

July to September 2019

“The Epistle to the Hebrews”

by

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About the Author



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MONDAY, JULY 1

HEBREWS 1:1-3

EXODUS 3:1-7

*“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him
in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush ...”*

THE MESSAGE OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS (I)

The Epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to Jewish believers who had come out of Judaism. It provides a proper interpretation of the Old Testament in relation to the coming of Christ. The writer called it going *“on unto perfection”* (Heb 6:1). He asserted the superiority of Christ over angels, Moses, the Aaronic priesthood, the Law, and the prophets. These are the key aspects of Judaism and the Old Testament. The author of the Epistle is not given in the original manuscripts but as the King James Version of the English Bible attributed it to Paul, the Apostle is the most probable writer. The date of writing is also not clear, but circumstantial evidences put it between AD 64 and 68. The spiritual depth and quality of its contents bear witness to its inspiration. It was probably written in Rome (cf. Heb 13:24). The main theme of the Epistle is the superiority of Christ. The first three verses commence with that theme.

God spoke *“at sundry times and in diverse manners”* (Heb 1:1). God chose different means of communicating His message. In the Old Testament, the first formal calling of a prophet was that of Moses. Earlier the Lord had spoken to Noah and used him to fulfil a great landmark in human history. Moses did not only fulfil what the Lord commanded him, he also left a permanent record in writing. The major prophet that followed him was Samuel. He was also a priest and he served his generation.

After him many other individual prophets were called and they conveyed God’s messages. Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament era. Each of them had a special word from the Lord and left a mark in their time. Eighteen prophets contributed to the books of the Old Testament.

THOUGHT: God speaks today through the written Word.

PRAYER: Father, let me hide Thy word in my heart.

TUESDAY, JULY 2

HEBREWS 1:1-3

“... *Jesus ... a man approved of God among you*

ACTS 2:22-28

by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did ...”

THE MESSAGE OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS (II)

God also communicated through the prophets Elijah and Elisha. They did not write any Old Testament book but their work is recorded in Scripture by other writers. The prophets' messages conveyed the words of God to the people. God communicated to them by plain speech, and also through signs and wonders. At certain times God spoke through angels and also by means of a theophany, i.e. the appearance of God to man. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was referring to all these means in Hebrews 1:1.

Those messages were given to the Jewish ancestors, referred to as “*the fathers*” (Heb 1:1). The writer was addressing the new believers who were conversant with God's dealing with their nation in the past. It was common to include the elders as part of the leaders of the Jews. They exercised authority together with the priests and the scribes. The main point here is the authentication of the Old Testament as the inspired text. It is part of Scripture and it is quoted extensively in this Epistle.

The writer stated that God has “*in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*” (Heb 1:2). The Epistle to the Hebrews is part of the New Testament. Together with the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, they give in detail the works of Christ. The writer referred to this as God speaking to us. That Christ is God is without dispute in these books. His speech and doctrine is the voice of God Himself. The book of Revelation is the extension of His speech while He was on earth. The message there is necessary to explain God's plan at the end of the age. The epistles in the New Testament are the exposition of the Apostles of the teachings of Christ. Hebrews 1:2 thus authenticates the record of the New Testament as the inspired Word of God.

THOUGHT: God spoke through the prophets and through Christ.

PRAYER: Father, may I always listen to Thy voice.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 3

HEBREWS 1:1-3

JOHN 14:6-12

“... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

THE MESSAGE OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS (III)

As much as Christ is superior to the prophets, the message of the New Testament is superior to that of the Old Testament in terms of the clarity of revelation. The Word of God is equally authoritative but the New Testament gives more in terms of knowledge. Christ told His disciples that the prophets desired (but were not able) to see the things that the disciples were seeing (Matt 13:17).

The “*last days*” (Heb 1:2) began at the first advent of Christ and ushered in a new era. This era brought many changes in God’s communication both to the Jews and the people of all nations. As the book of Hebrews progresses, we will learn to understand the Scriptures as it was known to the Jews. The message of the book of Hebrews specifically addresses the questions that the Hebrew believers had. The Son of God has spoken and He is the key in conveying God’s approach to the fulfilment of His eternal plans. Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6). We will see that He is superior to the Levitical priesthood. He is the heir of all things and in His incarnation He was God’s instrument of communication to mankind. He is also the Creator as the text asserts that God made the world through Him. This is also confirmed in John 1:3-4 which says, “*All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*”

Christ therefore had the final message. But He also said that He did not come to destroy the Law but to fulfil it.

THOUGHT: Jesus Christ is God Himself.

PRAYER: Father, may I always acknowledge Thy superiority.

THURSDAY, JULY 4

HEBREWS 1:1-3

EPHESIANS 1:3-6

*“According as he hath chosen us in him
before the foundation of the world ...”*

THE QUALITY AND THE WORK OF CHRIST

Christ is described as *“the brightness of his glory”* (Heb 1:3). The word rendered *“brightness”* (Greek: *apaugasma*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly *“reflected splendor,”* or the light which emanates from a luminous body. The rays or beams of the sun are its brightness, or that by which the sun is seen and known. The word *“glory”* (Greek: *doxa*) means properly *“a seeming, an appearance”* and then: (1) praise, applause, honour; (2) dignity, splendour, glory; (3) brightness, dazzling light; and (4) excellence, perfection, such as belongs to God and such as there is in heaven (Barnes). Here the writer painted a picture of the proper place of Christ before God the Father. He added that Christ is *“the express image of his person.”* Thus Christ and God are one. In addition, He did not only create all things, He upholds *“all things by the word of his power.”* Creation and providence are hereby affirmed. Part of the purpose of His incarnation was the forgiveness of sins. Here the writer used the word *“purged,”* referring to the purification done by Christ Himself, and not by type as of bulls and goats. Finally, Christ continues to intercede for His redeemed at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

This book describes in a comprehensive manner God’s plan of redemption. It shows that Christ is the key. Thus He is superior to any thing or person that God had used in relating to men. He is the Son of God, the Creator, the beginning and the end. Let us look to Him for complete salvation.

THOUGHT: Christ, my Redeemer, died on the cross.

PRAYER: Father, may I look to Jesus only for my salvation.

FRIDAY, JULY 5

HEBREWS 1:4-14

MATTHEW 16:13-17

*“Thou art the Christ, the Son.
of the living God.”*

CHRIST IS SUPERIOR BECAUSE HE IS GOD

The position of Christ as God is stressed and illustrated in today's text. Christ is superior to angels as the Father has given Him that exalted position. And so angels worship Him. He also has all the attributes of God. He is not subject to decay or subordination. As such, He is *“made so much better than the angels, ... hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they”* (Heb 1:4). His superiority is thus manifested.

Christ is eternally begotten of the Father while angels are created beings. Christ has always existed but angels have a beginning. Angels are messengers who are sent to fulfil the duties assigned to them. They are supernatural beings and do not have physical forms as humans have, and they are submissive to Christ. They do not have power over humans except by permission of God. Christ is the Son of God and has a more excellent name. The writer chooses to compare Him with angels because these messengers are known for conveying God's messages to men. They are regarded as superior to men. At Jesus' incarnation the people were confused as to who He was, many of the Jews were not persuaded that He was the Son of God. At the same time they knew that He was not an ordinary human being. The best they could attribute to Him was that He was either a prophet or an angel.

God gave a testimony of His exaltation in Psalm 2:2-7 when He said, *“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”*

THOUGHT: Jesus is the Son of God.

PRAYER: Father, may I always affirm the divinity of Christ.

SATURDAY, JULY 6

HEBREWS 1:4-14

LUKE 4:16-21

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he hath anointed me ...”*

CHRIST IS SUPERIOR IN WORSHIP

Jesus spoke of Himself as the Lord’s Anointed when He read Isaiah 61:1 at the synagogue in Nazareth and told the congregation that that Scripture was fulfilled. The people who heard Christ were amazed and they sought to know more about Him. He was in His hometown. It was a place where many were sceptical about His position. They assumed that He was the son of Joseph as they had seen Him growing up in their midst. Regardless of what people think and say about Him, His position does not change. He is above all.

Christ the incarnate Son of God is the first begotten of the Father. When He delivered the Sermon on the Mount, *“... the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”* They listened to Him and were right in their observation. He was no ordinary person. Many stopped short of worshipping Him for fear of the Jews. However those who desired help from Him, and were healed of Him spontaneously, gave Him worship. When this happened, He did not reject their worship because He was worthy of worship as God and Creator. The angels also worshipped Him but they do not accept worship from men. This was seen when John attempted to worship an angel. He testified of that encounter, *“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God”* (Rev 22:8-9). The angels minister to Him, as Psalm 104:4 says, *“Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.”*

At Christ’s birth, a multitude of angels appeared and gave glory to God in the highest and proclaimed peace on earth and good will toward men. Christ is superior and worthy of worship.

THOUGHT: Jesus is the Word and Creator.

PRAYER: Father, may I always worship Thee alone.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 7

HEBREWS 1:4-14

PSALM 45:6-7

“... therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

CHRIST HAS ALL THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The subordination to Christ and worship given to Him confirm His position. He is the everlasting Ruler. This attribute belongs to God alone. The writer cited the Old Testament to show that Christ reigns for ever and exercises righteousness. This truth is expressed in Deuteronomy 33:27: “*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.*” Christ is above all because He is the Creator of all things. The text says that in the beginning He laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of His hands. John 1:1ff says that He was there in the beginning and there is nothing that is made that He did not make.

Christ is not subject to decay or subordination: the creatures perish but He remains. While time determines the lifespan of both humans and animals (apart from sickness and other causes), Christ is eternal; He does not change with the passage of time. Even when He put on human flesh, the grave could not contain His body. He rose again on the third day. Paul addressed the subject of the resurrection of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15, showing that Christ's death was for a purpose. The resurrection was a proclamation of victory over death.

Christ alone has a place at the right hand of God the Father. This expresses His exalted position above all creatures, including the angels. He is victorious over death and holds a high position in His Father's Kingdom.

That Christ is God is a conclusive fact. This high position means He has power and superiority over the kings of the earth and over every created being. He is the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind. In His incarnation He laid aside the external manifestation of His glorious majesty to save you and me. Have you accepted His gracious offer of salvation?

THOUGHT: Jesus is the exalted Son of God and in Him all eternity dwells.

PRAYER: May I live for Thy glory, Father.

MONDAY, JULY 8

HEBREWS 2:1-4

PSALM 119:41-48

*“I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings,
and will not be ashamed.”*

WARNING ON THE DANGER OF NEGLECT

Neglect is not outright rejection, yet it is dangerous because it is deceptive. In the end it still amounts to rejection. The last message introduced the superiority of Christ. He is the very God. There is great reward in holding to the doctrine of the deity of Christ. The text follows with a warning of the danger of neglecting the promise of God in Christ. It gives instructions on the need for commitment and cited the consequences of neglect. The testimony is supported by God's witness through supernatural acts.

