priest Tom Forrest say, "I thank God for purgatory." He could only say that because He does not believe in the once-for-all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.
- c. Christ's once-for-all sacrifice was by the offering of himself (Heb. 9:26). He willingly laid down His life for sinners (Jn. 10:15; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 5:2; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14).
- d. It is appointed that men die once and then the judgment (Heb. 9:27).
 - (1) This verse single-handedly refutes the popular but false doctrine of reincarnation. If men die once and then are judged, it is obvious that they do not live and die and live and die through repeated cycles. This was one of the verses that God used in my life to bring

me to the realization that the Hindu philosophy I was following in 1973 was false and to prepare me for salvation. At the time I came to Christ I was a member of the Self-Realization Fellowship Society and my guru was Paramahansa Yogananda.

- (2) This verse teaches that man will face a divine judgment. Every man's knee will bow before his Creator. Every soul will give an account unto God. Man can ignore God in this life but he will not ignore him in eternity. This is a fearful and inescapable doctrine and it should be a powerful motivation for every unsaved person to flee to Jesus Christ for salvation and for every saved person to live in such a manner that when he stands before Christ he will hear, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*"
- (3) This verse says judgment follows man's death. Does this contradict the passages that teach that the judgment of believers is at the Bema of Christ and the judgment of unbelievers is at the Great White Throne at the end of the Millennium (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15)? No, because Hebrews 9:27 is not giving the exact time of the judgment; it is only stating that it occurs once (like Christ's offering) and follows death. To find information about the timing of the judgments we must look in other passages. Hebrews 9:27 merely uses the fact that man dies once to illustrate how that Christ died once for sins.
- (4) This verse teaches that man's death is by divine appointment. Death is not an accident, not the product of chance. "Death is not the condition to which man was subject by the laws of his creation. It is not to be accounted for by the mere principles of physiology. God could as well have made the heart to play for ever as for fifty years. Death is no more the regular result of physical laws than the guillotine and the gallows are. It is, in all cases, the result of intelligent appointment, and for an adequate cause" (Barnes).
- (5) The reason for death is sin. See Rom. 5:12 and 6:23. God warned Adam that if he disobeyed, if he sinned, he would surely die and he surely did (Gen. 2:17). He died spiritually (Eph. 2:1) and physically.
- (6) Man's destiny is settled at death ("*and after this the judgment,*"

Heb. 9:27). There is no opportunity whatsoever for salvation after death. There are only two types of men, saved or lost, depending upon their relationship with Jesus Christ, and there are only two destinies, heaven or hell. See John 3:26. The man without Christ is condemned already (Jn. 3:18). He is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1) and without God in this world (Eph. 2:12). The unsaved rich man who died went immediately to hell (Lk. 16:22-23). Paul said that for a believer to be absent from the body is to be “*present with the Lord*” (2 Cor. 5:8). Paul wanted to “*depart and be with Christ*” (Phil. 1:23). Death is a departure of the spirit from the body (Ecc. 12:7; 2 Tim. 4:6). It is the body that is dead, not the spirit (Jam. 2:26). Thus the Bible warns, “... *behold, now is the day of salvation*” (2 Cor. 6:2). There is no promise of tomorrow, and man’s opportunity for salvation ends at death. “This is matter of comfort to the godly, that they shall die well and die but once; but it is matter of terror to the wicked, who die in their sins, that they cannot return again to do that great work better” (Matthew Henry). “A man who is to cross the ocean but once--to go away from his home never to return--should make the right kind of preparation. He cannot come back to take that which he has forgotten; to arrange that which he has neglected; to give counsel which he has failed to do; to ask forgiveness for offences for which he has neglected to seek pardon. And so of death. A man who dies, dies but once. He cannot come back again to make preparation, if he has neglected it; to repair the evils which he has caused by a wicked life; or to implore pardon for sins for which he had failed to ask forgiveness. Whatever is to be done with reference to death, is to be done once for all before he dies” (Barnes).

- e. Jesus was offered to “*bear the sins of many*” (Heb. 9:28). Christ was never a sinner, but He bore our sins in the sense of taking the punishment due for our sins. Christ was not made sin but He was made TO BE sin for us even though He Himself “*knew no sin*” (2 Cor. 5:21). He was made by God to be the victim for our sin, made to take our place in judgment.

- (1) In one sense Jesus died for all men. He died to make it possible for men to be saved (1 Jn. 2:2). In another sense Jesus died only for

those who will be saved, because they are the only ones who will truly benefit from it. Thus, He died for all and He also died for many.

(2) Jesus bore the believer's sin. "*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed*" (Isa. 53:5).

f. Christ will appear to those that look for Him (Heb. 9:28). This is an evidence of salvation. See 1 Th. 1:9-10.

g. Christ will appear the second time "*without sin unto salvation*" (Heb. 9:28).

(1) He will appear the second time without sin. This refers to the objective of His first and second comings. The objective of His first coming was to make atonement for man's sin. Thus He was born in a lowly stable and lived a humble life in relative obscurity and was susceptible to human weakness in the sense that he slept and thirsted and hungered and wept, and He died a horrible death. All of this was to fulfill the objective of His first coming, which was to make atonement for sin. The objective of His second coming is not to die for sin but to rule and reign. "He will then appear without sin; at his first appearance, though he had no sin of his own, yet he stood charged with the sins of many; he was the Lamb of God that bore upon him the sins of the world, and then he appeared in the form of sinful flesh; but his second appearance will be without any such charge upon him, he having fully discharged it before, and then his visage shall not be marred, but shall be exceedingly glorious" (Matthew Henry).

(2) He will appear the second time unto salvation. The believer's salvation is guaranteed to him in this present world but it is not yet complete. In this present life we are waiting for the completion of our salvation. See Rom. 8:18-25. The believer's eternal inheritance awaits him in heaven and he is kept in this life by the power of God through faith (1 Pet. 1:4-5). The Holy Spirit is given to the believer as the earnest of his inheritance (Eph. 1:12-14).

Review Questions Hebrews 8:1 - 9:28

1. In what way was the Old Covenant defective?
2. According to Hebrews 9:10-12, what are three things that we find in the New Covenant that were not in the Old?
3. How thoroughly does God forgive sin under the New Covenant?
4. Who is the recipient of the New Covenant?
5. What are four of the national aspects of the New Covenant?
6. When will the New Covenant be established?
7. What New Testament passage says the New Covenant will be fulfilled in Israel when Christ comes?
8. What association do New Testament believers have with the New Covenant?
9. What book in the Old Testament describes the building of the tabernacle?
10. Why does the writer of Hebrews use the tabernacle rather than the temple?
11. In what way is the Bible a self-interpreting book?
12. What items were in the first compartment of the tabernacle?
13. What did the candlestick typify?
14. What divided the two compartments of the tabernacle?
15. What was inside of the ark of the covenant?
16. What does “propitiate” mean?
17. What did the mercy seat typify?
18. How many cherubim were over the ark of the covenant?
19. What Old Testament prophet described the cherubim in some detail?
20. What did the priests do inside of the first compartment of the tabernacle?
21. Who was allowed to enter the holy of holies?
22. How often could he enter it?
23. The Roman Catholic Church Mass “perpetuates in an unbloody manner the sacrifice offered on the cross.” How do we know that this is not possible?
24. What are three ways that the New Testament describes eternal security?

25. What does “redemption” mean?
26. What did the ashes of the heifer typify?
27. What does it mean that Christ offered Himself “without spot” unto God?
28. What are “dead works”?
29. What does it mean that Christ provided redemption for the transgressions that were under the first testament?
30. What verse says God calls men through the Gospel?
31. What does “remission” mean?
32. What Old Testament verse is referenced in Hebrews 9:12?
33. What two things were required for the atonement?
34. What verse says the wages of sin is death?
35. What did the blood and water of the Old Testament offerings signify?
36. What does “substitutionary” mean?
37. What verse says it is appointed to men to die once and then the judgment?
38. How does this verse refute the doctrine of reincarnation?
39. What verse says the sinner without Christ is condemned already?
40. What chapter says the sinner without Christ is dead in trespasses and sins and without God?
41. What verse says to be absent from the body is to be present with Christ?
42. What does it mean that Christ will appear the second time unto salvation?

A BETTER SACRIFICE - AN ETERNAL ONE (Hebrews 10:1-18)

SECTIONAL OVERVIEW

1. In this section of Hebrews the one sacrifice of Christ is contrasted with the continual sacrifices of the Old Covenant (Heb. 10:1-3). Those sacrifices were mere shadows and could not make the participants perfect, but through Christ's one sacrifice the believer finds eternal sanctification, complete forgiveness, and a bold entrance into the very presence of God (Heb. 10:12-20). "Here the apostle, by the direction of the Spirit of God, sets himself to lay low the Levitical dispensation; for though it was of divine appointment, and very excellent and useful in its time and place, yet, when it was set up in competition with Christ, to whom it was only designed to lead the people, it was very proper and necessary to show the weakness and imperfection of it, which the apostle does effectually, from several arguments" (Matthew Henry).

2. The offering of Christ's prepared body is contrasted to that of animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:4-10). Those sacrifices were mere types pointing to Christ and could not provide true atonement for man nor pleasure for God.

3. The once-for-all sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice is greatly emphasized.

"the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10)

"after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever" (Heb. 10:12)

"by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14)

"there is no more offering for sin" (Heb. 10:18)

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

1. The sacrifice of Christ is better because it is the fulfillment of the Old Testament types, which could never make the sinner perfect (Heb. 10:1-4).

- a. The Mosaic Law is called “*a shadow of good things to come*” (Heb. 10:1). A shadow is not the reality but is an vague reflection of the reality. The writer is explaining that it would be foolish to desire a shadow when one has the real thing. How strange it would be, for example, for a husband to desire his wife’s shadow rather than the wife herself. Likewise, for Jews to cling to the shadow of the Mosaic law instead of cleaving unto the Messiah is ridiculous.
- b. The Old Testament sacrifices were imperfect because they had to be offered continually and repeatedly (Heb. 10:2-3). Had they provided a true and satisfactory atonement for sin, they would have ceased, but in fact those sacrifices only brought up a remembrance of sins every year.
- c. It is not possible for the blood of animals to take away sins. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) and that is not the death of animals but the death of the man himself. And without the shedding of blood is no remission of sin, but that is not the blood of animals but the blood of a perfect Man.

2. The sacrifice of Christ is better because it was His own sinless body that was offered (Heb. 10:5-10).

- a. This passage quotes from Psalm 40:6-8: “*Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*”

All four of the Levitical offerings are mentioned in Psalm 40:6 and all pointed to Christ. Leviticus 1-4 describes the four as the burnt offering (Lev. 1), the meal offering (“offering” in Ps. 40:6 is the Hebrew *minchah*, which is translated “meal offering” in Lev. 2); the peace offering (“sacrifice” is the Hebrew *zebach*, which is used for the peace offering in Lev. 3); and the sin offering (Lev. 4).

- b. Though many commentators claim that the writer of Hebrews quotes the so-called “Septuagint” (meaning Seventy) Greek translation of the Old Testament, I am convinced that this is not the case. It is true that

the Septuagint reads, “a body hast thou prepared me” in Psalm 40:6, whereas the Hebrew has “*mine ears hast thou opened,*” but this is not evidence that Hebrews quotes from the Septuagint. It is more likely that the Greek translation quotes from Hebrews at this point. Consider the following facts:

(1) The early history of the Septuagint is dubious at best and there is no evidence of the existence of an entire Greek translation of the Old Testament until after the time of the apostles.

(a) The story that a group of scholars translated the Old Testament into Greek in 250 to 150 B.C. is clearly legendary. The letter of Aristeas is dubious in the highest degree, containing, as it does, statements that are fictitious upon their very face. “A letter, purporting to be written by a certain Aristeas to his brother Philocrates during the reign of Ptolomy Philadelphus (285-246 BC), relates how Philadelphus, persuaded by his librarian to get a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for his royal library, appealed to the high priest at Jerusalem, who sent seventy-two elders (six from each of the twelve tribes) to Alexandria with an official copy of the Law. There in seventy-two days they made a translation which was read before the Jewish community amid great applause, and then presented it to the king. From the number of the translators it became known (somewhat inaccurately) as the Septuagint” (Moorman). “Its claims to authenticity were demolished by Dr. Hody two centuries ago (*De bibliorum textibus originalibus*, Oxon., 1705). Clearly the writer is not a Greek, but a Jew, whose aim is to glorify his race and to disseminate information about their sacred books” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*). Thus even the name *Septuagint* is based on a fable.

(b) There is no manuscript evidence of a complete Greek Old Testament that dates before Christ. At best there is a fragment of one small portion of the Law. The earliest of the extant manuscripts of a Greek translation of the Old Testament date to 200 years A.D., which is more than 100 years after the apostles had died. One possible exception is the Ryland Papyrus (No.

458), which has a few portions of Deut. 23-28. It is possible that this fragment dates to 150 B.C., though this is not certain. At best, the evidence hints at a formal translation only of the Pentateuch in Alexandria. The *New Bible Dictionary* says that it is probable that a translation of the Pentateuch was made at one time and place and that the other books of the O.T. were then translated into Greek piecemeal by various individuals at a later date. The name *Septuagint* was subsequently extended to cover this hodge-podge of translations.

(c) Though there might possibly have been a complete translation of the Old Testament in Greek by the time of Christ, there is no evidence showing that it was one that was produced with any authority acceptable to most Jews or that it was commonly received among the Jews.

(2) For the following reasons we do not believe that Jesus or the apostles quoted a Greek translation, even if one was then available:

(a) There is clear evidence from the Gospels that the Lord Jesus put His stamp of authority upon the Hebrew Old Testament and not upon a Greek translation. First, Christ spoke of the jots and tittles of the Old Testament (Mat. 5:18), and this refers specifically to the Hebrew language. The *jot* or *jod* is the tenth and smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It can be observed in many editions of the King James Bible in the heading to Psalm 119:73-80. The *tittle* is a tiny part of a Hebrew letter; in particular it is that part that distinguishes the *daleth* (see the heading to Psalm 119:25-32) from the *resh* (see the heading to Psalm 119:153-160). A Greek translation has no jots or tittles. Second, Christ referred to the Old Testament by its Hebrew division rather than by its Greek division. See, for example, Luke 24:44. Christ referred to the things “which were written in THE LAW of Moses, and in THE PROPHETS, and in THE PSALMS, concerning me.” This is precisely the order of the Old Testament in Hebrew, but it is not the order of the Greek Old Testament. In Greek the order is the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, as in the English Bible. See also Matthew 23:35, where the Lord Jesus

referred to the first and last prophets that were martyred in the Old Testament. He referred to them by the order of the Hebrew Text rather than by the order of the Greek. Abel's death is recorded in Genesis (chapter 4) and Zacharias' death was recorded in 2 Chronicles (24:20-22). This follows the order of the Hebrew Old Testament, which begins with Genesis and ends with 2 Chronicles. The Greek Septuagint, on the other hand, ends with the prophets (concluding with Malachi) and with some apocryphal books.

- (b) To think that the Jews in Israel, with their pride of language and tradition, would stoop to use a hodge-podge Greek translation from Egypt, which was a hotbed of Greek philosophy-tinged Jewish cults, is unreasonable. Compare Acts 22:2.
- (3) What about those places in the New Testament which appear to be quotations from the Septuagint?
- (a) Since the earliest extant copies of the Septuagint are of late date, it is as possible that the Septuagint is quoting the New Testament as it is that the apostles are quoting the Septuagint. "How do we know that the present text of the Septuagint was not that found in those Greek OT translations of the second century AD by Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotian, or even that of Origen and his *Hexapla*. If this were the case, this text would follow that of the NT and you might have these translators quoting the OT quotes found in the NT rather than vice versa!" (D.A. Waite).
 - (b) In fact, what we often have in the New Testament is the Spirit of God quoting from His own Old Testament Scriptures in an expansive, interpretive manner. From my own examination of the Old Testament quotations in the New Testament, I see no reason to believe that the apostles were quoting from a Greek translation. I studied every quotation in Paul's first epistle to Corinth, comparing the quotations to the Hebrew Old Testament and to the "The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English," translated by Lancelot Brenton and first published in London in 1851, which is based upon the Vaticanus Old Testament Greek

text. In the 10 citations (1 Cor. 10:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19, 20; 9:9; 10:7; 14:21; 15:54, 55) I did not find one example of a clear quotation from the Septuagint as opposed to the Hebrew. This study can be found in the 439-page “The Bible Version Question -Answer Database,” which is available from Way of Life Literature.

(4) The quotation in Hebrews 10:5-7 from Psalm 40 does not consistently follow either the Hebrew or a Greek translation. For example, both the Hebrew and the Septuagint have, “thou hadst not required” in Ps. 40:6, but Hebrews 10:6 reads, “thou hast had no pleasure.” Also, in Psalm 40:6, the Septuagint reads “whole burnt offering,” whereas Hebrews 10:6 reads, “burnt offerings,” thus omitting “whole” and having plural offerings rather than singular. Therefore, what we have in Hebrews is a free rendering of the Old Testament, more like a paraphrase of it than a literal translation. This is exactly what I observed in the aforementioned study of the Old Testament quotations in 1 Corinthians. Most New Testament quotations of the Old Testament are modified and some are only vague references, depending upon the Holy Spirit’s purpose. As the Author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit has the authority, of course, to quote from it as He sees fit. (This does not justify paraphrastic translation methodologies, because a translator does not have an author’s authority and liberty.)

c. The most important thing in regard to our study of Hebrews 10:5-10, of course, is the interpretation.

(1) Psalm 40 is clearly Messianic, but it is Hebrews 10 that tells us when the Messiah is speaking. He spoke these things “*when he cometh into the world.*” Psalm 40 does not contain that information. Therefore, Psalm 40:6-10 prophetically describes the words that the Son of God spoke at some point after His incarnation. We do not know exactly when He spoke this, but it could have been even as a babe, for Psalm 22:9 says the Messiah hoped even when He was upon His mother’s breasts. That is certainly not true of an ordinary baby!

- (2) This passage emphasizes the fact that God prepared a body for the Messiah, a body that He offered as the perfect sacrifice for man's sin. It is a beautiful lesson on the incarnation. Jesus' human body was divinely prepared for a pre-ordained purpose. Why does Psalm 40:6 say, "*mine ears hast thou opened*"? It is an expression of submission and servitude that goes along with the theme of the passage. It either refers to one's ears being open to hear the master's command or it refers to the boring of the ear of a slave who wants to remain with his master (Ex. 21:6), or both. The same expression is used in Isa. 50:5, which is also a Messianic prophecy.
- (3) Jesus always knew who He was and what His earthly purpose was. He knew this even as a child. He knew that He had come to earth to do the Father's will. When His parents found him in the temple asking questions of the rabbis, they were amazed, but Jesus said: "*How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*" (Lk. 2:49).
- (4) This passage speaks to the mystery of the Trinity. In Heb. 10:7 the Son calls the Father "God," whereas in Heb. 1:8 the Father calls the Son God.
- (5) The theme of the Scripture is Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:7). Compare Lk. 24:44 and Acts 3:18. To read the Bible without seeing Christ is to miss its main purpose. It is not merely a book about religion or history; it is not merely great literature; it is a Book that is written to reveal God in Jesus Christ.
- (6) The coming of Christ marks the beginning of the New Testament (Heb. 10:9). When Hebrews 10:9 says "*he taketh away the first, that he may establish the second,*" it refers to the first and second testaments, which is the theme of the preceding passages. This means that the establishment of the New Testament did not begin with John the Baptist but with Jesus Christ Himself. John was a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Messiah.
- (7) The salvation of man was achieved by Jesus Christ saying yes to the Father and submitting to the incarnation and the cross (Heb. 10:10; Phil. 2:6-8). He "*offered himself*" (Heb. 9:14). When Heb.

10:10 says, “*By the which will we are sanctified,*” it is referring to the will of God to which Christ submitted. See verse 9.

(8) In Christ the believer is sanctified once for all (Heb. 10:10). The Greek word translated “sanctify” is also translated “hallow” (Mat. 6:9) and “holy” (Rev. 22:11). The word “sanctified” means to be set apart. In 1 Pet. 3:15 believers are exhorted to “*sanctify the Lord God in your hearts,*” meaning set Him apart in your hearts so that you are always conscious of His presence in and call upon your lives and so that He doesn’t get crowded out with other things. 2 Tim. 2:21 says the believer should be “*sanctified and meet for the master’s use,*” meaning that he should set himself apart from everything that is contrary to God’s will so that he can be a fit vessel for the Lord. When the Bible says the believer is sanctified in Christ, it means that he is set apart from his former position as a member of the devil’s cursed family into the blessed family of God. To be sanctified means to have a new position before God, and this new position was purchased by the sacrifice of Christ.

3. The sacrifice of Christ is better because it provides complete salvation (Heb. 10:11-20).

- a. The Old Testament offerings could not take away sins, no matter how often they were made, but Christ’s one offering takes away sin so completely that He sat down at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:11-13; Ps. 110:1). This is the third time that Hebrews has made reference to Psalm 110:1 (compare Heb. 1:3, 13). Sitting down signifies the completion of Christ’s offering. The high priest entered the Holy of holies once per year on the Day of Atonement, but he never sat down there. His offering was never complete; it had to be repeated every year.
- b. The one offering of Christ provides eternal perfection for the believer (Heb. 10:14).

(1) This is one of the most amazing verses in the Bible, and it describes the all-sufficiency, the eternity of Christ’s salvation. Some think that Hebrews is a proof text for the doctrine that the born again

child of God can lose his salvation, but it is just the opposite. It is one of the greatest testimonies in the Bible to the eternal security of the believer.

(2) Who is it that is sanctified?

(a) The sinner who calls upon Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2).

(b) The sinner who has faith in Christ is sanctified (Acts 26:18).

(c) The sinner who believes the truth is sanctified (2 Th. 2:13).

c. The New Covenant witnesses to the perfect forgiveness that is provided by Christ's offering (Heb. 10:15-18). As we have seen, the New Testament believer does not participate in every aspect of the Covenant that God will make with Israel, but he participates in the new birth and in the complete forgiveness of sin that comes through Christ's sacrifice. The laws of God are written in his heart and his sins and iniquities are remembered no more. The writer of Hebrews does not quote from the New Covenant to teach that the "church" rather than Israel has inherited it but rather to show that the Old Testament itself pointed to a time when the Mosaic sacrifices would no longer be made (Heb. 10:18). This fits into the purpose of Hebrews, which was to encourage Jewish professors to continue in Christ and not to return to the Judaic system because of the persecution they endured.

Concluding Exhortations in this section (Hebrews 10:19-39)

As we have seen throughout Hebrews, the writer first gives doctrinal instruction then exhorts his hearers on the basis of that doctrine. He begins this new section of exhortation by saying, "*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus ... and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near...*" (Heb. 10:19, 21, 22). He is saying that since the doctrine I have been teaching is true, let's see how this applies to our daily lives. His preaching is therefore very practical and gets down to where "the rubber meets the road" in people's everyday lives and ministries. This is the example that the Spirit of God has given to every preacher. Preaching that is not practical is of little benefit and tends to puff up the intellect more than it edifies and sanctifies the life. To delve deeply into the minutiae of the Scripture

and to parse Greek verbs and to wax eloquent about doctrine is fine but only if it is made practical and is applied plainly to people's lives. If doctrine is not accompanied by reproof, rebuke, and exhortation, it is not proper teaching and preaching. "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:2). This is the subject of Titus chapter 2, "*But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.*" The things that become sound doctrine pertain to holy Christian living.

In this section we find the words "*let us*" three times (12 times altogether in Hebrews). Contrast this firm yet gentle exhortation of grace with the "thou shalt not's" of the Mosaic Law.

Observe that the writer begins these exhortations by reminding his hearers of the perfect sufficiency of Christ's one offering (Heb. 10:19-21).

