

Hebrews

Hebrews' theme is about the supremacy of Christ, along with the sufficiency of His work and the necessity of faith in Him for salvation.

The author of Hebrews is unknown. There are many people who think the Apostle Paul wrote the book, however, there is much evidence that someone else wrote the book. Only God knows the author.

One of the reasons Hebrews was written was to encourage early Christians who had converted from being Jews. These Christians were under terrible pressure to renounce Christ and even were facing persecution. The writer is encouraging all Christians to not fall away from Christ because of any difficulty; even persecution. Christians are to press on to full Christian maturity.

Hebrews is written in the style of a sermon being delivered by a pastor who is absent from his church.

Hebrews was written to show the superiority of Christ to Judaism.

I. Part one: the supremacy of Christ. Hebrews Chapter 1-3:6

1. Chapter 1:1-2 God's final word

A. We are told in verse one that God has spoken. The words God spoke to us are recorded in the Bible. This is a very important fact, and tells us:

i. The Bible is the word of God. Human writers wrote the words of God as God spoke through them according to 2 Peter 1:21. We must recognize that God is speaking to us through the Bible.

ii. This means that the Bible is authority over us and we are to obey God's words as found in the Bible.

iii. It also means that the Bible is relevant today. Even though God wrote to different people thousands of years ago, His words in the Bible apply to us today. This means any rule found in the Bible is a rule for us to follow today.

iv. Since God is the only author the Bible has a unified message. The message flows from Genesis through Revelation. There are no contradictions in the Bible and a person can use one part of the Bible to understand other parts. A good rule is to use scripture to interpret scripture.

2. The final revelation in God's son.

A. These verses tell us that God has spoken His final revelation through Jesus and this final revelation is superior to the earlier revelations.

B. This final revelation is superior then the Old Testament because it completes the story. The Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Christ but it doesn't have all the details. The Old Testament is only part of the story. The New Testament brought to us by Christ completes the revelation of Jesus.

i. John Calvin, a Bible scholar from 500 years ago, said it was not just part of the Word that Christ brought rather it was the complete Word.

ii. This means that the Bible is complete and nothing is to be added to it. We see this in Revelation 22:18-19. Hebrews 1:1 tells us that God no longer speaks to us in dreams and through prophecy. He now speaks to us only through His Son through the Bible.

C. Another way Christian faith is superior over Jewish belief is that Christian faith was revealed to us by Christ. While the Old Testament faith which is the Jewish belief was brought to us by men such as the prophets.

3. Prophet, Priest, and King Hebrews 1:2-4

A. To show how superior Christ is, the author of Hebrews shows Jesus in these important offices of prophet, priest, and king. He shows that Christ is superior in these offices.

B. Christ is the true king reigning now and forever in heaven. This is what it says here in verse 2 when it says Jesus is the son of God and the heir of God. It also says in Psalm 2:8 and Romans 8:17 that Jesus is God's heir. This means that King Jesus is the king ruling in heaven and he is the highest king; there is no king higher than Jesus.

i. It is true in this present age that everyone does not acknowledge Jesus as king, but Philippians 2:9-10 tells us that every person will acknowledge Jesus as king. We Christians will gladly bow before King Jesus, but all non-Christians will bow in sorrow.

C. Jesus is the final prophet; the perfect prophet. As the human prophets reveal God's words to us, Christ is the perfect prophet because He is the exact imprint of God. This means that Jesus fully reveals the glory of God which nobody else can. If you have seen Jesus according to John 14:9 you have seen the father. This is because Jesus is fully God.

i. Comparing Jesus to the previous prophets helps us understand the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament. There is nothing wrong with the Old Testament but it is not complete. It is not complete until Jesus is revealed in the New Testament. All the Old Testament points to the coming Messiah.

ii. Jesus is the final prophet because after him there is nothing else to reveal about God.

D. Jesus is the true king, the final prophet, and He is the perfect priest. Verse three tells us that after His perfect sacrifice Jesus sat down at the right hand of God. Sitting down signified that his sacrifice completed the need for future sacrifice. The Jewish priest never sat down after they sacrificed because their work was never done. They had to continually sacrifice but the perfect sacrifice of the Jesus the Lamb of God was the final and perfect sacrifice.

E. Verse 4 tells us that Jesus is superior to angels. There are two reasons it is important to prove this.

i. The first reason is because the Jews lifted angels up to a very high status so it was necessary for the author of Hebrews to make sure everyone realized that Jesus was higher than the angels. The lesson is that Jesus is exalted above everyone else including the angels.

ii. The second reason is that people in the early church looked to angels for spiritual hope and comfort. It is important for us to know that we are to look to Jesus for our comfort and all our spiritual needs and not to anyone else including angels.

4. Superior to Angels Hebrews 1:4-9. As was just said, the early church elevated angels higher than they should have been. It is important that we realize the relationship between Angels and Jesus. It is comparable to the relationship of the Old Testament to the Old Testament. The New Testament is superior and Jesus is superior to angels. Angels were created but Jesus was not created; He has always existed, and He is superior to angels.

A. Jesus is superior because His name is superior. Luke 1:32 says He will be called the "Son of the Most High." God in Matthew 3:17 says, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased." God repeats this in Matthew 17:5. The name "Son of God" belongs to Jesus only and it shows that He is above everything including the angels.

B. Hebrews 1:6 tells us that Jesus is superior because the angels worship Him.

i. Luke 2:13-14 tells how the angels were worshipping Jesus.

C. Hebrews 1:7-9 tell the third way Jesus is superior is because of His divine sovereignty. His kingdom will exist forever.

i. Psalm 45:6-7 talks about Jesus ruling forever.

ii. Isaiah 9:6-8 tells that there will be no end to His kingdom.

iii. Hebrews 1:8-9 tells how Jesus loved righteousness and hated wickedness. This is a quote from Psalm 45:6-7.

iv. Jesus is the one who at the end of days will establish righteousness.

D. Revelation 19:10 tells how the angel told John that the angels were servants of Jesus just like John. Angels were created by Jesus just like people.

5. The ruling Lord Hebrews 1:10-14. No other chapter shows the fact that Jesus is God as strongly as Hebrews chapter one. John chapter 1 and Colossians chapter 1 also teach about Jesus being God, but Hebrews chapter 1 is the strongest teaching of Christ's deity. The writer of Hebrews looks to Psalm 102 to prove his points about Jesus being God.

A. Hebrews chapter 1 has already made many strong arguments about Jesus being Lord. This continues:

i. Verse 2 says He is the heir of all things and that all things were created through Him. These things can only be applied to God.

ii. The things verse 3 says about Jesus being the radiance of the glory of God and being the exact imprint or likeness of God prove that Jesus is God. Only God can uphold the universe. Only God can purify us.

B. Verses 10-12 show us that there is a great difference between the permanence of God, who created everything, and the creation itself. Everything such as Heaven and all of earth will pass away while the Son of God, Jesus, will stay the same forever. Every manmade thing, including man, will be gone. Only Jesus is permanent and only Jesus has no beginning or end.

C. We will look at Psalm 102 which is the source of Hebrews 1:10-12.

ii The author in the first half of Psalm 102 is lamenting, he is crying over the shortness of life. This is a common cry of old people that their life passed away so quickly that they hardly noticed it.

ii. But in the second half of the Psalm the author lifts up his eyes and sees God and there he finds great hope because the Psalmist tells us that God will live forever.

iii. Hebrews 1:11-12 are taken from Psalm 102 verse 25 and 12. Here in Hebrews we see that everything will wear out and perish except God.

D. Hebrews 1:13 takes the words of Psalm 110:1 and shows that God never gave the honor of sitting at His right hand to any angel rather God only gave this honor to His Son Jesus. Remember the right seat at the right hand of God and is the seat of power.

E. Verse 14 makes it clear that angels are servants of God.

In conclusion, chapter one makes it clear that Jesus ranks higher than the angels. Nobody is higher than Jesus.

6. Hebrews 2:1-4 is the first of several warnings, found in the book of Hebrews, about the danger of falling away from salvation.

A. Verse 1 warns about a common problem. This is when an individual or a church or a denomination falls away from the truths of the Bible. This is called drifting away from the truth. It is very common and soon the person or church is no longer Christian.

i. Sometimes this happens when someone comes close to becoming a Christian or even becomes a Christian and then he drifts away from the truths of the Bible. This is called apostasy.

a. Many people investigate becoming a Christian but before this happens they start avoiding any teaching about Jesus; they no longer listen to people who try to tell them about the gospel and salvation. The Lord allows the unbeliever to harden his heart and he is lost forever.

b. Individual churches also wander away from the true teachings of God. A church must make sure they only teach and preach what they read in the Bible. Sometimes a church decides they don't like one thing the Bible says and they begin to change their teaching from what the Bible says to what they want it to say. This practice grows and soon the church is far away from God.

c. Denominations also fall away from the true teachings from the Bible and they become apostate denominations just like individual churches and individual people.

ii. This wandering away from the truths of the Bible is very common and requires constant effort to keep true to the Bible. Every person must be on guard and keep both themselves and their churches and denominations true. Use your Bibles to make sure the truth is being taught and if you see any teaching that is not true to the Bible talk about this to the church leaders. If they don't correct the teaching then you must leave the church and find a church which teaches only the truth.

B. The reason we must be so careful to not wander away from the truth of the Bible is explained in verse 2 where it says the angels delivered a truthful message from God. This truth is to be obeyed.

C. The second part of verse 2 and verse 3 promise terrible punishment for wandering away from God. The punishment is eternal.

D. Jesus proved His message was true by the life he lived on earth and by the many miracles he performed. God the Holy Spirit also proved the authority of the message of Jesus; we see this reported in the New Testament especially in the book of Acts.

7. Hebrews 2:5-9 His story

A. Verse 5 returns to the theme that Jesus is superior to the angels when the verse points out that it is not the angels who control the world. Chapter 1:14 made it clear that angels are here to serve; not to rule. When the verse talks about the world to come it is talking about the time when Jesus will rule over the earth.

B. Verses 6-8 refers back to Psalm 8:4-7 which tells us that humans and not angels are to rule the earth. Genesis 1:26 tells us that God originally made humans to rule over the earth. This rule ended when man sinned in the garden and this privilege was taken away from him.

C. Verse 9 refers to the fact that Jesus the Son of God became a human being. He came to earth and lived as a man, and so became a little lower than the angels just like us. God raised Him from the dead and gave Him a royal crown of great honor and power. In Jesus, God has begun to carry out his promise that human beings should rule. It is because of God's great love that Jesus died for all of us.

i. We know from Mathew 28:18 that Jesus is ruler of both heaven and earth. However, because of our fallen state humans are not the current rulers of the earth.

D. In this section of Hebrews we see that the great problem in all history is the fall of man because of sin. Sin has such power over man that he is a slave to sin and because of this he is condemned to death. Man's only hope is found in the work of Jesus.

E. The life and story of Jesus can be organized into three segments.

i. The first part is humiliation which is what verse 9 is saying when it says "He was made lower than angels." As a man Jesus suffered a death unlike anybody else's death. Jesus was innocent of any sin but He took our sin on Himself. This is what 2 Corinthians 5:21 means when it says that God "made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" It is this act of Jesus taking our sins and putting them on Himself that allows us to be at peace with God and to be His saved child.

ii. The second segment of the life of Jesus is found in verse 9 where it says He "was crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death." In raising Christ from the dead God the Father honored the perfect obedience of Jesus and made Him ruler over all. It was through His victory over death that we have also conquered death.

iii. The third part of Jesus work is found in the future when He returns to earth and brings the history of the world to its glorious climax; to the end of the earth. This is what verse 5 of Hebrews says "It was not to angels that God subjected the world to come." When Jesus comes again, everything will be made right and sin and suffering will be no more. This is when all the promises for men will be complete.

8. Hebrews 2:10-13 perfect through suffering

A. Verse 10 tells us that God made Jesus our perfect leader by having Jesus suffer and die for our sins. Jesus is the one who made His followers holy.

B. Verse 11 repeats that Jesus is the one who makes men and women holy. The holy ones are those who have believed in Jesus. They have become one with Jesus. So he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters because we are one family. Jesus is our elder brother and we Christians are all in the family of God.

i. It is important for Christians to realize that we are all one family. We change when we become Christians and this means as 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us we become new creatures. John 3 tells us we become born again when we become Christian. This means our nearest family is our Christian brothers and sisters. We are first Christians and then black or white. We are first Christians

before we are one tribe or another. An African Christian is closer to a European Christian than he is to his Muslim family.

C. There are two important things about this new family we want to talk about.

i. First this family is all going to glory; to heaven.

ii. Second this family all comes from the same place. We are all born again and this birth is spiritual coming from God.

D. Every family member has a common characteristic. They all want to be holy.

Ephesians 1:4 says God chose us to be holy and blameless before Him.

E. Hebrews 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22. Psalm 22 is a Messianic Psalm. There is a theological thought here which can be difficult to understand. This point is that Jesus died and rose again not merely to save us but also to make us worshippers of God the Father. When we sing hymns to God this is what verse 12 talks about when it talks about singing God's praises.

F. Verse 13 Jesus was God. But while he was living on earth as a man, he had to put his trust in God. During his life on earth he had to depend on God. In this he was the same as we are, for we need God's help. Jesus was one of us. Again he shows that we belong to the same family. He says, 'Here am I, and the children whom God has given to me' (Isaiah 8:18). He is speaking of the men and women who followed him. We are among them, if we put our trust in him.

9. Chapter 2:14-18 Jesus is able to help

A. The great theme of these verses here is the full humanity of Jesus Christ in His work as divine Savior.

B. We see here three great parts of Christ's saving work.

i. First He broke the devil's hold and liberated captive humanity. Jesus came to earth to destroy the power of Satan and to free us from Satan. He did this by being fully human and being totally without any sin, and dying on the cross for us.

a. Satan's power over us has been the power of death. Jesus destroyed this power when He died for us on the cross. Read 2 Timothy 1:10 confirms this. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57 also tells how death no longer has any power over us because of what Jesus did on the cross. All death for a Christian is a door opening for us to go to heaven.

ii. Second Jesus made propitiation for us. This word, propitiation, means that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins in a way that satisfied God and turned His anger away from us. God is a just God who demanded punishment for all sins, and Jesus was punished for all our sins. Verse 17 means that Jesus had to be human to be able to pay our debt to God.

iii. The third part of Christ's saving work is that he is able to help us. Verse 18 tells that Jesus is able to help us because as verse 18 says Jesus suffered when He was tempted just like us. Jesus experienced that same difficulties and trials in life that we experience. If you are suffering from a painful illness, the person who can help you and comfort you the most is the person who has experienced the same illness.