The believer's response to the doctrine: There is a need to give more earnest heed. The adverb used to stress the nature of the response shows that it needs to be given great attention. When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, He taught His disciples many things, some of these were offensive to the Jewish establishment. Occasionally He would ask His disciples a question to determine their position. Since they had the conviction that they were on God's side, they spoke very strongly on what they affirmed to be true. When Christ was taken up to heaven they also preached with boldness. They were willing to die for what they believed. Stephen became the first martyr for preaching Christ. In Daniel 3, there was a strong resistance shown by the three young men in refusing to worship an idol. The king had given a command to that effect; they refused to obey the king choosing rather to obey God. In both instances, there was a spirit of earnestness and they were not negligent concerning their faith. They were earnestly contending for the faith.

THOUGHT: The doctrine of Christ is worth dying for.

PRAYER: May I be willing, Father, to affirm the truth of Thy Word.

TUESDAY, JULY 9

HEBREWS 2:1-4

REVELATION 3:14-22

*“As many as I love,
I rebuke and chasten ...”*

NEGLECT RESULTS IN LUKEWARM FAITH

The text referred to *“the things which we have heard”* (Heb 2:1). This is a reference to specific doctrines. There is a need to have a comprehensive understanding of every particular doctrine. When there is negligence, there is a possibility of them slipping away. Every child of God must avoid this danger. Neglect is the breeding ground of nominal Christianity. Today, many church-goers may consider it fashionable to go to church, without any obligation on their part. They may not reject the message they hear in church, but the spirit of neglect overwhelms them. They get pre-occupied with the cares of this world and in the long run they are separated from the Lord. The writer of this book foresaw that spirit coming among the Jewish believers and he gave this warning. Every believer must take heed of this warning and watch his steps of faith in his daily life.

The doctrine spoken by the angels was steadfast (Heb 2:2). This may be a reference to the angels being used of God to convey His messages to the prophets and other servants of God who penned the Holy Scriptures. This puts a confirmation on the words that were revealed that they are the words of God. When God speaks, men ought to tremble and fear. If there is no such response, man has not earnestly taken heed of God’s Word. The words of God are easily transgressed and disobeyed. God reacts with punitive measures. Note His letter to the church in Laodicea: *“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent”* (Rev 3:15-19).

THOUGHT: (Read Revelation 2:7a.)

PRAYER: Father, may I hear and keep Thy commandments.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10

HEBREWS 2:1-4

PSALM 51

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God;
and renew a right spirit within me.”*

MORE CONSEQUENCES OF NEGLECT OF DOCTRINE

There is no escape from God’s justice. The text says that such neglect receives a just recompense of reward. The reward of God’s justice can be very painful when one is in the wrong. King David was taught a lesson on this matter: he was negligent in his walk with God and in fulfilling the duties of his office. This led him to deviate from God’s Word and subsequently he ended up in the sin of adultery and murder. The Lord sent the prophet Nathan to confront him. Hearing Nathan’s story, David sentenced the man to death (that was the justice the man deserved for his sin). But when the truth dawned on David that he was that man, David confessed his sins and begged for forgiveness from the Lord. His repentance is recorded in Psalm 51. He was forgiven but justice demanded that he pay a penalty. The Lord told David that because he did it intentionally, the sword would not depart from his house. David had killed Uriah, therefore he would lose four sons in his lifetime. In the Mosaic Law, when a person steals one sheep, he has to pay back four times. Everyone must learn this lesson and not be negligent.

Negligence may mean missing out on God’s great salvation. Salvation can only come after the realization that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Jesus came to fulfil that manifestation of God’s love. The Lord Himself spoke of it at first and it was confirmed by the Apostles. The knowledge of God’s plan of salvation was known all along in the Old Testament. It was fully realized at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel that He preached was very clear, but it was new even to the Jews who were familiar with the Old Testament.

The Apostles were selected to go out and teach people of all nations. They did not have any specific plan for their outreach, but the Holy Spirit guided them so that they reached out to every place possible. Here is where a concerned Christian must follow and serve with great diligence. He must walk with God and faithfully attend to his duty of reaching out. All who obey will escape the consequences of neglect.

THOUGHT: Diligence is a fruitful mindset for a believer.

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 51:12.)

THURSDAY, JULY 11

HEBREWS 2:1-4

JOHN 8:20-32

*“And ye shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free.”*

THE ORIGIN OF THE GREATNESS OF DOCTRINE

The gospel message begins with Jesus Christ. This was foretold by the prophets and when He came He made known His mission in word and deed. He gave His life to fulfil God's requirement by paying the penalty for man's sins. The Apostles stressed this fact whenever they preached. The current epistle was written to build up the body of new believers. The writer rightly interpreted the Old Testament so that the whole Scripture is understood as one revelation.

God Himself bore witness of His word and thus He is the origin of all doctrines. Shallow theology comes out of failure to recognize the divine origin of Scripture. Note this well-known declaration: *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”* (2 Tim 3:15-16).

God's hand in the life and works of Christ is unquestionable. Never had a child been born of a virgin as Jesus was. The world had not witnessed such miracles that the Lord Jesus showed. He dealt with the sick, those possessed with unclean spirits, the deformed, the blind and the deaf; and He also raised the dead. People marvelled at the extent of His miracles. God also gave the gift of the Holy Spirit according to His will. It was an epoch-making period of human history. The truth of the greatness of Christ stands in all generations. Submission to Him is salvation.

The Christian walk to eternal life is reflected in holding the true doctrine, sincerely, earnestly and taking heed to every word. The doctrine of the Person of Christ leads to salvation that no other can give. A believer ought to fight the weakness of neglect in order to have the full reward of the doctrine of Christ. Let us be diligent, not negligent.

THOUGHT: A man of God is made perfect by the Scriptures.

PRAYER: May the tidings of truth be made known to all, O Father.

FRIDAY, JULY 12
HEBREWS 2:5-18
PSALM 8:4-6

*“Thou madest him to have dominion;
over the works of thy hands ...”*

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

Christ is described as being a little lower than angels, but made like unto His brethren. This ascribes to Him humanity, but at the same He is crowned with glory and honour. His act of humility makes Him the Saviour of mankind. He was man yet superior in His being.

Christ is superior as a member of the human race because God has put the world under His control. This is a reference to the human race. The humanity of Christ is a paradox, for when He took up human form, He did not give up His divinity. He was God and man at the same time. However, man could not differentiate between Him and other people. Angels were seen as being more glorious and possessing more power than man. When Jesus began His ministry, many began to change their minds about Him. His speech and miracles spoke for Him that indeed He was the Son of God. The Jews who were not persuaded were very angry with Him for making Himself equal with God.

The text said that He was made a little lower than angels, but crowned with glory and honour. This assertion is a quote from Psalm 8:4-6. The original recipients of this epistle did not have a clear picture of the position of Christ in the flesh. The writer referred to the Scriptures that were familiar to them to show that the place of Christ in His incarnation is revealed in the Psalms. Paul said that Christ having been raised from the dead must reign until He has put His enemies under His feet. Death is the last enemy.

The assertion that He is made lower than angels is shown in the fact that He was born in human flesh, He went through all the pain and affliction that come to the lower creatures. This humble assumption of human flesh was a necessity because He had to fulfil His earthly mission.

THOUGHT: The Son of God became the Son of man that the sons of men may become the sons of God. (Calvin)

PRAYER: May I, in humble adoration, adopt the mind of Christ.

SATURDAY, JULY 13

HEBREWS 2:5-18

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

*“Wherefore God also hath
highly exalted him ...”*

CHRIST IS SUPERIOR IN HIS ACHIEVEMENTS

It was by God’s design that Christ was accused of the Jews and subsequently subjected to trial under the Roman governor. He was sentenced to death though He was not found guilty of breaking any law. This was the lowest point in His humiliation. The text said that He was to taste death for every man, showing that His death was not in vain. His superiority was once again revealed when He rose from the dead. He also ascended to heaven in the same glorified body and there is a promise of His return in the same way. This was His glorious and honourable crowning. He became one with the human race yet He was the greatest. His humiliation was not in vain, for it was a sacrifice to redeem those whom the Father had given Him to inherit eternal life. *“... whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

He brought many sons to glory being the Captain of their salvation who is perfect through sufferings. He did not assume human form and humble Himself for nothing. He had a God-given purpose in doing all these things. He achieved that purpose as He stated. When He was about to go to heaven, He told His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them and would return to take them to Himself. His suffering and death paid the penalty that was due for sin. He sanctifies them so that they meet God’s demand for holiness and are able to have fellowship with Christ. This is the assertion of the text: *“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee”* (Heb 2:11-12).

This truth is also declared by the earlier prophets. Jesus told His disciples why He addressed them as friends; He treated them as His equals and His brethren. He identified Himself with those whom He came to save. He is superior in His work because He is Lord of all.

THOUGHT: (Read Philippians 2:5.)

PRAYER: May I always be thankful for what Christ has done for me.

THE ACTIVE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

The active obedience of Christ secured salvation for the human race. Part of this active obedience was the assumption of human flesh. The declaration of the fact that He came in the flesh was repeated. It was a point of dispute at the time of the writing of this epistle. John in his epistles written about the same time stressed the importance of believing that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Many Jews in positions of authority on religious matters were opposed to the representation of Christ as the Old Testament Messiah. They could not reconcile this because they held a negative view of Him due to their carnal nature. In assuming human form, He was liable to death. However, it is in this state that He showed that He can have victory over death. Christ did not take the form of angels, but the seed of Abraham. This is brought up because His descent in the flesh can be traced to this patriarch. It was to Abraham that the promise was made that through him would all the families of the earth be blessed. The fulfilment of this promise came through Jesus Christ.

Jesus delivered them who were subject to bondage. The offer of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ was needful after the transgression of Adam. All his descendants were born in sin and only Christ could set them free. In this He became the faithful High Priest to make reconciliation for the people. The work of the high priest was well known in the old order of worship. His function was part of the ceremonial law that Christ came to fulfil. As this epistle progresses, more will be said of the function of the high priest.

Christ suffered and was tempted, thus He is able to succour those that are tempted. The answer of Christ when tempted was *"it is written,"* thus overcoming the devil by the Word of God. Christ also went through other forms of negative reactions that oppress mankind, but He had answers for all of them. This qualifies Him as a worthy substitute for sinners in dispensing God's grace.

THOUGHT: Obedience is a virtue for every child of God.

PRAYER: Father, may I learn to be an obedient child to Thee.

MONDAY, JULY 15

HEBREWS 3:1-6

ISAIAH 9:6-7

*“Of the increase of his government and peace
there shall be no end, upon the throne of David ...”*

CHRIST IS GREAT YET HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF

The humility of Christ speaks clearly of His intention. He is God and Creator from the beginning. Thus superiority belongs to Him eternally. However, He became man in order to redeem the human race from sin. Paul expressed the humility of Christ thus: *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name”* (Phil 2:5-9).

Those who believe in Him and accept His offer of salvation are saved. He has that power to save and to reconcile them to God.