- a. That offering has provided bold entrance into the very holiest in heaven.
- b. It required the shedding of Christ's blood (Heb. 10:19).
- c. It is a new and living way as opposed to the old ritualistic way.
- d. It is something that Christ "*hath consecrated for us*" (Heb. 10:20). Salvation is Christ acting in the sinner's stead. Salvation is a matter of substitution. It is not a sinner working his way to God through his good works but it is God coming to man and purchasing perfect salvation in his place.
- e. The believer is adopted into God's family. He is a part of the "*house of God*" (Heb. 10: 21).

1. Let us draw near with a true heart (Heb. 10:22).

- a. Consider the terms used in this verse:

(1) A "*true heart*" is one that has full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22). It is a heart that has genuine faith as opposed to hypocritical. The writer of Hebrews is exhorting his readers not to be double-minded toward Christ but to be fully convinced that He and He alone is the Lord and Saviour and to cleave unto Him in sincere faith.

(2) To be “*sprinkled from an evil conscience*” is to have the conscience purified by faith so that it comes out from the darkness into the light and no longer attempts to hypocritically hide its evil deeds from God as Adam and Eve did. Defined in context, an “evil conscience” is the opposite of a fully assured heart. It is a heart secretly unconvinced and tempted to turn away from Christ.

(3) To have “*our bodies washed with pure water*” refers to believer’s baptism which is a picture of the believer dying with Christ, buried with Christ, and risen again with Christ. Baptism washes the body with water, but it typifies the washing of the soul through regeneration. Baptism is merely a figure and it is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh (through immersion in water) that saves but it is faith in the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 3:21).

- b. Observe that it is God’s express will that believers have “*full assurance of faith*” (Heb. 10:22). The doctrine that the believer can lose his salvation leaves the individual with a distinct lack of assurance, but this is not God’s will. He wants the believer to be fully assured that Christ has perfected Him with His one sacrifice and he is therefore forever saved in Christ. The believer can have full assurance because of the once-for-all offering of the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19-21).
- c. Observe that it is God’s express will for the believer to draw near to Him (Heb. 10:22). True believers have doubts about their relationship with God because of the imperfection of their earthly lives and because of the attack of the enemy of their souls, the devil. He throws fiery darts of unbelief at them, which must be defeated by means of the “*shield of faith*” (Eph. 6:16). The devil is the “*accuser of the brethren*” (Rev. 12:10). In the midst of this fierce warfare, the believer often becomes discouraged and fearful and is hesitant to draw near to his God. He is all too aware of his sins and imperfections, all too aware that the devil’s accusations are true enough even though the devil himself is a liar and the father of lies, that he has indeed sinned against his God repeatedly and failed Him in a thousand ways. The believer must never forget that it is God Himself who has made the acceptable offering for his sin and that it is God Himself who beseeches him to come boldly into His presence to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

2. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (Heb. 10:23).

- a. God does not want the believer to waver. That is not His will. God intends that salvation be something sure and stable. We have seen this throughout the book of Hebrews. The believer's hope is not an uncertain hope but a know-so hope; it is an anchor of the soul "*both sure and steadfast*" (Heb. 6:19).
- b. The believer can hold fast without wavering because God is faithful and is true to His word ("*for he is faithful that promised,*" Heb. 10:23). For a believer to doubt his salvation is a very serious matter, because it is to call God a liar. Compare 1 John 5:11-13.
- c. One can have a *profession* of faith without a *possession* of faith. That is one of the major themes of the book of Hebrews. The writer is exhorting those who profess faith in Christ to make absolutely sure that their faith is genuine and having made certain of that to hold fast to their profession in the face of any and all troubles.

3. Let us consider one another (Heb. 10:24).

- a. Every believer has an obligation to fulfill the ministry of exhorting and encouraging other believers. He is to consider other believers to provoke unto love and good works. To provoke has the sense of inciting, stirring up. The believer is a part of the family of God and of the body of Christ, the local manifestation of which is the New Testament church or congregation (1 Cor. 12:12-27).
 - (1) The ministry of provoking unto good works involves being the right example to the brethren. Consider the church at Corinth, and how they provoked many other brethren by their zeal in giving (2 Cor. 9:2).
 - (2) The ministry of provoking unto good works involves encouraging those who are cast down.
 - (3) The ministry of provoking unto good works involves exhorting those who are wayward.

- b. Christian love is not so much an emotion as a duty. It is a matter of treating others like God has commanded they be treated. Christian love is not caught or fallen into but it can be learned and provoked and strengthened. Feelings come and go, they wax and wane, as we journey through this difficult, sin-cursed life. Feelings are undependable. When God commands the believer to love, He is not commanding that we feel a certain emotion or that we even try to work up an emotion. He is rather commanding that we treat people as He has laid out in the Scripture. The Christian husband is commanded to love his wife, and he can do that irregardless of how he happens to “feel” about his wife at the moment. He can do that by treating her with the honor and tender compassion that God has commanded (Eph. 5:28-29). For a church member to love his pastors as God has commanded is for him to be aware of them and to know that they have been placed in that position by God and to esteem them highly and to be at peace among yourselves so there is not unscriptural divisions in the church (1 Th. 5:12-13). To love one’s neighbor as oneself is to do unto him as you would have him do unto you, which is the “golden rule” (Gal. 5:14). To love the brethren is to serve them (Gal. 5:13). That Christian love is not primarily an emotion is evident by the fact that the Bible says love should abound in “*knowledge and in all judgment*” (Phil. 1:9).
- c. A believer can backslide. The believer’s practical sanctification, his Christian growth and victory, can wax and wane. He must be continually provoked unto love and good works. If the believer is not moving forward spiritually, he is moving backwards.
- d. Close, godly fellowship is necessary for Christian growth and victory. The believer needs godly fellowship because he must be provoked unto love and good works so that he will not backslide. There are many pressures against godly living in this world. There are many spiritual enemies under the broad categories of the world, the flesh, and the devil. These enemies are resolute and their attacks relentless. The believer who is careless and who is so unwise to neglect the close fellowship with godly brethren will doubtless be defeated.
- e. It is God’s will that the believer walk in good works. The believer is

saved by grace without works but he is saved unto good works (Eph. 2:8-10).

- f. The believer's motivation for good works comes both from within and from without. The Spirit of God motivates him from within, but he also requires motivation and assistance from the brethren and from circumstances in this life. There is no "passive" Christianity taught in the New Testament. The believer rests but he also works. He expects great things from God and at the same time attempts great things for God. He trusts as if everything depends upon God but works as if everything depends upon him. The "deeper Christian life" is one of zealous service to Christ. "*Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily*" (Col. 1:29).

4. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25).

- a. The "*assembling of ourselves together*" is clearly a reference to the New Testament church of which every believer is to be a faithful member.

(1) This is the example that is given throughout the book of Acts, beginning with Acts 2:41-42.

(2) The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15) and has been commissioned to fulfill the Great Commission (Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). The Commission was given to the apostles, who were the representatives of the churches.

Such a great and glorious work requires faithful workers, and those who neglect the church are neglecting their spiritual duty. No human institution can be successful apart from committed and faithful members. This is true for a business, a football team, or a government agency. And it is equally true for the church. "*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*" (1 Cor. 4:2). "As spiritual declension sets in, one of the first things to fade is faithfulness to the assembly of the local church. Observe that even then, wavering Christians were sporadic in attendance to their local churches" (Sorenson).

- b. To neglect the assembly is spiritually dangerous. As the church needs every believer, every believer needs the church. Every believer needs the church's ministry of teaching and shepherding. It is a matter of spiritual wisdom and safety. Just as a child needs his parents, a believer needs pastors and fellow believers. The church is the local manifestation of the family of God, and it is where the child of God finds shelter and assistance in a dangerous world
- c. Again we see the importance of the ministry of exhortation ("*but exhorting one another,*" Heb. 10:25). The believer should not attend the assembly merely to be a spectator or even merely to learn; he should attend to contribute something. He should be there to exhort his brothers and sisters in Christ, to encourage them, to challenge them, to speak a word of warning as needed. The word "exhort" is from the Greek "parakaleo" and means to "to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, exhortation or consolation" (Strong). This Greek word is also translated "intreat" (Lk. 15:25), "desire" (Acts 8:31), "beseech" (Acts 13:42), "comfort" (Acts 16:40), "call for" (Acts 28:20), and "pray" (Acts 16:9).
- d. Faithfulness to the house of God will be increasingly important as the coming of Christ draws near ("*and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching,*" Heb. 10:25). The New Testament warns that apostasy will increase throughout the church age (2 Tim. 3:5). Apostasy is likened to tares which the devil sows and which will grow up together with the true seed throughout the age (Mat. 13:24-30). Apostasy is likened to leaven which a woman hides in the loaf of the true churches "*until the whole was leavened*" (Mat. 13:33). Paul warned, "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Therefore, it is incumbent upon God's people to be increasingly cautious as the day of Christ draws near, and a necessary part of spiritual safety is faithfulness to the New Testament church. This reminds us, of course, of how important it is to be in a strong, godly, Bible-based church as opposed to one that is morally careless, lukewarm, or based on man-made tradition (e.g., sacramentalism, infant baptism, amillennialism, etc.).

- e. This verse says God's people can see the day approaching (Heb. 10:25). Though the return of Christ is imminent and could happen at any time (Mat. 24:42-44) and though the rapture is not preceded by specific signs in the same sense of those that will precede His glorious appearing at the end of the Tribulation, the age will grow increasing evil and increasingly like the days of Noah so that the believer can have a general idea that Christ's return draws nigh.

5. Let us beware of apostasy (Heb. 10:26-31).

- a. The key to understanding this passage is to understand what the willful sin of Hebrews 10:26 refers to.

(1) It does not refer to willful sin in general. If it did, every believer would be in perpetual danger of losing his salvation, but it cannot refer to this for elsewhere in Scripture we find that that sin remains in the Christian life in this present world and Christ remains the propitiation for sin at all times. *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* (1 John 1:8 - 2:2). The Bible plainly teaches that Christians do sin after they are saved. There is no sinless perfection in the Christian life in this present world. Paul testified, *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing"* (Rom. 7:18). The believer's righteousness is in Jesus Christ positionally (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21).

(2) The willful sin of Hebrews 10:26 is defined in the immediate context. The first rule of Bible interpretation is context, context, context, and if we examine the context of this passage carefully, we see that this particular sin is defined in verse 29: *"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the*

covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” The willful sin in verse 26, therefore, refers not to sin in general but to one particular sin, that of *“counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace.”* This is to deny that salvation is by Christ’s blood and grace alone. In the immediate context to which the book of Hebrews was addressed, it refers to the Jews who professed confidence in Christ but because of persecution returned to their dead religion and thus gave up confidence in Christ. False religion, both then and now, attempts to replace Christ’s grace with a manmade system. Catholicism is an example. It preaches Christ, but it intermingles its own sacraments and priesthood and sainthood with the grace of Christ. This is a false gospel that robs Christ of His glory as the sole Saviour and Mediator. If Christ is not the Saviour wholly and exclusively, He is not Saviour at all. If grace is intermingled in any sense with works, the Gospel is perverted, and there is no salvation in a perverted gospel (Rom. 11:6; Gal. 1:6-9).

- (a) To *“trod under foot the Son of God and count His blood an unholy thing”* is not an ordinary sin. It is akin to the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit that Christ warned about in Matthew 12:31 (where the Jewish leaders renounced Jesus in the most final manner by attributing His miracles to the devil). The willful sin of Hebrews 10 is to reject Christ as Lord and Saviour. It is to renounce Him and His atonement. There can be no salvation when one commits such a sin because in doing so one has rejected the only means that God has provided for salvation. No true believer can commit such a sin, for *“the just shall live by faith”* (Heb. 10:38). We see in Hebrews 10:26-29 that the writer is not speaking of true believers when he warns of apostasy, because in 10:39 he concludes the passage with these words: *“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”*
- (b) To do *“despite unto the Spirit of grace”* is the same as to *“fall from grace”* (Gal. 5:4). The word *“despite”* means to *“insult”* (Strong). To do despite unto the Spirit of grace means

to turn from salvation by grace and to attempt to be saved by works or by a mixture of grace plus works. It means to reject the Holy Spirit's testimony about the grace of Christ. "The Holy Spirit delights to magnify Christ and to exalt His work. To refuse His testimony is to do despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Ironsides). This was the error of the Judaizers who were trying to corrupt the churches in Galatia. They were attempting to replace the grace alone gospel that Paul had preached with a false one of "grace" intermingled with works. The Jews of that day who had professed Christ and to whom the book of Hebrews is addressed were in danger of returning to the Mosaic system and thus turning their backs to the gospel of the grace of Christ. To do this is to demonstrate that one is not saved, because salvation is to trust oneself wholly to the grace of Christ. Those who turn back to works religion demonstrate that they have never understood nor believed in grace in a saving sense.

Consider the following important statement on this passage by Harry Ironsides: "It is not mere failure in the life that is here contemplated. The willful sin in this passage is the definite rejection of His atoning sacrifice. Nor is this simply the foolish and wicked determination of a moment, of which many have been guilty, but have afterwards been brought to sincere repentance. The verb ['sin wilfully'] is the present participle. It is what has become habitual. If, after fully examining what the Old Testament Scriptures teach concerning Christ and His work and comparing it with the New Testament presentation, thus having obtained the knowledge of the truth, one deliberately and persistently rejects it, God has nothing more to say to him. ... Satan has used this passage to trouble and perplex honest souls whose sensitive consciences accuse them of failure to walk with God as they should. Such have often been made to fear that they were guilty of the willful sin here contemplated. But it is not the question of what is commonly called 'backsliding' that is before us. Of this any real believer may often be guilty; but even when overwhelmed with failure, he clings more tenaciously than ever to the fact that Jesus is the only Saviour and

His sacrifice the only means of deliverance from sin's judgment. The apostate of this chapter has no such hope or consciousness. He has spurned utterly both the Christ and the cross. He holds the blood of Jesus in contempt, and hence for him, there is nothing but doom ahead" (Ironsides).

Consider another important statement on this passage by Matthew Henry: "This text has been the occasion of great distress to some gracious souls; they have been ready to conclude that every wilful sin, after conviction and against knowledge, is the unpardonable sin: but this has been their infirmity and error. The sin here mentioned is a total and final apostasy, when men with a full and fixed will and resolution despise and reject Christ, the only Saviour,--despise and resist the Spirit, the only sanctifier,--and despise and renounce the gospel, the only way of salvation, and the words of eternal life; and all this after they have known, owned, and professed, the Christian religion, and continue to do so obstinately and maliciously."

- b. To "*receive the knowledge of the truth*" is not the same as committing oneself to the truth in a saving fashion (Heb. 10:26). Many receive the knowledge of the truth in the sense of knowing in their hearts that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true, but for whatever reason do not repent and trust Christ as their Lord and Saviour and eventually draw back to the world. We have seen this countless times in our missionary work. One Hindu lawyer faithfully attended our church services for a full year and professed an appreciation for the things we preached. He bought a Bible and even attended the mid-week prayer services, but he refused to repent and to commit himself to Christ and finally fell away entirely. There was something in his life that he was holding on to and that kept him from receiving Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. The rich young ruler is an example of this in the Bible. He came to Jesus and asked what he had to do to have eternal life, but because of his great riches he went away sorrowful.
- c. What about the statement in Heb. 10:29 that says the individual "*was sanctified*"? Some claim that this describes someone who is saved and then loses his salvation when he turns from Christ, but Bible words

must be defined by their context. The method of false teachers is to give one definition to a Bible word and then to force that definition into all passages, but the correct method is to allow the context itself to define the word. When we do this we see that Bible words have different meanings in different contexts. That is how we define words in daily life. The word “run” can mean to run literally or it can mean to walk or even to drive depending on the context in which it is used. If I say, “I have to run downtown for a few minutes,” that probably means that I will be driving my car or motorcycle and not actually running. Likewise, the Bible term “sanctify” does not always refer to salvation. The basic meaning of the word is “to set apart” and it usually refers to something that is set apart for divine service.

(1) Consider some examples of how the word “sanctify” does not always refer to salvation in the Bible:

- (a) Mt. Sinai was sanctified (Ex. 19:23), meaning it was set apart because of God’s holy presence and the people were not allowed to approach it.
- (b) The priests were sanctified (Ex. 28:41), meaning they were set apart for the ministry God had assigned to them.
- (c) The offerings were sanctified (Ex. 29:27), meaning they were set apart to be eaten only by the priests.
- (d) The tabernacle and its altar were sanctified (Ex. 29:36), meaning they were set apart for the divine use that had been proscribed to Moses.
- (e) In 1 Pet. 3:15 the child of God is commanded to “*sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you...*” This means to set the Lord and the things of the Lord apart in one’s thoughts so that they are not crowded out by the things of the world.
- (f) 1 Cor. 7:14 says “*the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband...*” This does not mean that the unbelieving husband or wife is saved. It

means that they are set apart from other unbelievers in certain ways. If an unbeliever is married to a believer, that unbeliever hears the gospel more often and sees it lived out more clearly than other unbelievers. An unbelieving husband who is married to a believing wife also participates in the blessings that God pours out on that believer. In that sense, the unbelieving husband or wife is “sanctified.” Thus the word “sanctify” does not always refer to salvation.

- (2) Likewise, in Heb. 10:29 “sanctify” is not describing a person who is saved but a person who has come close to being saved, who has been sanctified in the sense of having come apart from the things of the world and having looked closely upon the things of Christ and having become a member of a church. A person can do all of this without being born again. We see a similar thing in 2 Pet. 2:20, “*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.*” The people described in this verse escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ, but they aren’t saved and in 2 Pet. 2:21-22 we see that they never were saved. The reason that they turn back to the world is because they were not born again and their nature was not changed (2 Cor. 5:17). A pig goes back to the mire and a dog to its vomit because it is still a pig and still a dog. If the pig or dog could receive a new nature it would no longer have such desires. When a person is born again through repentance and faith, his desires are changed and though he is still a sinner he no longer wants to live in sin as he did before he was saved and is not longer content in his sin.

The following statement on this passage by Harry Ironside is helpful. As a young Christian, Ironside was involved with the Salvation Army and was taught that he could experience “entire sanctification” so that he would no longer have indwelling sin. He sought this experience earnestly and even felt at one point that he had experienced it, but when he learned that the sin nature was still present he became so discouraged that he had to be hospitalized. He feared that he had committed the sin of Hebrews 10 and that he was lost. It was during

his hospitalization that he learned the truth of biblical sanctification and came to understand and appreciate the difference between his unchanging and eternal position in Christ and his daily practice, between his permanent relationship with God as an adopted son and his temporal fellowship with God. “There is an expression used in these verses that may still perplex and bewilder those who have not apprehended that profession is one thing, and possession another. ... He who is sanctified by the one offering of Christ upon the cross, that is, by His precious blood, is perfected forever (Heb. 10:10, 14-19). But in this passage it is equally plain that one who counts the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, shall be forever lost. In order not to miss the true force of this for our souls, it is necessary that we give some attention to what we have already designated ‘positional sanctification.’ Of old all the people of Israel, and all who were associated with them, were set apart to God both on the night of the Passover and afterwards in the wilderness. But this did not necessarily imply a work of the Spirit in their souls. Many were doubtless in the blood-sprinkled houses that solemn night, when the destroying angel passed through to smite the unsheltered first-born, who had no real faith in God. Yet they were by the blood of the Lamb put in a place of blessing, a position where they shared in many hallowed privileges. So afterward with those who were under the cloud and passed through the sea, being baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All were in the same position. All shared the same outward blessings. But the wilderness was the place of testing, and soon proved who were real and who were not. At the present time God has no special nation, to be allied to which is to come into a position of outward nearness to Him. But He has a people who have been redeemed to Himself out of all kindreds and tongues and peoples and nations, by the precious blood of the Lamb of God. All who ally themselves by profession with that company are outwardly among the blood-sheltered: in this sense they are sanctified by the blood of the covenant. That blood stands for Christianity, which in its very essence is the proclamation of salvation through Christ’s atoning death. To take the Christian place therefore is like entering the blood-sprinkled house. ALL WHO ARE REAL, WHO HAVE JUDGED THEMSELVES BEFORE GOD, AND TRULY CONFIDED IN HIS GRACE, WILL REMAIN IN THAT

HOUSE. IF THEY GO OUT, IT PROVES THEIR UNREALITY, and such can find no other sacrifice for sins; for all the typical offerings are done away in Christ. These are they of whom the apostle John speaks so solemnly: *‘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 they were not all of us’* (1 John 2:19). As they were ever bereft of faith in the soul, they ‘went out,’ and thus did despite to the Spirit of grace, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing. These sin wilfully, not in the sense of failing to walk uprightly merely, but as utterly abjuring, or apostatizing from, Christianity, after having become conversant with the glorious message it brings to lost men” (H.A. Ironside, *Holiness: The False and the True*, pp. 63-65).

- d. The unsaved face a most frightful future (Heb. 10:27). The Bible frequently describes God’s judgment in terms of fire. Here it is *“fiery indignation.”* Hell is described as a place of eternal suffering in fire. See Mt. 13:42, 50; Mk. 9:44-48; Lk. 16:24; Rev. 14:10; 20:10, 15. Consider some of the Bible’s descriptions of Hell:

“wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Mt. 13:42, 50)

“cast into a furnace of fire” (Mt. 13:42, 50)

“depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire” (Mt. 25:41)

“hell fire” (Mk. 9:47)

“the fire is not quenched” (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48)

“tormented in this flame” (Lk. 16:24)

“flaming fire taking vengeance” (2 Th. 1:8)

“fiery indignation” (Heb. 10:27)

“tormented with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 14:10)

“tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:10)

- e. What about the warning of Heb. 10:30-31? Believers are to serve God *“with reverence and godly fear”* (Heb. 12:28), but no true believer has to fear God’s vengeance and the judgment of hell. *“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father”* (Rom. 8:15). The quotation,

“*Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense*” is from Ps. 94:1, and “*The Lord will judge his people,*” is from Deut. 32:36; Ps. 50:4; and Ps. 135:14. This judgment refers to Israel, which was a mixture of saved and lost.

6. Let us call to remembrance the former days (Heb. 10:32-34).

- a. The writer urges his readers to remember the earlier days of their Christian profession. This is an important exhortation to those who are backsliding. Remember the former days of your profession in which you were zealous for the Lord. Remember how that the Lord brought you out of terrible darkness and brought you into the light, how he “illuminated” you. Return to that same zeal. This is similar to the exhortation that Christ gave to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2. He warned them that they had left their first love, and the solution to that problem was to “*repent, and do the first works*” (Rev. 2:5).
- b. In this passage we have a glimpse into the reason why these professors were tempted to turn back (“*ye endured a great fight of afflictions,*” Heb. 10:32). They were being persecuted by the Roman government as well as by their own countrymen.

(1) Their afflictions took many different forms:

- (a) They were made “*a gazingstock*” by those who mocked their afflictions (Heb. 10:33). To be made a gazingstock is a very unpleasant thing. It reminds us of the old stocks which were placed in public places so that those who were locked in them would be ridiculed by the passers by. “There are hints of believers being placed in public forums by the Romans in their amphitheaters doing battle with gladiators or wild animals. The word translated ‘gazingstock’ is *theatridzo*, from which the modern word *theater* derives” (Sorenson).
- (b) They had to endure the reproach of being affiliated with those who were persecuted (Heb. 10:33-34). In a similar context Paul exhorted Timothy, “*Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God*” (21

Tim. 1:8). Even though Timothy knew and served Christ and even though he loved Paul and was deeply committed to him, he was still tempted to be ashamed of the gospel and of the fact that Paul was in prison and tempted to draw back from the afflictions of the gospel.

(c) Their goods were robbed (Heb. 10:34). It has often been the case that those who have the authority to persecute have the authority to confiscate the possessions of those they are persecuting. This was true of Roman Catholic inquisitors in the Dark Ages. They could cast someone into the inquisitor's prison upon a mere suspicion and confiscate his property.

(2) The way of victory in the midst of persecution is to look beyond this brief life to the heavenly realities that we have in Christ (Heb. 10:34). To “*seek those things which are above*” and to “*set your affection on things above*” (Col. 3:1-2). Hebrews 10:34 says the believer has a better and an enduring substance in heaven. It is better than any earthly possessions and it is enduring as opposed to temporal.