C. Jesus became like us so that He could be our Savior. He suffered hunger, illness, pain, fatigue; in other words Jesus lived a life filled with difficulties just like us, He only left heaven so that He could die for us. He is still with us.

10. Chapter 3:1-6 The Great Apostle

A. Chapter one makes the point that Jesus is supreme over angles and now chapter three makes the point that Jesus is superior over Moses.

B. Chapter one says that Jesus is an apostle which means He represents God before man. He is also high priest because He represents man before God, and offers a sacrifice for their sins.

C. The Jews thought very highly of Moses so it is necessary to show that Jesus is higher than Moses. Verses three and four make the point that Moses was a faithful servant, but he was only a servant. Verses three and four make the point that Jesus was superior because as verse six says He is the son of God. Jesus is God and He is the builder of all things.

i. Another way of saying this is to think about humans building a large house. There are many workers or servants who do the work of building the house. However there is one boss who is over the workers. Think of Jesus as being the boss and Moses are being one of the workers.

D. So as verse six says We are part of his house, when we come to Jesus accepting all that he has done for us. We can have joy and confidence as we look to the future. We must hold on to this belief and not let it go. We can be certain that God will do all that he has promised.

II. Warnings against falling away. Chapters 3:7-6:30

1. Another warning against unbelief chapter 3:7-12.

A. We read in verse seven that the words in the Bible are the words of God. This is what we read in the first verse of Hebrews. It is a fact that the Bible is God's word and we must obey it. The words of the Bible are authoritative today and they will always be relevant and authoritative. God's laws are timeless.

B. Verse 8 warns people to not harden their hearts against God. People are to be obedient to God. Psalm 95 also warns about the danger of a hard heart.

C. Verses 8-11 uses the example of the rebellion of the people in the desert during the Exodus to teach that it is very wrong for a person to harden his heart against God. There is a severe penalty when God is disobeyed. In the case of the rebellion during the time of Moses, God punished the people by making them wander in the desert for forty years. They stayed in the desert until they all died. Not a single one of the people who hardened their hearts and rebelled against God was allowed into the Promised Land.

D. The verses teach the same lesson to those of us alive today. The message is that if we harden our hearts against God's offer of free salvation then we will never enter the promised rest of heaven.

2. Salvation lost. Hebrews 3:12-19

A. Verses 12 and 13 sound like a pastor speaking to his people and telling them to not allow sin to cause them to harden their hearts against God. A hard heart is one that says no to God and leads to the destruction of the person with the hard heart.

B. There are three lessons to be learned about a hard heart. Verse 15 warns people to not harden their hearts as people did in the rebellion of the Hebrews in the desert when Moses was leading them.

i. The first lesson is that because you have a good beginning in following God, this does not mean you will finish well. Verse 15 points out that the people who rebelled in the desert were the same ones who started out faithfully following Moses and God. It is true as John 10:28 says that if you are truly saved then nothing will take your salvation away. The problem is that many people only fool themselves about being saved. They, often, are like Judas and they draw close to Christ but they never become saved and after a while they leave the church. This is why we have verses like 2 Peter 1:10 which says to continue to make sure we are truly saved.

ii. The second lesson is that it is terrible to become hard hearted and rebellious toward God. As verse 12 warns us a hard heart cause a person to turn away from God and reject salvation through Him. A person does this even though they hear the truth about belief in Jesus and they refuse to accept what they really know is true. A person with a hard heart can't accept the truth.

iii. The third lesson about a hard heart is that as verse 17 warns, we should not provoke God and cause Him to get angry with us. Because verse 18 warns us that these people with a hard heart which is a disobedient heart will never enter God's rest. In other words the person with a hard or disobedient heart will never go to heaven. Look at Isaiah 57:1-2 to see that only the righteous person enters God's rest. Verses 3-13 tell how the hard hearted or unrighteous person will suffer and not enter heaven.

C. How can we prevent a person who starts with a good heart from turning into a person with a hard heart?

i. Hebrews 3:12 tells us to be careful and watch out that we don't wander away from God. We do this by spending time with God in prayer, reading the Bible and, going to worship with other Christians.

ii. Verse 13 tells us to exhort or encourage each other to stay true to God. Many successful church leaders have one or more fellow Christians who help them stay true to God and not wander away and get a hard heart.

3. The Sabbath Rest Hebrews 4:1-5

A. God has promised a place of rest that will last forever. This rest is promised to anyone who belongs to Jesus. We must learn a lesson from the Hebrews who did not enter the Promised Land. They did not enter because they did not trust God. We must trust and obey God so that we can enter the Promised Land which is heaven. After we die it will be too late so we need to turn to God now.

B. Verse 2 repeats the idea that failure to trust God is the reason people do not enter the place of rest. The gospel seems foolish to people who don't trust and believe in Jesus. See this idea in 1 Corinthians 1:18.

C. This passage is a warning to many people who believe that they are automatically going to heaven because they are born into a Christian family, or they faithfully go to church, or they serve God. None of these things will get them into heaven. The only thing that will get a person into heaven is believing and trusting in Jesus Christ. Nobody can go to heaven without this belief.

4. Entering God's rest Hebrews 4:6-11.

A. The first rest mentioned in the Bible is the rest promised to God's people when they were promised their own land in Canaan. The former slaves who Moses led to freedom never entered this promised land of Canaan because of their disobedience. Only Joshua and Caleb were obedient and allowed to enter Canaan.

B. Verse 7 is saying that while the people were not allowed to enter the first rest promised to God's people. However, God promises another rest to come. This is looking toward end times and is the rest promised to all faithful Christians who go to heaven.

C. Verse 8 tells us that Joshua did not have the power to lead the people into this promised. Only Jesus could do this.

D. God does promise a rest to us today and verses 9-10 talk about this promised rest which is the Sabbath. God gave this day to Christians to be a holiday when we do no work. It is a day when we spend time worshipping and enjoying God just as we will do fulltime when we enter heaven.

E. Verse 11 tells us that we must be eager to enter this place of rest. We must make sure that we get there by coming to know God in Jesus. We must be careful that we do not fail like the people in the desert. They did not trust God.

5. Hebrews 4:12-13 God's Living Word. These verses teach about the power of the Bible

A. The Bible is the only source of our knowledge about God. Everything we know about God is found only in the Bible. Here are two simple rules about the Bible.

i. Don't believe anything you are told about God unless it is in the Bible. If someone tells you something about God and you don't recognize it from the Bible then ask the person to show you where it is in the Bible, and don't believe it unless he shows you.

ii. The other rule is for you to never say anything about God unless you know that what you are saying is in the Bible.

B. The Bible is permanent and lives forever. 1 Peter 1:23-25, Isaiah 40:6-8

C. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is living and active. This is because they are the words of God see Hebrews 1:1.

i. How can this be true since we know that the Bible was written by around forty different humans? 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that God breathed words that were given to the human authors to write for our use. As we Christians read and study the Bible, we are changed, and in this way the Bible is alive and active.

ii. Peter tells us how this happens in 2 Peter 1:20-21 where we read that men spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Peter is telling us that the words the men wrote were from the Holy Spirit. We must read the words of the Bible as being God's words and this makes them to be living and active. It also makes the Bible to be authoritative over us; meaning it is to be obeyed.

iii. Another way that shows that the Bible is living and active is the content and purpose of the Bible. The Bible reports how God is bringing about the forgiveness and salvation of His people. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:15 that studying the Scriptures is how we learn how to be saved.

iv. The story of Lazarus in John 11:43 shows us another way in which God's word is living and active. Dead Lazarus came alive at the words of Jesus just as the words of the Bible made us spiritually alive.

D. Verse 12 also tells us the Word of God is sharper than any two edged sword which means that it penetrates us to our innermost depth which is our personality. In other words the Word of God changes our heart. The Bible serves as our judge. Our attitude toward the Bible shows our true attitude toward God. Do we respect it and obey it?

i. The words of the Bible along with the action of the Holy Spirit convict of us our sin and our need for a saviour. The Bible leads us to Jesus and this is how we are born again.

E. God's Word is a two-edged sword which stands above us to condemn us to eternal death. It tells us to repent, to confess, and surrender to God who freely forgives. Jesus came not to condemn the world but to save it. And yet He said, "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day."

G. God's Word is strong enough and sufficient for every need we have for faith and godliness. That is what we see in verse 12 where we read that God's word is sharper than any man made sword.

F. Verse 13 tells us again that God's Word is strong enough and sufficient for all our needs when it states that nothing is hidden from God. Everything we do God's sees and knows about.

G. Chapter 4 verses 12-13 teach that we need to respect and obey the Word of God. We close the study of these two verses by reading Isaiah 55:10-11, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." The Bible tells us that God's wishes are done.

6. Jesus is our great high priest. Hebrews 4:14-16

A. The idea expressed in verse 14 that we must hold fast to our confession or to our Christian faith; in other words the way we live must show that we are different because we are Christians.

Matthew 7:13-14 tells us the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few. Here are some reasons that tell why it is difficult to become a Christian and live the way a Christian is supposed to live:

i. Life is full of pleasurable temptations to live the same way the pagan world lives. We must pray and ask God to help us resist these temptations.

ii. Christians are to live building up treasures in the next life instead of this. Examples are that we might be missionaries or pastors instead of having jobs with good income. We often give large sums of money to the work of the church instead of buying the new car we want.

iii. Christians must resist the desires of our bodies such as when we desire sexual relations outside marriage.

B. Verse 15 tells us that we are able to do this because Jesus, our high priest, is helping us. Jesus has gone ahead of us and given us His example. Our faith in Him gives us both motivation and courage to be faithful and obedient.

i. Our high priest helps us by sympathizing with us. He experienced all the trials, temptations and sufferings we experience. He knows the difficulties we experience.

C. Verse 16 tells us to come with confidence and not fear to the throne of God. We know that the throne of grace is a friendly place. We come to the throne when we pray. There is a correct way to approach God in our prayers:

i. We must be respectful and humble and reverent. Think about how you would come to meet the president of your country and then be even more respectful to God.

ii. We should come with great joy. We are coming to the one who loves us so much that He died a cruel death for us to be able to come to the throne. Only a Christian can come to the throne.

iii. We should pray expectantly. We should expect God to answer us which he will. He answers every prayer. He say yes to our request, or He says no, or He says wait. Our faith makes us content with the answer God gives us because we trust Him to give us the perfect answer. Romans 8:28 tells us that God works all things for our good.

iv. We should come and pray with confidence. Many people avoid prayer because of various fears. God likes all our sincere prayers; even the little child's prayer. Romans 8:26 tells us that God the Holy Spirit helps us with our prayers.

7. Appointed as Priest Hebrews 5:1-10 gives us the requirements to be high priest and tells us that Jesus is high priest forever.

A. The high priest has to be a human, appointed by God to represent sinners before God by means of atoning gifts and sacrifices. The priest had to be a human to represent and identify with humans.

B. Jesus is qualified to be high priest because He is human. Jesus is fully human and fully God. He is qualified because as a human being He suffered and was tempted just like every other person ever born.

C. Verses 4-6 tell us that Jesus was appointed by God. It is important that we men are appointed by God to office; that we don't decide on our own to be a priest, pastor, elder, deacon, etc. We must make sure that we are called by God to office. We must be motivated to serve as a church officer in order to serve God and other people; not to profit ourselves.

i. Psalm 110:4 is talking about Jesus when it says, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." This means that Jesus is a permanent priest.

D. Verse 9 tells us that Christ is the only source of our salvation. There is nothing we do to be saved. What is needed for salvation?

i. We must have perfect righteousness to be saved. Matthew 19:16-17,

Luke 10:25-28, and 1 Peter 1:16. We must be perfectly righteous but we are according to Romans 3:10 not righteous. The problem is that we must be perfectly righteous but we are not and we stand condemned because of this.

E. We can't get this perfect righteousness from anything we do; we can only get it from Jesus. Verses 7-9 tell us that Jesus got this righteousness through His perfect obedience, while living as a human being, to God the father. Jesus perfectly obeyed all the law and he never ever sinned. He was tempted to sin just as we all are, but unlike us He didn't sin. Being tempted is not sin.

F. We get our righteousness from Jesus and only Jesus. John 14:6.

i. Hebrews 5:9 tells us salvation comes from Him.

ii. John 6:28-29 says we must believe in Jesus.

iii. John 3:36 says we will have eternal life if we believe in Jesus.

G. Obeying God and being saved means we must confess that we are sinners and admit that we can't save ourselves.

8. Hebrews 5:11-6:3 from milk to meat or from barely understanding the Bible to having a deep knowledge of God because of much study of the Bible.

A. The author in verse 11 is talking about it not being possible to teach the deeper truths of the Bible because the people have never studied the simpler truths so they don't know enough about God to teach the advanced truths. In the next chapter we will be studying about the problem of people leaving the faith. Often people fall away because they don't know much about God.

i. Verse 11 starts talking about the priesthood of Jesus according to the order of Melchizedek. The author of Hebrews immediately realizes that he can't teach about this because the people don't know enough about God to study this subject. This is a major problem in the church today; people don't know enough about the Bible to study the deep truths found in it.

B. Many people back in Bible times and today have no interest in theology. They only care to know enough to become believers. Immature Christians are weak and fall away from the church easily. They are also unable to teach and evangelize effectively.

i. Uneducated church leaders across the world who don't know the Bible teach all kinds of nonsense to the people. They start cults and all kinds of false religions. People that really know what their Bibles say are able to stop false preachers and teachers from leading people away from God.

ii The better we know God the better we will serve Him.

C. What does the immature Christian look like? Verses 11-14 tell us that he is:

i. A shallow Christian who doesn't really know much about God and never enjoys many of the benefits of living as a Christian. For example, a mature Christian goes to God and is comforted by God in difficult times. A mature

enjoys wonderful fellowship with God, and his service brings glory and honour to God. An immature believer misses many blessings from God.

ii. Another problem with immature believers is that they can't be of much benefit to others. Every believer is to teach others about Jesus both Christian and non-believers. It is both the men and women who are to teach. Immature believers can't teach their children and this is terrible.

iii. Another problem for the immature believer is that they are easily led to believe false teaching. For example, many Christians believe that life is supposed to be good with no suffering. One of the main teachings from the New Testament is that Christians will suffer. Just read 1 Peter 4:12-16; actually much of the message in 1 Peter teaches that Christians will suffer. Read 2 Timothy 3:12.