This epistle addressed a problem that was common among the Jews in understanding the Law of Moses in relation to the coming of Christ. They were not persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah who was foretold in the Law and the Prophets. They held that Moses was their prophet and the Law that he gave was superior to everything else. They were still waiting for the Messiah to come at a future date. This closed their minds so much so that they did not believe in Jesus. Also the believing Jews had doubts about the cessation of certain practices of the Law that Christ had come to fulfil. There was much controversy in the early church over the issue and the Apostles strove to address the problem. The Lord Jesus Himself knew of the misunderstanding for He often faced opposition from the scribes and Pharisees. A number of times He deliberately went against their traditions with the intention to teach them. The Apostles followed His teachings. These words were written for their understanding. Clear comparisons are made to substantiate the superiority of Christ.

THOUGHT: Humility is a virtue that Christ taught practically.

PRAYER: Father, may I always learn to be like Christ.

TUESDAY, JULY 16

HEBREWS 3:1-6

JOHN 8:26-28

“... *I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.*”

CHRIST IS THE FOCUS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Christians are holy and partakers of the heavenly calling in Christ. In His preaching, Christ made Himself known to His disciples and also made promises that form the hope of that calling. Believing in Christ puts a Christian in a very high position. John 3:16 is a well-known Bible verse because of the great doctrine it teaches. There Christ said, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” This is a great privilege that believers have; responding to the call of Christ comes with the promise of everlasting life. Another promise is in John 1:12, “*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*” This bestows on believers adoption as the sons of God. This gives them the heritage of heaven. Christ also promised the disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them and would come and take them to Himself. All these and other promises make them holy and partakers of celestial blessings that come with belief in Christ.

Christ is also called “... *the Apostle ... of our profession*” (Heb 3:1). He is so called because He came from heaven and took upon Himself human nature. His preaching was entirely new to the traditions that the Jewish community was familiar with. Many times He had to confront them because they misunderstood Him. However, to those who believed, it was a precious gift to them that they were willing to die for their faith. Christ had a refreshing message for them and they cherished His gospel. The office of a prophet is one of the three-fold offices of Christ and that of an Apostle is not much different. Christ spoke of Himself as a prophet and defended Himself as a messenger from God. He foretold the future things and spoke with singular authority. He came and declared the kingdom of God and made many disciples. He is thus the focus of our faith.

THOUGHT: Every born-again Christian is a child of God.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for Thy love and offer of salvation.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17

HEBREWS 3:1-6

EXODUS 33:8-10

“... *Moses entered into the tabernacle ...
and the LORD talked with Moses.*”

CHRIST IS GREATER IN HIS WORK

Christ is called the “*High Priest of our profession*” (Heb 3:1). In the old order, the priest had a very important role to play. Everything depended on him to make the worship complete. Christ played this role and He was the perfect High Priest. His services, however, do not need to be repeated. His greatness is far beyond all the sacrifices and feasts that have been offered, for He put to an end all those ceremonies.

The text said that He was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all his house. Since Christ has all the attributes of God, His faithfulness is without fault. Moses was appointed by God and was made a worthy vessel for the service of the Lord. God gave him the grace to be able to do what God wanted him to fulfil. On the other hand, it is known that he had some shortcomings. However the text was written to show the Jews the greatness of Christ and thus He is compared to Moses. Today’s world may consider biblical times as backward in terms of civilization. This may be true in manner of life and technology. But Christ is ahead of everything else because He is the Creator and there is nothing new to Him.

Time is greatly cherished in today’s world of cut-throat businesses. Every minute counts. But it is God who created time when He laid the foundation of the earth. The sun and the moon were made to control times and seasons. He is the Maker of the first clock which does not need re-winding at all. In Bible prophecies much has to do with time. All prophecies that were foretold and have been fulfilled were very accurate. Moses did not know the future except what God revealed to him. Christ is great because He knows all things.

THOUGHT: The greatness of Christ can never be diminished.

PRAYER: Help me to be faithful, Father, despite my many shortcomings.

THURSDAY, JULY 18

HEBREWS 3:1-6

NUMBERS 14:12-20

“... let the power of my Lord be great,
according as thou hast spoken ...”

CHRIST IS GREATER THAN MOSES IN HIS PERSON

As pertaining to redemption, Moses was a type of Christ. He was called of God to go to the king of Egypt and to ask for emancipation of the children of Israel and departure from Egypt. In the beginning, he thought the route to the Promised Land would be easy and would take a few days. In the end, it turned out to be a trek of forty years and he himself did not set foot on the Promised Land. He died before the crossing, yet he did what was humanly possible of all that God commanded him to do. In the Jewish mind, he was the greatest. However, Christ was counted to be of more glory than Moses.

In Zechariah 6:12-13, Christ was called “The BRANCH” that shall grow out of His place and shall build the temple of the LORD. It is added that He shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule upon the throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

Moses’ contribution in the writing of Scripture compares to none. However the loyalty to him and his influence was confined to the Jewish nation. This was so by God’s design. Christ did not write any book but He taught the disciples and commissioned twelve of them whom He named Apostles. This small band set out to preach the gospel of Christ. They did so with dedication and within their generation it was testified that they turned the world upside down. Since then until now the influence of Christ is far greater. He is great because He is God.

Moses was a servant for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. He was appointed of God for a special duty which he fulfilled. Christ was not a servant but a Son to His own house. “... *praise him according to his excellent greatness*” (Ps 150:2).

THOUGHT: Christ is worthy of my worship.

PRAYER: Father, may I always recognize Thy greatness.

FRIDAY, JULY 19

HEBREWS 3:1-6

JOHN 5:39-47

*“But if ye believe not his writings,
how shall ye believe my words?”*

A LESSON FROM JESUS TO THE CHURCH

As a church, the believers form the house of Christ. This is a communion of all saints, all who will hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. The Lord said that believers will be hated of all man for His sake: but they that will endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 10:22). Christ has power to save. This is where His greatness comes in because there is none other who can save like Him.

While God used Moses to reveal Himself to Israel, Moses' prophecies showed that there was One greater than him who was to come. The Lord said to him, *“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken”* (Deut 18:15). The Jews knew Him as the Messiah. However, when God's time came that He should reveal Christ, they rejected Him. Nevertheless, a number of them believed. The Apostles confirmed the fulfilment of this prophecy and Peter in his second sermon in the temple affirmed this prophecy as fulfilled in Christ. He added a practical lesson to it in Acts 3:19, and gave the meaning saying, *“And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people”* (Acts 3:23). He confirmed to them that Moses spoke of Jesus Christ and that his word was fulfilled. Jesus said, *“... there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me”* (John 5:45-46). All these attribute greatness to Christ.

The text shows that Jesus is indeed the Christ. Moses has his place in God's revelation, but Christ teaches all things. Believe in Him and you will be saved.

THOUGHT: Jesus Christ is the greatest, and He is the Saviour.

PRAYER: Father, may I not be ignorant of the great lessons in Thy Word.

SATURDAY, JULY 20

HEBREWS 3:7-19

PSALM 95

*“For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.”*

THE DANGER OF THE HARDNESS OF HEART

The hardness of heart and unbelief lead to eternal damnation. The Word of God speaks and His works are manifested every day. The Holy Spirit uses this to build one's faith. However, after the example of Israel in the wilderness, the hardness of man's heart is ever present. This is the depravity of the human heart, in that nothing good comes out of man. Today's text seeks to emphasize this. This is a danger that makes necessary a return to Christ. He called on His disciples to come to Him and lay their burdens on Him.

God speaks through the Scriptures. These sacred writings are His voice and the Holy Spirit is the agent that confirms the words of God in the heart. The writer cited Psalm 95:7 as the voice of the Holy Spirit. His message that was to Israel then and to the church today is that when God's people hear His voice they should not harden their hearts. The old nature of sin prevented Israel to listen to God's voice. Thus the Exodus is characterised with stories of rebellion after rebellion. The text refers to provocation in the day of temptation. This was the period of forty years when Moses led Israel out of Egypt and was in the wilderness all those years. They could have completed their journey in a few days, but as the Lord said He swore that they would not enter into His rest. Israel had sided with the ten out of twelve spies who were sent to investigate the situation in the land of Canaan. They were condemned to wander in the wilderness until all the adults aged twenty and above (except for Joshua and Caleb) who rebelled had died.

Hardness of heart leads to danger, but anyone who will humble himself will be saved.

THOUGHT: Hardness of heart is a sin and its wages is death.

PRAYER: Father, may I never harden my heart when Thou speakest to me.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 21

HEBREWS 3:7-19

JOHN 3:1-17

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

THE HARDNESS OF HEART HINDERS SALVATION

While in the flesh, man may have the desire to live many years. There may also be the desire for an abundance of earthly goods and a comfortable life. These may be possible but, at last, the end will come. There were those patriarchs who lived for centuries and there are those today who live to a ripe old age. And there are also those who are super-rich. However, at death all these do not matter. The greater concern is the destiny of one's soul. And this will be determined by one's relationship with God.

One's hardness of heart is one's rejection of God and His gracious offer of salvation. Jesus spoke of His work in that simple conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. One must be born again, a radical transformation attended to by the power of the Holy Spirit. One has to believe in Christ as one's Lord and Saviour, confessing one's sins to Him and seeking forgiveness. He will save to the uttermost. He offered Himself as payment for the penalty of sin for whoever will come to Him in faith. The hardness of heart is a hindrance to this blessedness.

One's hardness of heart leads to God being grieved. Like earthly parents, God is greatly saddened when the children rebel. The chief cause of rebellion is the sinful nature. One's lack of knowledge adds to it. The Lord lamented in the time of the prophet Hosea that His people were destroyed *“for lack of knowledge”* (Hosea 4:6). A result of sin is the wilful neglect of knowledge. Ignorance thus will not count as a good excuse for anyone.

THOUGHT: *“... that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them”* (Rom 1:19).

PRAYER: Father, make Thy revelation clear to me.

MONDAY, JULY 22

HEBREWS 3:7-19

PSALM 97

*“For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth:
thou art exalted far above all gods.”*

GOD’S CALL TO RETURN TO HIM

There is a need to return to God. In the case of Israel, they could not feign ignorance because they had seen the works of the Lord. Great miracles and a constant supply of food were witnesses for God. Yet, the Scripture says that they sinned while the bread was in their mouth (Num 11:33). God has reason to affirm that those rebels will not enter into His rest. One’s hardness of heart is dangerous.

God appealed to His people to return to Him. The writer used the background information to give this exhortation: *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”* (Heb 3:12-13). This is a compassionate appeal to God’s people to keep close to God and to seek the grace of God to carry them through. This includes care for the spiritual welfare of others as well. It also involves direct assistance in addressing particular needs and indirectly in bearing a good testimony. This will fortify the fellowship of believers and will keep deceitfulness of sin at a distance.

When believers are made partakers of Christ, they will be able to stand to the end. The end ushers in the eternal destiny, the place which the Lord promised to the disciples when He said that He was going to prepare a place for them and He would come and take them to Himself (John 14:2-3). Thus there was no cause for them to be troubled in their hearts.