7. Let us cast not away our confidence (Heb. 10:35-39).

- a. The believer's faith is described as “confidence” (Heb. 10:35). It is a matter of being convinced that Jesus and Jesus alone is the Lord and Saviour.
- b. Faith not only obtains the gift of eternal salvation but also obtains rewards (Heb. 10:35). It is an amazing thing that God not only saves the believing sinner by His grace but also makes it possible for him to lay up treasures in heaven.
- c. Patience is one of the most important things in the Christian life (Heb. 10:36). The words “patience” and “patient” are used 41 times in the New Testament.

(1) The honest and good heart is the one that brings forth fruit “*with patience*” (Lk. 8:15).

(2) We have to wait with patience for the promised salvation (Rom. 8:25).

(3) One of the signs of the true minister of God is “patience” (2 Cor. 6:4).

(4) Patience in trials is a necessary part of Christian growth (Jam. 1:3-4).

d. Christ’s coming is described as near (“*For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry,*” Heb. 10:37).

(1) This expression has a two-fold meaning:

(a) Christ’s coming is so described because it is imminent and therefore always near as a possibility (Mat. 24:42-44).

(b) Christ’s coming is so described because in the eyes of the Lord a thousand years is as one day (2 Pet. 3:8-9).

(2) Notice that the Bible says the Lord will not tarry His coming. It is common to say, “If the Lord tarries, we will do this and that,” but this is not a proper saying. It is better to say, “If the Lord does not come before then, we will do this and that.”

e. This passage concludes with a plain statement on the security of the believer (Heb. 10:38-39).

Consider the statement, “*The just shall live by faith*” (Heb. 10:38).

(1) This refers to the way of salvation. Faith is the means whereby a sinner is made just. The just lives by faith as opposed to works. Note the simplicity of salvation. Those who are saved are described as “*them that believe to the saving of the soul.*” Salvation is by God’s grace alone through faith alone.

(2) This also refers to the evidence of salvation. Living by faith is the evidence that one is just. The just “shall live” by faith, because they believe and the indwelling Spirit lives in them and works through them.

(3) This also refers to perseverance of the just. The just shall live by faith and shall continue to live by faith. We see in the next verse that those who truly believe do not draw back. “If any, after making

a profession such as this, turn back, they prove that there was no real faith in the soul. There is an intellectual believing that saves no one. One may accept Christianity as a system one day and give it up the next. But he who truly trusts in Christ is saved even now, and will never draw back unto eternal loss. Concerning all such our Lord has said, *'Those that Thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost'* [Jn. 17:12]. And we are told that He *"which hath begun a good work in them will perform it unto the day of Christ"* [Phil. 1:6]. Therefore it should be plain that salvation is not in our keeping, but we ourselves are kept by the power of God. None can pluck us out of the hands of the Father and the Son. Eternal life would not be 'eternal' if it were forfeitable and could ever be lost" (Ironsides).

Review Questions Hebrews 10:1-39

1. What are two reasons for disbelieving that the New Testament writers quoted from the Greek Septuagint?
2. What is the difference between the division of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek Old Testament?
3. What two meanings does the phrase “mine ears hast thou opened” have?
4. The Greek word translated “sanctify” is also translated by what other two words?
5. What is the significance of the fact that Christ sat down after His ascension?
6. How many times does Hebrews make reference to Psalm 110:1?
7. According to Acts 26:18, who is it that is sanctified?
8. What is the significance of the fact that Hebrews says Christ acted “for us”?
9. What is a true heart?
10. What does it mean to be “sprinkled from an evil conscience”?
11. What verse says baptism is not putting away the filth of the flesh but a good conscience toward God?
12. Why is it that the believer can hold the profession of his faith without wavering?
13. What does “provoke” mean?
14. What three things are involved in provoking others unto good works?
15. What verse says the church is the pillar and ground of the truth?
16. Why is it spiritually dangerous for the believer to neglect the assembly?
17. What does “exhort” mean?
18. What are three other ways that the Greek word translated “exhort” is translated?
19. Why is faithfulness to the assembly increasingly important as the coming of Christ draws near?
20. What verse says evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse?
21. What is the willful sin of Hebrews 10:26?

22. What passage says the believer has sin and Christ is the propitiation for the sin?
23. What verse says “in my flesh dwelleth no good thing”?
24. What is the chief rule of Bible interpretation?
25. What does it mean to count the blood of Christ an unholy thing?
26. What does it mean to de despise unto the Spirit of grace?
27. How is it possible to receive the knowledge of the truth without actually being saved?
28. What are three Bible examples of how the word “sanctify” does not always refer to salvation?
29. Why do we know that 2 Pet. 2:21-22 refers to unsaved people?
30. What is fiery indignation?
31. What type of fear is the believer to have toward God?
32. What is a “great fight of afflictions”?
33. What is a “gazingstock”?
34. What is the way of victory in the midst of persecution?
35. Why is Christ’s coming described as near?
36. What does the phrase “the just shall live by faith” refer to?

A BETTER PRINCIPLE - FAITH

(Hebrews 11:1-40)

SECTIONAL OVERVIEW

The way of faith is presented as the superior principle in contrast to the way of works in the Mosaic Law. The writer shows that faith is what God requires. He shows that the Old Testament saints served God by faith. And he shows that faith is based upon God's Word. "In all these past ages we see that faith was the controlling power that enabled men to walk with God and triumph over the corrupting influences of their times. It is important to remember that God has never had two ways of saving men. It has always been true that faith in God's Word, whatever that Word may have been, has alone justified man before Him, and through that Word men have been saved in all ages" (Ironsides).

It is encouraging to observe that God does not recount the many failures of those who are included in the Hall of Faith. Noah got drunk, and Abraham backslid into Egypt and lied about his wife and sinned in the matter of Hagar, and Sarah urged Abraham to take her handmaiden as his concubine and laughed in unbelief, and Jacob was a trickster, and Moses sinned in the matter of Meribah (Num. 20:11-13), and Gideon was weak and unbelieving in the beginning and sinned in the matter of the ephod (Jud. 8:27), and David sinned in the matter with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11), and Samson, well, we all know about Samson (Jud. 13-16)! But, praise God, none of that is mentioned in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews gives new revelation beyond the accounts recorded in the Old Testament. For example, we do not read in the Old Testament that Abel or Enoch or Sarah or Moses' parents exercised faith. We learn that here in the New Testament, as the Spirit of God adds new revelation to that found in the Old.

Hebrews chapter 11 reaffirms the divine inspiration of the Old Testament. Events are cited from all parts of the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis, and all are cited as absolutely historical and trustworthy. There is not a hint

that there are things in the Old Testament that are fallible or non-historical. Those who deny or question the inerrant divine inspiration of the Old Testament in any sense whatsoever are not taught of the Spirit of God but of the devil.

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

1. Hebrews 11:6 is the key verse in this passage.

- a. Faith is the only way to please God. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him.”* The word “impossible” is very strong. There has never been another way that has been acceptable to God. Cain rejected his brother’s prophecies of the coming Saviour and attempted to approach God through his own works and self-reliance; he did not want to acknowledge that he was a fallen sinner and that he and his works were therefore unacceptable to God apart from the Substitute, but Cain was rejected. And from then until now every man and nation that has attempted to approach God on any basis other than faith has been rejected. Most of the Jews of Moses’ day were not saved, not because they did not do enough good works but because they did not believe the Word that was preached (Heb. 4:2; Ps. 78:22; 106:24).
- b. God is *“a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Heb. 11:6). “No man in any dispensation honestly sought after God and failed to find Him, for He always revealed Himself to faith” (Ironsides).
 - (1) God delights in rewarding men. Giving is His very nature, because He is a God of love and love gives (*“God so loved that he gave,”* John 3:16).
 - (2) God wants men to diligently seek him. Man was made in God’s image to know and serve God. That is man’s chief purpose. For a man to do less than diligently seek God, for a man to be half-hearted and less than zealous in his service to God, is folly.
 - (a) God says, *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart”* (Jer. 29:13).
 - (b) God personified as Wisdom says, *“Those that seek me early shall*

find me” (Prov. 8:17). The old English word “early” means to arise early to do something diligently.

(c) Jesus said, “*But seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Mat. 6:33).

(d) Let us be like the Psalmist who said, “*With my whole heart have I sought thee*” (Ps. 119:10).

(3) God wants men to seek HIM. It is more common for men to seek something from God, but He yearns for men to seek Him. He wants men to walk with him and talk with him, as the first pair did in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15-25; 3:8). In Christ’s incarnation we see the delight that God has in fellowshiping with men. When Mary sat at his feet and heard his word, He said, “*Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her*” (Lk. 10:42).

2. Faith is based upon God’s Word; faith is believing God’s Word (Heb. 11:1-3).

a. Genuine biblical faith is not blind; it is not a leap into the dark. Faith is described as *substance* and *evidence* (Heb. 11:1) because it derives its certainty from the very Word of a God who cannot lie. “Faith in what God has declared gives the soul absolute assurance and firm conviction of the reality of things which the natural eye has never seen. Yet these things are as real to the man of faith as anything that he can see, feel, taste, smell, or handle. In fact, they become even more real, for his senses might deceive him, but the Word of God he knows to be absolutely infallible” (Ironsides).

(1) Compare Romans 10:17. Without a word from God, there can be no authentic faith.

(2) Biblical faith is founded upon “*many infallible proofs*” (Acts 1:3). “Is mere faith a consideration which should ever convince a rational mind? The infidel says no; and we know there may be a faith which is no argument of the truth of what is believed. But when a man who has never seen it believes that there is such a place as London, his belief in the numerous testimonies respecting it which he has

heard and read is, to his mind, a good and rational proof of its existence, and he would act on that belief without hesitation. When a son credits the declaration or the promise of a father who has never deceived him, and acts as though that declaration and promise were true, his faith is to him a ground of conviction and of action, and he will act as if these things were so. In like manner the Christian believes what God says. He has never seen heaven; he has never seen an angel; he has never seen the Redeemer; he has never seen a body raised from the grave; but he has evidence which is satisfactory to his mind that God has spoken on these subjects, and his very nature prompts him to confide in the declarations of his Creator” (Barnes).

- b. Contrast the “faith” of the world. The unsaved say to one another, “Keep the faith,” but that is not genuine faith. That is blind faith, because it is presumptuous and not based upon any clear Word from God. To claim to walk by faith when one is living by one’s own thinking or by man’s philosophy and tradition is not faith but folly.

3. Consider the examples that Hebrews gives of how that faith is believing God’s Word:

- a. It is by faith in God’s Word that we understand about creation (Heb. 11:3).
 - (1) Note that the writer of Hebrews confirms the Genesis account of creation and interprets it literally. To deny the historicity of Genesis is to deny the testimony of the prophets, Jesus Christ, and the apostles. It is to deny the Bible from beginning to end. “Reverent, God-fearing men of science have always recognized the necessity of this divine revelation as to the origin of matter, and have had no difficulty with the sublime narrative of Genesis 1. It is only unbelief and willful rejection of the testimony of God that makes men stumble at and pervert so wondrous an unfolding of the beginnings of the created heavens and earth” (Ironsides).
 - (2) Note that faith in divine creation is given as the first example of faith that pleases God. Creationism is a foundational matter. If the

first chapters of the Bible are not historical, there is no reason to trust anything else it records. If there was no literal creation, there was no literal fall, and the rest of the Bible, which describes salvation from the fall, becomes nonsense.

(3) Belief in divine creation is given as the first example of faith because it is a preeminent example. Creation cannot be confirmed by sources other than the Scripture. We are left to believe what the Bible says about it or to reject it, but we cannot put it in a science lab and test it and there were no human eyewitnesses to confirm or deny it. “The faith here exercised is confidence in the truth of the Divine declarations in regard to the creation. The meaning is, that our knowledge on this subject is a mere matter of faith in the Divine testimony. It is not that we could reason this out, and demonstrate that the worlds were thus made; it is not that profane history goes back to that period and informs us of it; it is simply that God has told us so in his word. After all the acts of faith which have ever been exercised in this world, perhaps there is none which is really more strong, or which requires higher confidence in God, than the declaration that this vast universe has been brought into existence by a word!” (Barnes).

(4) By faith we understand the following important truths about creation:

(a) The worlds were made by God, meaning not only the world that we live on but all of the worlds that exist in this great universe. Nothing exists anywhere that God did not make.

(b) The worlds were made by the word of God. The word translated “word” is *rhema*, referring to God’s command. See Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26 -- “God said.” Compare Ps. 33:6 and Jn. 1:1. “God made the world by his word, that is, by his essential wisdom and eternal Son, and by his active will, saying, Let it be done, and it was done, Ps. 33:9” (Matthew Henry).

(c) The worlds were framed, meaning they were carefully designed and built. The incredible skill of the Creator is evident in every

aspect of His creation. The Greek word translated framed, “katartizo,” means “to put in order, to arrange, to complete.” “The meaning here is, that they were set in order by the word of God. This implies the act of creation, but the specific idea is that of arranging them in the beautiful order in which they are now” (Barnes).

(d) Note that “*things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*” This means that the worlds were made of nothing. The word for “create” in Genesis 1 is the Hebrew “bara” and it means to make out of nothing. Thus, matter is not eternal. That “*things which are seen were not made of things which do appear*” might also mean that the physical creation is made from invisible elements. “A most interesting principle pertaining to atomic physics is found here. Matter which we can see is comprised of non-matter. Physicists in the twentieth century have come to understand that the various particles of atomic structure are in reality more energy than matter. ... Many centuries before modern scientists came to only partial knowledge of the essence of matter, the Word of God already had defined it here. God created it by the word of his mouth. The physical creation and all that is thereon essentially is of another dimension than is commonly assumed” (Sorenson).

b. It was by faith in God’s Word that **ABEL** offered his sacrifice (Heb. 11:4; Gen. 4:1-15).

(1) Abel was the first prophet, and he offered by faith because God had spoken to him and taught him the right way of worship (Lk. 11:50-51). Abel’s sacrifice spoke of the following:

(a) It spoke of confession of sin. By bringing this offering, Abel was acknowledging that he was a sinner and that he could not approach God in his own self but that he was required to approach God through a substitute.

(b) It spoke of the wages of sin, which is death. Compare Rom. 6:23.

(c) It spoke of the efficacy of the blood, that without the shedding

of blood is no remission. Not only did the lamb have to be killed, it had to be killed in a bloody manner and its blood sprinkled as an offering.

- (d) It spoke of salvation by grace without works through the payment made by Another.
 - (e) It spoke of faith in the coming Redeemer. The prophet Abel was taught that God would raise up salvation through Christ (Lk. 1:69-70). He understood that the blood of the lamb represented the Lamb of God that would come to take away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29).
 - (f) It spoke of imputed righteousness (Heb. 11:4). Abel's righteousness was obtained by faith in the coming Messiah as represented by the sacrificial lamb.
- (2) Abel's brother Cain would have heard the same message through Abel's prophecies, but he willfully rejected the testimony and made a bloodless offering, which was rejected by God. In his rage against his prophet brother and in his hatred of Abel's God, Cain committed murder. His offering spoke of the following:
- (a) It spoke of rebellion, because it was an act of defiance against the revealed will of God.
 - (b) It spoke of self sufficiency and self works. Cain would offer unto God that which he had labored to produce.
 - (c) It spoke of the rejection of the doctrine of the fall and sin. Cain denied his need for a substitutionary offering and imputed righteousness. His offering denied that "*the wages of sin is death.*" He believed that he could be accepted by God in his own self. While recognizing that he was not perfect and that his situation with God needed improvement (after all, his parents had recently been forced from the Garden), he felt at the same time that he was "not so bad" and that a little religion could patch everything up between him and God.
 - (d) It spoke of rejection of the blood. Cain's offering was bloodless.

(3) Cain and Abel stand for the two types of religion in the world from that day to this. Abel typified the true way of salvation by grace without works through faith in the coming Messiah, whereas Cain typified the false way of works and self confidence and man's tradition. From then until now these are the only two kinds of religion in the world.

(4) Abel continues to speak even though he is dead (“*by it he being dead yet speaketh,*” Heb. 11:4). It is by his sacrifice that he speaks. It is recorded in God's Word for all who will listen, and it speaks of God's grace in Jesus Christ. This is a great challenge for every believer. What will remain of our testimony when we are dead? What message will continue to be spoken by the life we live? Will it be the sweet savor of a life lived for Christ or the rancid savor of a life lived for self?

c. It was by faith in God's Word that **ENOCH** was translated (Heb. 11:5; Gen. 5:22-24).

(1) We do not know exactly what God said to Enoch, but we know that Enoch was a prophet and that he prophesied of the second coming of Christ to judge the world. One of his amazing prophecies is actually recorded in Jude 14-15. Since we have been taught that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, we know that Enoch was translated by faith in something that God had spoken to him. He had a word from God and it was upon that word that his faith rested.

(2) Enoch's translation before the judgment of the world by water is a type of the rapture of church age saints before the Great Tribulation. Compare 1 Cor. 15:51-57 and 1 Th. 4:13-18.

(3) Enoch and Elijah are the only two men who have not died. See 2 Ki. 2:11.

(4) Enoch lived in a very wicked generation, the very generation that was destroyed in the flood. Yet he didn't allow himself to be conformed to his generation, but rather he preached the truth and rebuked his generation for its wickedness and unbelief. “Enoch is

selected as the only one of that generation signalized by eminent piety, and he appears to have spent his life in publicly reproofing a sinful generation, and in warning them of the approaching judgment, Jude 1:14, 16. The wickedness which ultimately led to the universal deluge seems already to have commenced in the earth, and Enoch, like Noah, his great-grandson, was raised up as a preacher of righteousness to reprove a sinful generation” (Barnes).

(5) What a marvelous testimony Enoch had! We are told that he walked with God (Gen. 5:22) and that he pleased God (Heb. 11:5). If the believer wants to please God, he first must walk with God, which means living his life in fellowship with and in submission to God. As the believer walks with God he learns how to please God. This is the essence of the life of faith.

d. It was by faith in God’s Word that **NOAH** built the ark (Heb. 11:7; Gen. 6:5-22). Noah’s faith was based upon the warning and instruction that God gave him.

(1) Noah’s faith is a great example of the fact that faith is the evidence of things not seen, for he acted upon a word from God about “*things not seen as yet*” (Heb. 11:7). He had never seen a boat like the ark that he was told to build. He had never seen the world flooded with water. In fact, it is possible that it had never even rained prior to the flood. Genesis 2:5-6 says that the world at that time was watered by a mist that rose up from the earth rather than by rain. We don’t have a record of rain on the earth until Genesis 7:11-12. “There was no outward evidence that what Noah believed would occur. There were no appearances in nature which indicated that there would be such a flood of waters after more than a century had passed away. There were no breakings up of the fountains of the deep; no marks of the far-distant storm gathering on the sky, which could be the basis of the calculation. The word of God was the only ground of evidence; the only thing to which he could refer gainsayers and revilers. It is so now. There are no visible signs of the coming of the Saviour to judge the world. Yet the true believer feels and acts as if it were so--resting on the sure word of God” (Barnes).

- (2) Noah's faith was evident in his actions (Heb. 11:7). Those who profess that they believe but do not live like they believe do not have true faith. That type of "faith" is dead faith (Jam. 2:17-20). We are not saved by faith plus works; we are saved by faith that works (Eph. 2:8-10).
- (3) Noah's faith involved fear ("*moved with fear,*" Heb. 11:7). Observe that it is not unwise or improper to be motivated by fear. Fear of hell should motive the sinner to flee to Christ for salvation (2 Cor. 5:11; Jude 23); fear of the judgment seat of Christ should motivate the believer to live a holy and consecrated life (2 Cor. 5:9-10); and fear of being put on a shelf should motivate the preacher to keep his body under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27).
- (4) Noah's faith was absolute and unquestioning. It was a hard thing that God required of Noah, but we do not read anywhere that he questioned God about any aspect of it, such as how it would be possible that the entire world would be destroyed by water or whether the ark would be large enough or whether he would be able to build such a boat.
- (5) Noah's faith endured and overcame every obstacle.
- (a) Noah's faith overcame the unbelief and ridicule of his age. We know that he was a preacher of righteousness to that wicked, unbelieving generation (2 Pet. 2:5). The mockers of the last days hearken back to the days of Noah when the wicked doubtless made a laughing stock of the man of God (2 Pet. 3:3-7), yet his faith overcame their ridicule and our faith can overcome the ridicule of these last days. Modern men are so proud, so puffed up in their alleged knowledge. They scoff at the Bible's miracles and deny the second coming. "It is beyond all question that Noah would be subjected to much ridicule and scorn, he would be regarded as a dreamer; a fanatic; an alarmist; a wild projector. The purpose of making preparation for such an event as the flood to occur after the lapse of an hundred and twenty years, and when there were no indications of it, and all appearances were against it, would be regarded as

in the highest degree wild and visionary. The design of building a vessel which would outride the storm, and which would live in such an open sea, and which would contain all sorts of animals with the food for them for an indefinite period, could not but have been regarded as eminently ridiculous. When the ark was preparing, nothing could have been a more happy subject for scoffing and jibes. In such an age, therefore, and in such circumstances, we may suppose that all the means possible would have been resorted to, to pour contempt on such an undertaking. They who had wit, would find here an ample subject for its exercise; if ballads were made then, no more fertile theme for a profane song could be desired than this; and in the haunts of revelry, intemperance, and pollution, nothing would furnish a finer topic to give point to a jest, than the credulity and folly of the old man who was building the ark. It would require strong faith to contend thus with the wit, the sarcasm, the contempt, the raillery, and the low jesting, as well as with the wisdom and philosophy of a whole world. Yet it is a fair illustration of what occurs often now, and of the strength of that faith in the Christian heart which meets meekly and calmly the scoffs and jeers of a wicked generation” (Barnes).

- (b) Noah’s faith endured the 120 long years that he had to wait before the flood (Gen. 6:3). “All this would be heightened by delay. The time was distant. What now completes four generations would have passed away before the event predicted would occur, Youth grew up to manhood, and manhood passed on to old age, and still there were no signs of the coming storm. That was no feeble faith which could hold on in this manner for an hundred and twenty years, believing unwaveringly that all which God had said would be accomplished. But it is an illustration of faith in the Christian church now. The church maintains the same confidence in God from age to age--and, regardless of all the reproaches of scoffers, and all the arguments of philosophy, still adheres to the truths which God has revealed. So with individual Christians. They look for the promise. They are expecting heaven. They doubt not that the

time will come when they will be received to glory; when their bodies will be raised up glorified and immortal, and when sin and sorrow will be no more. In the conflicts and trials of life, the time of their deliverance may seem to be long delayed. The world may reproach them, and Satan may tempt them to doubt whether all their hope of heaven is not delusion. But their faith fails not; and though hope seems delayed, and the heart is sick, yet they keep the eye on heaven. So it is in regard to the final triumphs of the gospel. The Christian looks forward to the time when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea. Yet that time may seem to be long delayed. Wickedness triumphs. The earth is still filled with the habitations of cruelty. The progress of the gospel is slow. The church comes up reluctantly to the work. The enemies of the cause exult and rejoice, and ask, with scoffing triumph, Where is the evidence that the nations will be converted to God? They suggest difficulties; they refer to the numbers, and to the opposition of the enemies of the true religion; to the might of kingdoms, and to the power of fixed opinion, and to the hold which idolatry has on mankind; and they sneeringly inquire. ... Yet, in the face of all difficulties, and arguments, and sneers, faith confides in the promise of the Father to the Son, that the *'heathen shall be given to him for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession,'* Ps. 2:8. The faith of the true Christian is as strong in the fulfillment of this promise, as that of Noah was in the assurance that the guilty world would be destroyed by a flood of waters" (Barnes).