D. Chapter six starts out telling Christians to not just learn the basics facts about Christianity but to learn enough to become spiritually mature. In other words, becoming a believer is only a beginning. We Christians are to study the Bible all our lives.

E. Verses 1-2 of chapter six contain six basic beliefs we must keep.

i. The first two beliefs are found in verse one and we are told to believe in and practice repentance from dead works and continue in our faith in God. Our dead works is the work we do to save ourselves which are futile because it is only our faith in Jesus which saves us.

ii. The meaning of the first part of verse 2 is very difficult to understand. The only thing I will say here is that the baptism or washings and laying on of hands points us to sanctification. Another way to say this is in agreement with what we have been saying about our learning more about God and, maturing in the faith. We must do this.

iii. The second part of verse 2 looks at our glorification which deals with the believer's destination after his death. Christians are going to heaven after death while nonbelievers will go to hell and suffer.

F. A main subject in Hebrews is that we Christians must persevere in our faith throughout our life. We must grow in our faith by learning more about God. Verse 3 tells us that we can stay strong in our faith throughout our lives if God allows us to. Our goal is to please and honour God and we do this by growing in, our knowledge and service.

9. Hebrews 6:4-8. Once enlightened. This is another one of the warning passages in Hebrews. The subject of this warning is about the danger of apostasy or falling away from God. There are two main issues here.

A. Who or what kind of person falls away? The author is not talking to his audience of fellow believers. This is confirmed by the wording in verse 4 which speaks of, "those who have once been enlightened." In other words the author

is talking to people other than his audience of Christians who were former Jewish believers. He is talking about these believers in Verse 9. Where he refers to them as, “in your case” which shows that the author is now talking to the believers.

i. This means that the ones who are falling away are not the believers the author is writing to in the book of Hebrews. It is not Christians who fall away.

ii. Falling away means that a person stops believing in Jesus and walks away from anything to do with trusting and following Jesus. It means returning to the god you formerly worshipped

B. There is much disagreement about this passage. There are some who say that it means that Christians can lose their salvation. We know that a person who has truly believed and become a Christian can't lose their salvation. There are many verses to prove this such as John 6:36-40, John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, and Philippians 1:6. Scripture never contradicts itself so the Christian can never walk away from God.

C. Who do these words of warning apply to? One person is the person who comes to the church and participates in all the church does activities, but never becomes a born again Christian; he never truly surrenders his heart to Jesus. This is the person talked about in this passage.

i. Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23 is also talking about this type of person. This person knows all about Jesus and may have even served in the church for many years but they never became Christians.

D. These are the type of people who fall away and can't be restored. We must not judge that a person can't be restored; only God can make this judgement. We Christians must continue to evangelize these people, and leave the results to God.

E. What are some practical applications of this teaching?

i. It means that knowing and even teaching the gospel are not enough to save a person. Salvation requires both knowing Jesus and trusting Him.

ii. Verses 7-8 warn us that proof of our salvation is the fruit we have. This means if we are mature Christians, we serve God, and we honor God by our testimony.

iii. Or are we as verse 7-8 say people who take in the good things from God but never give anything back? If you are this type of person then you need to examine yourself to see if you are really a Christian.

iv. This passage also teaches that every time a person is given a chance to become a Christian and he refuses then it becomes more difficult for this person to ever become a Christian. His heart becomes hard against Jesus.

F. The final lesson from this passage is that we must live each day in fellowship with Jesus. Loving and obeying Him daily. We can only do this with God's help Hebrews 13:6 tells us that God is our helper.

10. Hebrews 6:9-12 Busy to the end or living as a Christian to the end of your life. The writer has said some hard things so now he wants to encourage the people.

A. He starts by calling them friend.

B. We can be assured of salvation if we faithfully exercise our faith. We don't have to worry about falling away because daily we prove our faith by serving and honoring God. We exercise our faith by reading our Bible, praying, thinking about God, and serving Him. This will increase our faith.

C. In verse ten the author reassures the people that God does what is right. That God knows that they are showing their trust in Him by their works because they love God. When we help people we show our love for God.

D. Verse 11 encourages us to continue living for God until the end of our lives, and to not get tired of serving God. This will help assure us that we do belong to God, and it pleases God.

i. Do not be like the person who serves God and has a good testimony for a time. But then stops serving and lives like an unsaved person. A person who does this should reexamine himself to see if he really is a Christian.

E. Verse 12 tells us we must not become lazy. We should copy others who have served until the end of their lives even when they have suffered for the faith.

11. Hebrews 6:13-20 God's promise is sure.

A. Verses 13-15 talk about the great trust Abraham had in God.

i. Abraham had to be patient and wait until it was God's time for his son Isaac to be born. It was 25 years after God promised Abraham an heir before Isaac was born. In fact, Isaac was not born until it seemed Sarah was too old to have children.

ii. We learn from this the lesson that we must often be patient and wait until it is God's time for something to happen.

iii. I had this happen to me when I wanted to be a missionary in 1985-86. My wife and I applied to be fulltime missionaries and we were rejected by the mission's board. I still wanted to be a missionary, but I thought my age of 62 was too old and my health was too poor. However, God didn't agree with this and in 2005 after waiting twenty years we became fulltime missionaries.

B. The second lesson in these verses is that we can always trust God to keep His promises. Remember, God can't lie.

i. These verses tell us that God made an oath to keep His promise. He didn't have to do this but He took the vow to reassure Abraham. Our God can be trusted to always keep His promises.

C. Verses 19-20 tell us that we can always reassure ourselves by reading God's promises in the Bible and know they are true. God's promises are like an anchor that keeps us stable. Jesus is the anchor and he is the forerunner who has gone on before us to heaven.

III. Our Great High Priest

1. Melchizedek Hebrews 7:1-10

A. The question is who is Melchizedek? Verse 1 tells us that Melchizedek was the king of Salem. Salem was probably a short form of 'Jerusalem'. He was not only a king, but also a priest of the most high God. In those days it was not unusual for a king to be a priest. We first met Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18-20. There is a lot of mystery as to who Melchizedek is. We will look at what we know.

i. Verse 1 tells us that he was both king and priest. The Levitical priest could not be king.

ii. Verse 1 also tells us that Melchizedek blessed Abraham.

iii. His name translates from the Hebrew as "righteous king".

iv. His title is "king of Salem." Salem which means peace is probably Jerusalem.

v. Melchizedek was a different type of priest than the Levites. He was not Christ but he was a type of Christ. This means he was similar to Jesus. He points to Jesus.

vi. Verse three talks about Melchizedek as having no father or mother or genealogy. This doesn't actually mean that he had no father or mother, rather it symbolizes that Melchizedek is a different kind of priest unlike the Levitical priest. Instead Melchizedek symbolizes eternal king Jesus.

B. We now look at Melchizedek as a type of Christ. Type means some other person who symbolizes and anticipates the person who is coming. In other words Melchizedek symbolizes and prepares us for the coming Christ. Let's see how he does this now.

i. The first thing similar to Christ is that Melchizedek was also both priest and king.

ii. Secondly Melchizedek blessed Abraham with bread and wine. He blessed Abraham in the name of the most high. Now Jesus through the Holy Spirit also blesses us in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

iii. Thirdly, Melchizedek's names and titles of "king of righteousness" and king of "peace" also fit Jesus who was this kind of king. This was what disappointed the people who wanted a military king who would free them from Rome instead Jesus freed them from sin.

iv. Lastly Melchizedek is spoken of in verse 3 as continuing to be a priest forever and we know Jesus is a priest forever.

C. The priesthood of Jesus is supreme or better than the priesthood of the Levites. Melchizedek serves as a model to show this. He does this three ways.

i. The first way is that Abraham paid a tithe to Melchizedek. In a way this meant that Levi paid a tithe because Levi was still in Abraham's loins. The tithe is only paid to a superior being.

ii. Secondly Melchizedek blessed Abraham and the superior blesses the inferior. Again this means Melchizedek was blessing the Levites who came from Abraham.

iii. Melchizedek represented a better priesthood than the Levites. Melchizedek represented an immortal priesthood which would last forever. Melchizedek represented the priesthood of the living priest Jesus Christ who lives forever.

D. We don't know much about Melchizedek. It seems that as far back as Abraham's time that God gave His people small glimpses of the coming Messiah, and this may be a reason for this teaching about Abraham.

2. Hebrews 7: 11-14 King and Priest

A. One purpose of the book of Hebrews is to bring the old covenant of Moses into proper relationship with the new covenant of Jesus. Hebrews shows that the new covenant of Christ is superior. The new priesthood of Christ is superior to the old covenant and it replaces the old covenant. The priesthood of the Levites is ended and replaced by the new covenant with a new priest.

i. So we see that there is a new priesthood and a new law. The Old Testament priest was from the tribe of Levi and the law was from Moses. The purpose of the priest was to be a link between God and man. They did this by offering sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. The problem was that the priest's sacrifice were not good enough because the priest were sinful men. God said there was a new type of priest needed. Verse 11 tells us this priest must be like Melchizedek.

ii. Verse 12 tells us that this new priesthood required a new law with a new kind of sacrifice. The old Law of Moses required the priest to come from the tribe of Levi who will now, according to verse 14, be replaced by a priest from the tribe of Judah.

3. Hebrews 7:15-19 Christ is greater, for He is alive forever.

A. Jesus has come as a priest in the type of Melchizedek in that he was a king and a priest. Melchizedek like Jesus was a priest who lived before the Law of Moses. The Jews didn't know where Melchizedek came from or where he went so they pictured him as having no beginning or end. Jesus had no beginning or end.

B. In verse 17 we are told that God made Jesus the new chief priest after the type of Melchizedek. Jesus is the permanent high priest. This makes Jesus greater than the law of Moses which set up the priest of Levi. These priest of Levi were human and so they died. Jesus lives forever so He is the only one who can always be our priest.

C. Verses 18-19 point out that there is a difference between the old and the new covenant.

i. The law was good but the people and their priest were not able to perfectly obey the law. Therefore the old covenant couldn't save the people. The sacrifices of the old covenant priest were unable to remove sin.

ii. The new covenant is able to save people because Jesus who is without sin is our current priest. God accepted His sacrifice for us because it was a perfect sacrifice. Jesus made the final sacrifice; no other sacrifice is ever needed. God accepts this perfect sacrifice that Jesus made for us and this sacrifice make us clean from sin.

4. Christ is greater Hebrews 7:20-28

A. Christ is greater because of the promise of God, verses 20-22.

i. God in Psalm 110:4 promises, with a vow, that He will be a priest forever. The vow mentioned in verse 21 means that it is a promise that will never be broken. Jesus is our priest forever.

ii. Verse 22 The old law of Moses appointed sacrifices, but these could not make people clean from sin. The priests who offered these sacrifices were like other men because in the end they too had to die. But Jesus offered the sacrifice of himself on our behalf, and that has effect for all time. He is the priest who lives forever. God accepts his sacrifice for us, and he is the agent of God to bring us his blessing. He is our agent to God to bring us to him. Jesus can make us ready and clean to live with God forever. In this he is greater than the old Law of Moses and all other priests.

B. Christ is greater because He is a priest forever Hebrews; 7:23-25.

i. There were many priest under the old covenant and they all died because they were all men like us. They could not be priest after they died so new priest had to continually take their place.

ii. It is different with Jesus because He is alive forever which makes Him the priest for all time.

iii. Verse 25 tells us that even now Jesus is serving as our high priest. He is right this very moment in heaven making intercession for us. Romans 8:26

C. Verses 26-28 tell us that Christ is greater because He has offered a better sacrifice.

i. Verse 26 tells us that His sacrifice is better because He is the perfect priest. He lived as a human and knows all the problems we have. However, unlike us He never sinned. He lived a perfect life and he died to take away all our sins. As our chief priest. He always lives with God and acts for us.

ii. Verse 27 tells us that daily sacrifices were required because the priest, who did the sacrifices, sinned daily. This meant that daily the priest had to make sacrifice for his own sins. Jesus did not ever have to make sacrifice for His own sins because He never had any sin. The sacrifice that Jesus made of Himself for our own sins is the perfect and final sacrifice. There is no requirement for any more sacrifices. It is sin to continue making sacrifices.

iii. Verse 28 tells us that under the old covenant weak and sinful men were appointed as priest. Jesus, who is the vow or oath, promised by God and is perfect. Jesus is not weak as we are. He did no wrong and He came back from the dead. He continues to live a perfect life and He will never die. He is able to make us clean from all sin, so that we also can be with God.

5. A superior ministry Hebrews 8:1-6

A. Chapter seven talked about how Christ ministry is superior because Christ has been made perfect. Now in chapter eight verse one we see four features of Christ's high priestly ministry proving that its superiority beginning with:

i. Verse 1 tells us that He is seated as our perfect high priest. The priest of the old covenant were not perfect so they can't meet our needs as sinners before God's holy throne. Only Christ, who is perfect has made it possible for us to go be with God.

ii. The second feature demonstrating that Christ's ministry is superior is that He is both priest and king. It was impossible for the Old Testament priest to be king, and it was also impossible for the Old Testament king to be priest. Only Jesus was able to be both. This is significant because He is a perfect king and a perfect priest and His reign is forever. We don't need to be concerned about any change because we will always have the same perfect ruler.

iii. The third thing showing us the superiority of Christ's ministry is that verse one reports that Jesus is seated. The Old Testament priest never sat because their work of offering sacrifices was never completed. Christ sat down because His sacrifice was the perfect sacrifice that ended the need for any further

sacrifices. He has won our salvation by His perfect sacrifice so He sat down because of the work being finished.

iv. The fourth proof of the superiority of Christ's ministry is the power with which He presently reigns. Verse one says that He sits at the right hand of God which is the place of power and authority. This means He has the power to save us. There are many verses that tell us that Jesus has the power to save us and protect us. One of these verses is John 6:39 which says, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

B. Verse two talks about how in Moses time the people had a special tent, called the Tabernacle, where the people worshipped. This tent was a manmade model of the true holy place in heaven which God has made.