THOUGHT: God is my sufficiency when my whole heart is surrendered to Him.

PRAYER: Father, may I surrender and give all to Thee.

TUESDAY, JULY 23

HEBREWS 3:7-19

PSALM 62

*“God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this;
that power belongeth unto God.”*

WHEN GOD SPEAKS, MAN LISTENS

God repeats His message to stress its importance. Whenever the same words are repeated in Scripture, it means that God places greater importance on those words. The same exhortation has been repeated in Scripture in different ways. He repeats them to confirm lest we forget. The constant study of God’s Word will keep His people faithful and they are to remain watchful as the Lord gives power.

Every day the danger of the hardness of heart is there. God speaks and His people should hear His voice. David in the Psalms said that God spoke once and he heard it twice. In the text God spoke twice, thus His people must hear four times. Multiple hearing means it is a truth that we must never forget.

God was grieved that those who sinned died in the wilderness. Those who did not believe did not enter into His rest. Their unbelief prevented them from enjoying the privilege that God had graciously offered them. The Jewish religious leaders during the time of Jesus were equally hard hearted. Although the first converts to Christianity and those who took the gospel to many nations were Jews, the nation officially rejects Jesus to this day. The reason: hardness of heart.

The passage of time has not changed the depravity of the human heart. It is ever deceitful (Jer 17:9). Degeneration into unbelief comes quickly, but worthy believers ought to resist. This message is for you today. Take heed and repent.

THOUGHT: God speaks to men through His Word and circumstances.

PRAYER: Father, may I pay more attention when Thou speakest.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 24

HEBREWS 4:1-8

ACTS 7:44-50

*“Howbeit the most High dwelleth not
in temples made with hands ...”*

THE CHALLENGE TO ENTER GOD’S REST

The word “rest” in the text is used as a noun. There are many words that are translated rest. The most common of these is the word Sabbath. This is a Hebrew word which is usually not translated. It is a name given to the day when God rested from His creations and the weekly day of rest. The word is also translated “peace.” The usage of the word in the text means eternal rest. God’s rest and all the privileges of heaven is the expectation of every believer. A challenge is given to the believers to strive to enter into that rest.

There is an offer of eternal rest in the heavenly Promised Land. The settlement of Israel in the land of Canaan has a parallel with the eternal settlement of believers. God had promised to take them to a land flowing with milk and honey. It was a description of an earthly “paradise.” The text here adopted that parallel, but the promise referred to here is that of heaven itself. It will be a place of peace and rest. Negligence can lead to coming short of that rest.

The writer gives a challenge to fear and to strive to enter into that rest. None should come short of it. The gospel was preached to us as it was to them. However, when the Word preached is not mixed with faith, it does not profit those who hear it. “... *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom 10:17). Moses spoke the words of God to Israel but they did not believe in Him, they often disputed because they did not take His words by faith.

THOUGHT: Faith is having the assurance of the promises of God.

PRAYER: Father, grant me strong faith that I may enter into that eternal rest.

THURSDAY, JULY 25

HEBREWS 4:1-8

ACTS 7:44-50

*“Heaven is my throne,
and earth is my footstool ...”*

FAILURE OF THE MAJORITY TO ENTER GOD’S REST

The gospel that is preached today is not different from that which Moses preached. It offers eternal promises of good things to come. The ultimate reward is eternal joy and God-given rest.

The majority were denied entry into the land of Canaan because of their unbelief. The story is told in Numbers 13, that Moses had chosen twelve spies (one from each tribe in Israel) to go and search the land before Israel occupied it. When they returned they brought a good report concerning the land that it was a good land as the Lord had told them. They even brought the fruit of the land to prove the value of its productivity. However, ten of the spies hesitated. They said that the people living in the land were too strong for them and the walls of their cities were very high. The majority of the congregation sided with them and wanted to appoint a captain to lead them back to Egypt. Moses strongly resisted their proposal and asked the Lord about it.

Meanwhile two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, wanted to enter the land for they had faith in God, who had promised, that He would give it to them. The Lord’s verdict was that all adults of the congregation, except for these two spies, would not enter the Promised Land. The Lord did not execute the judgment right away but they were to wander in the wilderness for forty years until they all died and only their children would inherit the Land. They failed to enter that rest that God had promised them. They did not trust in God but in themselves. Their failure to recognise God’s sovereignty led to miserable consequences for them.

THOUGHT: One cannot serve God with divided attention.

PRAYER: Father, may I always serve Thee with one mind.

FRIDAY, JULY 26

HEBREWS 4:1-8

JOHN 14:1-4

*“And whither I go ye know,
and the way ye know.”*

THE BENEFICIARIES OF ETERNAL REST

Joshua and Caleb and those of the younger generation were the immediate beneficiaries. They took the word of God by faith and the Lord is always faithful to fulfil His promises. All who believe will enter into that rest. This is the promise in verse 3, *“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”*

The assurance that the Lord gives is sufficient and all He promises will come to pass. The seventh day which God rested after creation is a picture of that rest. It is descriptive of trouble-free rest. It will be a time of full enjoyment of the glories of heaven. The entrance to that rest is still open. When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, He had promised that He was going to prepare a place for believers in Him and would return to take them to Himself.

The entry to God’s rest is associated with the response to the preaching of God’s Word. The church is constituted as a divine institution to teach and preach the Word of God. This comes through the regular worship service and Bible classes. Open-air and house-to-house evangelism are also used to bring the message to those who have not heard it. The mass media today has advanced so much. If used rightly, it will help greatly in publicising the gospel. It will give many people the opportunity to hear the gospel and when they believe they have hope of that eternal rest.

THOUGHT: *“In my Father’s house are many mansions ...”* (John 14:2).

PRAYER: Father, help me look forward to those mansions above.

SATURDAY, JULY 27

HEBREWS 4:1-8

1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19

*“If in this life only we have hope in Christ,
we are of all men most miserable.”*

THE REQUIREMENTS TO ENTER INTO THAT REST

The Lord Jesus Christ knew the great need and He put in place a means through which His disciples could bring the gospel to as many as need to hear it. Through the centuries He has had foresight over this ministry and has raised His servants in every generation to take the gospel to all the lands of the earth. Those who accept it will enjoy that gift of God which He has assured them that they will enter.

Some will enter for believing in the Word that was preached and some will not enter because of unbelief. God’s salvation comes by His grace alone. The preaching of the Word is a means of grace. Jesus said that the Scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35). Those who expect to enter God’s rest will have to accept the Word of God. The preaching of the Word goes with giving the sense of the Word so that the hearer may understand. Correct interpretation of the Bible yields sound doctrine. The writer cited the Psalm: *“To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts”* (Heb 4:7b). This spells out the urgency of believing. Jesus said that He would come as a thief in the night; He calls for readiness at that appearance. That day is today. Believe in Jesus Christ (for the forgiveness of your sins) and His Word and you will be saved. You will enter into that eternal rest.

As the weekly Sabbath comes, the time of eternity shall also come. It will be a time of peace and happiness. It is God’s desire that His children have this rest. He has made this possible for whosoever believes.

THOUGHT: He who believes in Christ shall have that eternal peace.

PRAYER: Father, let me see that glory Land of light.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 28

HEBREWS 4:9-16

PSALM 33:1-9

*“For he spake, and it was done;
he commanded, and it stood fast.”*

RESPONSIBILITY IN ENTERING GOD'S REST

God's rest is His gracious gift of eternal life. It is called rest because the redeemed are freed from earthly cares and sin as a new chapter is opened to them. Everything necessary for entry into that rest has been provided by God. The Word of God stands out as an instrument in preparing the way for that rest. Jesus Christ serves as the Mediator (High Priest) in their undertaking. There is therefore assurance as one approaches the Throne of Grace. None should fail to enter that rest through Christ.

When the text said that rest remained for God's people, it has the idea of it being reserved for God's people. It is waiting for them to occupy. God has put everything in place, giving assurance of its certainty. He that enters into this rest ceases from his own works even as God also ceased from His. If the work of creation were to use manpower, it would have been an impossible undertaking. It is imagined here (from the human point of view) that God used some energy and after six days He rested. That is, He ceased from His activities. In those six days great things had taken shape and on the seventh day everything was calm. The writer pointed to the need of responsibility in verse 11, where he said, *“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”* The command here shows that God requires some responsibility from those who are to enter into His rest. However, this does not infer that there can be any merit on the part of man that contributes to the requirements to enter into that rest. Those who will be admitted are those who are born again and have repented of their sins. Their inclusion in God's rest is the gift of God to them. There is that assurance when one believes in Christ.

THOUGHT: Jesus Christ is the emblem of eternal rest.

PRAYER: Father, give me grace to stand in my faith to the end.

MONDAY, JULY 29

HEBREWS 4:9-16

PSALM 119:105-112

*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.”*

THE WORD OF GOD IS AN IMPORTANT INSTRUMENT

The written Word gives direction to enter into God’s rest. What the believers are able to achieve is not because of them, but it is the gift of God’s grace. Unbelief is the rejection of God, either by resorting to idolatry or acting contrary to any of His commandments. There were others who have done this before and have received retribution according to their sin.

The writer had the events of the Old Testament in mind when he said those words. There were those who believed and demonstrated their faith in their lives and God showed His recognition of them. These are examples and exhortations for us to labour to follow in their footsteps.

The Word of God is called special revelation and whenever God’s words are read, it is God speaking. God reveals Himself in nature, this is His general revelation. Everybody has this revelation as the Word of God said. The response to this natural revelation is seen in the different forms of worship that men have invented. These never come to the knowledge of the truth until they hear the true Word of God, His special revelation. This is now contained in the written books of the Old and the New Testaments in sixty-six books. These are profitable for the instruction of those who believe. These are not ordinary words. They were given by inspiration of God. Thus it is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. The other descriptions show its power to reach the innermost part of man’s soul. God speaks once and He is heard twice.

THOUGHT: God’s Word discerns the heart’s thoughts and intents.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy Word always have a place in my heart.

TUESDAY, JULY 30

HEBREWS 4:9-16

JOHN 14:1-7

*"I am the way, the truth, and the life:
no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

CHRIST IS THE MEDIATOR ON THE PATHWAY TO REST

Those who are to enter into God's rest must have His words as their guide, without which there will be no full knowledge of God and of Christ as Mediator. These will be deprived of entry into that rest. The responsibility is to know the will of God and to do it.

God sees everything as He is also the Creator of all. He does not only see the physical appearance but even the thoughts and intents of every heart. Each one will have to give an account to Him for all these things whether good or bad. The understanding of this attribute of God naturally says we have to act accordingly. All these will have a bearing on that rest.

Jesus is the Son of God and He sits at the right hand of God the Father. He is there as the High Priest. The work of the high priest was very important in the Old Testament system of worship. Apart from other functions, the high priest literally mediates for the people on the Day of Atonement. He had to offer sacrifices for himself and for the people. However, he was only a picture of the true great High Priest who has passed into the heavens. On this basis, the writer exhorted us to stand fast in our profession. The Lord has placed faith in our hearts and externally we are to profess our faith as Christians in holding to the fundamentals of the faith. The call is to hold on to that faith to the end. This will usher in that promised rest.