- (6) Noah's faith brought righteousness (Heb. 11:7). Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord because of his faith (Gen. 6:8). Righteousness has always been accounted to sinners by grace through faith. The sinner has no perfect righteousness which is acceptable to God. The only way he can become righteous in God's holy sight is by having Christ's righteousness accounted to him by grace through faith. This is how Noah was saved before the flood; it is how Abraham was saved after the flood (Rom. 4:1-5); and it was how David was saved during the Law (Rom. 4:6-8). No man has ever been saved by his works or by any righteousness he has in himself.

(7) Noah saved his own house (Heb. 11:7). This is where a believer's faith, good deeds, and compassion should begin. The Bible says, "*let them learn first to shew piety at home*" (1 Tim. 5:4) and "*if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*" (1 Tim. 5:8). Though the world ignored Noah's preaching, his family was saved and that is a good reward for one's labors. The Bible does not guarantee that the believer's family will be saved, but there is a close association between the salvation an individual and that of his family (Acts 16:31). "God saved his family for his sake; it was well for them that they were Noah's sons and daughters; it was well for those women that they married into Noah's family; perhaps they might have married to great estates in other families, but then they would have been drowned. We often say, 'It is good to be akin to an estate,' but surely it is better to be akin to the covenant" (Matthew Henry).

(8) Noah's faith condemned the world (Heb. 11:7). He took away any excuse they might have had. Those who did not believe Noah's preaching and perished in the flood have no excuse because it is evident that since Noah believed God, they could have believed as well. Compare Mat. 12:41-42 and 2 Cor. 2:15-16. "Good examples will either convert sinners or condemn them. There is something very convincing in a life of strict holiness and regard to God; it commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and they are judged by it. ... Noah's holy fear condemned their security and vain confidence; his faith condemned their unbelief; his obedience condemned their contempt and rebellion" (Matthew Henry).

e. It was by faith in God's Word that **ABRAHAM** journeyed to and dwelt in the land of promise (Heb. 11:8-10; Gen. 12:1-4). Here again we see that Abraham's faith was based upon God's Word. Though he did not know where he was going, he was not moving blindly because he had the solid certainty of God's promise.

(1) We see that faith steps out; it obeys. To say you have faith when you are not serving and obeying God on the basis of that faith is to

deceive yourself. If Abraham had remained in his home country and yet claimed to have believed God, it would have been nonsense.

- (2) We see that faith understands that this present life is a pilgrimage (Heb. 11:9-10). Abraham lived in the land of promise but he did not live there as a possessor but as a pilgrim. He did not build a house; he lived in a tent. He knew that this present life is not the life that he is seeking. Faith can live as a pilgrim because it continually looks beyond this brief life to the one that is eternal. *“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”* The city of God *“hath foundations,”* meaning it is eternal and unshakeable, and that certainly does not speak of anything in this present world. The Bible describes that city in glorious detail in Revelation 21-22.
- (3) Note that Abraham did not try to take possession before God’s time. He had been promised that he would own the land, but he did not try to force his will upon his neighbors or to exalt himself over them or to control their lives, because he knew that the time for this had not yet come. Likewise, the believer has been promised everything as the heir of Christ and he understands that he will rule and reign with Christ, but he also understands that this will not happen until Christ returns. Thus he does not pretend to have charismatic-style “kingdom now” authority. He is not a “reconstructionist.” He knows that in this present world he is a pilgrim and a stranger, and his goal is not to rule or to try to take over the government but to fulfill the Great Commission, after the pattern of the apostolic churches. *“How Abraham lived in Canaan, not as heir and proprietor, but as a sojourner only. He did not serve an ejection, or raise a war against the old inhabitants, to dispossess them, but contented himself to live as a stranger, to bear their unkindness patiently, to receive any favours from them thankfully, and to keep his heart fixed upon his home, the heavenly Canaan”* (Matthew Henry).
- (4) Abraham was still alive when Jacob was born (*“dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob,”* Heb. 11:9). When Abraham died, Isaac was 75 years old and Jacob was 15.

- (5) Abraham's promise was passed on to Isaac and then to Jacob (Heb. 11:9). Compare Gen. 26:3; 28:13. Abraham's sons and grandsons followed in the steps of his faith, which is a wonderful testimony. "All the saints are heirs of the same promise. The promise is made to believers and their children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call. And it is pleasant to see parents and children sojourning together in this world as heirs of the heavenly inheritance" (Matthew Henry).
- (6) Abraham's knowledge of the prophetic city of God reminds us that the saints of old had great light even before the Bible began to be written in the days of Moses. In addition to knowledge about the heavenly kingdom, the saints of old had the following revelation:
- (a) Salvation. They had revelation pertaining to substitutionary salvation. Abel's offering proves this. Abel was a prophet (Lk. 11:50-51) and offered by faith (Heb. 11:4). This means he offered according to God's Word, because "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). Prior to that, even, God had taught Adam and Eve about substitution when He clothed them in coats of skins (Gen. 3:21). He taught them that He did not accept their own attempt to cloth themselves in such a manner that they would be acceptable before Him but that it was necessary for God Himself to kill animals and to cloth them properly. This is a picture of the believer clothed in the righteousness provided by Christ.
 - (b) Saviour. They had revelation of the Redeemer who would come to the earth in the last days (Lk. 1:68-70). Job, who probably lived sometime between the flood and the days of Abraham, knew about the coming Savior (Job 19:25).
 - (d) Resurrection. They had revelation of the bodily resurrection (Job 19:26-27).
 - (e) Second Coming. They had revelation of God coming to judge wicked men. Enoch prophesied of this great truth (Jude 14-15), and he was Noah's great grandfather (Gen. 5:21-32).
 - (f) Restored earth. They had revelation of a restored earth (Acts 3:21).

f. It was by faith in God's Word that **SARAH** received strength to conceive Isaac (Heb. 11:11-12). Her faith was in what God had promised (Gen. 17:19; 21:1).

(1) Faith is to believe that God is faithful to fulfill His promises ("*she judged him faithful who had promised,*" Heb. 11:11). God had challenged Sarah with these words: "*Is any thing too hard for the LORD?*" (Gen. 18:14), and she took God at His word and agreed that nothing is too hard for the Lord. Unbelief, on the other hand, is to say that God is neither faithful nor able.

(2) In the case of Sarah we see that it is possible for a true believer to have momentary doubts. At one point Sarah actually laughed at God's promise (Gen. 18:11-14). But here she is in Hebrews 11 ensconced in God's Hall of Faith. She laughed, but she did not continue laughing. She stumbled and fell but she got up and continued on. That is genuine faith.

(3) Conception of children is under God's control. We see this throughout the Bible. When Eve conceived Cain, she wisely and properly said, "*I have gotten a man from the Lord*" (Gen. 4:1), and when Cain was killed and Eve conceived Seth, she again said, "*For God hath appointed me another seed*" (Gen. 4:25). See also Gen. 20:18; 25:21; 29:31; 30:2, 17, 22; Ps. 139:16.

(4) Faith is rewarded by multiplication (Heb. 11:12). God does not add blessings; He multiplies them! The God who made the single seed of corn to bear hundreds of seeds is the God with whom the believer has to do, and if God multiplies His blessings in the physical realm even more does He multiply them in the spiritual, and if He multiplies them in this present, sin-cursed world, even more will He multiply them in the next.

g. In light of the fact that faith is based upon God's Word, we see how important it is for the believer to maintain an intimate relationship with the Bible.

(1) In order to have faith, we must read the Bible (1 Tim 4:13; Rev. 1:3).

(2) In order to have faith, we must study the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15). Faith only comes from the Bible as it is properly understood, and this requires study.

(3) In order to have faith, we must hear the Bible preached and taught. In this light we are reminded of the importance of being faithful to a true Bible-believing church. Being faithful to the preaching and teaching of God's Word is the way to maintain and increase one's faith. Seven times in Rev. 2-3 we are commanded to hear what the Spirit "*saith to the churches.*"

(4) In order to have faith, we must memorize the Bible (Ps. 119:11).

4. Faith believes God no matter what the circumstance.

- a. Abel believed God even though his brother ridiculed and hated him.
- b. Enoch believed God even though he lived in a wicked and unbelieving generation that rejected God and doubtless mocked his faith.
- c. Noah believed God and built the ark even though he had probably never seen rain and certainly had never seen a worldwide flood. He obeyed God even though his neighbors mocked him. He obeyed God even though the work was long and difficult.
- d. Abraham believed God even though he never took possession of the promised land during his earthly life and even though the promised son was long in coming and even though he had trouble with his neighbors and trouble from the pagans and trouble from his own family. Faith sees beyond the circumstances.
- e. Sarah believed God even though she was past age to bear children and even though the promise was a very long time in coming.
- f. Likewise, we need to believe God today even if we are hated and misunderstood, even if we are poor or uneducated or untalented or old or unmarried or married to an unbeliever or sick or whatever. The man who truly lives by faith can live above and beyond the circumstances of life because he knows that God will take care of him and he knows that the future is bright.

5. Faith looks beyond this life (Heb. 11:13-16).

- a. The reason that the Old Testament saints could endure suffering and walk in God's will as pilgrims and strangers in this present world is because they looked beyond this life. Their eyes were focused on eternity. They could refuse the sinful pleasures of this world's cities because they saw a better city to come. To be an overcomer in this life one must take the long look by faith. New believers need to do this. Old believers need to do this. Young people need to do this. Old people need to do this. The way to continue serving God diligently is to keep one's eyes upon eternity.
- b. God's salvation is not complete in this present life and His promises are not all fulfilled ("*not having received the promises,*" Heb. 11:13). The believer has the down payment to his salvation, which is the indwelling Spirit (Eph. 1:12-14), but he does not yet possess everything that has been promised. We do not yet possess the resurrection body and the heavenly riches. This present life, therefore, is one of "*waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*" (Rom. 8:23). The so-called "kingdom now theology" is false. Though the believer has been translated into the kingdom of Christ in a spiritual sense (Col. 1:13), he is waiting for the kingdom in a physical sense (2 Pet. 1:11), which kingdom will not appear until Christ returns (2 Tim. 4:1).
- c. God requires patience of those who believe His promises. This is why we are required to wait on their fulfillment. This is why we do not always receive answers to prayer instantaneously. This is why we must at times live in sickness and lack and distress in this present world, even though we have been promised perfection and glory.
- d. God's people are strangers in this present world (Heb. 11:13). Jesus said, "*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you*" (Jn. 15:18), and, "*Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets*" (Lk. 6:26). And John said, "*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you*" (1 Jn. 3:13).
- e. Through faith one can be persuaded of unseen things ("*having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them,*" Heb. 11:13). "Faith in what God

has declared gives the soul absolute assurance and firm conviction of the reality of things which the natural eye has never seen. Yet these things are as real to the man of faith as anything that he can see, feel, taste, smell, or handle. In fact, they become even more real, for his senses might deceive him, but the Word of God he knows to be absolutely infallible” (Ironsides).

- f. True faith not only “believes,” it embraces (*“having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,”* Heb. 11:13). True faith is merely not to believe facts but to act upon what one believes. To say that I believe that a boat is seaworthy is one thing, but it is not a biblical sort of faith until I act upon that belief and get into the boat and launch out into the stormy sea. To say that I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sin and that He is the Lord and Saviour is mere “head knowledge” until I act upon that and reject all other hopes and gods and cast myself upon Him and bow before Him exclusively. Biblical faith embraces and acts upon what it claims to believe.
- g. True faith confesses itself (*“and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth,”* Heb. 11:13). True faith is not quiet. It does not remain secret. What is believed in the heart must be confessed with the mouth (Rom. 10:9-10). And what is believed and confessed truly will be exemplified in the life. The only secret disciple that we read of in the Gospels is Joseph of Arimathaea, but even he did not keep his faith a secret for he came to Pilate and requested the body of Jesus (Jn. 19:38).
- h. Believers must be careful not to be mindful of this present world (Heb. 11:15). See 1 Jn. 2:15-17. The believer knows that this world is not his home, he’s “just a passing through.” “They did not hanker after the plenty and pleasures of it, nor regret and repent that they had left it; they had no desire to return to it” (Matthew Henry).
- i. Those who turn back to the world prove that they never had true faith (Heb. 11:15). It proves that they had remained mindful of the present world and were never truly persuaded of that better country.
- j. Heaven is a place (Heb. 11:16). It is here called a country and a city.

(1) It is called “*the city of the living God*” (Heb. 12:22).

(2) It is called “*paradise*” (Lk. 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7). This refers to an Eden-like place.

(3) It is a place of mansions (Jn. 14:2).

(4) The New Jerusalem is described in some detail in Revelation 21-22. It is a real city with gates and streets and rivers and trees, though splendid beyond our present comprehension.

k. God is not ashamed to be called their God; therefore, let us not be ashamed of Him (Heb. 11:16). “Notwithstanding their meanness by nature, their vileness by sin, and the poverty of their outward condition, God is not ashamed to be called their God: such is his condescension, such is his love to them; therefore let them never be ashamed of being called his people, nor of any of those that are truly so, how much soever despised in the world. Above all, let them take care that they be not a shame and reproach to their God, and so provoke him to be ashamed of them; but let them act so as to be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory” (Matthew Henry).

6. Faith is tested (Heb. 11:17-19).

a. It is important to understand that faith is always tested. Abraham’s faith was tested severely, both before and after Isaac’s birth. His faith was tested soon after he arrived in the promised land, when the famine came. Abraham failed that test and fled to Egypt, a place God had not spoken of. After Isaac’s birth, Abraham’s faith was tested again when he was told to offer his son upon Mt. Moriah, and he passed that test.

(1) God does not tempt men to sin (Jam. 1:13). He tests faith to demonstrate its character and to make it shine brighter and gain greater rewards (1 Pet. 1:7).

(2) Abraham’s trial is doubtless the greatest one that a natural man has ever endured. It was amazing in every way. Abraham had waited for the promised son for so many long years and he had finally arrived and was his greatest joy. The son’s very name meant laughter and

was descriptive of the joy that he brought his elderly parents. All of their hopes and aspirations, all of the magnificent promises of God, were wrapped up in this child. And now God had commanded Abraham to go to Mt. Moriah and offer this son as a burnt offering. There is no record that Abraham argued with God or that he faltered. He did as God had commanded, fully intending to offer Isaac, believing that God would raise him from the dead. This is an amazing and mysterious event. Some unbelievers have used it as an opportunity to cast aspersion upon God's character or to make the claim that the God of the Old Testament is not the God of the New, but the record tells us that God did not allow Abraham to actually kill his son and that He never intended for him to do such a thing. God commanded Abraham to offer his son not because he wanted a human sacrifice but because he wanted to test Abraham's faith and to create a lovely type of the offering of Jesus Christ by God the Father. As Abraham and Isaac went alone to Mt. Moriah, God the Father and God the Son went alone to Calvary and there accomplished the terrible offering that was required for man's salvation. "It was faith at its highest, triumphing over every question that the human mind could raise, and depending upon the living God who is the God of resurrection to work out His own wondrous purpose of grace. Such faith could not fail of reward" (Ironsides).

- b. Every believer's faith is tested (Acts 14:22; Jam. 1:2-3; 1 Pet. 1:6-7). If a person professes to believe in Jesus Christ, that faith will be tested by trials and tribulations. The "*time of temptation*" always follows a profession (Lk. 8:13). If a person takes a new step of faith in his Christian life, to begin studying the Bible more faithfully or to give more to the Lord's work or to be more faithful to church or to become more involved in serving the Lord or whatever, he can be sure that his step of faith will be tested.
- c. Genuine faith endures testing. It is like gold that increases in value as it is put through the fire. Abraham was willing to endure the harsh trial because he was convinced in his faith. He believed that God would even raise Isaac up from the dead if necessary.

7. Faith makes for good dying (Heb. 11:20-22).

In this section we see the deaths of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Faith is not only a great way to live, it is a great way to die. Those who die without faith in the true and living God and in His salvation in Jesus Christ die an entirely different sort of death than the believer.

- a. When one dies by faith he is able to leave blessings upon others (Heb. 11:20-21). He who dies by faith does not think only of himself because he who lives by faith does not live only for himself. Only the Lord knows how many blessings have come upon children because of the faith and prayers of godly parents and grandparents.
- b. When one dies in faith he has the wisdom to know God's will (Heb. 11:20). Isaac loved Esau and wanted the best for him and in a time of weakness he even tried to give him the Abrahamic blessing, but he recovered from his lapse into unbelief and understood that his sons were not the same and that their future was not the same. He understood by faith that God had chosen Isaac to inherit the promises and that Esau was a worldly man who did not value the things of God. In contrast, unbelievers lack such important wisdom regarding their loved ones and regarding life in general. They waste their blessings and property, because they lack the wisdom to discern spiritual things.
- c. When one dies by faith he dies worshipping (Heb. 11:21). Contrast the way that unbelievers die, many of whom have gone out into eternity angry at God and even cursing Him. "In Jacob's case, too, it was when he was dying that faith shone out most triumphantly. ... His had been a long life for self and a short life for God, but he passed off the scene as a worshipper, triumphing by faith" (Ironsides).
- d. When one dies in faith he can strengthen himself to complete his God-given task (Heb. 11:21). Jacob knew that it was God's will to bless Joseph's sons and though he was very old and sick, he strengthened himself to perform this task and to worship God even though he had to lean upon his staff. As long as there is breath, there is no retirement from the will of God.

- e. When one dies by faith he is confident of the future (Heb. 11:20, 22). Isaac knew the future because He believed the promises of God. He knew that the promises of God to Abraham would be fulfilled and he knew that he and his son Isaac had a part in that. Joseph knew that his people would depart Egypt at the appointed time and that they would journey to the promised land (Gen. 50:24-25). In his mind, there was no question about this. Like Job, Joseph also knew that he would be resurrected and would see his Lord and Saviour face to face (Job 19:25-27). What a contrast this is to the death of an unbeliever! The weeping and wailing that is often evident at a pagan's funeral is indicative of the fact that they have no hope for the future.
- f. When one dies in faith, he does not leave crucial things undone. These men were careful to finish all of the necessary business that God had given them. They did not wait until it was too late. The wise believer knows that his life is but a vapor and he is careful to finish God's will while there is time.

8. Faith makes for good parenting (Heb. 11:23).

It is not Moses' faith that is in view in this verse but that of his parents.

- a. Because of their faith that Moses was a special child and that God had His hand upon him, they did not fear the king's commandment and rather hid their infant son, believing that God would preserve him. It is probable that God had spoken to them about Moses, because "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). Parents of faith do many such wise things. Rather than fearing their pagan neighbors and imitating their proud but unwise ways, they raise their children in a godly manner. Rather than fearing for finances, they know that God will provide their needs. Rather than fearing their own children, they discipline them and correct them and chasten them in the fear of God.
- b. Moses' mother raised him and obviously taught him the Word of God (Ex. 2:7-10). It was on the basis of this training that Moses was able to exercise such dramatic faith in God's Word. Compare Timothy, who was trained by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).

9. Faith makes wise choices (Heb. 11:24-27).

Moses was the adopted son of Pharaoh, the richest, most powerful man in the world. “Pharaoh's daughter is said to have been his only child, and was herself childless; and having found Moses, and saved him as she did, she resolved to take him and bring him up as her son; and so he stood fair to be in time king of Egypt” (Matthew Henry). Moses could have had everything this world has to offer, but he chose rather to cast his lot with the despised and poor people of God. He did this by faith.

a. Why did Moses make this choice of faith?

- (1) He understood that the pleasures of sin are but for a season (Heb. 11:25). He had the “long look” which is the only wise way to look at life. Hollywood and Bollywood rarely give the long look. The movie industry depicts the pleasures of sin, but rarely does it depict the wages of sin. It is a wise young person who imitates Moses of old and rejects sin’s pleasant season for holiness’s pleasant forever.
- (2) He understood that serving God brings greater and more durable riches (Heb. 11:26). He considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. What an unusual way of thinking! How unlike the way the world looks at things. Faith sees life in its proper perspective. Note that it is not wrong to serve God for a reward. Moses “*had respect unto the recompence of the reward.*” The New Testament is filled with promises of reward for service and sacrifice, and it cannot therefore be wrong for a believer to be motivated by such. See Mat. 6:20; 10:41-42; 19:29; Lk. 6:38; 1 Cor. 3:8, 14; 15:58; 2 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 6:9; 1 Tim. 6:17-19; 1 Pet. 5:4.
- (3) He saw the invisible God (Heb. 11:27). He saw things by faith that the world does not see. The unsaved live their lives with their eyes exclusively upon this world. They cannot see beyond this world because they do not believe God’s Word. Those among them who think they can see beyond the veil of death are deceived and see only the delusions of their own hearts or the doctrines of devils. The believer can see the invisible God because he sees Jesus Christ. Note that it was by keeping his eyes upon the invisible God that Moses

“*endured*” (Heb. 11:27). When Peter kept his eyes upon his Saviour he could walk on the water, but as soon as he took his eyes off of Christ and onto the waves he began to sink (Mt. 14:30). The believer can endure any trial as long as he keeps his eyes upon Christ.

b. God’s people today also have to make many choices.

(1) We have choices to make pertaining to the will of God. We must choose whether to surrender to and seek God’s perfect will or not (Rom. 12:1-8). We must choose whether to put God and His business first or our own business first (Mat. 6:33).

(2) We have choices to make pertaining to holiness vs. carnality and worldliness (Titus 2:11-14; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

(3) We have choices to make pertaining to our relationship with the church (1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:25).

(4) We have choices to make pertaining to giving (Lk. 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:6-8).

(5) We have choices to make pertaining to marriage (“*only in the Lord,*” 1 Cor. 7:39) and friendships (1 Cor. 15:33).

10. Faith trusts in the blood (Heb. 11:28; Ex. 12:1-17). The Passover is a picture of our salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ.

a. The Passover lamb typifies “*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (Jn. 1:29).

b. The protection from the destroying angel typifies salvation from divine judgment (Ex. 12:12-13).

c. The lamb’s death and blood typifies Christ’s bloody death on Calvary (Ex. 12:6-7).

d. The application of the blood to the door of each house typifies the sinner’s faith in Christ whereby the blood is accounted to him (Ex. 12:7). It is only by Christ’s sacrifice and faith in that sacrifice that

sinner can be saved. “It is not owing to our inherent righteousness or best performances that we are saved from the wrath of God, but to the blood of Christ and his imputed righteousness. If any of the families of Israel had neglected the sprinkling of this blood upon their doors, though they should have spent all the night in prayer, the destroying angel would have broken in upon them, and slain their first-born” (Matthew Henry).

- e. The seven-day feast of unleavened bread that immediately followed the Passover typifies the holiness of life that follows salvation (Ex. 12:15-17; Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 2:11-14).

11. Faith overcomes and endures (Heb. 11:29-37).

- a. Hebrews 11 concludes by pointing out that there are two kinds of faith, overcoming and enduring. In Hebrews 11:29-35a, we see that often times God’s people were given faith to overcome obstacles and difficulties, to walk through the Red Sea, to see the walls of an enemy city fall down, to overcome enemy armies, to stop the mouths of lions, to go through the fire without being burned, to see the dead raised. But notice that the situation changes dramatically mid-way through verse 35 -- “*and OTHERS were tortured, not accepting deliverance ... And OTHERS had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented*” (Heb. 11:35-37). In these cases, God’s people had the same faith as those described in the earlier verses, but the outcome was different. Instead of the fire being quenched, the fire burned them up. Instead of the dead being raised, they remained dead. Instead of escaping the sword, they were devoured by the sword. We all want God to give us overcoming faith so that the trials and obstacles are removed. If we are imprisoned, we want the jail door to swing open. If we are destitute, we want riches; if tormented, deliverance; if afflicted, healing. But God does not always grant such things. Oftentimes, we are required to endure the trial rather than overcome it, but the faith that is granted to endure is as real and significant as that which is granted to overcome.

b. Notice that God gives faith according to His own will. The people described in Hebrews 11 did not choose their circumstances nor did they choose whether they would have to endure the circumstance or overcome it. God makes that determination and the believer's part is to accept his lot.

c. Other lessons from Hebrews 11:29-37

(1) Lessons from the passage through the Red Sea (Heb. 11:29; Ex. 14)

(a) God allowed Israel to become trapped so that there was no natural way of escape. Behind them was the army of Egypt and before them was the great sea. There was no way to run, no place to hide, no strength to fight, no means of escape. In this situation they had only one direction to look, and that was UP! God often removes our human supports so that we will be cast upon Him.