C. Verses 5 and 6 tell us that this special tent was designed to teach the people about the true place of worship in heaven. This place in heaven where Jesus now works shows that He is greater than the priest who worked in the special tent. Jesus has made a better agreement with God on our behalf. This agreement includes better promises than the old agreement. We will study these promises when we study verses 8-12.

D. This proof that Jesus has a superior ministry is very comforting to us because it teaches that we have the joy of the certainty our salvation. We know that nothing can take our salvation away. All we have to do is look to Jesus, trust in His Word, and be saved. We have nothing to fear. We read in Hebrews 13:5-6 that God says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you. So we can confidently say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

6. The new covenant Hebrews 8:6-13

A. Verses 6-7 point out that the old covenant or old agreement is flawed. The problem is not with the covenant. The problem is that the people because of their sinfulness are not able to obey the agreement. This is why a new covenant is needed.

B. Verse 8 points out that God was not pleased with the people and so back in Jeremiah chapter 31 He promised a new covenant.

C. In verse 9 God says the problem with the old covenant was that the people did not obey the agreement which angered God. In Jeremiah 3:2 God tells the people that they have polluted the land with their disobedience.

D. Verses 8-9 tell us that because the people did not keep the old covenant God will turn away from the people. This will result in the destruction of the kingdoms in Israel and the people will return to being slaves in Babylon just like

they were in Egypt.

i. The lesson for us is that when we disobey God He turns away from us and withdraws His protection.

E. The first great promise of the new covenant is stated in verse 10: "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." In this new covenant God not only gives the law, but He actually places it in their hearts. By this action God overcomes human weakness by His actually putting the covenant into people's hearts and making it a part of them.

i. Paul tells us the effect of having the covenant in their hearts will cause the people to be changed. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. A sign that you are a Christian is seeing change in you.

ii. This new heart of ours will cause us to want to obey and glorify God. This is because God is working in you; when He does the work it is effective. Philippians 2:13 says, "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

F. The second promise of this new covenant is the forgiveness of sins. There are two parts to this wonderful promise.

i. The first part of this promise found in verse 10 is that God will forgive our sins by the blood of the spotless sacrifice of Jesus.

ii. The second part of this promise found in verse 12 is that God will not remember their sin. This means that we can live the rest of our lives serving God knowing that God doesn't hold our sins against us. We humans may forgive someone who has done something bad to us but we always have some memory of the wrong and some memory of the wrong remains part of our relationship. God on the other hand according to verses like Psalm 103:12 sends our sins as far away from Him as the east is from the west. He completely removes them.

iii. The last promise from God is that He will always be our God. He promises this in verse 10 when He says He will be their God and they will be His people.

7. The old holy place Hebrews 9:1-10

A. To show how much better the new covenant is the author now writes about the old covenant. The old covenant had strict rules about worship.

B. Verse 2 tells us that the tent or tabernacle was set up with two sections. The outer part was called the holy place, and the inner part was called the most holy place. The outer part had a lamp which was continuously burning and a table

containing holy bread which could only be eaten by the priest. Each week on the Sabbath the high priest replaced the old loaves of bread with fresh bread.

C. Verse three tells us that through a second curtain was the inner room called the most holy place or holy of holies. Only the high priest could enter this room and only once a year. Verse 4 tells us that near the curtain there was a large box made of wood covered with gold (Exodus 30:1-6). There was the gold jar of the bread from heaven (Exodus 16). When the people went through the desert God fed them. He sent bread each morning for them to collect and eat. God told them to put some of it into this jar. It was there to remind them of how God cared for them. The stick of Aaron that came into flower was there (Numbers 17).

D. Verse 6 The priests had to go into the outer part of the special tent every day. They prepared the lamps in the morning and lit them in the evening. They had to say prayers to God at fixed times in the morning and in the evening. At these times the priests burned incense on the altar of gold. Each week they had to change the bread.

E. Verse 7 The chief priest went into the most holy place once a year. When it says once a year, it means on one day of the year. He had to go in more than once on that day. The priest was in danger of the anger of God, when he went into the most holy place. There had to be the right sacrifices made to God to make it safe for him. He had to make a sacrifice for his own sins on the altar. Then he went in with some of the blood and put it on the lid of the special box of the agreement. Then God forgave his sins. Then the chief priest made a sacrifice for the sins of the people. He went in again with some of that blood and put it on the gold lid of the special box. Then he asked God to forgive the people as well.

F. Verse 8 The Holy Spirit used the special tent to teach us an important truth. It was that there was no way that the people could go directly to God. Only the priests could go into the holy place. Even they could not go beyond that. The chief priest alone could go to God in the most holy place. He could only go there on one day of the year (Leviticus 16).

G. Verse 9 In those days the direct way to God was not yet open. The direct way to God is now open through Jesus. In the old special tent the priests offered gifts and sacrifices to God. The problem was that these had no power to change a person's heart and mind. These could not clean the conscience from sin and so make the people right with God.

Verse 10 There were strict laws about food and drink. The Jews had a lot of rules about washing and for much of their daily lives. These were all to do with the outside of a person and had no effect on the inside of a person. These old laws

applied until the time of the new agreement came. The new agreement put an end to the old laws and replaced them with a better way.

7b. Now we look at these ten verses to see the difference between fellowship with God in the tabernacle and the fellowship we Christians have with God.

A. Verse 3 points out that there is a curtain blocking the inner room where God dwelt from the outer room. Only once a year was a priest allowed to enter into God's presence. Verse 6 points out that the priest daily were permitted into the outer room but not into the inner room. Only the priest were allowed into the tabernacle; the rest of the Hebrews were never allowed into the tabernacle.

B. Verse 7 points out that only the high priest could enter the most holy place and only on one day of the year and he could only do so with a blood sacrifice covering his and the people's sins. This day was called the Day of Atonement.

C. The point of the tabernacle system of worship was to show that while God wanted to have a fellowship with His people, the way was not yet open for this.

i. It was at the time of the death of Jesus on the cross that the curtain on the temple was torn open as reported in Matthew 27:51. This tearing open the curtain meant that the way to God was no longer blocked. We Christians can go directly to God whenever we want. This is a wonderful blessing. This means that at any time day or night we Christians can pray to God and He is glad to receive us.

ii. We do not need to go to any priest or any other person to talk to God. We can come to God at any time because the blood sacrifice of Jesus paid the price for our sins. Our guilt for our sins is removed and our debt is paid in full.

D. Verse 8 points out that the curtain was blocking the way into the presence of God, and now it is removed. This means we have unrestricted access to God through our faith in Him. The Holy Spirit works within us to remind us that we are in full fellowship with God and gives us the knowledge of God's grace. As Paul points out in Romans 8:14-16, we are full sons of God; fully adopted by Him. As His children we are welcomed into His presence.

E. Verses 9-10 point out that the Old Testament way of worship did not change us internally. The old covenant was only external and did not clean us of our sins. It took the sacrifice of Jesus to remove all our sins permanently. He has removed our sin from us. We no longer need to fear God's wrath.

8. The blood of Christ Hebrews 8:11-14

A. This passage exults or rejoices in the blood of Jesus. This passage shows why the crucifixion was not only necessary but also a source of great joy and power. It shows us not a cruel God, but a God of love who makes the most costly provision so that we can draw near to Him.

B. Verse 11 tells us that a more perfect system is now here which takes our guilt away.

C. Verse 12 tells us there are three reasons why Christ's blood is truly superior and purifying. It tells us why His blood is able to secure our eternal redemption, once and forever.

i. The first reason is that Christ's blood is a better sacrifice. The old covenant sacrifices were from sinful people and imperfect animals. Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice and it was accepted by God because Jesus was perfect; He had no sin. The blood of goats and calves and bulls was not worthy, but the blood of Jesus was the perfect and precious blood of the son of God.

ii. The second reason that the blood of Jesus is superior is that it is the way that God appointed for men to be saved from their sins. In other words the blood of Jesus was superior is because it was God's perfect plan for our salvation to come through His blood.

iii. The third reason for the superiority of the blood of Jesus over the blood of animals is mentioned in verse 14. Jesus's blood was not just a sacrifice of the body, but it was also a spiritual sacrifice. The worse part of the suffering of Jesus was His spiritual suffering. While the physical suffering was horrible, the spiritual suffering was much worse. He was separated from God the Father and all of the wrath of God was poured out on Jesus. It was a terrible suffering that we can't fully understand.

The importance of this spiritual sacrifice is that this sacrifice is applied to us spiritually while the sacrifice of animals only applied to our flesh. This means that the spiritual sacrifice of Jesus is applied to our heart. This spiritual sacrifice restores us to fellowship with God who is spirit (John 4:24). As it says here in verse 14, Christ's blood was offered to purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

D. Another main point of this passage is that Christ's blood has the power to clean the conscience of sinners which the blood of animals can't do. The purpose of Christ's blood is to reconcile us to God, and give us a clean conscience so that we can serve Him.

E. The purpose of Christ blood.

i. God's glory

ii. It calls us to serve God. (verse14) We were made and redeemed to serve God. A Christian has great pleasure when he is serving God. The work that we do serving God will last forever, but the work we do serving ourselves is only temporary.

F. The service that is pleasing and acceptable to God are the works of His redeemed people

9. Christ brings us into the new agreement. Hebrews 9:15-22

A. Verse 15 tells us that Jesus can make us clean from sin. His blood was the price that He paid to make us free from sin. The sacrifices of old were to show the need for the sacrifice of Jesus that was to come one day. These sacrifices showed the need for a different sacrifice. This sacrifice of Jesus is there for those us who live under the new agreement. The way to heaven is the same for all whom God calls. All who trust in Jesus will have a place in heaven. That place will always be there and so will they.

B. Verses 16-17 talk about a will. The idea is that Jesus has something valuable which he wishes to leave as a gift for His people. The will only has value after the death of the person. It was by His death that Jesus left His riches to His people. These riches are the new covenant which promises blessings to His people. These blessing are our relationship with Jesus which will take us to heaven. When we are joined to Jesus in faith we become his legal heirs.

i. This means that we Christians are heirs of Jesus and we inherit all the blessings He has in God. This means that God is our father and He watches over us with loving care.

ii. The real benefit to us is after we die and we inherit Christ's resurrection life, a place in heaven, and a home with God forever. We will inherit His perfect holiness.

C. Verse 18 points out that the old covenant required a blood sacrifice to be valid just like the new covenant.

D. Verses 19-21 tell the story of how the old covenant was ratified or agreed to with the blood of sacrifices. See Exodus 24.

E. Verse 22 makes it clear that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. All the people who have been saved both in the times of the old covenant and the new covenant have been saved by the blood of Jesus. The people of the Old Testament Time who were saved were saved by trusting in the blood sacrifice as they looked forward in trust to the coming Messiah.

F. There are three things we want to remember in summery about this passage.

i. The first is that salvation is a gift from God. We didn't do any work to earn our salvation. An inheritance is not earned; it is a gift.

ii. The second is that our salvation is the greatest gift we can ever receive. God gives himself to us. God gives us His time; we can come to His throne anytime and we pray and He listens to us and welcomes us. God tells us in Jeremiah 7:23 that He will be our God and we will be His people. This is a wonderful promise.

10. The perfect sacrifice Hebrews 9:23-28. The work of Christ on the cross is the focal point of all history. It is the most important event in history. Christ's entry into heaven is the culmination (the highpoint) of the work of the cross. These two events go together. Verses 23-28 are difficult to understand but here is an explanation for you.

A. Verse 23 is talking about how the purification ceremonies in the tabernacle were copies of the real things in heaven. To make clean the things in the Tabernacle, blood had to be put on each object. But the blood of goats and young cows could not clean what is in heaven. They need much better sacrifices than the blood of animals.

i. The sacrifice of animals under the old covenant was only a symbol of the true sacrifice to come. The sacrifice that would save us came from heaven when Christ came to earth and offered His blood as our sacrifice.

B. Verse 24 tells that the work of Jesus was not in the special tent that people had made on earth. That special tent was only a copy of the real thing in heaven. Jesus made his one perfect sacrifice here on earth. He then went home to heaven. He went home to his Father, on behalf of his people. Now he always stands before God to pray for those who belong to Him trust in Him.

C. Verses 25-26 The chief priest had to go into the most holy place each year. He had to go in with blood. This was not his own blood, but the blood of animals. Jesus gave his own blood and not the blood of animals. If the blood that the chief priest offered could have taken away sin, he would not have needed to go into the most holy place every year. In contrast, the blood of Jesus did take away sin once and for all. So he does not need to make that sacrifice again. He made it once for all time and then he went into heaven. If the blood of Jesus had not been enough for all time, he would have had to die many times. As it is, he came to earth once as a human. He died one death for us and rose to life again. He has paid the price for all sins of all Christians forever.

D. All people want to know what will happen to them after death. Verse 27 tells us what will happen to us after we die. We are told that after we die the next thing is we are judged. If we belong to Jesus we immediately go to be with Him forever. If we are not Christian, then immediately we go to suffer forever.

i. We are not given a second chance. The instant we die, we go to be judged.

ii. This verse tells us that the stories people tell about how they died and visited heaven, and then returned to life on earth are all completely false. The Bible clearly tells here in verse 27 that death is followed immediately by judgement.

E. Verse 28 has two observations about this passage.

i. The first observation is about the two reasons Christ came to earth the first time. First he came to die for our forgiveness and He lives now for our salvation. This act of His dying and the act of His resurrection is the focus of all redemptive history. In other words, these two events, His death and resurrection, are the most important events in all of history. Together His death and His eternal life in heaven are the means of our salvation.

ii. The second point about this passage is that the death and resurrection of Christ is not the end of history because Jesus will according to verse 28 return a second time to save His people who are eagerly waiting for Him. The remainder of history is the gathering of the rest of His church; the rest of the people going to heaven. The end of history is when Christ returns in glory to take His people home to heaven.

11. The law was a shadow of things to come. Hebrews 10:1-4

This section starts out looking back at the old covenant which shows us that it was not adequate for salvation and we must not think about following its commands. Now that the old covenant is past we can look at it and better understand our lives as Christians.