Christ, having come in the flesh, is the High Priest who is touched by the feelings of our infirmities. He was tempted in all points as we are yet without sin. In the case of the earthly priest they had to offer a lamb without blemish, a picture of the sinless Christ.

THOUGHT: Jesus is Prophet, Priest and King.

PRAYER: Father, glory belongs to Jesus, my Mediator.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 31

HEBREWS 4:9-16

PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26

*“For to me to live is Christ,
and to die is gain.”*

THE PRIVILEGE OF REST COMES THROUGH CHRIST

The purpose of the incarnation of Christ is enshrined in His office as the High Priest. His work facilitates the entry into God’s rest. It is a privilege offered to anyone who believes in Christ.

The exhortation to come boldly to the Throne of Grace stresses the fact that as children of God the believers have that right. Grace shows the unconditional love of God and free offer of salvation. In Christ, we also obtain the mercy of the Lord. This is shown in the work of Christ when He came and was made in the likeness of men. He went through all the pain of human sufferings and ultimately suffered crucifixion and death. This was an act of vengeance on the part of the Jews but God had allowed it so that Christ would bear the penalty of sin.

The forgiveness of sins and salvation are an expression of God’s love for sinners and He purposely sent Jesus to fulfil the promise of redemption. In this Christ became both a high priest and a sacrifice all in one. He played a unique role and fulfilled the picture represented by that office in the Mosaic Law. He became the sinless Lamb of God. All who come to Him then will find grace in time of need. This gives believers a right and hope to enter into God’s rest.

Each one has a responsibility to receive God’s offer, and the Word of God is their guide. Jesus Christ has fulfilled all the requirements and gives that blessed privilege to believers to enter this eternal home.

THOUGHT: In Jesus Christ there is complete forgiveness of sins.

PRAYER: Father, may I be among the number that will enter that rest.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1

HEBREWS 5:1-10

EXODUS 27:21

“... it shall be a statute for ever ...”

THE TWOFOLD PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

The office of the high priest was a type of Christ. The Jews were familiar with the priesthood of Aaron. It is compared also with the priesthood of Melchizedek. This comparison is made of the two orders of priests and each has a parallel to the priesthood of Christ. There is a lesson here for believers: Christ is the ultimate High Priest.

The picture of the Aaronic priesthood as the text says is that every high priest is taken from among men. The priesthood after the order of Aaron was instituted during the time of Exodus. The Lord commanded Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons to be priests. He declared that the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute (Exod 29:9). The sons of Aaron and their descendants who were consecrated priests were required to be without any physical blemish. Like the lamb that was offered for sacrifice, that requirement was symbolic of the perfect holiness of Christ.

The whole tribe of Levi was set apart for the service of the Lord. All priests were taken from them and when the inheritance of the land was given to the tribes of Israel they were scattered among them. They did not have any individual heritage as the others (Deut 10:8-9; Num 3:5-9). The origin and duties of the Aaronic priesthood are thus clear from the Mosaic Law. The high priest had to come from that particular family and they were to offer gifts and sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. Christ could reasonably bear with the ignorant, showing compassion on them who are out of the way.

THOUGHT: Priests were ordained of men to serve in the things of God.

PRAYER: Father, may my hope always be our Great High Priest Jesus Christ.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 2

HEBREWS 5:1-10

EXODUS 30:10

*“... Aaron shall make ... atonement upon it
throughout your generations ...”*

DUTIES OF THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

In His human nature, Christ was compassed with infirmity. He was a priest taken from among men even as Aaron but His descent was from the house of Judah. The picture of the Aaronic priesthood is clear from his ordained work in fulfilment of the duties of a priest.

The priest appointed after the order of Aaron stood for the people and for himself to offer sacrifices for sins. Such a person was called of God and no man could take this honour upon himself. In the Mosaic Law, these priests had multiple duties. They kept the sanctuary and the lamp burning continually. They covered the furniture and moved them when necessary. They also burned incense and offered sacrifices. In addition, they blessed the people and purified the unclean. They diagnosed leprosy and blew the trumpets. When Israel had to move, they carried the Ark of the Covenant. The primary duty of the priests and Levites was to teach the Law. In Israel there were those that held both this office as well as that of the prophet; notable among whom were Samuel, Jeremiah and Ezra. The duties are stated severally in the five books of Moses.

The services of the priests were entirely essential in Israel and the nation could not function without them. The requirements of the ceremonial law were complex. Believers in Christ (of the New Testament administration) today are no longer required to observe these for Christ has fulfilled them all at once.

Paul called the work of Christ the basis of Christian liberty and the Law a school master that leads to the full knowledge of God's plan of redemption (Gal 3:24). In the office of the priest, Aaron was an example of Christ. Beside this priesthood, there was another earlier order: the priesthood of Melchizedek.

THOUGHT: There is liberty in Jesus Christ.

PRAYER: Father, grant me wisdom to exercise Christian liberty.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3

HEBREWS 5:1-10

EXODUS 30:10

“... it is most holy unto the LORD.”

THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK

In relating to Christ, Hebrews 5:1-10 asserted that Christ did not glorify Himself to be made a high priest. He was appointed to that office by God the Father. Melchizedek comes in to give another picture of Christ. He is called king of Salem and a priest of God. He received tithes from Abraham when he came back from the slaughter of the kings. The Scripture is silent on other details regarding this priest, but that he personally met Abraham, showing that he was a historical person.

The Father said this of Christ, “*Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee*” (Ps 2:7) and also in another Psalm He said, “... *Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*” (Ps 110:4). This priest was before Aaron and is first mentioned in Genesis 14:18. This order of priesthood was different from that of Aaron’s.

Matthew Henry has this to say on this passage: “The apostle prefers Christ before Aaron, both in the manner of his call and in the holiness of his person. In the manner of his call ... referring to his eternal generation as God, his wonderful conception as man, and his perfect qualification as Mediator. Thus God solemnly declared his dear affection to Christ, his authoritative appointment of him to the office of a Mediator, his installment and approbation of him in that office, his acceptance of him, and of all he had done or should do in the discharge of it.”

Christ, in the days of His flesh, offered prayers and supplications as did Melchizedek to God.

THOUGHT: Christ is superior to Aaron as seen in Melchizedek.

PRAYER: Father, may I always remember Christ as God the Creator.

THE MERITS OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK

Though the knowledge of Melchizedek is obscure, the Scripture represents him as one that had a better priesthood than that of Aaron. His character best represents that eternal High Priest who intercedes for the saints at the right hand of the heavenly throne. Here are the merits of Christ as listed in the text:

- (a) He was a son and He learned obedience by the things He suffered.
- (b) He was made perfect and is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey.
- (c) He was called of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

This is the true picture of Christ. The writer in this passage was addressing the Jews who were familiar with both orders of priesthood, for both had been recorded in the Old Testament Scripture. Thus the writer used this example freely.

The priesthood of Aaron was formal as known in the Law and that of Melchizedek came earlier in the days of Abraham. The Aaronic priesthood had clear similarities with that of Christ and there were constant reminders in the services rendered. That of Melchizedek was also a picture of the same priesthood. Both orders point to the necessity of atonement through the blood. Christ fulfilled this requirement.

Have your sins been atoned for by the blood of Christ?

THOUGHT: The priestly office of Christ is essential for atonement.

PRAYER: Father, help me always to remember what Christ has done for me.

MONDAY, AUGUST 5
HEBREWS 5:11-14
GALATIANS 1:6-9

*“I marvel that ye are so soon
removed from him that called you into the
grace of Christ unto another gospel.”*

THE FRUIT OF WILFUL IGNORANCE

The writer was addressing the people who were dull of hearing his words. They had a specific mind-set and they had closed their thoughts and were inclined to a particular judgment. They were not persuaded about the gospel and were willingly ignorant of its truths.

The writer showed them that the fruit of their ignorance would be the stagnation of their spiritual lives. They would always remain babies in matters of faith. If they listened they would grow to full age and feed on spiritual meat so that they would be able to understand what was morally right and wrong.

The writer made observation of their spiritual condition. He said that he had many things to say of Melchizedek and Christ. He was familiar with the Scriptures and knew the right interpretation. His audience were not agreeable with his presentation of the gospel. They were reluctant. They were dull of hearing, though they had knowledge of what the writer was saying.

The attitude of these people is seen in the general response of the Jewish community to the gospel of Christ. They confronted Christ face to face and were hostile to the Apostles after Christ ascended to heaven. Peter (who became the spokesman of the Apostles) had very strong words against them because of their rejection of Christ. Stephen (one of the early disciples and a leader) delivered a stern sermon and told them the truth regarding Christ. They responded by stoning him to death. They were determined to stop the spread of the Christian faith and clung on fanatically to their false understanding of the Scriptures. They were wilfully ignorant.

THOUGHT: Wilful ignorance is sin.

PRAYER: Father, may I be diligent to hear Thy words, and to learn from Thee.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 6

HEBREWS 5:11-14

EPHESIANS 4:17-21

“... ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.”

A DEMONSTRATION OF WILFUL IGNORANCE

The writer told the Hebrews that they were supposed to be qualified teachers, but they lacked understanding. They still needed someone to teach them. The Jews had turned down the gospel of Christ and had opposed Him and at last demanded His crucifixion.

At the time of the early church, there were self-styled sects of the Jews who professed to have full knowledge of the Scriptures. The Pharisees were the most prominent, and then there were the Sadducees, the scribes and elders. They counted themselves to have all authority in the knowledge of the holy writ. Any other person or group that opposed their point of view was rejected, and even physically attacked. Such a stand led them to reject Christ and in the end they had Him put to death. They were also hostile towards the Apostles and they persecuted them and sought to exterminate them.

The writer told them in the text that they needed someone to teach them. One of them who recognized his own inability was Nicodemus in John 3, who as a Pharisee was a certified teacher of the Law. However, he saw something different in Christ early in the Lord's ministry. He came to Him at night and asked basic questions about salvation. Jesus explained to him and he became a believer. His conversion was genuine as, after the death of Christ, he assisted Joseph of Arimathaea in the burial of Christ's body. He brought a hundred pounds of spices that were required in Jewish burial. This act was an expression of his faith in Christ.

The step of wilful ignorance is easy for any professing Christian to take. Believers today must learn a lesson from these Hebrews of the early days.

THOUGHT: Christ is the true Teacher and Interpreter of the Scriptures.

PRAYER: Father, keep me humble that I may learn from Thy words.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7

HEBREWS 5:11-14

1 PETER 2:1-6

*“If so be ye have tasted that
the Lord is gracious.”*

THE PRESCRIPTION

The Sanhedrin had taken counsel to slay the Apostles Peter and John, then Gamaliel stood up and forbade them from taking action (Acts 5:33-39). He was a member of this council of the Jews and a doctor of the Law. He was a respected leader in Jerusalem. It is not clear if he was a believer in Christ but at least he recognized that the apostles were not ordinary people but that their words had substance.