(b) As the parting of the sea was a great miracle, we are reminded that there is nothing too hard for God (Jer. 32:17). The account in Exodus 14 has been discounted by theological liberals. Some have said that it was not a sea but a marsh. If so, that would have been just as great a miracle because the Bible says the armies of Pharaoh were overwhelmed and drowned! Actually, we know that God miraculously parted the sea just as the Bible says and the Israelites were able to cross over on dry land, but when the Egyptian armies attempted to cross, the seas closed and they were drowned.

(c) There is a judgment of the wicked. God destroyed the unbelieving, rebellious Egyptians who were not covered by the blood of the Passover, and He will just as surely judge every sinner who rejects His salvation in Jesus Christ.

(2) Lessons from the falling of the walls of Jericho (Heb. 11:30; Jos. 6). The following is from Warren Wiersbe's *Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*:

(a) They obeyed their leaders (Josh. 6:6-9). We noted God's

‘spiritual chain of command’ in Josh 1, and here we see it in operation. The people respectfully listened to God’s Word from their leaders and obeyed what God commanded. They manifested unity, cooperation, and singleness of mind in the ranks; and God gave them the victory.

- (b) They had patience and faith (Josh. 6:10-14). Could God have delivered the city to Joshua on the first day? Certainly! But the requirement of six days of marching (during which the people were not allowed to talk) was a great means of discipline for the nation. Faith and patience go together (Heb. 6:11-15). Maintaining silence and waiting for God’s appointed time also required discipline. James 3:1-2 teaches us that people who can control their speech are mature in the faith; also see Prov. 16:32.
- (c) They trusted God for the impossible (Josh. 6:15-16). Who ever heard of taking a city using weapons like shouts and trumpets? But the ark (representing Christ’s presence) was with them, and this meant that God would do the work. With God, all things are possible. See Jer. 33:3.
- (d) They obeyed Him in every detail (Josh. 6:17-25). The loot of the city was to be ‘devoted to God’; the animals and citizens were to be slain; Rahab and her family were to be saved alive.

(3) Lessons from Rahab (Heb. 11:31; Josh. 2:1-21)

- (a) A harlot was saved by faith when more righteous people (humanly speaking) in Jericho perished. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God and none can be saved by their own works apart from the imputed righteousness of Christ.
- (b) Rahab’s faith showed itself in the good deeds she did toward the Jewish spies (Jam. 2:25). Faith that does not evidence itself in good works is not true faith.
- (c) Rahab joined herself with the people of God. This is another evidence of faith. It desires communion with God’s people. Those who believed on the day of Pentecost “*continued steadfastly in ... fellowship*” (Acts 2:42).

- (d) Rahab became a great-great grandmother of Jesus (Mat. 1:5). Rahab married an Israelite named Salmon and had a son named Boaz, who married Ruth and had a son named Obed, who was the father of Jesse, the father of king David.
- (4) We are reminded from this account in Hebrews that there is much that we do not know in regard to the saints of old. There are things mentioned here that the Old Testament does not record. The Bible does not attempt to be a complete account of the history of God's people.
- (5) We do know some of the particulars of some of the accounts that are mentioned in general in Hebrews (Heb. 11:33-37).
- (a) Kingdoms were subdued (Heb. 11:33) by Joshua (Josh. 6-13) and by David (2 Sam. 5:4-25; 8:1-14).
 - (b) Samson, David, and Daniel stopped the mouths of lions (Jud. 14:5-6; 1 Sam. 17:33-36; Dan. 6:20-23).
 - (c) Daniel's three friends quenched the violence of fire (Dan. 3:19-28).
 - (d) David escaped the edge of Goliath's sword (1 Sam. 17) and of Saul's (1 Sam. 24), and Mordecai and the Jews escaped the sword of Haman (Es. 8:7-17).
 - (e) Gideon was made strong out of weakness (Jud. 7:19-25).
 - (f) Samson, Jonathan, David, David's mighty men and others waxed valiant in fight (Jud. 15:14-20; 1 Sam. 14:4-14; 1 Sam. 17; 2 Sam. 23:8-39).
 - (g) We know of two women who received their dead raised to life again (1 Ki. 17:22-24; 2 Ki. 4:8-37).
 - (h) Many had trial of cruel mockings, including Samson (Jud. 16:25), Elisha (2 Ki. 2:23), and Jeremiah (Jer. 20:7).
 - (i) As for scourgings, twice Jeremiah was smote and once put into the stocks (Jer. 20:2; 37:15).
 - (j) Many had trial of bonds and imprisonment, including Joseph

(Gen. 39:20), Micaiah (1 Ki. 22:27), Hanani (2 Chron. 16:0), and Jeremiah (Jer. 32:3-4; 37:15; 38:6-13).

(k) Naboth was stoned (1 Ki. 21:13-15), as was Zechariah (2 Ch. 24:20-21).

(l) Tradition says that Isaiah was sawn asunder by Manasseh.

(m) Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:7-12).

(n) David wandered about when fleeing from Saul (1 Sam. 22:1; 23:15, 19; 24:1-3; 26:1). Elijah wandered about when hiding from Ahab and fleeing from Jezebel (1 Ki. 17:3; 19:9).

(6) A good report from God comes only by faith (Heb. 11:39), for *“without faith it is impossible to please him”* (Heb. 11:6).

(7) God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (Heb. 11:40). “In other words, we may say of Old Testament saints that their souls were all safe in God's keeping; their eternal salvation was absolutely assured; but the work upon which all this rested had not yet taken place. They were, if we may so speak, saved on credit. In the cross their responsibility was discharged, and now they, with us, are made perfect” (Ironsides).

Review Questions Hebrews 11:1-40

1. What verse says that without faith it is impossible to please God?
2. What verse says “ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart”?
3. What verse says to seek first the kingdom of God?
4. What verse says faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God?
5. What verse speaks of the “many infallible proofs”?
6. What is the first example of faith in Hebrews 11?
7. How does the writer of Hebrews confirm the Genesis account of creation?
8. What does the statement “things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” mean?
9. What verse says Abel was the first prophet that was killed?
10. How did Abel obtain righteousness?
11. What do Cain and Abel stand for?
12. What chapter in the Old Testament describes Enoch?
13. Where in the New Testament do we find one of Enoch’s sermons?
14. Enoch’s translation is typical of what prophetic event?
15. Who is the other man who did not die?
16. What does it mean to walk with God?
17. What passage says the world was watered by a mist that rose up from the earth before the flood?
18. What verse says Noah was a preacher of righteousness?
19. What verse says God would wait for 120 years before sending the flood?
20. How did Noah’s faith condemn the world?
21. What is the significance of the fact that Abraham lived in a tent?
22. What two chapters of the Bible describe the eternal city of God?
23. What Old Testament character testified of his faith in the bodily resurrection?

24. Which one of Noah's great grandfathers prophesied of the second coming of Christ?
25. What did God say to Sarah to challenge her faith?
26. What did Sarah do when she first heard God tell Abraham about the promised son?
27. Since faith is based upon God's Word, what significance does this have as to the believer's relationship with the Bible?
28. What verse says the believer is waiting for the redemption of the body?
29. What verse says "Marvel not if the world hate you"?
30. How do we know that Heaven is a real place?
31. In what verse did Jesus promise that there are mansions in heaven?
32. What verse says God does not tempt men to sin?
33. Why does God test faith?
34. What was the greatest trial that a natural man has ever endured?
35. What verse says the trying of your faith worketh patience?
36. How long do sin's pleasures last?
37. What are two verses in the New Testament that promise reward to the believer who serves God?
38. In the Old Testament Passover, what did the application of the blood to the door of each house typify?
39. What was the feast that followed the Passover and what did it signify?
40. Does faith always overcome obstacles?
41. What ex-harlot was a great great grandmother of Jesus?

CONCLUDING EXHORTATION TO BELIEVERS (Hebrews 12:1 - 13:19)

SECTIONAL OVERVIEW

This lengthy exhortation concludes the book of Hebrews. The author has given wonderful doctrine. He has exalted Jesus Christ and explained the Old Testament priesthood and tabernacle. From time to time he has paused to exhort his readers and now he concludes with further exhortations. Doctrine is not given in Scripture merely to satisfy the intellect; it is intended to change how one lives. As Paul instructed Titus, “*But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine*” (Titus 2:1). It is not enough to understand the grace of God as a doctrine; that grace should teach us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Tit. 2:12). It is not enough to know prophetic truth; that truth should motive us to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

1. Let us lay aside every hindrance and run the race with patience (Heb. 12:1-4).

- a. The Christian life is described as a race to be run. Consider some of the lessons from this:
 - (1) Running a race is a strenuous activity. The Christian life is not passive. Though we are saved by grace without works, we are saved unto good works (Eph. 2:8-10).
 - (2) Running a race requires preparation and training, and this is true for the Christian life. There is a rule book to be mastered and exercises to be done to strengthen one’s spiritual muscles. One must become skilful in the word of righteousness and exercise the senses to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:13-14). One must exercise unto godliness (1 Tim. 4:7-8) and stir up the gift of God (2 Tim. 1:6).

(3) Running a race requires complete dedication to the task and involves laying aside everything that would hinder, and the Christian race requires no less.

(a) There are weights that hinder. A weight is not necessarily the same thing as the sin that is mentioned in the same verse. There are things that can hinder me from fulfilling the will of God that are not wrong in themselves, but they are wrong for me. Anything that impedes the runner is a weight that should be laid aside. I once met a Christian brother in Singapore who had been a chess champion before he was saved and who had given his life to the Lord and was called to preach. While attending Bible college, he was offered a job writing a chess column in a newspaper, and he eagerly agreed to do so in order to earn some needed money. But he learned that if he allowed his mind to go in the direction of chess, he was unable to concentrate properly upon his Bible studies, therefore he gave up the job. Chess in itself is not wrong, but in his case it was a weight that was hindering him from doing the will of God. There are weights that keep believers from studying the Bible as they should, weights that keep them from praying as they should, weights that keep them from attending church as they should, weights that keep them from witnessing as they should. Anything can be such a weight, and we must be ready to give it up for the sake of running the race that God has set before us.

(b) There are sins that hinder. Note that there are sins that easily beset the Christian (“*the sin which doth so easily beset us,*” Heb. 12:1). William Tyndale translated this, “the sin that hangeth on us.” Harry Ironside observes, “There is no saint so holy but that he realizes he has certain tendencies, which if allowed to control him, would lead to the breakdown of his testimony.” This passage refutes the doctrine of sinless perfectionism. Every believer knows the truth of what this verse is saying. There are indeed sins that easily beset us, and it is a different thing for each believer. We all have the same sin nature, the old flesh, the old Adam, and it is from this old nature that all sin arises (Mk. 7:21-23), but depending on one’s background and personal

situation the specific sins that beset us tend to be different. Barnes divides such sins into four general categories: “First, those to which we are particularly exposed by our natural temperament or disposition. In some this is pride, in others indolence, or gaiety, or levity, or avarice, or ambition, or sensuality. Second, those in which we freely indulged before we became Christians. They will be likely to return with power, and we are far more likely, from the laws of association, to fall into them than into any other. Thus a man who has been intemperate is in special danger from that quarter; a man who has been an infidel is in special danger of scepticism; one who has been avaricious, proud, gay, or ambitious, is in special danger, even after conversion, of again committing these sins. Third, sins to which we are exposed by our profession, by our relations to others, or by our situation in life. They whose condition will entitle them to associate with what are regarded as the more elevated classes of society, are in special danger of indulging in the methods of living and of amusement that are common among them; they who are prospered in the world are in danger of losing the simplicity and spirituality of their religion; they who hold a civil office are in danger of becoming mere politicians, and of losing the very form and substance of piety. Fourth, sins to which we are exposed from some peculiar weakness in our character. On some points we may be in no danger. We may be constitutionally so firm as not to be especially liable to certain forms of sin. But every man has one or more weak points, in his character; and it is there that he is particularly exposed. A bow may be in the main very strong. All along its length there may be no danger of its giving way--save at one place where it has been made too thin, or where the material was defective--and if it ever breaks, it will of course be at that point. That is the point, therefore, which needs to be guarded and strengthened. So in reference to character. There is always some weak point which needs especially to be guarded, and our principal danger is there. Self-knowledge, so necessary in leading a holy life, consists much in searching out those weak points of character where we are most exposed; and our

progress in the Christian course will be determined much by the fidelity with which we guard and strengthen them” (Barnes).

- (4) Running a race requires persistence, patience. A race is not won by starting well but by finishing well. This is true for the Christian life. It is not enough to become enthused at some point in one’s life and to start out to serve the Lord, one must pursue God’s service diligently to the end. One must “*finish the course*” (2 Tim. 4:7). Like Archippus, each believer must “*take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it*” (Col. 4:17).
- (5) Running a race requires learning one’s strengths. Some are cut out to be long distance runners, while others are more adept at sprinting. Likewise, living the Christian life requires that the believer learn his gifts and calling and focus on that as opposed to trying to be something that God has not called him to be (Rom. 12:3-8).
- (6) Running a race is a tiresome activity. One can grow weary and faint before the race is over. The same is true for the Christian life (“*lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds,*” Heb. 12:3). The danger for the true Christian is not to apostatize but to faint. It has happened to many. They do not turn away from the Lord but they quit serving the Lord. They do not renounce the Lord but they lose their first love for Him. Friends, beware of this great danger. We cannot hear those welcome words, “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant,*” if we faint in His service. There is no time in this life to retire from the service of Christ. As the late evangelist Lester Roloff often said, “It is not time to retire, but to re-fire!”
- (7) Running a race involves spectators. These observe every detail of how he runs. If he tries to cheat, they see it. If he grows weary and quits, they are watching. If he runs well they are cheering. Likewise, the believer is watched by many. His life is observed both by the unsaved and by the saved. He is watched by his friends and relatives and by his fellow church members. It is incumbent upon the believer, therefore, to run a good race that will challenge his spectators to run the same kind of race.

(8) Running a race requires obeying the rules. If one does not run according to the rules, regardless of how fast and well he runs, he cannot obtain a reward. *“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Tim. 2:5). Thus, one can run the race of the Christian life with zeal and conviction and sincerity, but unless one runs according to the teaching and example of the New Testament, there is no reward.

b. What are the helps that we have toward running our race (Heb. 12:1-4)?

(1) We consider the great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1). Not only do we have the example of how the saints of old lived for God, they are alive still and we will see them one day. They are described as a great cloud because there are so many of them that they seem to be a cloud. How strange it would be to associate with the saints on high if we fail to live for the Saviour here below. As the Isaac Watts’ hymn “When the Battle’s Over” says, “Shall I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to gain the prize and sailed through bloody seas?”

(2) We consider Jesus (Heb. 12:2-3). In all things Christ is our Captain and example. As He endured suffering, so should we. As he endured persecution, so should we. The little that we suffer is as nothing compared to what our Saviour suffered. “In the hour of discouragement when one feels inclined to cry with Jacob, ‘All these things are against me,’ lift up your eyes, tempted one, and look upon Him who knew such grief as you shall never know. Let Him be your heart’s Object. Let Him be your soul’s delight, and lifted above the cares and griefs of this present moment, you will be enabled to run unweariedly and without fainting, your appointed race” (Ironsides).

The writer of Hebrews brings various scenes from Christ’s life to our attention to challenge us to strive against sin and to run the race:

(a) Christ endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). He endured the great pain and agony of death by crucifixion.

(b) Christ despised the shame (Heb. 12:2). He not only endured the pain of the cross but the shame as well. He was mocked by Herod and his soldiers. He was rejected by His own people who desired the wicked Barabbas above Him (Mat. 27:21) and who cried out, “*Crucify him; crucify him*” (Lk. 23:21). He endured being hung naked on the cross and becoming a spectator for the mocking crowd. He endured death by the most ignoble, debasing means imaginable. “It is difficult for us now to realize the force of the expression, ‘*enduring the shame of the cross,*’ as it was understood in the time of the Saviour and the apostles. The views of the world have changed, and it is now difficult to divest the ‘cross’ of the associations of honour and glory which the word suggests, so as to appreciate the ideas which encompassed it then. There is a degree of dishonour which we attach to the guillotine, but the ignominy of a death on the cross was greater than that; there is disgrace attached to the block, but the ignominy of the cross was greater than that; there is a much deeper infamy attached to the gallows, but the ignominy of the cross was greater than that. And that word--the cross--which when now proclaimed in the ears of the refined, the intelligent, and even the gay, excites an idea of honour in the ears of the people of Athens, of Corinth, and of Rome, excited deeper disgust than the word gallows does with us, for it was regarded as the appropriate punishment of the most infamous of mankind. We can now scarcely appreciate these feelings, and of course the declaration that Jesus ‘*endured the cross, despising the shame,*’ does not make the impression on our minds in regard to the nature of his sufferings, and the value of his example, which it should do. When we now think of the ‘cross,’ it is not of the multitude of slaves, and robbers, and thieves, and rebels, who have died on it, but of the one great victim whose death has ennobled even this instrument of torture, and encircled it with a halo of glory. We have been accustomed to read of it as an imperial standard in war in the days of Constantine, and as the banner under which armies have marched to conquest; it is intermingled with the sweetest poetry; it is a sacred thing in the most magnificent cathedrals; it adorns the altar, and is even an

object of adoration; it is in the most elegant engravings; it is worn by beauty and piety as an ornament near the heart; it is associated with all that is pure in love, great in self-sacrifice, and holy in religion. To see the true force of the expression here, therefore, it is necessary to divest ourselves of these ideas of glory which encircle the ‘cross,’ and to place ourselves in the times and lands in which, when the most infamous of mankind were stretched upon it, it was regarded for such men as an appropriate mode of punishment. That infamy Jesus was willing to bear; and the strength of his confidence in God, his love for man, and the depth of his humiliation, was shown in the readiness and firmness with which he went forward to such a death” (Barnes).

- (c) Christ endured “*the contradiction of sinners against himself*” (Heb. 12:3). This refers to the opposition that Jesus experienced on every hand. He was opposed by his own relatives and neighbors and by the religious and political leaders and by the crowds. “The reference is to the Jews of the time of the Saviour, who opposed his plans, perverted his sayings, and ridiculed his claims. Yet, regardless of their opposition, he persevered in the course which he had marked out, and went patiently forward in the execution of his plans. The idea is, that we are to pursue the path of duty, and follow the dictates of conscience, let the world say what they will about it. In doing this, we cannot find a better example than the Saviour. No opposition of sinners ever turned him from the way which he regarded as right; no ridicule ever caused him to abandon any of his plans; no argument, or expression of scorn, ever caused him for a moment to deviate from his course” (Barnes).
- (d) Christ resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Heb. 12:4). This is a reference to the Garden of Gethsemane, in which Christ resisted the temptation so fiercely that “*his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*” (Lk. 22:44). Some commentators have interpreted Heb. 12:4 as a reference to resisting persecution unto blood, but it is not talking about resisting persecution; it is talking about resisting sin. Many

Jewish believers had shed blood for their faith, but none had shed blood striving against sin.

(3) We consider the joy that lies before us (Heb. 12:2). Jesus faced the cross by looking beyond the cross, and that is how we must live. We can give of our substance freely in this life, because we have our eyes upon an inheritance that waits for us in heaven. We can sacrifice any comfort or lack in this life, because we have our eyes upon the glory that awaits just over the horizon.

c. Can the saints in heaven see what is happening on earth (“*we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,*” Heb. 12:1)? This verse is not necessarily saying that those who have gone before us, those described in Hebrews 11, can actually see us, but that is a possibility. The Bible simply does not give enough light on this question to answer it dogmatically. See Deut. 29:29.

2. Let us endure chastening (Heb. 12:5-13).

a. This section continues the thought of the previous one. The subject is running the race of the Christian life and not becoming wearied and fainting. To that end the writer exhorts his readers not to despise the chastening of the Lord. He wants them to understand that God’s chastening is the reason for many troubles in the Christian life, and instead of despising this we should welcome it and allow it to do its good work in us. In verses 12-13 he concludes this section with another exhortation about not fainting.

b. The writer refers to Prov. 3:11-12, which teaches us that God chastises every one of His children and He chastises them because He loves them. Therefore, we should not faint under His chastisement.

(1) There are three things involved in the Lord’s discipline and wise parents will use the same things in the discipline of their children:

(a) Chastening (Heb. 12:6) -- This involves teaching and instruction. The Greek word translated “chasten” in Heb. 12:6 is “*paideuo*,” which is also translated “learn” (1 Tim. 1:20), “instruct” (2 Tim. 2:25), and “teach” (Tit. 2:12). This is the

foundation of child training. The parent patiently teaches the child the difference between right and wrong and makes him to understand what is required of him.

(b) Rebuking (Heb. 12:5) -- This refers to verbal correction. When the child errs, the parent lovingly rebukes him and if the child obeys the discipline ends there.

(c) Scourging (Heb. 12:6) -- This refers to physical punishment, to flogging. Of the seven times it is used in the New Testament, five times it refers to the scourging that Jesus received before He was crucified (Jn. 19:1). Parents must resort to scourging or the compassionate use of the rod when a child refuses to heed instruction and rebuke and is openly defiant to parental law. See Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15.

God employs all of these things to discipline His children, and wise parents will follow suit. Because of the sin nature, proper child discipline requires all of these. Bible-believing parents will not only correct their children verbally but will also employ the rod when necessary.

(2) We see that God is intimately involved in the believer's life. He is the Father observing every child to give it exactly the discipline that it needs. He is the Refiner who sits over the fire and controls the refining process. He is the Weaver who sees the finished carpet in his mind and who patiently weaves the proper pattern on the loom. He is the Potter who sits over the wheel and skillfully shapes the formless clay into a beautiful vessel. Far from being a fearful thing, how encouraging and wonderful is the thought that God takes a fatherly interest in me and my life, far exceeding that of the most compassionate earthly father and that all things do work together for good for those who love God and who are the called according to His purpose.

c. The writer emphasizes that chastisement is universal and that if one is not chastened he is not a true son of God (Heb. 12:7-8). This is an evidence of salvation. If a person can sin with impunity, if he can walk apart from fellowship with God and enjoy it, this is an evidence that he

is not truly saved. “*If ye endure chastening*, that is, if you undergo, or are called to experience correction. It does not mean here, ‘if you endure it patiently, or if you bear up under it,’ but if you are chastised or corrected by God. The affirmation does not relate to the manner of bearing it, but to the fact that we are disciplined” (Barnes). A bastard is typically neglected by its father, and spiritually speaking, those who are not chastened for sin are illegitimate and not sons of God. “In this way we see the difference between a backsliding child of God and one who has never truly known the Lord, but has made a profession, and then turned back into the world. The first will ever be under the chastening hand of God, if going on in self-will. The latter may seem remarkably free from any evidence of the divine disfavor, but he only proclaims thereby the sad fact that he was never a regenerated person at all, but simply one who bore the name of son but had no rightful title to it” (Ironsides).

d. The writer compares God’s chastening to that of human fathers (Heb. 12:9-10).

(1) Since we submit to and give reverence to human fathers who correct us, even though their chastisement is intermingled with selfishness and frustration and imperfection and is sometimes arbitrary and not always for our profit, how much more should we submit to God’s chastening, which is always for our profit? The writer is referring to discipline in general, of course, because we know that children do not always give reverence to their earthly fathers.