A. Understanding the Old Testament. The Old Testament is important.

i. Verse 1 The 'law' here means the whole of the old religion of the Jews. That was no more than a shadow of the real religion that was to come. This is not to say that the old religion was of no value. In all its parts it pointed to what was to come. By it the people could understand that God was holy. It told them that people could not come to a holy God with their sins. There were sacrifices offered for sins, but these sacrifices could not take the sins away. They could not make people clean in the sight of God. People still could not come directly to God by means of the sacrifice of animals.

ii. Verse 2 if a sacrificing of animals could have removed sins, no other sacrifice would have been necessary. The fact also that there were so many sacrifices shows that they were not sufficient. They could not remove sins or free the conscience from guilty feelings.

Verses 3-4 Sacrifices during the year were a constant reminder to people of their sins. The Bible often tell us to 'remember'. The word means more than 'call to mind'. It also means to take some action as a result. Sacrifices were to remind people not only to ask God to forgive their sins. They also reminded people to repent, that is, to turn away from sins and to turn back to God. But the blood of goats or young cows could never do these things. Animals are different from humans. Only the blood of a person would be sufficient, and that person must have no sin of his own. That is why Jesus came to die for us. He is the only person who has ever lived without sin.

12. The only sacrifice for sins Hebrews 10:5-18

A. In verses 5-6 we are told what God doesn't want. He didn't want their sacrifices because they were not made from men with clean hearts. They were done by the priest as a ritual and had no real meaning.

B. In verse 7 after being told what God doesn't want, we are told God wants. He wants worship from people who come with truly repentant and clean hearts.

C. This lesson is often repeated in the Bible. Amos 5:21-24 is one example of this lesson. Verses 21-23 God reject their worship because it comes from unrepentant hearts. Verse 24 tells us He wants worship from clean hearts.

i. Amos 5:21-23 tells us what God does not want. Read these verses: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen."

Amos 5:24 tells us what God wants. "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

D. The lesson for us is that we should not go to church to worship unless we have clean repentant hearts. Your worship is pleasing to God only when it comes from a repentant heart.

E. Verses 8-9 repeat the above lesson. Their sacrifices didn't please God so Jesus came to be the perfect sacrifice. He replaced the old covenant of works with the new covenant of grace where we are saved by our trust and belief in Jesus, and not by any work we do.

F. Verse 10 Jesus came to carry out God's new plan to make us holy. When Jesus died, He had done all that God required. That one death is enough for all people and for all time. Jesus will never have to die again.

G. Hebrews 10:11-14 proclaims the one true sacrifice that takes away our sins and makes us holy.

i. First Verses 11-12 compare the work of Jesus with that of the priests. The priest had to stand doing their duty day after day. Each day they offered more sacrifices for sins. None of these sacrifices could meet the real need of the people. They could never take away their sins. Jesus made the one perfect and complete sacrifice that did take away all sin. There is no need for him to repeat it. It is good for all time and for all sins. The priests could never satisfy God with the sacrifices that they offered. But Jesus has done all that God asked him to do. His work done, Jesus sat down in the place of the highest honor, at the right hand of God.

ii. Verse 13 refers to Psalm 110:1 where God says to Christ, 'Sit at my right hand. Sit there until I make your enemies a place to rest your feet'. From the time that he rose from the dead, Jesus has been waiting for God to do this. He has overcome all his enemies, but we do not yet see them put under him. The apostle Paul says the same (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Jesus has conquered all His enemies.

iii. Verse 14 Again, the writer makes it clear that Jesus died once for all time and for all sin. It is most important that we know and believe that this is true. All who trust in Jesus, will be made holy by God. Jesus has done all that God said was necessary for them to become holy.

H. Verses 15-17 tell us that the Holy Spirit is a witness to the truth of this as well. In the words of Jeremiah 31, from verse 33, he talks of the new agreement. God will put his laws in the hearts and minds of his people. That is, God will give his people the power to obey him. He will remember their sins no more. It is as if they do not have any sins. This is because Jesus has taken from them all that was not right. This is the new agreement which Jesus has made for us.

I. Verse 18 tells us that where God has forgiven sins, there is no need for any more sacrifices for them. What Christ has done is complete and final. Now that Jesus has made this new agreement, the old one has no value.

IV. Exhortations to and Examples of Faith

1. How we should live Hebrews 10:19-25. The way we live must show that our professed faith is true. The things we do must show people that we really believe what the Bible says. As James 1:22 says we must be doers of the Word and not just hearers.

2. Two positive possessions we see in verses 19-20.

A. Verses 19-20 tell us that we have confidence to enter God's presence through the blood of Jesus. We can come into the presence of God without being afraid because we know that He wants us to come to be with Him. This is a wonderful privilege which no person in the Old Testament times had. Even in our time only Christians have this privilege. We come into His presence when we pray and we should do this often. It will help prepare us for heaven when we will always be in His presence.

B. The second possession is that we have a great high priest who is always with God. Jesus is always representing us and pleading for us to God. Romans 8:26 tell how Jesus even helps us to pray properly. Just think, Jesus is on duty 24 hours a day and seven days a week representing us before God.

3. Verses 21-25 tell us that because we have this high priest means we must live proper lives. We are given three requirements of how we are to properly live.

A. The first requirement of ours is as we see in verse 22 to live lives of worship. John 4:23 tells us that God wants us to worship Him in truth and spirit.

i. Verse 22 tells how we can draw near to God and worship Him. We must draw near with hearts that truly belong to God. Our hearts must be filled with assurance in God. We must come with clean repentant hearts. Verse 22 also talks about our bodies being washed with water. This means we don't come to worship with continuing sin in our lives. If we are knowingly committing sin we must stop and seek forgiveness from this sin before we come to worship.

ii. We must worship seven days a week which means we often must worship when we are away from church and by ourselves. However Hebrews 10:24-25 is telling us we Christians must often and regularly come together to worship as a group. Some people claim to be Christians and they say they don't feel they should go to church. Not going to church is disobeying God and is sin. There are times when we can't join together for worship such as when we are in prison or the hospital, or we are in an area where we are persecuted. However, our attitude must be that we will worship together as much as we can. There is power in corporate worship.

B. The second requirement is that we must live lives of truth. Verse 25 as written in its original language means we must uphold truth. We are talking about the truth that is found in the Bible. We must believe in everything the Bible teaches, and we must tell these truths to everybody we can.

i. One of the sins of some of the western churches is they say God doesn't really mean what the Bible says when they want it to say something else. For example, the Bible is very clear that homosexuality is sin. Some churches say it is all right for a homosexual to marry or to be a pastor. This is clearly wrong.

ii. Christians must always tell the truth about God and what the Bible says even if they are tortured and killed for speaking this truth. This is what Revelation 12:11 is talking about.

C. The third requirement is found in verse 24. We are to live lives of love and good works. One sign of you being a Christian is that you have compassion for others, and you actually help others. This is what James 2:14-16 is talking about

i. Americans give more money and other things away all around the world than any other country. This is because America, until the last few years has had a strong Christian church and Christians give to other people.

ii. Here in Uganda many Christians bring orphans into their homes and adopt them. They often do this even when they don't have enough to take care of their families. This kind of sacrifice is what God wants us to do.

D. How are Christians supposed to live?

i. Hebrews 10:22 has told us to live with faith. Our relationship with God is based on our faith in Him. A close relationship is based on trusting Him. We increase our faith and trust by spending time with God which we do by studying the Bible, praying, thinking about Him, and serving Him.

ii. The second way we live is by hope according to verse 23. If we hold fast to the truths of the Bible, we will have an anchor for our very souls. Our knowledge of scripture helps make our hope in Jesus strong and permanent.

iii. Faith brings us into a relationship with God for a life of worship, while hope anchors us firmly to a future of wonderful blessings.

iv. The last way we are to live is told in verses 24-25 which instructs us to live and work with each other in a life of love and good works. 1 John 4:19-21 tells us we Christians must love each other. One way we show this love as we studied earlier is to help each other.

4. A dreadful punishment Hebrews 10:26-31. This is a frightening passage and serves to warn us.

A. The first thing we want to discuss here is the certainty of hell and that it is a place of eternal punishment. There are many Christians who don't want to believe in hell so they teach that a loving God won't be so cruel as to make a person to suffer forever. These people are similar to the ones we talked about earlier who think it is all right to ordain homosexual pastors and marry homosexual people. Their sin is in not believing what the Bible says and changing its meaning.

i. People who think there is no hell are saying they don't believe the things in the Bible that they don't like. This means they are saying that they know more and are smarter than God. This is wrong, we must believe everything the Bible teaches. We humans are not smart enough to decide what we should believe or not believe in the Bible.

ii. The Bible in many places teach that hell is real, permanent, and more horrible than we can imagine. This what we see in Hebrews 10:26-31.

iii. One of the tools Satan uses to lead people to reject Jesus is to argue that there is no such place as hell, or if there is that it is not very bad and it is not permanent. This is another one of Satan's lies and we must believe the Bible, not Satan. Cults such as the Jehovah Witness don't believe there is a hell.

B. This passage of chapter 10:26-31 gives us a strong warning to people who have professed faith in Christ and then as verse 26 says continue to willfully choose to sin. Let's look at who this passage says is condemned and who is not.

i. The person who truly belongs to Christ is not being threatened here. 1 John 1:10 and Romans 3:23 tell us that all Christians sin and often they have a sin which they have had a long time. However, the true Christian hates his sin and continually ask God to help him stop his sin, but our sin doesn't condemn a Christian.

ii. The person being warned here is the person who rejects God's authority to tell them what to do and who chooses to openly and continually disobey God.

iii. The difference between these two types of people is that the Christian hates his sin and tries to stop sinning. The other person does not recognize his sin as being sin so he refuses to repent and is condemned by this.

C. Verses 26-27 tell us that there are people who once accepted what God had done for them in Jesus. They knew that it was true, but they never were born again, and now they have decided to turn away from Jesus. They no longer accept what He did for them by his death. For them, there is no sacrifice for their sins. They have refused the one way that God has given to us so their sins are not forgiven. Remember God will judge all unforgiven sin. Those who have put their trust in Jesus know that he has taken away their sins. Sin makes God terribly angry, and this should make us afraid, for it is awful. It is like a fierce fire that will destroy all his enemies. Those who have known the truth, but now refuse it, are his enemies. These are people who have never truly become Christian.

D. Verses 28-29 tell us that if you failed to do what the Law of Moses said it was serious. Not obeying the law was the same as denying God. The one who did this had to pay the price for it. He or she had to die. It was so serious a matter that there had to be proof that they were guilty. One witness was not enough. There had to be two or three (Deuteronomy 17:6). It is much more serious to deny Jesus and what he has done. The punishment for that must be much worse. It must be more severe because Jesus is so much greater than Moses. It must be more severe because the new agreement is so much better than the old one.

If someone turns away from Jesus on purpose, they are guilty of three things:

i. It is as if they walk upon the Son of God. It is to deny Jesus who is God.

ii. It is to count the blood of Jesus as being of no value. The death of Jesus is the foundation of the new agreement. This then is to show no respect for the love of God.

iii. It is to insult the Holy Spirit of God.

D. Verses 30-31 remind us who God is and what He will do. He is the living God who knows all about us. It is he who said, 'I am the one who will punish people,

I will pay them back for what they have done'. Again he said, 'The Lord will judge his people' (Deuteronomy 32:35-36). It will be terrible for a person who is guilty, when he or she has to face God. There can be no escape for us, if we do not obey him. We know what he has told us to do. He has told us to put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31).

E. Verses 30-31 also give us a good understanding of just how much God loves us. We get a better understanding of just what Jesus suffered for us and also the terrible punishment Jesus saved us from.

i. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus faced His coming suffering. He knew just how bad his suffering would be. This caused Him to as Luke 22:42-44 tells us to ask God if there was another way instead of the terrible suffering facing Him. His agony over this was so bad that His sweat became like drops of blood.

ii. We know that because Jesus suffered for us on the cross we who believe and trust in Jesus will never have to face the suffering of being in hell forever. As verse 31 warns, God's wrath is greatly to be feared.

5. Choose the right way 10:32-39.

A. This is written to encourage Christians who are facing persecution and hard times. In verse 32 they are reminded how when they first believed in Jesus that they were so convicted of the truth of the gospel that they willingly endured any suffering caused by their faith.

B. Verses 33-34 At times they had to suffer insults, shame and evil things done to them. They helped other Christians when they suffered the same things. Some people were in prison for their faith. There they needed the help that other Christians were able to give them. They had their possessions taken from them. But nobody could take away their inner joy. That joy was in the fact that they knew Jesus and that He was always with them. In Jesus they had the promise of things to come that were so much better than any other possession. The things of Jesus and of heaven are real possessions that will last forever. Nobody can ever take those away from Christians.

i. The idea is that the things of Jesus are so good that they are worth suffering to obtain. This is the message of Matthew 13:44 which says, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

C. Verse 35-36 tells the readers that they must not throw away their trust in Jesus. God will give them a great reward, if they continue to live and work for him. They could lose so much, if they do not continue with Jesus.

Verse 36 tells us that we must maintain our faith, even when life is hard. We must always try to do what God wants. Then we shall receive what God has promised.

D. Verses 37 tells us that Jesus is coming back soon and He will not delay his coming. We must be strong in our trust because we are sure that He will return. When He comes back, that will end our struggles in this life and bring in His promised blessing of eternal life with God.

E. Verse 38 tells that we will live by trusting in Jesus. We can never earn life with God by anything that we do. God gives us that life because of what Jesus has done on our behalf. It is by trust in him that we can receive that life. When we trust in Jesus, God makes us right with himself. As we came to Jesus in the first place by trust, so we must continue to live by trusting in Him. Those who turn back from their belief cannot please God. All Christians must want to please God, when they remember how much He has done for them, and who He is.

F. Verse 39 tells us that those who really trust Jesus, do not turn back. People who turn back from Jesus will have to face the judgement of God. All who maintain a bold trust in Jesus will be safe from that judgement. They will gain God's promised life.

6. What is Faith? Hebrews 11:1-3. It is important that we understand what faith is because it is by our faith in Jesus that we are saved.

A. A simple definition of faith is believing in something you can't see. Faith is trusting that what God says in the Bible is true. Faith is what sustains us to always hope in Jesus even when it hurts because of persecution or any reason.

B. There are four ways that the original Greek word for faith in the Bible may be understood.

i. Faith in something can be understood as being something we can be absolutely certain about. For example, faith allows us to be absolutely certain that the promises from the Bible about future judgment will happen.

ii. Faith can also be understood as the foundation of our hope in the certainty of the future promises of the Bible coming true.

iii. Faith can also be understood as having complete trust that the promises of the Bible are true. This means that I have absolutely no fear of death.

iv. Faith act as a guarantee of the promises of the Bible coming true.