At that time the Apostle Paul was still one of the Pharisees and a student of Gamaliel. He was very hostile towards the church, but now as the probable writer of the words of this text he understood well the Jewish mind. These Jews needed to know the first principles of the oracles of God. This was what Nicodemus asked Jesus in that night visit. These were the basic doctrines of Christianity, but wilful ignorance kept them in the dark.

Today there is a parallel to this trend: the advent of liberal theology came with clergy with big titles who were wilfully ignorant of biblical truths. In the nineteenth century, liberalism invaded the Anglican Church. One of her bishops, a conservative believer, wrote that the bishops of his church knew nothing about Christ except His name. It is no wonder that some of today's bishops are self-proclaimed atheists! Many mainline churches today are led by liberal clergy who are similarly destitute of biblical truths. However in the eyes of the general public they are great leaders whose words count in public affairs. These false shepherds have flocks that follow them ignorantly.

The writer saw these people as babies in the faith and as such he could only prescribe milk for them. He said that they were unskilful in the word. He got them started with that simple food for they were unable to digest more. When they had grown, they could then be given strong meat.

THOUGHT: Simple spiritual diet is good for anyone who wishes to learn simple truths.

PRAYER: Father, may I always *“desire the sincere milk of the word”* (1 Pet 2:2).

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8

HEBREWS 5:11-14

PROVERBS 1:1-7

*“The fear of the LORD is the
beginning of knowledge ...”*

WISDOM IN APPLICATION OF GOD’S WORD

The Lord called the gospel dispensation the fulfilment of the Law. It took His personal intervention to convince some of His prominent disciples who previously belonged to the opposing camp. This was the case with Nicodemus and Paul. It is a fact that strong meat belongs to them that are grown-up. Nevertheless everyone must start with the basic menu. Unless the people listened, their spiritual growth would stagnate and that would be very dangerous.

It is worth seeking to understand the application of the Law even after the Messiah has come. Those who are willing to listen will find the answers. They make use of their spiritual senses. The requirement to use common sense is applied even in non-religious matters. The main factor here is to tell the truth as it is. Note the words of the text: *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe”* (Heb 5:12-13). When a person is honest in all his dealings, he will understand the mind of God in His Word. He will discover a treasure of knowledge that enables him to discern good and evil.

There is so much treasure in God’s Word. The knowledge of these should lead to continued growth. The writer wound up his figure of speech thus: *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (Heb 5:14). These are written for your instruction.

THOUGHT: Walking close to God fills me with heavenly wisdom.

PRAYER: Father, may I always learn to seek Thy mind in understanding Thy Word.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 9

HEBREWS 6:1-8

EPHESIANS 4:11-14

*“That we henceforth be no more children,
tossed to and fro ...”*

GOING UNTO PERFECTION

The value of the Christian faith is not simply knowledge of the Scriptures, but there is the need to apply the knowledge to one's life and mature spiritually. This is the message of the text. The writer discouraged stagnation and sliding back to the old ways. It is important to know the basics and seek God's direction. This makes one enlightened and not go back. As the earth brings rain it yields fruit that is a blessing from God. Spiritual maturity is the way forward.

The necessity of doctrine for maturity is beyond human estimation. The knowledge of the main principles of the teachings of Christ is the basis. However, that simple knowledge is not enough, there is a need to go on to perfection. In the old order as well as in the New Testament church there were teachers of the Scriptures. In their teaching there were things that were of common knowledge because they were stressed as essentials. Maturity requires something more than these basics.

In any venture, growth is naturally expected. Progress must be seen. This is not different in matters of faith. We cannot keep on learning the same doctrines without learning more, as in the laying again of the foundation of repentance from dead works of faith towards God. In the mid twentieth century, there was a revival movement in East Africa within the Anglican Church. This movement was characterised by public confession of sins. It came to a point where some with simple understanding thought that was a good thing to commit sin and later on to come and confess. This brought disrepute to the movement. Lack of maturity is always followed by a return to the old ways. This is how Paul expressed christian maturity: *“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”* (Eph 4:13). How is your progress to perfection?

THOUGHT: Genuine faith is confirmed by intensity in maturity.

PRAYER: Father, may I always feed on the spiritual diet of Thy Word that I may be perfected in my faith.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10

HEBREWS 6:1-8

1 PETER 1:5-9

*“Receiving the end of your faith,
even the salvation of your souls.”*

THE WAY TO MATURITY

There are people who profess faith in Christ out of various motives. Some may see such association as fashionable. These will see Christianity and judge by her external worth. They learn and practise those basics and do not go beyond that. They will not be able to give concrete explanations of their profession.

The writer mentioned doctrines of baptisms, laying of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment as some of the things that immature people were concerned with. There is nothing wrong with the teaching of these doctrines, but the believer's heart condition is equally important. The practices of these doctrines may be considered as outward manifestations of Christianity and the writer saw the danger of these becoming mechanical observations that do not have any element of faith. When it comes to this, the profession of faith will be meaningless. When religion becomes mechanical, it fails to be a true religion. External observations are within human power to fulfil, but it is only God who bestows blessing for every religious practice. These must be exercised in faith. This is the mind of the writer when he said these things.

External practices must be done according to God's instruction, for the whole plan of salvation is the gift of the grace of God. The light that comes with it bestows the taste of this heavenly gift. This is an awareness of the forgiveness of sins, an assurance of justification and adoption into God's family. More than these the believer is made partaker of the Holy Spirit. In the early church this was also accompanied by external manifestations of the power of God in the lives of those believers. This was part of God's self-revelation before the completion of the canon of the Scriptures.

THOUGHT: Every religious activity must have the approval of the Holy Scriptures.

PRAYER: Father, may I serve Thee with meaning as revealed in Thy Holy Word.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 11

HEBREWS 6:1-8

2 PETER 1:19-21

*"... holy men of God spake as they
were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

GOD'S INSTRUMENT OF MATURITY

The written Word is the perfect revelation of God given by inspiration. This gives it authority that cannot be challenged. It becomes the Christian's basis for faith and practice. This is where Christians find spiritual food that leads to perfection.

When reading and hearing the preaching of God's Word, the Spirit touches the heart so that one may give heed to the words. This is the real taste of the good Word of God, for when the Lord uses His Word lives are transformed in a visible way. This is the first step after accepting Christ as Lord and Saviour. A steady progress in maturity will follow this initial step.

The power of the Word comes as the ultimate reward for everyone who perseveres to the end. Many, who are not persuaded, are not bothered by it. However their procrastination catches up with them as the end will finally come. It came to the rich man as told by Jesus in Luke 16. His eyes were focused on his riches and comfort that he enjoyed. He ignored God's call and his end came. His poor neighbour Lazarus who feared God and counted it worthy to suffer the lack of earthly goods gained heaven. The Lord Jesus gave that comparison to show the misery of those who reject God. That man was in great pain and requested a messenger to be sent to his brothers who were still alive. The answer was that they should listen to Moses and the prophets and they would have heavenly reward.

All believers have that hope when they believe in the saving grace of Christ as revealed in His Word. God's Word is God's instrument that helps them grow in their faith. How do you value God's written Word?

THOUGHT: The blessing of God's written Word comes by constant meditation upon it.

PRAYER: Father, grant me discipline to read Thy Word every day.

MONDAY, AUGUST 12

HEBREWS 6:1-8

JOHN 15:1-9

*“... He that abideth in me, and I in him,
the same bringeth forth much fruit ...”*

THE DANGER OF FALLING AWAY

For the believer to fall away from the faith is not theologically possible. Those who do end up leaving the faith show that they were not believers in the first place. They only professed but did not possess faith. These are the people referred to in the text.

Those who harden their hearts and fall away crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to open shame. The original sin caused by the transgression of Adam was enough to put man in a hopeless position. The salvation that came through Christ brought hope and redemption. The price of that redemption was the suffering and death of Christ on the cross. Crucifixion as a means of discharging capital punishment was reserved for top criminals, murderers and robbers. The Son of God was counted with these transgressors to pay the penalty for those who come to Him for forgiveness of sins. Those who reject this salvation Christ offers are as if they have crucified Christ again.

The writer warned against professing believers who bore no fruits of salvation. He illustrated this with the earth that receives rain and bring forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed. This, he said, receives blessing from God. On the other hand when it bears thorns and briers it is rejected, cursed and burned. The contrast here is very clear. The message is that those who are truly saved ought to bear fruits of salvation and grow in the faith leading to greater blessing while those who only professed faith without fruits of salvation will be cursed. The choice is clear for everyone.

Maturity is the goal of every believer. To achieve that, one needs to continue in learning and obeying the truths of God's Word. Following the right path brings positive fruits. The danger of being only a professing believer is real and there is need of growth in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Are you a growing Christian?

THOUGHT: Faith in Christ cannot be mixed with earthly interests.

PRAYER: Father, give me true faith and courage to stand in all circumstances of my life.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13

HEBREWS 6:9-20

ACTS 2:38-40

*“For the promise is unto you, and to
your children, and to all that are afar of ...”*

STANDING ON THE PROMISES OF CHRIST

The text continues with the subject of maturity. It comes when one stands on the promises of Christ. These are the things to come for God is not unrighteous to forget our service for Him and for the saints. There is a need for diligence, not slothfulness. Through faith, hope and patience, there is a heritage of the promises. This is the anchor of believers. Jesus has entered into the holy place as our High Priest. He is thus their assurance.

In their maturity, believers are persuaded of better things that accompany salvation. These are the blessings and the fruit of the Spirit. Thus, believers, as they mature spiritually, will aspire for these things. This is one difference between believers and unbelievers. This encouragement is meant to persuade them to demonstrate their faith. There must be a clear line that separates them. In the early days in this country (Kenya) when there were few Christians, the believers were despised because of their faith. There were customary rites that particular tribes were to observe. These were idol worship and superstition, but were highly regarded by the people. Christians were seen as outcasts. They made their stand known and showed their changed lives that accompanied their salvation. God gave them hope when He made His promises known to them.

The text beautifully asserted this in verse 10: *“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”* The reward of believers is firmly grounded on the promises of God. This is a great treasure for them, when they know God and what He is able to do for them. This is an assurance that they have all things according to God’s will.

THOUGHT: The promises of Christ are sure as the rising of the sun each morning.

PRAYER: Father, may I never doubt Thy promises concerning my salvation.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14

HEBREWS 6:9-20

JOHN 10:28-30

*“And I give unto them eternal life;
and they shall never perish ...”*

THE FULL ASSURANCE OF GOD’S PROMISES

Jesus in His sermon on the mount stressed the fact of full assurance in God’s promises to show His disciples that God was their sufficiency. It is a worthy cause to continue to minister to the saints. The greater part of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is summed up in the expression that He went everywhere doing good.