(2) God is the “*Father of spirits*” (Heb. 12:9). See Num. 16:22; 27:16; Job 33:4. “The idea seems to be, that as the soul is the most important part of man, this name is given to God by way of eminence, or he is eminently and supremely our Father. It was his to create the immortal part, and to that spirit which is never to die he sustains the relation of Father. The earthly father is parent to the man as mortal; God is the Father of man as immortal. God is himself a Spirit. Angels and human souls, therefore, may be represented as peculiarly his offspring. It is the highest designation which could be given to God to say that he is at the head of the

universe of mind; not implying that he is not also at the head of the material universe, but designing to bring into view this high characteristic of the Almighty, that all created minds throughout the universe sustain to him the relation of children. To this Great Being we should, therefore, more cheerfully subject ourselves than to an earthly parent” (Barnes).

e. We see that the objective of God’s chastisement is that we might be partakers of his holiness (Heb. 12:10). When God chastens one of His children, there is no selfishness, no pettiness, no impetuosity, no meanness, no arbitrariness, no cruelty involved. It is a holy and loving endeavor with a holy objective. To make a holy people is why Jesus died (Col. 1:22; Tit. 2:13) and holiness is God’s objective for every believer (1 Pet. 1:15).

f. Chastisement itself is not pleasant but it yields pleasant fruit (Heb. 12:11).

(1) Every child who has been chastened knows that it is not pleasant (Prov. 19:18). I was spanked by my parents and by my teachers, as well, and it was fearful and painful, but the eventual fruit of child discipline is obedience and peace, and the same is true for the Christian life.

(2) This passage reminds us that there are many unpleasant experiences in the Christian life. We must not run from these or chafe under them but embrace them in faith as blessings from the Father’s hand. “We are so likely to refer all our perplexities and difficulties merely to natural causes, and so fail to learn the lessons that they were designed to teach us by our ever patient God and Father. Or else we are likely to take everything of an adverse character as punishment, and thus become depressed in spirit because obsessed with the idea that we are constantly beaten with the rod on account of our failures. But neither view is a correct one. The truth lies in the golden mean. For the man of faith there should be no second causes. Everything will be taken as from the hand of God and even when one is called upon to share the afflictions through which the world in general is passing, the subject believer

will recognize God's hand back of it all. It is the mind of God that, as a result of the very circumstances through which His people are called upon to pass, they shall learn their own feebleness and the trustworthiness of their own hearts, and thus be cast wholly upon Himself, He who is our strength as well as our salvation, and whose delight it is to manifest His Fatherly love and care to all who cleave to Him" (Ironsides).

(3) God's chastisement through the tribulations of life produces spiritual growth (Rom. 5:3-5). The fruit of righteousness is peace (Is. 32:17; Jam. 3:17). "The apostle speaks of this as if it were a universal truth in regard to Christians who are afflicted. And it is so, There is no Christian who is not ultimately benefited by trials, and who is not able at some period subsequently to say, *'It was good for me that I was afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.'* [Ps. 119:67] When a Christian comes to die, he does not feel that he has had one trial too many, or one which he did not deserve. He can then look back and see the effect of some early trial, so severe that he once thought he could hardly endure it, spreading a hallowed influence over his future years, and scattering its golden fruit all along the pathway of life. I have never known a Christian who was not benefited by afflictions; I have seen none who was not able to say that his trials produced some happy effect on his religious character, and on his real happiness in life. If this be so, then no matter how severe our trials, we should submit to them without a murmur. The more severe they are, the more we shall yet be blessed--on earth or in heaven" (Barnes).

g. This section concludes with another warning about fainting (Heb. 12:12-13).

(1) We see that it is a real possibility under trials for the hands to hang down and the knees to become feeble and the feet to become lame and to turn aside, meaning that one is no longer busy walking with and serving the Lord. The hands are no longer turning the pages of the Bible in sweet devotion; the knees are no longer bent in intercessory prayer; the feet are no longer walking where they should and are no longer running the Lord's race as they should.

- (2) That which is weak and crippled in the individual Christian life and in the church should not be ignored and neglected. It is easy to ignore problems. It is easy to overlook when a brother in Christ is showing signs of spiritual ill health, but we must not ignore it because weakness leads to more weakness. If neglected, small spiritual problems can become large ones.
- (3) We are reminded that there is always healing available for the backslider (“*let it rather be healed,*” Heb. 12:13). The healing is available when the backslider repents and returns to the first paths, when he puts his hands back into the Lord’s service and strengthens his knees in prayer and turns his feet back into the right way. As the father was waiting and watching for the return of the Prodigal Son and hurried out to meet him and restore him (Lk. 15:20), God is ever ready and willing to grant healing to His backsliding children who repent and turn their faces to Him. There is a sin unto death, but as long as one is alive there is hope for restoration to the Lord’s fellowship and service (1 Jn. 5:16).

3. Let us follow peace and holiness (Heb. 12:14).

a. Notice the two-fold exhortation:

(1) Follow peace with all men

- (a) This is a powerful, broad, far-reaching obligation. The God of peace delights in peace. He blesses the peacemakers (Mat. 5:9). It is God’s will that His people relinquish their natural passions toward strife and vengeance, toward selfishness, so that they can live in peace with their fellow man. Toward this end Paul taught the believers at Corinth that it is better to “*suffer yourselves to be defrauded*” than to go to court against one another (1 Cor. 6:7). The Bible says that wars and fightings come because of lusts that men pursue (Jam. 4:1-3). Compare Rom. 14:19; Jam. 3:17; 1 Pet. 3:11. The latter verse exhorts us to “*ensue*” peace. This means to pursue after it. The same Greek word is translated “*follow*” in Heb. 12:14 and “*press toward*” in Phi. 3:14. It is a word that is often translated “*persecute*” (Acts 9:4), so the Spirit of God is telling us that the believer should

pursue peace as diligently as evil men pursue persecution, as Saul did before his conversion.

- (b) This is spoken particularly in the context of the present persecutions and loving one's enemies. Compare Mat. 5:43-48. "The connexion here requires us to understand this mainly of persecutors. The apostle is referring to the trials which those whom he addressed were experiencing. Those trials seem to have arisen mainly from persecution, and he exhorts them to manifest a spirit of kindness towards all, even though they were engaged in persecuting them" (Barnes).
- (c) This is not an absolute thing. Compare Rom. 12:18. The Lord Jesus Himself didn't live in peace with all men in an absolute sense, and His apostles also had many conflicts. The believer is not to follow peace with all men in the sense of putting their feelings and concerns before the Lord. In that sense, we are not supposed to please men but God. See Gal. 1:10; Jam. 3:17. "While 'following peace with all men,' we are not so to seek to please them, as to make God's will and our sanctification a secondary object; this latter must be our first aim" (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

(2) Follow holiness

- (a) What is holiness? It is separation from sin. It is "*to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit*" (2 Cor. 7:1). It is the opposite of uncleanness (1 Th. 4:7). It is godly living (2 Pet. 3:11).
- (b) What does it mean to "follow"? It means to pursue after it and to continue in it. It means that this should be the trend of our lives. "The original word imports a vehement pursuit, a metaphor taken from huntsmen, who follow the chase, and pursue their game though it flies before them" (William Burkitt).
- (c) Observe that holiness and peace are associated. Pursuing holiness quenches those sinful passions that produce strife and war. "Instead of yielding to contending passions and to a spirit

of war; instead of seeking revenge on your persecutors and foes, make it rather your aim to be holy, Let that be the object of your pursuit; the great purpose of your life. Men might in such cases counsel them to seek revenge; the spirit of religion would counsel them to strive to be holy. In such times they were in great danger of giving indulgence to evil passions, and hence the special propriety of the exhortation to endeavour to be holy” (Barnes).

(d) Observe that peace and holiness are both required. The modern ecumenical and New Evangelical philosophy often promotes peace at the sake of holiness and truth, but the Bible does not support that. There is no support for putting peace and unity above doctrine or holy Christian living. “Peace and holiness are connected together; there can be no true peace without holiness. There may be prudence and discreet forbearance, and a show of friendship and good-will to all; but this true Christian peaceableness is never found separate from holiness. We must not, under pretence of living peaceably with all men, leave the ways of holiness, but cultivate peace in a way of holiness” (Matthew Henry).

b. In what sense is holiness necessary to see the Lord?

(1) This does not mean that holiness is the *way* of salvation. Contrast Rom. 4:1-8; Eph. 2:8-9.

(2) This does not mean that holiness *perfects* one’s salvation. This same book tells us that Christ Himself perfected salvation (Heb. 10:10, 14).

(3) This does not mean that holiness is a separate experience that one must have in order to be fully saved. The “holiness” doctrine of a “second blessing” or “entire sanctification” has no basis in Scripture. If God had wanted to teach such a doctrine, He would have done so clearly and would have explained plainly how to attain and/or maintain such an experience. “It is important to observe that in this verse we do not have the positive statement which people so often substitute for what is actually written: ‘Without holiness no man

shall see the Lord.’ This expression is capable of being utterly misconstrued, and has tormented many an earnest soul who was seeking to do the very thing that the verse rightly read commands. The teaching has been based upon it that holiness is an experience called by some the second blessing, or the second work of grace, and that those who do not obtain this experience, although regenerate, will eventually lose their souls and will never see the Lord. But this is far-fetched indeed, and finds no countenance whatever in the text itself. We follow that which is ever before us. When we attain it we no longer follow it” (Ironsides).

- (4) This does mean that holiness is the evidence of one’s salvation and that if holiness is not present, one’s salvation is not real. Compare 1 Jn. 3:2-3. Notice that we are “now” the sons of God (1 Jn. 3:2). Eternal salvation is a present possession as opposed to a future possibility. But the next verse, 1 John 3:3, says, “*And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*” The believer does not purify himself in order to secure his hope in Christ; he purifies himself because he has hope in Christ. Holiness is the *fruit* of our salvation (Rom. 6:22). Salvation is a gift of God’s grace purchased by Christ, and holiness is its blessed fruit. The reason why Christ gave himself for us was “*that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*” (Tit. 2:14).

An excellent book that explains biblical holiness is “Holiness: The False and the True” by Harry Ironsides. It is available on the Internet at <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/holiness1.htm>.

4. Let us beware of failing of the grace of God, of bitterness, of fornication, and of profanity (Heb. 12:15-17).

In this passage, the writer of Hebrews warns of four great spiritual dangers: failing of the grace of God, a root of bitterness springing up, fornication, and being profane. Every church must face these dangers. Note that God’s people must look diligently to prevent these from occurring. This is not the job of pastors only but it is the job of every believer.

- a. To “*fail of the grace of God*” means to reject the grace of God and to return to a works salvation. It means to turn from the true gospel to a false, from the truth in Christ to a false religion. It is the same as falling from grace, which Paul mentioned in Galatians 5:1-4. The professing believers in Galatia were under assault by false teachers and they were in danger of turning away from the grace of Christ to a false gospel of grace plus works (Gal. 1:6-9).
- b. A “*root of bitterness*” is described as another great spiritual danger (Heb. 12:15). The word translated “bitterness” is the Greek *pikria*, which means “acridity (especially poison), literally or figuratively” (Strong). Bitterness is a natural element of the old nature (Rom. 3:14).

(1) A root of bitterness can be hidden in the heart (Jam. 3:14), but eventually it will expose itself and spring up suddenly. A root of bitterness is harbored in a heart that is not right with the Lord (Deut. 29:18). The Bible warns that husbands can become bitter toward their wives (Col. 3:19). Simon was in the “gall of bitterness” because though outwardly he professed Christ (Acts 8:13) inwardly he wanted the power to do miracles (Acts 8:18-19). Many have become bitter toward pastors because of something they have disagreed with.

(2) Bitterness is intimately associated with many other sins, particularly wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice (Eph. 4:31).

(3) Bitterness must be dealt with quickly so that it does not spring up. It is essential that anger and bitterness not be harbored and nurtured. Bitterness must be put away (Eph. 4:31). It is much better to accept offense and allow oneself even to be wronged than to harbor bitterness. Jesus was wronged in terrible ways, but He harbored no bitterness toward His persecutors and rather said, “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*” (Lk. 23:34).

(4) A root of bitterness not only corrupts the one who harbors it but others as well. Many churches have been injured and even destroyed by a root of bitterness that was harbored and nurtured in

an unforgiving and impenitent heart and eventually sprang up to defile many. Sin has a corrupting power. One bad apple can corrupt an entire barrel of good ones. “*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (1 Cor. 5:6). Peter’s hypocrisy influenced others (Gal. 2:13). It is not uncommon that there are weak and carnal Christians in a church who are easily influenced by bitter persons.

c. Fornication is another great danger to the churches and to the Christian life (Heb. 12:16). Some commentators have interpreted this as a reference to Esau, but since there is nothing in the Old Testament record to support this, I believe it is a separate sin.

(1) Fornication is a broad term that refers to every sort of sexual sin. Adultery is fornication; sex outside of wedlock is fornication; even entertaining lustful thoughts is fornication (Mat. 5:28). Therefore, viewing pornography, which is such a prevalent sin in this age, is fornication.

(2) Fornication is a sin that proceeds from man’s natural, fallen heart (Mk. 7:21).

(3) Fornication is a terrible sin that brought great judgment upon Israel (1 Cor. 10:8).

(4) When the apostles summarized the obligations of a Christian, they specifically listed abstinence from idolatry and fornication (Acts 15:20).

(5) Fornication should not even be once named among the saints (Eph. 5:3).

(6) Fornication is one of the sins that require the exercise of church discipline (1 Cor. 5:9-11).

d. A final danger mentioned in this passage is a “*profane person*” (Heb. 12:16).

(1) Esau is the prime example of a profane person, and his life gives us the definition of this danger. Esau did not value spiritual things; in fact, he so despised spiritual things that he was willing to sell his

birthright as the inheritor of Abraham's promise for a mere bowl of soup (Gen. 25:31-34).

- (2) The word "profane" is from the Greek "bebelos," meaning "crossing the door-way, i.e. (by implication of Jewish notions) heathenish, wicked" (Strong). Thus it refers to someone who is not careful about crossing over into heathenish thinking and ways. Such a person is profane-minded as opposed to spiritually-minded. He professes Christ but he doesn't properly value the things of Christ and properly devalue the things of the world. Though Esau was the son of Isaac and in the lineage of the promises of God, he was worldly-minded. "Profane" is the same as unholy (1 Tim. 1:9). It is the opposite of that which contributes to godliness (1 Tim. 4:7).
- (3) When we see this definition, we realize that there are many in the churches today who are profane like Esau. They profess Christ but they care more about the things of the world, such as sports or fishing or hunting or golfing or community affairs or business or some other pleasure or activity, than the things of God. They spend much more time with the things of the world than the things of Christ and get more excited and enthused by the things of the world.
- (4) The Word of God warns the profane Esau types to repent while there is opportunity (Heb. 12:17). There comes a time when it is too late (Prov. 1:24-31). "Sinners will not always have such mean thoughts of the divine blessing and inheritance as now they have. The time is coming when they will think no pains too great, no cares no tears too much, to obtain the lost blessing" (Matthew Henry).
 - (a) Observe that sorrow is not repentance. Esau did not repent even after he had lost the blessing. He was sorry that he had lost the blessing by his carelessness, but the Bible nowhere says that he repented. To be sorry about something is not the same as repentance. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action. Esau rather sorrowed after a worldly manner, meaning that he was sorry about the consequence of his sin but

he didn't repent of his sin toward God and had no interest in changing his ways. See 2 Cor. 7:9-10.

- (b) What does the Bible mean when it says that Esau “*found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears*”? It means that he tried to get his father to repent in the sense of changing his mind and giving the blessing to him instead of to Jacob. See Gen. 27:31-37, 41. Though in a weak moment Isaac had intended to bless Esau above his brother (Gen. 27:1-4), after he was tricked into blessing Jacob he apparently remembered that at their births God had promised to bless Jacob above Esau (Gen. 25:23) and that the matter was therefore out of his hand, even though what Jacob and his mother did was wrong.

5. Let us remember that we are not under the old covenant but the new (Heb. 12:18-24).

This passage contrasts the old covenant with the new in a dramatic fashion. The writer encourages the believers by describing the superior privileges of the new covenant.

- a. The old covenant was a fearful one that threatened destruction (Heb. 12:18-21). It is illustrated by Mt. Sinai that burned with fire and was enshrouded in darkness and tempest and a fearful trumpet and words that were so terrible that the people begged that they not have to listen (Ex. 19:16-20; 20:18-19; Deut. 5:27; 18:16).

(1) It was a covenant that had only to do with this world and with the externals, being typified by a “*mount that might be touched*” (Heb. 12:18). This does not mean that the Israelites were permitted to touch the mountain (compare Ex. 19:12); it means simply that the mountain was of this world as contrasted with the heavenly Jerusalem which is beyond this world.

(2) It was a dark covenant (Heb. 12:18), composed of types and shadows as opposed to the real things.

(3) It was a covenant that brought judgment (Heb. 12:18-19). This

was typified by the fire and blackness and tempest and the fearful trumpet and of the words that proclaimed a curse upon those who do not keep all things that are written in the law. Even Moses feared and quaked. The reason that the old covenant was so fearful was that it demanded perfect holy obedience from sinners who are incapable of giving it. The Mosaic covenant can only curse the one who does not give complete obedience. See Gal. 3:10-12. "If even the lower creation, made subject to vanity because of man's sin, would not be permitted to so much as touch the mount, and if Moses who might be considered the very best in all Israel, trembled at the thought of drawing nigh to God under such circumstances, what possible hope could there be of any ordinary man standing before Jehovah on the ground of legal righteousness?" (Ironside).

- b. The believer, by contrast, is not under the old covenant but the new, and it is an entirely different one because it is a covenant of grace through the atonement of Jesus Christ. It not only promises heaven, it makes the believer a citizen thereof even while he is still on earth (Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:13). Therefore it can be said that we are come unto the heavenly Jerusalem. Yea, we are exhorted to set our affections there rather than on this earth (Col. 3:1-4). None of this ever came through the Law. The new covenant is indeed an entirely different one! (Men were justified in the Old Testament times by faith but that was not through the law.)

(1) We are come unto the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22).

- (a) It is called mount Zion, which is the Greek spelling for the Hebrew word *Zion*. Mt. Zion was one of the hills of Jerusalem and is often used as another name for Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:7; 2 Ki. 19:31). The word "zion" means "height." The earthly Jerusalem is an emblem for and points to both the heavenly Jerusalem and the glorified Jerusalem which will be the headquarters of the Messianic kingdom. Many Old Testament scriptures prophesy that God will set the Messiah as king over Mt. Zion and make it His headquarters (Ps. 2:6; Ps. 48:2; 132:13-14; Is. 12:6; 28:16; 51:11; 59:20; 60:14; Joel 2:32).

- (b) It is called the city of the living God, because it is where God's throne resides.
 - (c) It is called the heavenly Jerusalem, because it is the heavenly reality which the earthly Jerusalem typifies and looks forward to.
- (2) We are come unto an innumerable company of angels (Heb. 12:22). The number of angels is so vast that it cannot be counted. These are the "elect angels" who did not follow Satan in his rebellion (1 Tim. 5:21). As we have seen in chapter 1, they are intelligent, powerful creatures who do God's bidding and minister to the heirs of salvation.
- (3) We are come unto the general assembly and church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23).
- (a) Churches in this present age are but foreviews and foretastes of that great church in heaven.
 - (b) The heavenly church is called the church of the firstborn because it is composed strictly of those who have been born again. Churches in this present world should attempt to have a pure membership, but no church can ever be certain that all of its members are regenerated. In contrast, none will be in that heavenly assembly who are not. See Jn. 3:3.
- (4) We are come unto God the Judge of all (Heb. 12:23).
- (a) We come directly to God. "We come unto God. There is now no separating veil, no cloud of darkness hiding His face; but in the blessed consciousness of justification from all things, we stand unabashed in His holy presence knowing that for us the sin question has been forever settled, and His perfect love has cast out all fear" (Ironsides).
 - (b) God is the judge of all. Men were not created to live for themselves and no man can avoid the divine judgment. The saved will stand at the judgment seat of Christ, and the unsaved will stand at the Great White Throne described in Revelation 20. "That great God who will judge both Jew and Gentile according

to the law they are under: believers come to him now by faith, make supplication to their Judge, and receive a sentence of absolution in the gospel, and in the court of their consciences now, by which they know they shall be justified hereafter” (Matthew Henry).

(5) We are come unto the spirits of just men made perfect (Heb. 12:23).

(a) It is the believer’s spirit that departs the body at death (Jam. 2:26) and journeys to heaven (Lk. 23:43; Phil. 1:23; 2 Tim. 4:6; Rev. 6:9). The dead are not sleeping in the grave as some have falsely taught.

(b) The saved are described as just men, because they have been justified or declared righteous through the blood of Christ (Rom. 3:24).

(c) In heaven they are made perfect, because they no longer have the old sin nature. In heaven, the believer is saved entirely from the presence and power of sin.

(6) We are come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel (Heb. 12:24). This refers to Abel’s blood which spoke of vengeance (Gen. 4:10).

(a) Jesus’ blood is the foundation for all of the believer’s blessings.

(b) Jesus is the one mediator between God and men; by His atonement He brings sinful man and a holy God together.

(c) Notice that the blood of Christ speaks and it speaks better things than that of Abel. Instead of vengeance, it speaks of complete forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation. “First, It speaks to God in behalf of sinners; it pleads not for vengeance, as the blood of Abel did on him who shed it, but for mercy. Secondly, To sinners, in the name of God. It speaks pardon to their sins, peace to their souls; and bespeaks their strictest obedience and highest love and thankfulness” (Matthew Henry).

(d) The writer uses the name “Jesus” here instead of “Christ,” because he wants to emphasize the fact that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus is the Messiah. They are one and the same, in contrast to Pharisaical teaching.

Review Questions Hebrews 12:1-24

1. What are five similarities between the Christian life and running a race?
2. What are some weights that the Christian must lay aside?
3. What are four types of sins that easily beset us?
4. In what verse does Paul say to Archippus “take heed to the ministry which thou has received of the Lord, that thou fulfill it”?
5. The danger for the true Christian is not to apostatize but to -----.
6. What verse says a man is not crowned except he strive lawfully?
7. What was the contradiction of sinners that Christ endured?
8. When did Christ resist unto blood, striving against sin?
9. What are the three elements in child discipline?
10. If a professing believer is not chastened for sin, what does that demonstrate?
11. What is the objective of God’s chastisement?
12. What is the fruit of chastisement?
13. What verse says tribulation worketh patience?
14. Why should spiritual problems not be ignored?
15. According to James, what is the source of fightings?
16. What verse says to follow after the things that make for peace?
17. What verse says, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men”?
18. According to 2 Cor. 7:1, the believer is to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the ----- and the -----.”
19. How does pursuing holiness help one keep peace?
20. What verse says every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure?
21. What does “fail of the grace of God” mean?
22. Why is a root of bitterness so dangerous?

23. What is fornication?
24. What verse says to look upon a woman lustfully is to commit fornication?
25. What is a profane person?
26. What passage contrasts the sorrow of the world with godly repentance?
27. What does the Bible mean when it says that Esau “*found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears*”?
28. Why did the Mosaic covenant bring only judgment?
29. Where was Mt. Zion?
30. What does “zion” mean?
31. What city does Mt. Zion refer to?
32. Why does God call the angels in heaven “elect angels.”

CONCLUDING EXHORTATION TO BELIEVERS CONTINUED (Hebrews 12:25 - 13:19)

6. Let us not refuse the voice that speaketh from heaven (Heb. 12:25-29).

- a. Those who refuse the Gospel will not escape (Heb. 12:25). This passage makes it clear that there is no second chance for salvation after death and that there is no hope for those who do not accept the Gospel.
- b. God's voice is heard today through the gospel (Heb. 12:25). He is speaking from heaven through the preaching of the Gospel. He calls men by the Gospel (2 Th. 2:14). Men are drawn when Jesus' cross is preached (Jn. 12:32). It is evident, therefore, that every believer's part in the preaching of the gospel is important (Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8; Rom. 10:13-14; Phil. 2:16; 1 Th. 1:8).
- c. God is going to destroy this present world (Heb. 12:26-27). The writer quotes Hag. 2:6. The "*things that are made*" refers to this present creation. Everything will be shaken and toppled over.
 - (1) This will begin during the Great Tribulation (Rev. 6:12-17; 11:13; 16:18-21; 18:9-10).
 - (2) The shaking will conclude with the destruction of the present heavens and earth. See 2 Pet. 3:7, 10.
- d. We have received a kingdom that cannot be removed (Heb. 12:28). The kingdom of Christ exists already and He sits upon its throne, though it has not yet come to earth. It is an eternal kingdom (Is. 9:7; Dan. 2:44; 7:27; Lk. 1:33). We enter this kingdom spiritually at salvation (Col. 1:13), but in the physical realm we are waiting for the kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1).
- e. We must serve God acceptably (Heb. 12:28). This reminds us that it is possible to serve God unacceptably.