C. There are two basic questions that help us better understand what faith is.

i. What does faith do? It makes things real to us that otherwise would be unreal. For example, faith allows us to understand that if we are Christian then we are very blessed all the time. We understand this even when the evidence says different such as I knew I was blessed even when I was sufferings terribly

from lung cancer. I expected to soon die but my faith in God was so strong I never felt sorry for myself. I knew the blessing of heaven was waiting for me as soon as I died.

ii. The second question is what is faith? Faith is what allowed me to believe God's promise of heaven.

D. Verse three mentions that it is by faith that we believe that the universe was created by the word of God and that it was created out of nothing.

i. The atheist have strong faith in the lie that it was created by a Big Bang and all life developed by evolution without any direction by God. If you examine their theory closely and examine how complex life is, and you see that their faith is misdirected.

E. Our faith, therefore, feeds on the Word of God. Matthew 4:4 tells us that we live on the words that come from God's mouth. Our faith grows strong from the Word God which Hebrews 4:2 says is living and active. Our faith is not a blind faith but a faith which sees by the revelation of the Word of God see Psalm 119:105.

F. Faith is central to Christian life.

i. Faith is how we receive the blessings of salvation. The only way a person can be justified, forgiven of his sins, receive the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and be a Christian is by our faith in Jesus. Let me now define these terms I just used to show how we are saved:

Justified=declared innocent in the eyes of God of any sin. It is like a person had never sinned.

Forgiven=our debts to God caused by our sin are cancelled.

Imputation of Christ's righteousness=Jesus gives us his righteousness.

A. What is the practical application of faith and its centrality to the Christian faith?

i. First, faith is how we receive the blessings of salvation and have peace with God.. Romans 5:1 says,"therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

ii. Second, faith is how we are sustained in the midst of trial and difficulty. 2 Timothy 4:16-18 tells how Paul was strengthened at his trial before Caesar at the end of his life. Faith is what enables us to be strong when we are enduring great suffering.

iii. Third, verse 2 of chapter 11 tells us that faith is what makes us pleasing to God and useful to others in this life.

iv. We should always desire more faith. Matthew 7:7-8 tells us that if we ask, God will give us more faith.

7. The faith of men before the flood Hebrews 11:4-7

A. In verse 4 the writer tells us that Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:3-7) each brought a sacrifice to God. God accepted Abel's sacrifice, but not because of what he offered. It was because God saw that Abel had faith. Cain's sacrifice did not please God. This also was not because of what he offered. It was because Cain's heart was not right with God. This heart attitude prevented God from accepting Cain's sacrifice. This made Cain was angry and jealous. So he killed Abel (1 John 3:12). God did not forget Abel's innocent death. It was not unlike the death of Jesus (see Hebrews 12:24).

i. This verse tells us that it is by faith that Abel was declared righteous or justified by God. This is one of the great teachings of the Bible: the doctrine of justification. Ephesians 2:8-9 teach that we are save by faith alone and not by our work.

B. Verses 5-6 talk about how faith pleases God. Enoch was a very good man. His faith was so strong that we read that he walked with God (Genesis 5:24). He lived so close to God that he pleased God. Because of his faith, verse 5 tells that God took him straight to heaven. Although the people looked for him, they could not find him. God had taken him straight to heaven and he did not die.

i. Without faith verse 6 says it is impossible to please God, if we do not trust Him we can't please Him. Our trust in him must be sure about two things. We must be certain that God exists, and that he will reward those who look for him.

C. verse 7. In the days of Noah the people had turned from God. He saw that Noah was the only one alive on earth who walked close to God and did what was right (Genesis 6:9). By his life of faith, Noah pleased God. God decided to destroy all the wicked people by a great flood. He warned Noah about His plans and told him to build an ark (a large boat) (Genesis 6:13-14). While he was building the ark, Noah warned the people about the flood that God would send. They laughed at him, and nobody believed him. After all, it had never happened before. Only Noah and his family were safe in the ark when the flood came. The wicked people drowned. Noah trusted God, and so was right with God. Therefore Noah would receive the good things that God has promised to those who trust him.

A. God required greater faith from Noah then he does from us. He required Noah to have faith in a coming flood, and a flood was something that had never happened before in the history of the world. He requires us to have faith in things that had already happened. The death and resurrection of Jesus has already happened and it was witnessed by many people.

B. Verse 7 tells us two things that proved Noah's faith.

i. He had reverence for God which caused him to follow God's instructions for building the ark exactly as God ordered.

ii. He proved his faith by his work in building the ark. The Bible teaches that we are saved by faith and not by works. Ephesians 2:8-9, but James 2:14-26 teaches that faith without works is dead. Noah was saved by his faith in God and he proved he was saved by his work in building the ark. We are saved by our faith in Jesus and our service to Him shows that we are indeed saved.

iii. He demonstrated that he had great faith by preserving in this faith for around 100 years. This is how long he worked to build a boat for a world that had never needed a boat. Noah was ridiculed by unbelieving people but his faith stayed strong for the whole 100 years.

8. The faith of Abraham and Sarah Hebrews 11:8-19.

A. In verse 8 we look at Abraham, who is a great example of faith. God called him to leave the country where he lived (Genesis 12:1). He had to leave his friends and family; he was already an old man. God led Abraham to Canaan and Abraham faithfully followed God's directions even though God did not choose the shortest route to Canaan. Abraham showed his faith in God by trusting and obeying Him.

i. Verse 8 shows us how great Abraham's faith was because he did not even know where he was going when he started following God. We also must have faith to follow Jesus wherever He leads us. Faith and obedience go together.

B. Verses 9-10 tell that when Abraham arrived in the land that God had promised to him, he lived there as a foreigner. He had no rights or possessions in that land. Later he did buy a small piece of land in which to bury those who died. He had no house to live in. Abraham was content to live as a foreigner in the land. He knew that one day God would do all that he said that he would do. Abraham looked forward, beyond his death, to his true home in heaven. By faith he saw a city which God planned and built. God has made the foundations of it, so we know that they will never fail. It will be a permanent home for the people of God.

i. Abraham never had a comfortable house to live in. His days were spent living in a tent. He was content because he knew that this life is not as important as his eternal life. We must also remember that we are strangers to this world; we are journeying through this life to get to heaven. We must be content with our current situation and wait as verse 10 says for the city with permanent foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

C. Faith in the promise. Hebrews 11:11-12 When God told Abraham that he would have a son (Genesis 15:1-5), both he and his wife Sarah were really too old. At first, Sarah laughed at the idea (Genesis 18:9-15). But Abraham trusted

God to do what He promised. Sarah received strength for the birth and Isaac was born. God promised that Isaac would be the first of a very large family. They would be like the stars in the sky and the sand by the sea - too many to count.

D. Faith seeking a home Hebrews 11:13-16. There are three points we want to look at in these verses.

i. Verse 13 looks at the end of faith's journey; at a Christians death. They all died in faith, without receiving the things promised. This is not sad because Christians are not focused on earth and this present life. Colossians 3:2 tells us to, "Keep your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth." We are willing to suffer in this life and receive our rewards in heaven.

ii. Next in verses 13-15 we talk about faith in leaving our home. Christians need to leave their old lives behind and live a new lifestyle which is to follow Jesus wherever He leads us. We leave our old immoral lifestyles and friends behind. We Christians are to live in a way that shows the world that we Christians are different.

iii. Verse 16 talks about looking for a new home. We Christians are to focus on finding a new home in heaven with God. Our faith allows us to not fear death, instead we know that our death will be a blessing to us.

E. Hebrews 11:17-19 talks about faith tested.

i. This was the greatest test of Abraham's faith. God told him to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Isaac was his only son by Sarah his wife. Isaac was the only son of the promise. It was through Isaac that God said that His promises would come. So Abraham had a real problem. If he were to kill Isaac, would not the promises fail? If he did not do what God asked, would the promises still be there for his people? Abraham had to trust God that somehow God would find a way to keep his promises.

ii. Verse 19 Abraham prepared to do what God told him to do and sacrifice Isaac. He took him and tied him on an altar. He had fire ready. He lifted his knife. Then God told him to stop. So Isaac did not die (Genesis 22). Abraham had been ready to obey God and to kill Isaac, so now it was like receiving him back from the dead. Jesus, the only Son of God, did die and he did come back to life from death. All the promises of God to us are in his Son Jesus. We shall receive those promises, if we trust God completely, as Abraham did.

9. Faith trusting God's plan. Hebrews 11:20-22

A. Verse 20 because he believed what God had promised, Isaac blessed his two sons, Jacob and Esau. He told them about the good things God had planned. It was in Jacob that the promises of God were to come. Just as Abraham had done, so Isaac looked for the future beyond this life.

B. Verse 21 When he was dying, Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph. It was the custom to give the best blessing to the older son. But, because he believed what God had shown him, he gave the greater blessing to Ephraim, who was younger than Manasseh.

C. Verse 22 Joseph, a son of Jacob, trusted in the promise that God gave to Abraham. When he was at the end of his life, he spoke of the exodus. He knew that the land of Egypt was not to be the home of the people of Israel. God had promised them the land of Canaan. Joseph believed the promise of God and looked to the time when God would lead them back to that land. He told his family that when they went there they were to take his bones with them. He wanted them to bury him in the Promised Land (Genesis 50:24-25).

10. Faith choosing God. Hebrews 11:23-26.

A. Verse 23 Many years after Joseph died there was a new king in Egypt. He was afraid that there were so many Hebrews, they might take over the country (Exodus 1). So he made them slaves. Then he gave orders to kill all the Hebrew baby boys at birth. The parents of Moses saw that he was an unusual child. They trusted in God and were not afraid of the king. So they hid Moses for three months. When they could no longer hide him, they put him in a basket. They put the basket among the plants by the river. The daughter of the king found him there. She took him home and brought him up as her own son.

B. By faith when Moses grew up, he chose to live as a Hebrew rather than remain the son of the daughter of the king. This means he chose to trust God and follow Him instead of living a life of luxury in the palace of pharaoh. He trusted in God so he decided to leave all that he had, or could have had, as a royal prince. He chose to go back to his own people. They were poor slaves who had to suffer much. He chose to suffer with them, rather than have a comfortable life without God. A life without God would have been sin.

i. God calls Christians to be willing to choose Jesus even if it means suffering, and many Christians do this.

ii. Verse 26 God made Moses aware that one day the Christ would come. Many would not accept him. Those who did would share in the shame that Christ suffered. Moses knew that to be one of the people of God was worth far more than all the riches of Egypt. Riches may last for this life, but are of no value for the life to come. With Christ there are rewards in a new life after death. Moses trusted in God and desired those rewards more than to have riches now.

11. Faith passing through Hebrews 11:27-29

A. Verse 27 makes the point that Moses faith in God was stronger than his fear of pharaoh. His parents had proved they also trusted God more than they feared pharaoh by saving his life when he was born. We Christians must also trust God

enough to obey Him even if it means terrible persecution for us. 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us that we Christians are to expect persecution. The end of verse 27 tells us that the way to remain faithful is to keep our eyes on God and trust Him.

i. To trust God when life gets really difficult we must really know Him. We do this when we spend a lot of time with Him. We do this by reading and studying the Bible, by praying, and spending time with our fellow Christians.

ii. For a long time the king refused to let the Hebrews go (Exodus, chapters 7-11). Through all those difficult days Moses was strong. It was as if he could see God, whom nobody can see. He was so strong because he trusted in God. It was as if he walked with God. The Bible says that God talked with Moses face to face, as a person speaks with his friend (Exodus 33:11).

B. Verse 28 by faith Moses obeyed God when he led the Jews to have the first Passover. This was a special meal that God told them to eat. They had to kill a lamb for the meal for each family. They had to put some of its blood on the doorposts and over the doors of their houses. The angel of death went through the land of Egypt. He killed the first son in each house. But when he saw the blood round the doors of a Hebrew's house, he 'passed over' that house and did not kill the firstborn son there. That is why they called the event the 'Passover'. Ever since that time Jews have eaten the Passover meal each year. They remember that God rescued them from being slaves and brought them out of Egypt (Exodus 12).

C. Verse 29 reports that as the Jews left Egypt, they came to the Red Sea. God made a path through the sea for them. They had to go forward trusting in God to get them to the other side. So they went across the sea on a dry path. When the Egyptians tried to cross the sea, the water drowned them all (Exodus 14:29-31).

i. This is a picture of God's salvation, a salvation by grace alone that none the less requires us to step forth in saving faith. This is the only way anyone ever is saved. It took an enormous amount of faith to walk on the bottom of the sea with a tall tower of water on each side of them. Do we have this kind of saving faith in our Lord Jesus?

D, Salvation by faith. We learn several things from Moses.

i. The most important aspect of Moses' leadership was his faith. Moses showed that he was a godly leader by his faith which he demonstrated and passed on to other people.

ii. Secondly, Moses and the people in verse 29 showed that faith helps us to overcome fear and danger.

iii. Finally, Moses shows us the difference between faith and unbelief. Unbelief cause us to surrender to the world and to live like the unbelievers or pagans. Faith allows us to live in a way that pleases God.

iv. Hebrews 13:5-6 tells us that we have nothing to fear because God says that He will never leave us or forsake us and that He is our helper so we have nothing to fear from man.

12. Faith conquering Hebrews 11:30-40.

A. Forty years later the Jews came to the city of Jericho. They had to attack it and destroy it. The Jews had no practical way to conquer the city. Their army did not have the proper equipment to conquer a fortified city. They did conquer the city, and they did it by trusting God. God told them to march round it once each day for 6 days. On the seventh day God told them to march round seven times. This required great faith, and they believed God and did what he told them to do. Then on the seventh time on the seventh day, the walls of the city fell down (Joshua 2).

B. Verse 31 before the Hebrews attacked Jericho, they sent spies there. They were to look at the city and report back to their leaders. When they came, Rahab took them into her house. She kept them safe while they were there. Then she sent them away by a safe route. She had lived a bad life, but now she helped the men because she had faith in God. When Jericho fell, the men saved her life (Joshua 2).

i. Rahab showed great faith in saving the spies. If army of Jericho had discovered that she was hiding the spies they would have killed her. Her faith in God was stronger than her fear of men.