The Apostles followed in His steps and exhorted all the saints to do the same. In the service for the Lord, an exemplary diligence must be evident. It is motivated by the love for Christ and thus God’s children will show love one for another as the Lord had taught them. The Apostles did not hesitate to render help whenever they were called. Peter and John went to Samaria to help new believers and on other occasions Paul went full throttle in preaching the gospel and also raised funds to assist the poor in Jerusalem. He did what was humanly possible for the spiritual and physical welfare of the saints. Such good works are a demonstration of one’s spiritual maturity.

In the promises of God there is a full assurance of hope to the end. The writer counsels his audience not to be slothful but to follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. The promise is sure but one has to endure that natural test before attaining that promise. Human weaknesses must not be allowed to diminish what God has offered to His children freely. God made the promises swearing by Himself for He could swear by no other. Nothing thus goes beyond His oath. The end of the promise is His reward for those whom He made; He will do this without fail. God confirms His unchanging counsel to the heirs of the promise. Part of the promises was that God would multiply Abraham’s descendants as the stars of heaven. Also the Lord told Abraham that in him all nations of the earth would be blessed. These were great promises besides security and salvation.

THOUGHT: “Blessed assurance Jesus is mine.”

PRAYER: Father, may I follow Thee faithfully and let every doubt fly away.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15

HEBREWS 6:9-20

PSALM 33:9-12

*“The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever,
the thoughts of his heart to all generations.”*

GOD IS UNCHANGING IN HIS CHARACTER

God’s unchanging character is the assurance that all His promises will be fulfilled. “He is for ever the same in His divine being and perfections and also in His purposes and promises” (Berkhof).

Here are some examples of God’s promises. He made the first formal promise to Abraham. This was a covenant which was to be fulfilled through many generations. The patriarch himself did not live to see the full fulfilment of that promise. He endured patiently and only a fraction of it was fulfilled in his lifetime. The Lord confirmed it with an oath and Abraham was assured that God would bring it to pass.

Abraham died with the hope of the fulfilment of the covenant through his son Isaac. The Lord confirmed the same covenant through Isaac. It was in the house of Jacob (the son of Isaac) that the greater fulfilment was witnessed. Jacob went with his family of twelve sons to Egypt and after four hundred years it had a population large enough to form a nation. God brought them out of Egypt and settled them in the land of Canaan. The nation was called Israel, after Jacob’s name. The promise was partly fulfilled but more was to come.

God does not change and it is impossible for Him to lie. This gives a strong consolation for the hope set before the believers. This hope is an anchor of the soul steadfast and sure. Jesus Christ is the ultimate reward. The fulfilment began with the blessing of Jacob to his son Judah that the sceptre would not depart from his house. Many prophecies followed. Thus when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son born of a woman, as is stated in Galatians 4:4. Jesus was born of Mary. God is faithful.

THOUGHT: *“... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief”* (1 Tim 1:15).

PRAYER: Father, help me to never doubt Thy promises.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 16

HEBREWS 6:9-20

EPHESIANS 1:7-12

“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”

THE HEIRS OF THE PROMISES OF GOD

The faithful are heirs of the promises of God. This heritage comes through faith and patience as seen in the example of Abraham. In the Christian church today the cross has become the symbol of faith. Though it is a reminder of the terrible suffering and death of Christ, He is the hope of salvation to everyone who believes.

The ceremonies and sacrifices in the Old Testament Law were figures of the work of Christ. The text referred to the veil that divided the holy place in the temple and the holy of holies. Only the high priest was permitted by the law to enter and perform necessary ceremonies. He did this on behalf of the people once every year on the Day of Atonement. The sacrifices that they offered were repeated often. The entrance of Jesus Christ put an end to that repeated offering. He entered within the veil once. His sacrifice and offering needed not to be repeated. The order of Aaron was only useful before the coming of this perfect one.

Paul gave an appraisal of the cross saying, *“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God”* (1 Cor 1:23-24).

The road to maturity begins with faith and ends with faith. The rewards that come with salvation have eternal value. God’s promises are ever sure. The saints in the Bible are our example as they trusted in God who does not change. Thus we stand on His promises. Do you?

THOUGHT: Our God is the King of the universe and He dispenses grace after the counsel of His own will.

PRAYER: Father, do not leave me out of Thy will as I believe Thy promises.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 17

HEBREWS 7:1-10

GENESIS 14:18-20

“And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand ...”

THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK

The priesthood of Christ is compared with that of Melchizedek. His priesthood had certain qualities of Christ's priesthood. His service to Abraham was only once and his ancestry is mysterious. However he was a real priest. He was a type of Christ. The Jewish mind had to recognise the ministry of Christ in the light of that priesthood.

The identity of Melchizedek cannot be clearly verified as there is little historical background of him. He is called king of Salem. (Salem is an old name for Jerusalem.) The name also means *“King of peace.”* He was a priest of the Most High God. His story is mentioned once in Genesis 14:18. He is also referred to in the book of Psalms and then in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Abraham was highly regarded by the Jews, but Melchizedek is presented as superior to him.

He is also called *“King of righteousness,”* a title that belongs only to Christ. He was a king yet he was also a priest. In the Genesis encounter, he is said to have received tithes from Abraham. The particulars relating to the order of priests in the days of Abraham is not known. There are no details given as in the case of the priesthood of Aaron and the Levites. However this older one is presented as superior to that of Aaron. There were no written Scriptures at that time but the people then knew God and served the way it is done today. Melchizedek had many of the qualities of Christ. He was thus a superior mediator to Aaron.

THOUGHT: Sin separated man from God and, as such, man needs a mediator to reconcile him to the Creator.

PRAYER: Father, grant me the grace that I may be a testimony of Thy righteousness.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 18

HEBREWS 7:1-10

JOHN 8:56-59

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."

THE CHARACTER OF MELCHIZEDEK

The book of Job is like a window through which we can view the relationship that the people then had with God. Job was a priest to his family, but Melchizedek was a priest to more people, possibly the people of his kingdom. There was no separation of state and religion. In the inter-testamentary period, the high priests also held the office of governor. Melchizedek had so much in common with Christ that the writer chose to show his particulars as an accurate type of the Messiah.

The text gives the details of the similarities between Christ and this ancient priest. He is said to have been without father or mother. Suggestions have been made to mean that his parents were not known, but not that they did not exist. Since no other details are given about him, speculation is not to be made beyond that which is revealed in Scripture. It is added also that he was without descent and did not have a beginning of days or end of life.

That he was a priest continually fits well with the priesthood of Christ. The comparison of the priesthood of Christ and that of Melchizedek was used to convince the immediate audience (the Hebrews) that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and holds the offices of a priest and king as well as that of a prophet.

THOUGHT: Christ is not only a priest. He is also the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

PRAYER: Father, may I be contented with Jesus Christ's work of mediation as my Redeemer, for there is no other mediator.

MONDAY, AUGUST 19

HEBREWS 7:1-10
NUMBERS 18:2

*“I have given the children of Levi
all the tenth in Israel ...”*

THE SUPERIORITY OF MELCHIZEDEK

The Jews were agreeable to the assertions of the Messiah in the Old Testament. However they had difficulty accepting that Jesus had indeed come to fulfil those Scriptures. John 8 represents the general position of the Jewish community regarding Jesus. They argued and in the end they took up stones to stone Him. Jesus had credible arguments but they were still not convinced.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to the Jews who were already believers but they needed this teaching to consolidate their faith. They were prepared to give answers to those who would ask them. They could not defend their faith without the full knowledge of Scriptures.

Melchizedek was a great man and Abraham recognized this and Abraham showed submission when he gave tithes to him. Although this was long before the formal institution of the office of a priest, the concept of priesthood had existed from the beginning. Abel's offering was an act of worship and every generation after that did the same. There is more that Abraham knew of the priesthood, though not revealed in Scripture. That spontaneous act in Genesis 14 and his giving of tithes tells more of the religion of that day. The sons of Levi received the priesthood pioneered by Aaron. These also received tithes from the people. The service of these priests is clearly spelled out in the Mosaic Law and the Jews were very familiar with this. They were their brethren and came out of the loins of Abraham. Melchizedek was not from the line of Levi, but his priesthood was superior. Numbers 18:21 and 26 spoke of them receiving tithes and also offering up a heave offering of what they received. Melchizedek was above all. His priesthood did not continue visibly in the everyday life of Israel but he is said to be an eternal priest.

THOUGHT: The Levitical priesthood was a type of the eternal priesthood of Christ and served its purpose.

PRAYER: May Jesus Christ be praised in my lips as my Lord and Mediator. I pray in His name.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 20

HEBREWS 7:1-10

1 JOHN 2:1-2

*“And he is the propitiation for our sins ...
also for the sins of the whole world.”*

THE CONTRAST OF THE TWO PRIESTHOODS

There is a contrast between the priesthood of Melchizedek and that of Aaron. Melchizedek was unique and has no ancestry while the Aaronic priesthood came from the house of Levi one of the twelve sons of Jacob. The name of Melchizedek suddenly came to the scene without any historical background given.

The Levites received tithes but they did not live beyond the appointed time of human life on earth. Melchizedek has a different description and the text implies that he lives. There was also the age limit in the Aaronic priesthood. One was admitted to serve as a priest at the age of thirty years and retired at the age of fifty, i.e. one could serve for a period of twenty years only. This was brief and shows that the life of that order was greatly limited. After Christ came to fill that office, it was abolished completely and the Levites no longer served as priests. Those who force themselves into that office after this serve no meaningful purpose. The text also asserted that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham.

The writer said this of Melchizedek: *“Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.”* In that his priesthood is eternal and the call that the believers come to Christ only for salvation is stressed. Only Jesus saves. Berkhof added this of the priestly office of Christ, “Besides bringing the great sacrifice for sins, Christ as priest also makes intercession for His people. He is called our *parakletos* by implication in John 14:16, and explicitly in 1 John 2:2. The term means ‘one who is called in to help, an advocate, one who pleads the cause of another.’”

THOUGHT: The Aaronic priesthood was part of our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

PRAYER: Father, may I learn well from the schoolmaster as well as from my “*parakletos*.”

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21
HEBREWS 7:11-28
2 JOHN 8-9

*“Look to yourselves, that we lose
not those things which we have
wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”*

IMPERFECTION OF THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

The text continues to give arguments and comparisons to show that the Levitical priesthood was temporary and also inferior to that of Christ. The priesthood of Melchizedek best represents that perfect one. The Levitical one was not perfect but was just a picture of the eternal priesthood of the Son of God. He lives for ever to make intercession for believers. He had all the necessary qualities and His sacrifice was not repeated but was offered once for He was consecrated for ever.

Since the Levitical priesthood was not perfect, it was necessary for another priest to rise after the order of Melchizedek. The Aaronic priesthood that came from the house of Levi had limitations and could not fulfil God's requirement. The writer posed the question that under the Levitical order the people received the ceremonial law, thus there was another needed after the order of Melchizedek. He asserted that since the priesthood was changed, there was a need to change the law. In reality this is not a change per se but assigning the Mosaic Law its rightful place.