- (1) We cannot serve God acceptably according to human tradition (Mat. 15:9) or philosophy (Col. 2:8) or after our own pleasure and lusts (2 Tim. 4:3). We can serve Him acceptably only according to the revelation of His will in the Scriptures.
- (2) It is not “legalism” to try to follow the Bible strictly in order to serve God properly. We are not saved *by* good works but we are saved *unto* good works, “*which God hath before ordained that we walk in them*” (Eph. 2:8-10).
- (3) We serve God acceptably in “*reverence and godly fear.*” Fear is a necessary part of serving God, but it must be the right kind of fear. This verse carefully defines the proper fear--it is reverent and godly.
 - (a) It is not the fear of being punished by a judge but the fear of displeasing a Father.
 - (b) It is not the fear that paralyzes and disheartens but the fear that liberates to serve in joy.
 - (c) It is not a fear that quakes at the possibility of destruction but one that reveres God so much that it wants to please Him in all things.
 - (d) It is not an ungodly fear that tries to earn God’s favor but a godly one that knows that Christ has done that for us and that my part is to please the One who has saved me.
- (4) We serve God acceptably by His grace (Heb. 12:28). We cannot serve Him in our own strength any more than we could save ourselves from Hell through our own works. The Spirit of God is our help. He who saves us by grace does not leave us to serve Him by natural human ability. “It is only the grace of God that enables us to worship God in a right manner: nature cannot come up to it; it can produce neither that precious faith nor that holy fear that is necessary to acceptable worship” (Matthew Henry).
- (5) What about Hebrews 12:29, “*For our God is a consuming fire*”? The quotation is from Deut. 4:24.
 - (a) The writer of Hebrews is not saying that the believer is in

danger of being consumed by God's fire. This would contradict too many clear New Testament passages. The fire of God fell upon Jesus so that it will not fall upon those who trust him. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 describes the believer's judgment, and it plainly states that while the careless believer is in danger of losing rewards "*he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*" (1 Cor. 3:15). 1 Cor. 3:11 says the foundation is Christ and we build on that foundation. We can fall on the foundation but we cannot fall off of it!

(b) This warning harkens back to the beginning of this passage in verse 24: "*See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.*" It is the unbeliever who rejects God's voice that is in danger of hellfire.

(c) It is equally true that the believer should never forget God's nature, that He is holy and that He judges all sin. The believer who remembers this will rejoice ever more in the propitiation and safety from wrath that Jesus Christ has purchased, and he will not take sin lightly, recalling the great price that was paid to redeem him from its just punishment and knowing that though God will not judge him for sin God will also not overlook sin, that unconfessed sin will break his communion with God, hinder his testimony, bring church discipline, ruin his family, disqualify him from certain types of service, and that there is even a sin unto death. "God is the same just and righteous God under the gospel that he appeared to be under the law. Though he be our God in Christ, and now deals with us in a more kind and gracious way, yet he is in himself a consuming fire; that is, a God of strict justice, who will avenge himself on all the despisers of his grace, and upon all apostates. Under the gospel, the justice of God is displayed in a more awful manner, though not in so sensible a manner as under the law; for here we behold divine justice seizing upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and making him a propitiatory sacrifice, his soul and body an offering for sin, which is a display of justice far beyond what was seen and heard on mount Sinai when the law was given" (Matthew Henry).

“By all these tender and solemn considerations, therefore, the apostle urges the friends of God to perseverance and fidelity in his service. His goodness and mercy; the gift of a Saviour to redeem us; the revelation of a glorious world; the assurance that all may soon be united in fellowship with the angels and the redeemed; the certainty that the kingdom of the Saviour is established on a permanent basis, and the apprehension of the dreadful wrath of God against the guilty, all should lead us to persevere in the duties of our Christian calling, and to avoid those things which would jeopard the eternal interests of our souls” (Barnes).

7. Let us practice hospitality and brotherly love (Heb. 13:1-3).

- a. The writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers to continue in brotherly love, meaning love among brethren in Christ, and he mentions two specific ways they can do that: *entertaining strangers* and *remembering those that are in bonds*. Christian love is an action. It is most often a verb. Saying love or feeling love apart from doing love is of no value (Jam. 2:14-16; 1 Jn. 3:18).
- b. The passage says to “*let brotherly love continue,*” which means love is the fruit of the Spirit and it is the believer’s part to give free reign to it, to allow it to control his life in contrast to allowing the flesh to control his life (Gal. 5:17-25). This is what it means to be “*filled with the Spirit*” (Eph. 5:18). It is yielding to His control.
- c. Christian love must be stirred up and encouraged. Though the indwelling Spirit is love and love is His fruit, love can grow dim and be quenched in the believer’s life. Christians must be reminded to love one another, husbands to love their wives, wives to love their husbands, parents to love their children, etc. “There are innumerable occasions which will be ready to impair and weaken it, if it be not well grounded; alas, unsuitableness of natural temper, differences in judgment, and matters of opinion, inconsistent worldly interest, readiness to provocation, or to be provoked, pride on the one hand, or envy on the other, will sadly occasion the temporary decay, yea, at last the total loss of this noble grace, if it be not well grounded and deeply rooted” (William Burkitt).

d. Note that we can forget to entertain strangers, but it is an obligation of Christian love to do so (Heb. 13:2). The believer is exhorted to be “*given to hospitality*” (Rom. 12:13). One’s natural tendency is often to ignore strangers and to slight any obligation to them.

(1) It is important to understand that these strangers were brethren in Christ. They were not mere unknown transients. It was common in those times for Christians to have to flee persecution or to travel on business and it was the brethren’s obligation to care for them. “The sense of the word translated as entertain strangers is to be ‘hospitable to travelers’” (Sorenson). “In those early times, when there were scarcely any public inns or houses of entertainment, it was an office of charity and mercy to receive, lodge, and entertain travellers; and this is what the apostle particularly recommends” (Adam Clarke). “If there is danger that we may sometimes receive those of an opposite character, yet it is not wise, on account of such possible danger, to lose the opportunity of entertaining those whose presence would be a blessing. Many a parent owes the conversion of a child to the influence of a pious stranger in his family; and the hope that this may occur, or that our own souls may be blessed, should make us ready, at all proper times, to welcome the feet of the stranger to our doors. Many a man, if he had been accosted as Abraham was at the door of his tent by strangers, would have turned them rudely away; many a one in the situation of Lot would have sent the unknown guests rudely from his door; but who can estimate what would have been the results of such a course on the destiny of those good men and their families?” (Barnes).

(2) Jesus promised great reward to those who assist His disciples (Mat. 10:40-42).

(3) Gaius was known for his charity toward strangers (3 John 1, 5-8).

(4) A widow indeed is one who has “*lodged strangers*” (1 Tim. 5:10).

(5) To be “*lover of hospitality*” is a qualification for a pastor (Tit. 1:8).

e. Angels still visit believers, but Hebrews 13 indicates that they do not

appear as angels and those who see them do not recognize that they are angels (Heb. 13:2). Angels have often appeared as men from the time of Abraham (Gen. 18:2-3; 19:1). Angels are ministering spirits who are sent to minister to believers (Heb. 1:14).

f. The believer is to consider himself in the same adversity as his brethren (Heb. 13:3). This is Christ's "royal law," which is "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (Jam. 2:8). See also 1 Cor. 12:26. "There is great force and beauty in this expression [*as bound with them*]. Religion teaches us to identify ourselves with all who are oppressed, and to feel what they suffer as if we endured it ourselves. Infidelity and atheism are cold and distant. They stand aloof from the oppressed and the sad. But Christianity unites all hearts in one; binds us to all the race, and reveals to us, in the case of each one oppressed and injured, a brother" (Barnes).

(1) To remember them that are in bonds and them which suffer adversity encompasses every sort of imprisonment and slavery and oppression. It refers particularly to those who are suffering unjustly.

(2) To remember them that are in bonds involves the following:

(a) It involves sympathizing with them and feeling compassion for them.

(b) It involves praying for them.

(c) It involves comforting, assisting, and relieving them insofar as is necessary and possible.

(d) It involves seeking their deliverance by every just means.

(3) An example of one who did this is Onesiphorus who assisted Paul (2 Tim. 1:16-18).

8. Let us honor marriage and beware of adultery and fornication (Heb. 13:4).

This is a strong exhortation. The word translated "whoremongers" is the Greek "pornos," from which the English word "pornography" is derived." It is a broad term and refers to every sort of sexual sin outside of marriage. It is often translated "fornicator" (1 Cor. 5:9-11; 6:9; Heb. 12:16).

a. God created marriage for the satisfaction of the sexual drive (1 Cor. 7:2) and within marriage there is no defilement so long as the marriage partners are satisfied with one another and do not introduce any unlawful foreign influences (such as pornography, which is mental adultery -- Mat. 5:32).

(1) Marriage has been despised by false teachers since the earliest days of the Gospel. It was despised by the Gnostics and many other cults in the early centuries. Later it was despised by the Roman Catholic Church. Rome still does not allow its priests and nuns to marry, because the unmarried state is alleged to be superior.

(2) The Spirit of God has exposed this error and has identified the doctrine of "*forbidding to marry*" as a doctrine of devils (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

(3) One of the requirements of a God-called pastor is that he is "*the husband of one wife*" (1 Tim. 3:2).

b. Sex outside of marriage is a serious sin and will be judged by God. Our society needs to be reminded that there are spiritual and eternal consequences to immorality and that no prophylactic will protect from these. "The sins here referred to prevailed everywhere, and hence there was the more propriety for the frequent and solemn injunctions to avoid them which we find in the Scriptures" (Barnes). "Most whoremongers escape the notice of human tribunals; but God takes particular cognizance of those whom man does not punish. Immoralities will then be regarded in a very different light from what they are now" (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

(1) This is one of the sins that calls for church discipline (1 Cor. 5:9-11).

(2) Notice that the Bible is very plainspoken about these sins. God does not allow any excuse for them, such as "love" for a new partner or distaste for an old one. "God knows who are guilty of such sins, no darkness can hide them from him. He will call such sins by their proper names, not by the names of love and gallantry, but of whoredom and adultery" (Matthew Henry).

- c. Moral purity is another manifestation of Christian love, which is the theme of the preceding verses (Heb. 13:1-3). Compare 1 Th. 4:3-7. If a man truly loves his wife or a wife loves her husband, they will not commit adultery against them. If a young man truly loves a girl he will not try to get her to commit sin.

9. Let us beware of covetousness (Heb. 13:5-6).

- a. What is the sin of covetousness?

(1) Hebrews 12:6 defines covetousness as a lack of contentment with one's lot. The opposite of covetousness is to "*be content with such things as ye have.*" It means to be dissatisfied; to be greedy.

(2) Other Bible definitions of covetousness:

(a) Covetousness is to desire that which is not my own or that which is forbidden (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21; Josh. 7:21).

(b) Covetousness is to love and pursue money and personal wealth instead of being content with the basic needs of life and to pursue righteousness and the will of God (1 Tim. 6:6; Phile. 1:14). "The word translated as covetousness (*philarguros*) is made up of three simpler Greek words. The *alpha* prefix is the negative. The word *philo* means a love or desire for. Finally, *arguros* is the basic Greek word for silver. Putting it together produces the idea of not loving silver" (Sorenson).

(c) Covetousness is to make possessions the focus of one's life (Lk. 12:15).

(d) Covetousness is to live for self pleasure instead of living for God's pleasure (Lk. 12:16-6:3).

(e) Covetousness is to enrich oneself at the expense of others; it is to oppress and use others for one's own selfish ends (Pr. 28:16; Mic. 5:2).

(3) Following are some helpful definitions of covetousness:

(a) Covetousness is "an over eager desire of the wealth of this world, envying those who have more than we" (Matthew Henry).

- (b) “To desire inordinately; to desire that which it is unlawful to obtain or possess; excessively eager to obtain and possess” (Webster)
 - (c) “The covetous man is ever running out into futurity with insatiable desires after secular good; and, if this disposition be not checked, it increases as the subject of it increases in years” (Adam Clarke).
 - (d) “The love of filthy lust and the love of filthy lucre follow one another as closely akin, both alienating the heart from the Creator to the creature” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).
 - (e) “By covetousness, we are not to understand, as if a provident and prudential care for the things of this life were forbidden, or as if all endeavours to maintain our right to what God has given us were unlawful; but by covetousness is meant an eager and unsatiable desire after, accompanied with restless and unwearied endeavours for the things of this life, proceeding from an undue valuation of them, and an inordinate love unto them. ... Contentment is a gracious disposition of mind, whereby the Christian rests satisfied with that portion of the good things of this life which the wisdom of God assigns him, without complaining of the little which God gives to him, or envying the much which God bestows on others” (William Burkitt).
- (4) A prominent example of living without covetousness is the apostle Paul, who lived according to the rule of contentment (Phil. 4:11-13).
- (5) This does not mean that the believer should not work and merely “trust the Lord” for his livelihood. To the contrary, every believer is enjoined to work hard, and the Bible says that those who do not work should not eat (Acts 20:35; Rom. 12:11; Eph. 4:28; 1 Th. 4:11-12; 2 Th. 3:7-12).
- (6) This does not mean that one cannot aspire to have more and that it is wrong to work hard in order to progress in one’s financial situation. Covetousness is a matter of the heart’s motives and intents. One can work hard and seek to prosper without having

one's heart set upon wealth and while having one's trust and confidence in the Lord. Covetousness is to will to be rich (1 Tim. 6:9), meaning that wealth is one's objective and heart's desire.

b. Two reasons are given for being content and avoiding covetousness:

(1) *"for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Heb. 13:6).

(a) This statement seems to be quoted from God's promise to Joshua (Jos. 1:5), but it is also a general reference to many of God's promises, such as Gen. 26:24; 28:15; Deut. 31:6, 8; 1 Sam. 12:22; 1 Chron. 28:20; Ps. 23:4; 37:28; and Isa. 41:10, 17; Mat. 28:20.

(b) Though it was not stated exactly like this anywhere in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit gives this wonderful promise exactly as it stands in Hebrews to the New Testament believer. It is a better promise than any similar promises in the previous dispensation. The Lord says to every believer, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* This is a very strong statement. In the nine Greek words that are translated, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,"* there are no less than five negatives. *"To give a strictly literal translation is scarcely possible; it would run in this way: 'No, I will not leave thee; no, neither will I not utterly forsake thee'"* (Adam Clarke). What an unspeakably wonderful encouragement this is. Since the very God of the universe has pledged Himself to us and has promised to be with us and to meet our every need, what more could we possibly want! How bold we can be in this world! How confident we can be regardless of our circumstances.

(2) *"So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me"* (Heb. 13:7).

(a) A similar thought is found in Ps. 27:1 and 118:6.

(b) We should avoid covetousness and be content with what we have so that we do not put ourselves into bondage to man unnecessarily. The Bible says that the borrower is a servant to

the lender (Prov. 22:7). When the believer puts himself into bondage to man, he is unable to say, “*The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me,*” because if the borrower does not pay his debt, he must fear what his creditors and the government shall do to him.

(c) It has well been said, “God is a Substitute for everything, but nothing is a substitute for God.”

10. Let us obey church leaders (Heb. 13:7, 17).

a. Two times in this chapter the writer of Hebrews admonishes his readers to heed their spiritual rulers. Two obligations are given: *remember them* (v. 7) and *obey them* (v. 17).

(1) To remember one’s elders has the following meaning:

(a) It means to remember that one has spiritual leaders and therefore that one has an obligation to them. It means to “*know them which labour among you and are over you in the Lord*” (1 Th. 5:12).

(b) It means to support them properly (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

(c) It means to think about them so as to be an encouragement to them.

(2) To obey them is to submit to their teaching and follow their example. “Christians must submit to be instructed by their ministers, and not think themselves too wise, too good, or too great, to learn from them; and, when they find that ministerial instructions are agreeable to the written word, they must obey them” (Matthew Henry).

(a) Obedience to pastoral authority is something that is enjoined upon every believer and it must be performed as an act of the will. The Spirit of God says, “*Submit yourselves.*” Obedience to human rulers is always a difficult matter for a sinner, even a saved one, because he is rebellious and stubborn by nature. Furthermore, elders are far from perfect. One is always tempted to think, “Who is that man to tell me what to do! He is no better

than I am; he isn't so very perfect himself; I know that he has made mistakes. Anyway, I have the Spirit of God just as he does." Obedience even to the most respectable human authority, therefore, is an act of self sacrifice. *Submit yourselves*. It is an act of the will. I submit to those that God has put over me as unto the Lord and not merely as unto a man. That is how a wife can submit herself to her husband. "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord*" (Eph. 5:22). She doesn't surrender her will to a man only; she surrenders it to the Lord through that man. Obedience to pastoral authority is a serious matter and cannot be ignored without consequences. Pastors are one of God's gifts to churches (Eph. 4:11-12). Many professing Christians have the idea that they don't need pastors and elders, that God is their ruler and they don't need men, but this philosophy flies in the face of Hebrews 13. Every believer should ask himself, "Who has the rule over me spirituality under God?" because two times in Hebrews 13 we are told how to relate to those who "*rule over you.*" It is certain that pastoral authority has been abused at times, but that is no reason to discard or discount it altogether. Every kind of authority has been abused in this sinful world, but that does not mean that we are free to ignore it. Churches should be governed by a combination of pastor-elder and people rule. This is what we see in Acts 6. The elders gave the standards for the deacons, the people selected them, and the elders ordained them (Acts 6:3-6). This is a model of a church properly and scripturally governed.

- (b) Obedience to pastoral authority is *not* absolute, of course. Bible believers do not blindly follow their spiritual leaders. Pastors are not popes. God's people are to follow their leaders as they follow Christ and as they follow the Word of God. We see in Heb. 13:7 that "*the word of God*" is the absolute standard and as long as the leaders are speaking the Word of God, they should be obeyed. "They are not to make laws of their own, but to interpret the laws of God; nor is their interpretation to be immediately received without examination, but the people must search the scriptures, and so far as the instructions of their

minister are according to that rule they ought to receive them” (Matthew Henry).

(c) Pastors have real authority but it is not a lordly authority; it is a shepherd’s authority. *“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock”* (1 Pet. 5:3). We see this in Hebrews 13:17, where the ruler’s role is described in terms of watching for the souls of the believers. See also Mk. 10:42-45; 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 1:24; 3 Jn. 9-10. The pastor’s job is to watch over the spiritual. He watches for men’s souls. In contrast, some pastors have attempted to lord it over every aspect of people’s lives, interfering with their every decision, forbidding them to do things that are not forbidden in Scripture, and putting obligations upon them that go beyond the bounds of Scripture. *“It is for your own good that they do this [‘for they watch for your souls’], and you should, therefore, submit to these arrangements. And this shows, also, the true principle on which authority should be exercised in a church. It should be in such a way as to promote the salvation of the people; and all the arrangements should be with that end. The measures adopted, therefore, and the obedience enjoined, should not be arbitrary, oppressive, or severe, but should be such as will really promote salvation”* (Barnes).

b. Even though the book of Hebrews is not written to a particular church, as most of Paul’s epistles were, the church is never out of sight. In Heb. 10:25 we are reminded of the importance of the assembly and in chapter 13 we are reminded of the necessity of obeying church leaders. From the very beginning of this dispensation God’s people have been taught to organize themselves into New Testament assemblies. Christ said He would build His church (Mat. 16:18). From the day of Pentecost, the church has been the focal point of God’s people (Acts 2:41-42). The apostles established the first churches and left this as the pattern for the rest of the age (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). It is the church that is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Much of the New Testament is written directly to individual churches.

c. The two broad standards for church leaders are given in Heb. 13:7,

which reminds us again that God's people are not to blindly follow men but are to submit to those who give clear evidence of a divine call and who are scripturally qualified and are living what they preach.

(1) They are sound in doctrine and practice ("*who have spoken unto you the word of God,*" Heb. 13:7). This refers to their teaching. They are men described in Titus 1:9 -- "*Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*"

(2) They have strong faith and a good manner of life ("*whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*" Heb. 13:7). This standard is described in detail in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Godly living is a necessary qualification for pastors and elders because the character of the church depends upon it. God's people are exhorted to follow the faith and example of their leaders. If the pastors' lives are not right the people will not have the proper example to follow and God's work on earth will be seriously hindered. Therefore, pastors must have the right kind of personal testimony and family life. How often in this age have pastors failed to maintain the biblical teaching and practice and how often and grievously God's work has suffered as a result!

d. Pastors watch for the souls of the brethren and must give account for them (Heb. 13:17). Pastors are given watchcare over the Lord's flock and they have the responsibility to present it back to Him in good shape. The flock is not their own; it is loaned to them for safekeeping. If they do not feed the sheep properly and do not protect them from the wolves and do not go after the wayward they will be judged by the Great Shepherd. The pastor will give account for his teaching, for his pastoring, for his example, for his decisions, for everything. Therefore James says, "*My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation*" (Jam. 3:1).

e. Believers must give account for how they relate to their church leaders (Heb. 13:17). The Bible indicates that it is "unprofitable" for brethren to be a grief to their pastors (apart from a clear scriptural basis, of course, which might require them to resist false teaching or sinful living)

because of their rebellion or stubbornness or laziness or carnality. Unless the pastor is teaching or living contrary to the Word of God in such a manner that I must resist him in order to be faithful to Christ, he should have joy from my life and service in the church. He should be encouraged at how I love and heed the Word of God, at how I am growing in Christ, at how I am diligently serving the Lord, at how I am supporting the cause of Christ with my finances, at my faithfulness, at my zeal, at my compassion, at my holiness. It is good for every believer to ask himself, “What kind of account would the pastor give of me if he were to stand before Christ this very day? What can I change so that the pastor has more joy when he gives this account?”

11. Let us avoid strange doctrines (Heb. 13:8-9).

a. We are urged not to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines.

(1) We see that right doctrine is important and that it is an urgent matter to avoid false doctrine. This is one of the themes of the New Testament. “Doctrine” is mentioned in 44 verses and “teaching” in 24. In almost every epistle the writer warns about false doctrine (e.g., Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 15:12; 2 Cor. 11:1-4, 12-15; Gal. 1:6-9; 5:10; Eph. 4:14; Phil. 3:2-3, 17-20; Col. 2:4, 8; 1 Tim. 1:3-11; 4:1-6; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 3:5, 13; 4:3-4; Tit. 1:10-16; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; 1 John 2:18-23; 2 John 7-11; Jude 3-19).

(2) We are minded that sound doctrine is ever under assault from false doctrine. The devil seeks to “carry us about” by means of false doctrine. Error is very aggressive and proselytizing. It is not something that can be ignored. This is why one of the qualifications for a pastor is that he “*be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*” (Tit. 1:9). It is not enough that he be able to exhort the brethren, he must also be ready and able to protect them from false teachers. Thus, when Paul gave his final exhortation to the elders at Ephesus he said, “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of*

your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28-31).

(3) To be protected from false doctrine requires a total commitment to the Bible. The protection is to not allow oneself to be moved away from sound apostolic teaching. False doctrines are “*divers and strange*” because they are different from the standard of the apostles (Rom. 16:17). The protection, therefore, is to stand fast in the Scripture, to study it and rightly divide it (2 Tim. 2:2), and to continue in it (Jn. 8:31-32). The Word of God is the sword that defeats the devil (Eph. 6:17).