C. Verse 32 tell that in the history of the Jews there were a lot of examples of those who lived by faith. There were too many to include in this letter. The writer mentions the names of six of the most famous men along with the prophets. These are Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel.

i. The writer does not tell us about these men here. We can read about them in the Old Testament. Each of them had to overcome many troubles that they could only do with the help of God. They were able to win because they trusted in God.

D. Verses 33-34. The list of things done in verses 33 and 34 are not just what those six men did. These describe the sort of things that many who trusted in God have done.

E. Verse 35 tell some examples where a mother received her child back from the dead. There was a widow who helped the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24). When her son died, Elijah cried to the Lord. God heard him and the child lived again. Another lady lived in Shunem, a place in Israel. She had a room built on

top of her house for Elisha the prophet. When her son died, she went to Elisha, and God brought her boy back from the dead also (2 Kings 4:18-37).

i. There have been many who have suffered and died for their faith. They could have saved themselves by turning from their belief in God. Yet to them the future life to come in heaven with God was much more important than the life here on earth. We also must not turn away from our trust in God, no matter what it costs us.

F. Verse 36 There are many more who suffered, but did not have to die because of their faith. We Christians should expect that we may have to suffer for Jesus. People may say bad things about us or do bad things to us, because we are Christians. We should accept this and be happy that we can suffer on behalf of Jesus.

i. Many Christians live in places where Christians are persecuted. Here in Africa in places like Eritrea and Egypt Christians are tortured and even killed. The recent persecution in the Middle East in places like Iraq and Syria have caused most of the Christians to leave their homes and flee.

G. Verses 37-38 the writer lists more ways in which those who trusted God had suffered. To other people, these people have no value. The truth is that they were worth far more to God than the whole world, although they were poor. Many had no homes here on earth, but they knew they had a wonderful home in heaven.

H. Verses 39-40 God gave honor to all of these people, because they trusted him. God did not forget those who served him. They are all now safe with God. They received many good things from God. Yet they did not receive all that God promised while they lived on earth. There is something more which is yet to come for them.

i. God has planned something better, which will include all Christians. His plan is for all who have ever trusted in him. All who belong to Jesus will have a share in God's plan. He has not told us what that plan is in detail. But we know that in his plan he will make perfect all of us who know Jesus, together with all these heroes of faith.

I. There are a few more lessons from this passage.

i. Verses 32-35a talk about the faith of six of God's followers who overcame great obstacles to succeed in doing what God called them to do. These people accomplished great deeds that required great faith in God. Gideon, Sampson, Deborah, Jehoshaphat, Elijah, Elisha, all had victories which were the result of their faith in God. Samuel and David also had success because of their faith in God. The accomplishments of all these people was because God gave them victories which were only possible because God provided them. God is still giving

people who trust in Him victories that are impossible for a human to do in his own power. An example is that this author was diagnosed with incurable liver/lung cancer. God took the liver cancer away which led to my being cured of this deadly cancer.

ii. Verses 35b-38 talk about faith that conquers through perseverance through great suffering. The history of the church is full of stories of many Christians who have suffered terribly because of their belief in Jesus which they refused to deny or change. All Christians need to be prepared and be willing to die; even death by torture.

J. There are four final conclusions about faith we can see from this passage.

i. No matter our circumstances we can survive and conquer them if we trust Jesus. In other words we can conquer when times are good and also in terrible times. God will deliver us Romans 8:37 tells us that in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

ii. We must be patient and wait for God's promises to be filled. Hebrews 11:29 tells us that, "And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised". Christians know that what was promised is waiting in heaven and will be received there. Listen to this great promise Paul gives us from 1 Corinthians 2:9 "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him". This tells us that heaven is more wonderful than we can imagine. We Christians are patiently waiting until we get to heaven to enjoy our rewards.

iii. The third lesson is that we must keep our faith in times of trouble. Severe trials purify and strengthen our faith so that what we have left is pure and glorious to God. 1 Peter 4:12-13 tells us that we will have trials.

Our faith will help us through these trials. Paul tells us in Romans 8:35-37 that nothing can separate us from God.

iv. Finally, remember that in the end faith is what really matters. It is only through faith that we are saved. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, healthy or a cripple, famous or unknown in the end faith is everything.

K. Chapter 11 concludes commending those who were faithful. Verse 39 is telling that all the faithful have their names written here in Hebrews. These saints along with all true Christians have their names written in the Book of Life in heaven. On judgment day this is all that matters because if our names are in the Book of Life then we are going to heaven.

i. Verse 40 promises us that even if we seem to have no rewards on earth that we should not be concerned because God has something better waiting for us in heaven.

12. Faith fixed on Jesus Hebrews 12:1-3. These three verses are the conclusion of the lessons from chapter 11. This lesson teaches us to apply the lessons from chapter 11. Chapter 11 was not just a history lesson; rather it was an exhortation or a call for us to have strong faith.

A. We Christians should think of ourselves as if we are “surrounded by a big cloud of witnesses” who have a testimony of strong faith in Jesus. The cloud of witnesses here are the people of faith listed in Hebrews 11 and many other people. These are the people who we Christians belong to. These saints from the Old Testament are watching and encouraging us as we run the race of life that they have already successfully completed.

i. This is how we should live our lives. We should remember that we belong to this group of saints, and we will be with them in heaven. We should live this life copying their faith as we live in a way pleasing to God. We must not live the same way the non-Christians in this world live.

B. Verse one is telling us that God has marked out a racecourse for our lives. There are places we are to go, things we are to do, and challenges we are to confront. We don't know ahead of time what the challenges are going to be but verse one tells us to follow the course of life faithfully following God no matter what these challenges are.

i. In other words life is going to have difficult times; maybe even horrible suffering. We Christians are to follow God in faith no matter how hard it is.

ii. Life is like a race that you are running. Paul talks about running this race in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 where he says, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we receive an imperishable prize.

Paul is telling us to run the race of life so that at the end of life we will get the prize which is the prize of heaven that God will give us; the gift that will last forever.

iii. Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7-8 tells Timothy, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. Here Paul is telling Timothy and all of us to do just as Paul did which is to be faithful in all things to God.

iv. It is not easy to follow God in faith through all of life's trials and temptations but through faith and trusting God we can do it. Just as the cloud of witnesses in verse one did.

C. Verse 2 encourages us to look to Jesus for the faith to successfully run the race of life. We see three ways that this verse encourages us.

i. First it shows that Jesus is the best example for our faith. He endured the pain and shame of the cross and He still remained faithful to God; even as Matthew 27:43 says, while He was suffering on the cross.

ii. Jesus also encourages us by being the object of our faith. Jesus is the one who will bring us to victory over all of life's troubles; He will take us all the way to heaven. We believe in Jesus.

iii. The third encouragement is that Jesus is the source of our faith because He is now in heaven working for us. We find an example of this in Luke 22:32 which tells us that He is praying for us. We read, "but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

D. Verse three gives us encouragement to get through this difficult life. At times we, all of us, will grow tired and become discouraged by life. Even the strongest Christian has times when he gets discouraged. We can overcome this by looking closely at Jesus and drawing closer to Him. We do when we:

i. Study the Bible and remind ourselves of His wonderful promises to us. Read passages like Romans 10:8-13 or Romans 8:28.

ii. Spend a lot of time in prayer.

iii. Spend time with other Christians both in and out of church. We help strengthen each other.

V. Concluding Exhortations

1. Disciplined As Sons Hebrews 12:4-13

A. Verse 4 points out that Many Christians who we read about in the last chapter, died for their faith. The readers of this letter had not yet had to risk their lives. They had not suffered as much as Jesus. Today, in many parts of the world, Christians suffer and some Christians die for their faith. Remember that 2 Timothy 3:12 tells all Christians to expect to be persecuted for their beliefs in Jesus.

B. Verses 5-7 God does not let us suffer because he is angry with us. He allows suffering to work for our good because he loves us. A father who loves his children will teach, correct and punish them. He tries by all these methods to train his children for their benefit. So it is with God who is our Father.

i. Do not think you are being punished because God is angry with you. Verse

5 refers to Proverbs 3:11-12 which says, “My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.” This teaches us that we should be encouraged when we are disciplined because it means we are loved by and belong to God.

C. Verse 8 All children have to learn how to live. Their parents have to teach them and train them. For this they will correct them and punish them when they do wrong. If we do not have any discipline from God, then we cannot be his true children. For God is a good father who trains all his children.

D. Verse 9 We all had human fathers who in the past have corrected us. At the time we did not like the discipline they gave us. Now that we are older we know that it was good for us. So we respect our fathers for what they did. These were men like us. They were training us for this life. But God, like a father, is training us for the life which never ends. So when he disciplines us, we should be happy to accept it. We know that he does it, or allows it, so that we may learn how to live properly. He knows what is best for us and he wants the best for us.

E. Verse 10 When we were young our fathers corrected us. They did what they thought was best for us. Although they were not always right, for they were human, they tried. But God is always right in all that he does. He corrects us to make us holy like he is, and so fit to live with him.

G. Verse 11 When our fathers punished us for doing wrong, we did not enjoy it. We do not like it when someone corrects us. It hurts us and it makes us sad. Yet when God corrects us and we accept it, the result is always good for us. If we allow God to train us, we shall benefit by it. As we do what the discipline teaches us, our lives will please God. This brings us a quiet heart.

H. Verse 12 The writer is again thinking about the Christian life as a race. He is not here talking of actual hands and knees. By tired hands and weak knees he means people who find it too hard to continue the Christian's race. They are ready to give up their belief in Jesus. Tired hands can no longer work. Weak knees stop moving forward. He urges his readers to make their hands and knees strong again. They must be brave and strong, like all those people the writer has been talking about. They must not give up when troubles come. They must continue to trust Jesus and live as God wants them to live, even when it is difficult.

I. Verse 13 The Christian life is like a race along a path. If that path is straight or level, it will be easier to reach the place where we are going. If we do not keep to the straight path, the journey will be longer and harder. If we leave the path, we may not get back on it again. On a rough path or a longer way, the weak will get weaker and will fail. We should make the path as easy as we can for others,

so that the weak will be able to keep on going. In the right way there is healing for them. So they will be able to get to the end. How can we help them? We need to be clear in our belief and in what we teach. We need to walk together and live as God wants us to live.

2. More lessons from this passage.

A. There are two things God does to raise us correctly, beginning with fatherly discipline.

i. One is that He sends us trials and challenges to help us develop and grow into maturity. Trials are designed to make us stronger and push us toward spiritual maturity.

ii. Sometimes God sends us hardship to punish sin in our lives. This is corrective punishment designed to keep us from forgetting God and heaven. It is designed to draw us closer to God.

B. Different ways Christians respond to God's discipline.

i. Verse 5 addresses the person who tries to get through his trial without learning anything about its purpose. He just wants to get through with it.

ii. Some people get angry or feel sorry for themselves. This is bad because they don't realize that discipline is good for them. Verse five is talking about this when it says, "nor be weary when reproved by him." These trials show that God loves us.

iii. Some Christians have the right attitude which is told us in verse seven which says, "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons." God is training us for godliness. There are many Bible verses which teach this such as 1 Peter 1:6-7 and James 1:2-3, 12. Romans 8:28 encourages the suffering Christian by reminding him that his suffering is for his good.

3. A Call To Holiness Hebrews 12:14-17.

A. Verse 14. We live in a world in which there is so much disagreement. Even in the church there are often quarrels. We have a duty to try to live without quarrels. We are to try to get along with all people. That means both with those who trust God, as we do, and with those who do not. It may not always be possible. We are not to be the cause of trouble. The writer tells us to be holy as well. The meaning of the word 'holy' has as its base that we belong to God alone. He is to be the Master of all that we do. We should always live as God wants us to live. Only those who are holy will see God. No person can make himself or herself holy. It is God who makes us holy, and we obey him and trust in Jesus.

B. Verse 15. Christians must care for each other to make sure that none of them fails to know the love of God. We need each other to help us to be true to our faith. One of the dangers that comes is anger. Anger is like a bitter root. The

fruit of anger makes the fruit bitter to the taste. We must not let anger continue for it will cause so much trouble. It will spoil the whole church and hurt many people. We must not let anger stay in our hearts or minds.

C. Verse 16a. There is danger to the church if a member has wrong sex. God has told us that sex is good and right only between husband and wife. Sex with another person is always wrong and destructive.

D. Verses 16b-17. We should be careful to respect what God has promised to us. As the oldest son Esau would have special rights when his father died. One day when he was hungry, he sold his rights merely for a meal. He gave away his future rights for almost nothing. He did not think his future was as important as what he happened to want just then. We should not be like him. Our life with God is far more important than the little things of this present life. Esau had given away his rights and he could not get them back. He wanted them, but they now belonged to his brother. He cried and tried so hard, yet he was not really sorry for what he had done (Genesis 27:34). He is to be a warning to us. We must value what God has promised more than anything else.

4. The Mountain of Grace Hebrews 12:18-24

A. Verses 18-21 The writer contrasts the giving of the law to the Jews with the blessings that come from Jesus. God gave the law at Mount Sinai. Jesus died on Mount Zion. Verses 18-21 tell of the terror of Mount Sinai. Verses 22-24 tell of our approach to better things by our faith.

The Jews could not come near Mount Sinai. God would not let them approach it. There was a great darkness and a wild storm. The mountain was burning with fire. There was a loud sound like that of a trumpet. Then God spoke, and it made them very afraid. So much so that they cried out that he should stop speaking to them. They could not bear to listen to the words of God. The sound of his voice made them afraid. If an animal came near to the mountain, it must die. They had to kill it by throwing stones. If any person were to come near, that person too must die. God told Moses to come up the mountain. What Moses saw there was so awful that he trembled with fear (Exodus 19:10-25; Deuteronomy 4:11-12; 5:22-26).

i. We Christians do not have such a terrible experience. In the Old Testament times God's people could not approach God. Because of the completed work of Jesus we can come right to God's throne anytime we want. We Christians are blessed to be able to bow our heads at any time and be in God's presence. He welcomes us.

ii. We must remember a big difference between God's people of the old covenant and we Christians is that we can come into God's presence because our sins are not only forgiven, they are completely removed from us.

Psalm 103:12 tells us that God has taken our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west.

B. Verse 22 Christians, says the writer, have come to Mount Zion, the city of God. We Christians have not come to the Mount Zion that is on earth. We have not come to the city of Jerusalem that stands on that Mount Zion. The writer is painting a picture in words to show that we have come to where God really lives, that is, in heaven. We have come, not to the terror of Sinai, but to the living God. He has called us to come to him because of what Jesus has done for us. In that city of God in heaven we can join with the vast crowd of angels that worship him.

C. Verse 23 In heaven also is the true church. Believers in Jesus, both those who are on earth and those who have died, are all part of the church. It is the church of Jesus. God has written in heaven the names of all who have faith in Jesus. We have come to God as the judge who is over all. There we join all those who have died and who were loyal to Jesus while they lived on earth. God has made them alive again and made them perfect. They live in heaven with God.

D. Verse 24 The reason why we are able to come to God and live with him is that Jesus is there. The awful terror of Sinai was because of the old covenant with God. But Jesus has made a new covenant with God for us. By it He has taken away all our sin by His death on the cross. It is His blood that He gave there that makes the new covenant for us with God. God has accepted that shed blood as payment for our sins. So we are fit to live with a holy God. The blood of Abel could not do what the blood of Jesus has done. All Abel's blood could do was to cry out for God to punish Cain who murdered him.

5. What can't be shaken Hebrews 12:25-29. Verses 25-29 completes the fifth and final warning telling people of the danger of apostasy or falling away from God. The author says, "See to it that you don't refuse Him who speaks." The author of Hebrews is concerned that Christians who are persecuted might fall away. He warns them to stay strong in the faith.

A. Verse 25 The writer now contrasts the way that God spoke then with the way that he speaks now. Those who heard God speak at Sinai wanted him to stop. The voice of God made them afraid. So they agreed that God should speak to Moses and that he should tell them what God said. They promised to obey all the law of God that He gave to them by Moses. They did not keep that promise. They refused to listen when God warned them so in the end God punished them. God speaks to us today, not by Moses but by his Son Jesus through the Bible. He does not speak to us on earth, but He speaks from heaven. What God says now by Jesus is greater than what he said by Moses. God punished those who did not obey what he said by Moses. How much more will he punish those who do not

obey what he says by his Son Jesus! There is only one way that we can escape the punishment of God. We must accept what Jesus has done for us, and come to Jesus in faith.

B. Verse 26 When God spoke at Sinai, the whole mountain shook (Exodus 19:18). There was a great fire and darkness. It was awful and those who saw it were very afraid. God promises that one day he will again shake the earth. He will shake not only that mountain, but the whole earth. He will shake not only the whole earth, but the heavens as well.

C. Verse 27 There is a time coming when God will shake all that exists. God will remove all that shakes in that day. All that God has made, the physical world and the sky, he will shake. God will remove them all. After that, God has promised to make a new heaven and a new earth.

As God shakes all physical things, there are some things that will last for always. These are the things that we cannot see yet, but they are real. These will remain and they will never end. The writer does not tell us what all of these are.

D. Verses 28-29 One thing that will remain is the place where God is the king. This place will not shake or move and it has no end. God is giving us Christians a home in this place. We cannot earn it by anything that we do. It is a free gift that we receive from God. We accept this great and wonderful gift and say thank you to God for it. Let us give ourselves to God to be his servants. We want to please him in all that we do. We should praise him and respect him.

We should fear and respect God. We need to be careful how we approach God. He is the God who has all power, who made all that is in heaven and on earth. He is the God who will judge all things. He will punish all who fail to obey what he has said. He is like a fire that burns up all the rubbish. We need to be sure that we really are Christians. Only by our trust in Jesus can we come to God. He will accept us because we belong to Jesus who has paid for all our sins.

5. Jesus Christ the same Hebrews 13:1-8 Here we are given some practical instructions in how we Christians are to live. This first section of chapter 13 gives us instruction in living as a Christian community.

A. Verse 1 All Christians have the same Father in heaven. We are all children of God. As we love God, we are to love his children. So we must love and help each other as brothers and sisters. If you are a Christian, you are my brother.

i. We are told how very important it is to love each other in John 13:35, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

ii. One way to show this love is by being friendly and spending time with each other. We should invite each other into our homes. We also need to invite non-Christians into our homes if we hope to evangelize them.

iii. Verse three tells us another way to love each other is to help those who are in prison. We can do this to both our brothers and also non-Christians.

B. Verse 2 This love should also extend to those whom we do not know. When strangers come to us, we should receive them into our homes. We should care for them while they are with us. We should do this because we are Christians and love the Lord. However, some people have had angels come to visit them and they did not know it. For example, angels came to Abraham (see Genesis 18) and they went on to the house of Lot (Genesis 19).

C. Verse 3 At that time there were many who were in prison only because they were Christians. The readers of this letter had known this (see 10:32-34). Those in control of the prison did not give food or other help to those in prison. They had to depend on their friends to give them what they needed. In many parts of the world today there are Christians who suffer like this. If we know of Christians in prison, we should show them our love. We should try to understand what they suffer, as if we were there in prison with them. We should share with them in their need and do what we can for them. We should certainly pray.

D. Verse 4 Marriage is a contract for life between a man and a woman. Sex in such a marriage is pure and good. But it is wrong for either of them to ever have sex with someone else. All acts of sex, other than in a marriage, are sin. God will judge all who have wrong sex with another person.

i. It is always wrong to have sex outside of marriage. If your spouse becomes physically unable to have sex with you, don't have sex with anybody else.

ii. A Christian's attitude about sex is different from the world's attitude. We live in a world where many people think it is all right to have sex with anybody whenever they want. We Christians must remember that we are called to be holy. Many places in the Bible tell us to be holy such as 1 Peter 1:15," but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."

iii. Sex outside marriage causes many terrible problems in the world. Illegitimate pregnancies cause suffering for millions of children in the world. There are many illnesses caused by sex outside the marriage. A person should always practice safe sex, and the only safe sex is sex with your marriage partner

iv. The worse thing caused by a Christian having sex outside marriage is the hurt caused to God by this sin.

E. Verse 5 The desire for wealth can easily take control of our lives. We cannot love money and also properly love God. One of them has to take the first place in our lives. The love of money is the cause of much that is wrong in the world. While we do need money, we need God more, and He knows what is good for us. What we have should satisfy us and we should trust God for what we need.

If we love God first, money will not control us. (Jesus spoke about this, see Matthew 6:25-34).

i. Many Christians sacrifice money in order to serve God. For example, Africans Teaching Africans has more than a thousand volunteers who are doing the work of the ministry without receiving any money. They do this work because they love God and they are doing as Matthew 6:20 commands, "but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."

F. Verse 6 tells us not to live our lives being afraid of what will happen to us. We read that God is on our side so we have nothing to fear. We must always remember that we Christians live for the next life. If you die, the next thing that happens is you go to be with God forever. We can trust God about this. We must remember that God here promises to be our helper; there is no better helper.

G. Verse 7 Christian people had taught these Hebrews about Jesus. They had shown from the Bible that Jesus is the Christ. It was not only by what they said that they taught them. They were also a practical example by the way that they lived. Now it seems that many teachers had died. It may be that they had died because of their belief in Jesus. We should remember such people and see how they lived. They put their trust in Jesus and obeyed God to the end of their days. We should follow their good example of faith and live as they did.

H. Verse 8 tells us that human leaders come and go, but Jesus is always here. 'Yesterday' means the past, and Christ was there even before God made the world. 'Today' is the present, and Jesus is alive and here now. 'Forever' is the future, and he will always be there. He died once for our sins, but now he will never die again. He never changes, as he was, he will always be. So we can trust him with total confidence for our lives now and for the future.

i. This means that everything that is in the Bible is as true today as it was when it was written. Sometimes people say that the Bible is old fashioned and some things have changed, but this is not true. Every command from God is as important today as it was yesterday, and every commandment is to be obeyed. Jesus said this in Matthew 5:18 which says, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

6. Outside The Camp Hebrews 13:9-14

A. Satan is always attacking God and one way he does this is to get inside the church to attack it. Verse 9 is talking about false teaching which has been a problem in the church ever since the church was founded. He does this by using false teachers who pretend to be Christians. As we look at different churches we see many strange practices which are designed to be pleasant to

people and make them feel good. Some of this false teaching involves requiring people to do some work to be saved.

i. Some churches offer entertainment instead of teaching the gospel. Other churches make false promises. They promise you will become healthy, wealthy and prosperous by becoming a Christian. Unfortunately, many people believe these lies even though the Bible tells us to expect trouble when we become a Christian. Look at 1 Peter 4:12 where Peter is telling Christians to be ready for trouble, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."

B. Sometimes churches bring in religious rules from other religions and mix their religion with Christianity. Some churches try to bring some of the Old Testament laws into the church.

C. This is all wrong. We are to believe in Jesus and put all our faith and trust in him alone. Jesus did all the work necessary for our salvation.

D. There have always been many who teach strange things that did not come from God. These teachers may be from other religions or from groups that claim to be Christian. They say in effect that we must work to be good enough to become a Christian. But we Christians know that we cannot please God by what we do. We can only come to God because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. He died for our sins, so that God will accept us. We need to be strong in our belief in Jesus, for that is what God asks of us. Our trust must not be in what we can do, but in what Jesus has done on our behalf.

E. Verse 10 To eat at an altar means to take part in the sacrifice that the priest has made on it. Those who serve at the altar in the old agreement cannot take part in the sacrifice of Jesus. We who are Christians by our trust in Jesus, share what he did when He died on the cross. His sacrifice was for us and God accepts us because of our belief in Him. Those who depend on what they themselves do at the altar do not share what Jesus has done, and are not Christian..

F. Verses 11-12 The Hebrews were 40 years in the desert. While there, God gave them the law and the rules for sacrifices. On one day in the year the chief priest brought the blood of animals into the most holy place. They burned the bodies outside of the camp. This was the sacrifice for sin in the old agreement. They made these sacrifices each year for the sins of the Jews. They were to do this until Jesus came and made the one great sacrifice. Jesus was both the chief priest and the one great sacrifice. As they burned the bodies of the sacrifices away from the camp, so they killed Jesus outside the city of Jerusalem.

G. Verse 13 The fact that Jesus died outside the city shows that the people had refused him. He was the Christ, but they would not accept him. They cursed him and killed him, as if he were a criminal. What they did to Jesus then, people do the same to those who follow him now. Let all Christians be bold and say that

we belong to Jesus. Let us be ready to suffer for him. Let us never deny that we are his, even if we have to die for Him.

H. Verse 14 Nothing in this life lasts forever. We Christians are like strangers here on earth. We are not at home here anymore. We are going home to be with our Lord in heaven. Like Abraham, we look for the city that is to come. That will be the place where we shall live and where we belong forever.

7. A sacrifice of praise Hebrews 13:15-19

A. Verse 15 We no longer have to give blood sacrifices to God. We no longer need the old priests to go to Him on our behalf. Jesus is the one and only chief priest and He is always with God the Father. The only sacrifice that we can bring to God is our praise. We can praise him at all times and not just at the special times of the old sacrifices. The 'fruit of our lips' means what we say about God. We praise him when we tell of his greatness, power, might and love. We praise him when we thank him for who he is and for what he has done. We praise him when we give ourselves to him. We praise him through Jesus, for there is no other way to come to him.

i. Verse 15 has a very interesting way of telling us to praise God. It says, "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God." God created us to praise Him, and we are privileged to be able to do this. Only a born again Christian is able to praise God in a way which is pleasing to Him. This is because pleasing prayer has to go through Jesus. In heaven we will be continually praising and worshipping God.

B. Verse 16 While we are praising God, we must not forget the needs of others. It pleases God when we share what we have with those who are in need. Some of the things we share are:

- i. Material things such as food, clothing, medicine, etc.
- ii. Helping take care of sick or elderly neighbors.
- iii. The biggest thing we can do is share the gospel to unsaved people. This will add to the praises God receives from His people.

C. Verse 17 God has given us leaders in the church. It is their responsibility to help us to grow as Christians. One day they will have to give an account to God for how well they have done this. We should obey what they teach and follow as they lead. If we do this, their task will be a joy to them. If we do not, it will be hard for them and will make them sad. If we make the task of the leader hard in this way, it will do us no good and the church will suffer. Jesus is for us the leader above all others. We must obey and follow him at all times. We should help and obey the human leaders he has appointed to lead the churches.

i. Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us to obey those who God has appointed over us. As long as they faithfully teach and follow the Bible, we must obey and help our leaders.

ii. I have been a church leader for many years now and the most difficult part of being a church leader is all the lack of cooperation and fighting among church members. This fighting prevents makes it difficult for the church to accomplish its most important task of worshiping and serving God.

E. Verses 18-19 The writer urges his readers to pray for him and for those with him. This is not for just one prayer. He asks that they will continue to pray. He wants them to pray especially for God to help him in his situation. He always tries to do what is right. He is sure that he has a good conscience. This means that he does not know of any sin in his life that he has not asked God to forgive. He really wants to come and see them. But there is some reason why he cannot come yet. He believes that as they pray for him, God can make it possible.

8. Benediction of Peace Hebrews 13:20-25

A. Verses 20-21 Now, as the writer comes to the end of the letter, he prays for his readers. He prays to God to give us a quiet heart. There may be troubles all about us. We may have problems in our lives. Yet in all our difficulties, God can give us that quiet heart. God has made that possible for us in Jesus. He raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus is the great leader of the sheep (John 10:1-5). The 'sheep' is a picture of his people. By his blood, that is, by his death, Jesus has made the new agreement on our behalf. By that agreement, all who belong to Jesus will receive the life that never dies. God will give them a quiet heart that will last for all time and forever in eternity. The writer's prayer is that God will make them able to do his will while they live here on earth. He prays that God will do all that he wants to do in their lives. God will do this for us through Jesus Christ, as we obey and follow him. All the praise and all the honor belong to Jesus forever.

Verse 22 In this letter there is much advice on how to live as a Christian. It warns us about many things that could lead us to sin. It asks us to make many decisions and shows us the right answers. The writer wrote his letter to help us. He asks us to accept it and learn from it.

Verse 23 Timothy was a man who often travelled with the apostle Paul. He was a leader in the churches. The readers knew that he had been in prison. The writer tells them that Timothy is now out of prison. He promises that if Timothy arrives soon, he will bring him to visit them.

Verse 24 The writer sends greetings to his readers, from himself and from the church members in Italy. He calls them, 'our Italian friends'.

Verse 25 This is a final prayer for all his readers.