(4) We see the fruit and effect of false doctrine, which is to carry one away from the truth and to unsettle the soul as opposed to the established peace and confidence that comes through sound doctrine. Divers and strange doctrines “carry one about,” whereas grace “establishes.” “They were of an unsettling, distracting nature, like the wind by which the ship is tossed, and in danger of being driven from its anchor, carried away, and split upon the rocks. They were quite contrary to that grace of God which fixes and establishes the heart, which is an excellent thing. These strange doctrines keep the heart always fluctuating and unsettled” (Matthew Henry).

(5) False teachers are not afraid to add to apostolic doctrine (Heb. 13:9). The New Testament epistles give no instruction, for example, about dietary matters, about meats and drinks, except to warn about false teachers (Col. 2:16, 20-23; 1 Tim. 4:1-6). There are no dietary rules in the New Testament dispensation. There are healthy diets as opposed to unhealthy, but that is not a matter of Bible truth but of common sense and medical knowledge. There is no such thing as an authentic, biblical “Christian diet.”

b. Note that we are urged to avoid divers and strange doctrines for two reasons:

(1) The first reason that we need to avoid divers and strange doctrines

is that “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*” (Heb. 3:8). He is not giving new doctrines or imparting new revelation. The canon of Scripture is complete and the faith has been once delivered to the saints (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19). If someone comes as an apostle; if someone claims to have a new revelation; if someone teaches a new doctrine; if someone boasts that he has a new “end times” church; if someone preaches a different christ or a different spirit or a different gospel -- we are not to follow him.

- (a) Hebrews 13:8 teaches that Jesus is eternal. Though Jesus was born in Bethlehem about 2,000 years ago, that was not His beginning. As the Son of God, His goings forth were of old, from everlasting (Mic. 5:2).
- (b) This means that Jesus has an unchanging character. What He was during His earthly life as recorded in the pages of the Gospels, He is today and forever will be. He is just as holy, tender and compassionate, just as patient, just as gentle, just as wholly devoted to the Father’s will, just as true, just as wonderful today and for ever as He was then.
- (c) This does not mean that Jesus *does* the same thing in every dispensation. To say that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, does not mean that He is doing today exactly what He did in the book of Acts, for example. His actions today are different because the time is different. Then, there were apostles laying the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) and exercising sign gifts (2 Cor. 12:12). Today there are no apostles. We are not laying again the foundation of the church; we are building on the firm foundation that they laid. The need for sign gifts ceased with the apostles, and the New Testament nowhere instructs the churches as to how to replace the apostles because it was not God’s intention to replace them. Their work being finished there is now no need for them. God is still doing miracles today but He is not doing apostolic sign miracles. There are still spiritual gifts in operation but not revelatory gifts. That God does different things in different dispensations is evident

from even a cursory glance at Bible history. He is not creating the world or instructing men to build arks to escape floods. He is not giving the Law. He is not building tabernacles and temples. And He is not sending out apostles to do sign miracles.

(2) The second reason that we are admonished not to go after divers and strange doctrines is because *“it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats”* (Heb. 3:9).

(a) Salvation by grace alone through faith alone is the hallmark of sound doctrine. Paul made this clear in Romans and in Galatians. See Rom. 3:24; 4:3-6; Gal. 2:16; 3:24-25. The very definition of “grace” is free gift (Eph. 2:8-10). A gift is something that someone else purchases and gives to me freely. If it costs anything at all, it is not a gift. Likewise, if any works whatsoever are added to grace, it is no longer grace (Rom. 11:6).

(b) Any gospel other than this gospel of grace is a false one (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-7). To add anything to the grace of Christ for salvation is to pervert it, whether it is law keeping, baptism, church membership, sacraments, whatever. Christ plus anything and grace plus anything is a false gospel.

(c) The true grace of God is not license; it is not the liberty to live as one pleases but the liberty to serve Christ from a heart of gratitude for redemption (Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:16). The true grace of God produces zealous holy living (Tit. 2:11-14).

(d) The particular false doctrine that was in view in Hebrews 13:9 was the one taught by the Judaizers who plagued the apostolic churches (Tit. 1:10). They taught that works and law-keeping had to be mixed with grace for salvation (Acts 15:5; Gal. 3:1-3). They taught that New Testament believers are obligated to keep Old Testament rituals such as circumcision and the sabbath (Acts 15:1; Gal. 6:15; Col. 2:16). They taught that the believer should mind earthly things rather than the heavenly things that Paul taught (Phil. 3:18-19).

12. Let us go forth unto Jesus without the camp (Heb. 13:10-14).

a. This section is a continuation of the previous one, but we have set it apart by itself because it contains an important stand alone teaching. We were exhorted not to be carried away with divers and strange doctrines, because it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace and not with meats. That refers, of course, to animal sacrifices and dietary restrictions and other laws that the New Testament believer is no longer obligated to keep.

(1) In this context, the writer proceeds to remind his readers that the New Testament believer's altar is infinitely better than that of the Judaic system and that since Jesus suffered outside of that system, we also should go out of it and bear His reproach. Even to this day, there is a great reproach toward Jesus on the part of unregenerate Jews. It is not uncommon for them to be deeply prejudiced against Him and even filled with bitterness and hatred toward Him and His people, especially toward Jews that profess Him. The writer of Hebrews urges his readers to bear His reproach, because His offering is infinitely superior to that of those who reproach Him and because we are citizens of a superior city.

(2) The reference to those which serve the tabernacle is to the Levite priests (Num. 3:7; 7:5).

(3) The bodies of the animals were burned without the camp. See Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:11-12, 21; 16:27.

(4) Jesus suffered without the gate. He was crucified outside of Jerusalem's city walls. No criminals were put to death inside of the walls. "Calvary, as it is now shown, is within the walls of Jerusalem; but there is no reason to believe that is the place where the Lord Jesus was crucified, for that was outside of the walls of the city. The precise direction from the city is not designated by the sacred writers, nor are there any historical records, or traditional marks, by which it can now be known where the exact place was. All that we know on the subject from the New Testament is, that the name was Golgotha; that the place of the crucifixion and sepulchre were near each other; that they were without the gate, and nigh to the city,

and that they were in a frequented spot, Jn. 19:20” (Barnes).

b. To go without the camp applies not only to the Jewish system which has been fulfilled and therefore done away in Christ, but also to any and every false religious system.

(1) False teaching and apostasy in the churches had progressed so far even during the days of the apostles that the Lord Jesus was already standing outside of some churches and warning others that He would remove their candlestick (Rev. 2:4-5, 14-16, 20-23; 3:2-4, 15-20). .

(2) The Holy Spirit warned that this leaven of false teaching and false Christianity would increase as the age progresses and as the return of Christ draws nigh. See 2 Tim. 3:13, which describes the course of the church age succinctly -- *“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”* See also 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-13; 4:3-4; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 Jn. 2:18-19; Jude 3-4.

(3) The New Testament frequently exhorts believers to separate from false teaching and apostasy. See Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 3:5; 2 John 9-11. Jesus commended the church at Ephesus for trying them which say they are apostles and are not and for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:2, 6). And He rebuked the church at Smyrna for not separating from the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:14-15). Since that day, false doctrines have increased greatly among the professing churches and if Christ rebuked the church at Smyrna for not separating there is no reason to believe that He is any less concerned about separation today. The fact that separation is an unpopular doctrine and one that is largely neglected in this apostate age is no reason to think that Jesus no longer requires it. Jesus is outside of the camp of apostate and false Christianity. He is outside of those churches that deny His deity or that deny the divine inspiration of Scripture or that deny salvation by grace alone through faith alone or that deny His holy requirements for church membership and Christian living. He is outside of the camp of the Roman Catholic Church which has turned the simple New

Testament faith into a complex, tradition-bound religious system. He is outside of the camp of the apostate, heresy-ridden World Council of Churches and the various national councils which have replaced the infallible divine agenda with a fallible human one, that provide a home for every sort of false teaching. The true Christ of the Bible is outside of the camp of nominal Protestant churches that are populated with unregenerate “Christians” who have never experienced the life-changing power of the New Birth, who trust in their infant baptism or their church membership or their devotion to “the sacraments.” He is outside of the camp of the various Christian cults, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormons, the Rosicrucians, the Unitarian-Universalists, and others with their false grace plus works gospels and their false christs. These have only scorn for the Jesus of the Bible who is Almighty God and who preached Hell hot and Heaven sweet and the necessity of being born again, and only scorn for those today who follow such a Jesus. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

- (4) The believer has a reproach to bear (Heb. 13:13). It is the reproach of Christ. He was rejected, mocked, beaten, and crucified. He was accounted as a deceiver and not worthy even to die a common death. That is Christ’s reproach that we are called to bear. It is not an easy burden. Jesus said, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you”* (John 15:18). “He was put to death as a malefactor. He was the object of contempt and scorn. He was held up to derision, and was taunted and reviled on his way to the place of death, and even on the cross. To be identified with him there, to follow him, to sympathize with him, to be regarded as his friend, would have subjected one to similar shame and reproach. The meaning here is, that we should be willing to regard ourselves as identified with the Lord Jesus, and to bear the same shame and reproaches which he did. When he was led away, amidst scoffing and reviling, to be put to death, would we, if we had been there, been willing to be regarded as his followers, and to have gone out with him as avowed disciples and friends? Alas, how many are there who profess to love him when religion subjects them to no

reproach, who would have shrunk from following him to Calvary” (Barnes).

c. New Testament believers have an altar (Heb. 13:10).

(1) Our altar is not physical; it is not a man-made altar; it is not on earth. Our altar is Christ and His sacrifice; our altar is in heaven. Our altar is spiritual; it is ascertained and approached by faith not by sight. There is always a tendency in man to exchange faith for sight. When one generation walks by faith, it is not uncommon for the next generation to leave faith and walk by sight. By this means came crucifixes, physical altars in churches, alleged pictures of Jesus, incense, holy water, holy relics, gold and jewels, scarlet and purple clothing, elaborate liturgy, and cathedrals. All of this is to replace faith with sight, but there is no support for any such thing in the New Testament. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). The true Christian life is “*from faith to faith*” (Rom. 1:17).

(2) Our altar is typified by the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is not the altar itself; it is rather a picture of the sacrifice that purchased our relationship with God. It is picture of the great heavenly altar upon which Christ sprinkled His blood to make an entrance for us into the true holy of holies. By drinking the fruit of the vine we remember His spotless blood that was shed for us and by eating the unleavened bread we remember his sinless body that was broken for us. Thus reminded we enter by faith into the very tabernacle in heaven and fellowship with the Lord of lords and King of kings.

13. Let us offer acceptable sacrifices to God (Heb. 13:15-16).

a. There are three things that are listed in this passage and described as sacrifices and worship: giving thanks to his name, doing good, and communicating (which refers to giving). These are sacrifices because they go against the natural inclinations of our fallen, selfish flesh and to offer them is a sacrifice of self to the will of God. My natural inclination is to complain and fret, but when I give thanks unto God through Christ instead, I am offering an acceptable sacrifice. My natural inclination is to sin, but when I do good instead, this is the acceptable sacrifice before

God. My natural inclination is to be selfish and to ignore the needs of others, but when I communicate God is well pleased. This is true worship.

b. It is only by Jesus and because of His blood that we can offer anything unto God acceptably. God is holy, and we are sinners. He will not accept our natural offerings and works any more than He did Cain's of old (Gen. 4:3-5). All must be sanctified by Jesus. We come to God only through Him. This is what it means to pray "in Jesus' name." It is a recognition that we can approach God only through Jesus Christ. It is an amazing thing that the great and holy God could ever be "well pleased" with anything we do and offer (Heb. 13:16)\, but this is possible through His Son Jesus Christ.

c. Following are the three ways that we worship God acceptably according to this passage:

(1) We are exhorted to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God. The New Testament nowhere describes a "worship service"; it describes worship, rather, as a daily, continual thing.

(a) We are exhorted to give thanks *continually* (Heb. 13:15).

(b) We are exhorted to give thanks *in everything* (1 Th. 5:18).

(2) We are exhorted, secondly, to do good. This, in a nutshell, is the will of God for every believer. Don't do bad things; do good things. Do good to those who love you and do good to those who hate you. Do good when you are at home and when you are at work and when you are at leisure and when you are at church. Just do good. This is an acceptable worship unto God.

(3) The third way that we worship God acceptably is by communicating, which refers to giving. The Greek word translated "communicate" is "koinonia" and it means "partnership, benefaction" (Strong). The same Greek word is translated "contribution" (Rom. 15:26), "communion" (1 Cor. 10:16), "distribution" (2 Cor. 9:13), and "fellowship" (2 Cor. 8:4). The love of God is a giving love (Jn. 3:16) and those who have the love of God delight in giving.

- (a) Believers are to communicate with brethren who are in need (Rom. 15:26).
- (b) Believers are to communicate as they purpose in their hearts (2 Cor. 9:7).
- (c) Believers are to communicate liberally (2 Cor. 9:13).
- (d) Believers are to communicate with their teachers (Gal. 6:6).
- (e) Believers are to communicate with missionaries (Phil. 4:14).
- (f) Believers are to communicate with pastor-elders who labor in the Word of God (1 Tim. 5:17-18)
- (g) Believers who are rich in this world are to be willing to communicate to those who are in need (1 Tim. 6:18).

14. Let us pray (Heb. 13:18-19).

The final exhortation of Hebrews is for prayer. Consider some of the lessons from this exhortation:

- a. Prayer is an important thing and we should pray for others. This is intercessory prayer, and the wise believer will be interceding daily for many on his prayer list, for family members, for church leaders and fellow church members, for the nation's leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-5), for the unsaved, for other churches, for preachers and missionaries and Christian workers.
- b. We should especially pray for preachers. "Ministers need the prayers of the people; and the more earnestly the people pray for their ministers the more benefit they may expect to reap from their ministry. They should pray that God would teach those who are to teach them, that he would make them vigilant, and wise, and zealous, and successful--that he would assist them in all their labours, support them under all their burdens, and strengthen them under all their temptations" (Matthew Henry).
- c. We should ask others to pray for us. Paul beseeched these brethren to pray for him (Heb. 13:19) and he did the same thing on many other occasions (Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; 1 Th. 5:25; 2 Th. 3:1). This

is a wonderful example. If Paul felt the need for prayer, as zealous and dedicated and wise and fruitful as he was in Christ, how much more do we need prayer!

d. Prayer changes things. Paul testified that he trusted that he was walking in God's will and that he had no reason to think that God would not answer his own prayers (Heb. 13:18), but he said that if his readers would add their prayers to his, "*I may be restored to you the sooner.*" Prayer changes things. When we pray effectively in Christ, things happen in this world that would not otherwise happen.

(1) The prayers of the church at Corinth helped Paul out of the trouble he experienced in Asia (2 Cor. 1:8-11).

(2) The prayers of the church at Philippi also assisted Paul (Phil. 1:19).

(3) Hezekiah's prayers and tears added 15 years to his life (2 Ki. 20:1-6).

Review Questions Hebrews 12:25 - 13:19

1. In what chapter did Jesus tell the thief on the cross, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise”?
2. What verse says God calls men through the gospel?
3. What is the standard by which we can learn to serve God acceptably?
4. What verse says the believer is ordained by God to walk in good works?
5. What type of fear is required for the believer to serve God acceptably?
6. What verse in Hebrews says it is possible for angels to visit believers?
7. What is the royal law?
8. To forbid to marry is a doctrine of -----.
9. How is covetousness defined in Hebrews 12:6?
10. In what verse did Paul say he had learned to be content in whatever state he was in?
11. What verse says that he who does not work should not eat?
12. What two reasons does Hebrews give for being content and not coveting?
13. What does it mean to remember one’s elders?
14. What verse says God has given pastors to the churches?
15. What verse says to obey them that have the rule over you?
16. What verse says elders are not to be lords over God’s heritage?
17. In what verse did Christ say He would build His church?
18. What are the two qualifications for church leaders that are described in Hebrews 13?
19. Why does the Bible indicate that it is “unprofitable” for brethren to be a grief to their pastors?
20. How many verses in the New Testament mention “doctrine”?
21. What is the protection against false doctrine?
22. The apostles laid the foundation of the church and then died. Where does the New Testament describe how to select apostles to replace them?

23. What does grace mean?
24. What verse says “ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh”?
25. What false doctrines did the Judaizers teach?
26. What verse says evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived?
27. Where is the believer’s altar today?
28. What are the three acceptable sacrifices to God that are listed in Hebrews 13?
29. What are three of the ways in which the believer is to communicate his goods?
30. What did the writer of Hebrews say would happen if the believers would pray for him?

THE BENEDICTION

(Hebrews 13:20-25)

1. The writer of Hebrews prays for God to bless his readers (Heb. 13:20-21).

- a. It is only by God's working that the believer can ever be perfected in His will. Compare Gal. 2:20 and Phil. 2:13. It is God that must perfect the believer in every good work to do his will.
- b. Our God is the God of peace (Heb. 13:20). He is called this many times in the New Testament. See Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Th. 5:23; 2 Th. 3:16.
- c. Our God brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:20).
 - (1) That God raised Jesus from the dead is one of the themes of the preaching recording in the book of Acts. See Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30; 17:31.
 - (2) See also 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Th. 1:10; 1 Pet. 1:21.
- d. God brought Jesus from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant.
 - (1) The resurrection is the divine sign that Christ's atonement was acceptable and complete. "The blood of Christ satisfied divine justice, and so procured Christ's release from the prison of the grave, as having paid our debt, according to an eternal covenant or agreement between the Father and the Son; and this blood is the sanction and seal of an everlasting covenant between God and his people" (Matthew Henry).
 - (2) The covenant that Jesus has made with every believer is everlasting.

- (a) It is everlasting because it was formed in the eternal councils of God (1 Pet. 1:20). In this sense, Christ is the “*Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8)
- (b) It is also everlasting because it has no end. The eternal security of the believer could not be described more plainly. The new covenant is called “everlasting” in Isa. 55:3; Jer. 32:40; and Eze. 37:26.
- e. The Lord Jesus is that “*great shepherd of the sheep*” (Heb. 13:20). He is the one who is in view in Psalm 23. He is the one prophesied in Isa. 40:11. During His incarnation, He declared Himself to be the great shepherd (Jn. 10:14-15). “This denotes his interest in his people. They are the flock of his pasture, and his care and concern are for them. He feeds them, and leads them, and watches over them” (Matthew Henry). Pastors are under-shepherds for the Great Shepherd.
- f. It was Paul’s burden and aim that every believer be made perfect in every good work to do God’s will (Heb. 13:21). This was what he prayed for and this was what he worked for (Col. 1:28). This should be the burden and aim of every preacher and teacher of God’s Word. We must plan and work and pray toward this end.
- g. God’s will is for the believer to do every good work (Heb. 13:21). Compare 2 Cor. 9:8. This is a very strict standard. If a believer or a church adopts such a standard in this day and time, they are usually labeled “legalists” or “Pharisees,” but it is not legalism for a blood-washed, saved-by-grace believer to aim to be obedient to every good work that God has laid out in the Scriptures (Eph. 2:8-10).
- h. There is a Christian perfection, but it is not sinless perfection as far as the state of one’s earthly life. Perfection is not a present possession; it is a goal. It is not sinlessness (1 Jn. 1:8-10); it is to be complete in all of the will of God.
- i. The standard for the Christian life is that which is wellpleasing in God’s sight (Heb. 13:21). The believer should live first and foremost to please God. Those who live by this standard are blessed with answered prayers (1 Jn. 3:22).

- j. Everything God does for and in us is through Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:21). We have no part whatsoever with God apart from Jesus.
- k. To Jesus Christ be glory for ever and ever (Heb. 13:21). This is another evidence that Jesus is God, because God has emphasized that He will not give His glory to another (Isa. 42:8; 48:11).

2. He beseeches them to suffer the word of exhortation (Heb. 13:22).

- a. Notice that he does not command them; he beseeches them. Here we see the difference between the old covenant and the new. Under the new covenant the believer is a child in God's family and is treated as a child rather than a slave (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 3:24-26). We are not without law in Christ; we are under the law of liberty (Jam. 1:25; 2:12).
- b. He calls his epistle "*the word of exhortation.*"
 - (1) All of its many doctrinal passages were given for the purpose of exhorting the professing brethren to hold fast and to live right.
 - (2) God's Word is not to be preached and taught for entertainment but for obedience.
- c. He said "*I have written a letter unto you in few words.*" There are various ways to understand this.
 - (1) First, the epistle of Hebrews is brief in comparison to what the apostle could have written on these themes.
 - (2) Second, the epistle of Hebrews is brief in comparison to the massive amount of doctrine and exhortation that is imparted therein and in comparison to how much space a man would be required to teach the same things apart from divine inspiration. The Scripture is amazingly, miraculously succinct. I have used roughly 300 pages in my attempt to explain and comment on this short epistle.

3. He informs them about his plans (Heb. 13:23).

- a. The mention of "*our brother Timothy*" is a dead give away that the

writer is the apostle Paul. Timothy was selected by Paul when he was a young man (Acts 16:1-3) and continued to be his “right hand man.” Compare 1 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Th. 3:2; Phile. 1:1. “There is no other one of the apostles who would so naturally have used this term respecting Timothy; and this kind mention is made of him here because he was so dear to the heart of the writer, and because he felt that they to whom he wrote would also feel an interest in his circumstances” (Barnes).

- b. The mention of Italy in verse 24 also identifies the writer as Paul, as he was imprisoned twice in Rome.

4. He urges them to salute the brethren (Heb. 13:24).

- a. He begins by urging them to salute those that have the rule over them. He had earlier exhorted them to “*remember them that have the rule over you*” (Heb. 13:7). Believers who attempt to live the Christian life apart from a proper New Testament church with duly ordained pastor-elders are disobeying the clear teaching of the Word of God. Such cannot obey Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24, because they have none that rule over them.

- b. He also urges them to salute “*all the saints*” and conveys to them the greeting of those who were with him in Italy.

(1) This is a lovely picture of Christian charity and fellowship. There should be warm greetings to and from the brethren at all times. “It is a good thing to have the law of holy love and kindness written in the hearts of Christians one towards another. True religion teaches men the truest civility and good-breeding. It is not a sour nor morose thing” (Matthew Henry).

(2) Note that the Christians are called *saints*. Every born again believer is a saint in Jesus Christ because he has been eternally sanctified and perfected by Him (Heb. 10:10, 14). The Roman Catholic doctrine of sainthood is unscriptural.

- c. Note that there was no special salute for the spiritual rulers. They are rulers and should be honored as such, but they are not rulers after a worldly fashion. They are not lords (Mk. 10:42-45; 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor.

1:24; 1 Pet. 5:3). There is no hint in the New Testament that they should be given lofty titles such as Doctor or Reverend or Most Reverend or that they should be exalted to lofty positions such as bishop (in an extra-scriptural ecclesiastical sense) or metropolitan or cardinal or pope. There is no hint that they should wear special distinguishing gowns or head gear or capes or carry special emblems such as a staff. There is only one Master and all the rest are brethren (Mat. 23:8).

5. He concludes with a familiar salutation (Heb. 13:25). This was Paul's special salutation (2 Th. 3:17-18). Compare Rom. 16:24; 1 Cor. 16:23-24; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 4:23; Col. 4:18; 1 Th. 5:28; 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22; Tit. 3:15; Phile. 25.

Thus we have concluded almost where we began in these studies, with a reminder that Paul is the human author of this amazing book.

Review Questions Hebrews 13:20-25

1. What verse says it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his pleasure?
2. What is one of the themes of the preaching in the book of Acts that is also mentioned in Hebrews 13:20?
3. What is the divine sign that God accepted Christ's atonement?
4. Who is the great shepherd of the sheep?
5. In what chapter in the Bible do we find, "The Lord is my shepherd..."?
6. What verse says God gives grace so the believer can abound to every good work?
7. What is Christian perfectionism?
8. What book of the Bible says God will not give His glory to another?
9. When the writer of Hebrews says he had written a letter in a few words, what does this mean?
10. What chapter of the Bible describes the occasion when Paul chose Timothy to travel with him?
11. What does one have to do to become a saint?
12. In what chapter of what epistle did Paul explain that he concluded all of his epistles in a certain way?

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