The validity of the law versus the gospel is the main factor here. The coming of Jesus Christ brought to completion that which was prefigured in the Mosaic Law. The law is said to be changed because the service of the Aaronic priesthood came to an end and in effect changed the law. Christ now occupies the office of the priest. In the flesh He was born, not of the house of Levi but of a tribe that Moses said nothing about priesthood. The writer said that our Lord sprang out of Judah. The argument here was to terminate the Aaronic priesthood which had served its purpose and to approve the priesthood of Christ. He is best represented in the priesthood of Melchizedek. This depicts its perfect character while that of Aaron was insufficient.

THOUGHT: The Levitical priesthood is a picture of the perfect one.

PRAYER: Father, may I always be confident of Jesus as my eternal High Priest.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 22

HEBREWS 7:11-28

GALATIANS 3:6-18

“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

CHRIST HAD TO HAVE ANOTHER ORDER

The facts about Jesus Christ were the things that the Jews argued about over and over and they rejected Him as the promised Messiah, the Son of God. The Apostles carried on preaching the gospel of Christ after His ascension to heaven but were derided and persecuted for their preaching. That negative reception was one of the reasons for the writing of this epistle. The Jewish Christians had a hard time in answering questions regarding their new faith. Thus this letter became handy in helping them to face their opponents.

Christ rose to be a priest after the similitude of Melchizedek and was not made after the law of a carnal commandment. Much has been said concerning Melchizedek and his relationship with Abraham. The patriarch recognized him as a priest of God and in offering him tithes he demonstrated his faith in God. His act shows that he was well informed of the sanctity of serving God in a spiritual way. Jesus acknowledged that Abraham saw Him. That priesthood was made after the power of an endless life. That is, His priesthood would last for ever. This was best represented by the order of Melchizedek. The law made nothing perfect but better hope was expected to come. That hope came in Jesus Christ and through Him we draw near to God.

When Paul wrote to the Galatians on the same subject, he stressed that Abraham believed God and was counted righteous. He added that they who are of faith are the children of Abraham and are blessed with him. The main factor is faith and the object of faith is Christ. Abraham had this faith when he met Melchizedek. The just shall live by that faith. The law is called the schoolmaster that brought us to the faith. People of all nations are brought under that faith in Christ.

THOUGHT: One is counted righteous when one believes that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah.

PRAYER: Father, may I submit to Him who can make intercession for me.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 23
HEBREWS 7:11-28
PSALM 110

*“The LORD shall send the
rod of thy strength out of Zion:
rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.”*

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO ORDERS

The Levitical priests were made without an oath; Christ was made a priest with an oath (Ps 110:4). Christ thus became a surety of a better testament. When Jesus said that He is the way, the truth and the life, He was showing His place as the priest of an eternal covenant. When the gospel is preached today, this truth must be stressed and believers must be born again and must conform to Christ.

The Aaronic priests were many and they died. This shows that they were temporary. They served the purpose for which they were ordained and that was the end. This comparison and explanation was necessary because the human mind is inclined to believe what they see. The service of Aaronic priests had gripped the mind of the Jews for they lived among them so that they were not easily persuaded to accept the priesthood of Christ. However the truth stands.

Christ's priesthood is unchangeable and He continues ever as a priest. He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him for He lives to make intercession for them. In this He exercises the responsibilities of His office. The office of a high priest requires some qualities, and these high spiritual credentials were seen in Christ. He was holy, harmless and undefiled and was separate from sinners and higher than the heavens. He did not need to offer daily sacrifices but He offered Himself once. This was also another point of difference with the Aaronic priests. The Levitical law prescribed different sacrifices that were repeated daily. This is because none of the animal sacrifices was sufficient. Christ, on the other hand, was both a priest and a sacrifice. He offered His own body. Christ is the perfect one and He has fulfilled God's promise.

THOUGHT: The earthly priests were made by the law, but the Son is consecrated for ever.

PRAYER: Father, may Jesus Christ ever be my surety.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 24

HEBREWS 8:1-13

PSALM 110

*“The LORD hath sworn,
and will not repent ...”*

THE NEW AND BETTER COVENANT

A covenant is an agreement made with an oath. In the context of the present passage, God made a covenant with the fathers. In it He spelt out how He was going to work with His people. It began with Abraham and it is preserved with addition when He had it put into writing by the hand of Moses. The law that the Lord gave became a guide to the relationship He had with His people. He chose the house of Israel to manifest His glory. Now He spoke of a new and better covenant. He made a promise in the prophets.

The sum of the things that had been spoken was given. It was to introduce the new covenant to a people who held on to the old covenant as a matter of tradition and not with reason from the Scriptures. The new covenant has everything to do with Jesus Christ. He was introduced in the text thus: *“... We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man”* (Heb 8:1-2). The high priest was a very important minister in worship in the old order. The people were so used to the routine of their ministry, and so with their little knowledge they did not expect a change to that order. The description of the high priest here shows that He was entirely different from that which the people knew. The similarity here is that both priests offered sacrifices as the law requires. This new high priest did not minister in the earthy tabernacle. The earthly priests did as were assigned by the Law.

The new priest is a special one and the revelation here shows that He is none other than the Son of God. The facts pertaining to this high priest may have been agreeable to the Jews but they failed to identify Him who walked among them. He taught in the temple and in their synagogues. They, however, failed to link Him with the prophecy.

THOUGHT: *“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests ...”*
(Rev 5:10).

PRAYER: Father, may I recognize only Jesus Christ as my High Priest.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 25

HEBREWS 8:1-13

EXODUS 25:40

*"... make them after their pattern,
which was shewed thee in the mount."*

THE VALUE OF THE OLD COVENANT

The coming of Jesus abolished the office assigned by the Law, which is the old covenant. This became a point of great disagreement but the truth stands. The human high priest served as an example and shadow of heavenly things. The Lord required the exercise of those ordinances for the instruction of His people to lead them to the perfect High Priest.

When Moses constructed the tabernacle and its furniture, he followed the pattern which God gave him in the mount. God had revealed it to him and gave wisdom to the builders who were able to construct it exactly as God had showed. These physical features and the form of worship in the tabernacle prefigured a more excellent ministry. They were pictures and not reality. The Lord had Israel to observe those ordinances and He continued to teach them and told them of a better covenant that was to come. The Messiah is the Mediator of this better covenant based on the promises. All went well with Israel as far as these promises were concerned, but they were not ready when the time came for the promises to be fulfilled.

The writer in this text proved that God had fulfilled His promises regarding the new covenant. Christ was born of a virgin as it was told by the prophets. John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way before Him and this was also told by the prophets. When Jesus began to teach and do many great works never witnessed before, He was in constant conflict with the Jews. There was a minority that believed and became His disciples but the official position of the Jewish nation was negative. They rejected Him and had Him crucified. However, the truth is that He is the Messiah and He came to fulfil the promises of the new covenant. His message was universal and not limited to the nation of Israel as it was under the old covenant. The Apostles were commissioned to preach this message.

THOUGHT: Jesus is indeed the heavenly High Priest.

PRAYER: Father, grant me clear understanding of this truth.

MONDAY, AUGUST 26
HEBREWS 8:1-13
JEREMIAH 31:31-34

“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour ... saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me ...”

THE PURPOSE OF THE SECOND COVENANT

The passage of time has proven that Jesus Christ is indeed the mediator of the new covenant. The Apostolic message has spread to every continent of the world as God promised. The first one was imperfect and there was need for a second one. This fact has been asserted severally in this book.

Hebrews 7:18 said that there is a disannulling of the commandment because it was weak and unprofitable. A proper search of the Scriptures would have prepared the Jewish nation for the coming change. The writer in Hebrews 8:8-13 reminded his audience of the promise God gave through the prophets. He quoted from Jeremiah 31:31-34 to show that the new order should not be strange. This is part of that promise, “... *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord*” (Heb 8:8-9).

God brings to pass the new covenant saying that He will be their God and they shall be His people. He added that they will know Him without anyone teaching them. God will manifest His grace as He will be merciful to them and forget their unrighteousness and their iniquities. This will come on the basis of atonement through Christ the mediator of the covenant. Salvation by grace alone always stands.

The advent of the new covenant makes the first one old and thus there is no need to observe its specifications but all are to embrace the new. All these things lie in God’s eternal plan. Believers were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Are you chosen?

THOUGHT: Salvation by grace was in the beginning and will remain till the end.

PRAYER: Father, may I accept Thy gracious offer in Jesus Christ.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 27

HEBREWS 9:1-10

NUMBERS 3:6-8

“And they shall keep ... the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle ...”

PARTICULARS OF THE OLD COVENANT

In the Mosaic Law the particulars of external observations of the old covenant are spelt out. The pattern of the structure of the sanctuary and its furniture was given in detail. Also the sacrifices and the manner of service of priests were also shown. This was repeated here to show their significance and the expectation of their reformation.

The structure of the old sanctuary had ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary. These were guidelines on how the priests discharged their ministry. The sanctuary was a tabernacle (a movable tent); all the pieces of the structure were clearly defined, including their size and colour. In the original instruction the Lord said this to Moses, *“And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it”* (Exod 25:8-9). It was logical at the time that the Lord gave this instruction that it had to be a tabernacle because Israel was on a journey and did not have a permanent place. The Levites were assigned to dismantle and carry the pieces of the tabernacle and the furniture whenever they were moving (Num 3:6-8, 21-37).

Subsequently when they settled in the Promised Land, they continued for several years using the tabernacle as the sanctuary. When David became king, he saw the need to build a permanent structure. He prepared building stones and wood for the purpose. The Lord sanctioned his desire but did not allow him to build it. Solomon completed the building and dedicated it. Its pattern was exactly like the tabernacle both in size and the furniture. They ensured that the particulars of the covenant were maintained as in the Law of Moses. This was an object lesson as they waited for the new covenant.

THOUGHT: The old and the new covenants are complementary covenants made by the same Lord.

PRAYER: Father, help me to understand the value of Thy covenants.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28

HEBREWS 9:1-10

“... once in the year shall he make atonement
upon it throughout your generations ...”

EXODUS 30:10

THE SERVICE OF THE OLD SANCTUARY

The tabernacle had two compartments, separated by a veil: the holy place and the holy of holies. In the holy place, the first piece of furniture was a table made from shittim wood. On it was kept the shewbread continually. It was sanctified bread that only the priests could eat. These were kept in the first sanctuary together with the golden candlestick having a main shaft and six branches, three on each side. Details of its design are given in the Exodus account. In the Tabernacle courtyard, there was also an altar made from shittim wood and overlaid with brass. There was also a laver of brass (a basin), of a big size, used by the priests for washing (Exod 30:17-21). This section of the tabernacle was used by the priests on a daily basis.

The second section, the holiest of all, had a golden censer and the Ark of the Covenant made of gold. In the Ark of the Covenant were a golden pot which contained samples of manna, Aaron's rod which budded and the table of the covenant. The cherubim overshadowed the mercy seat which was a covering for the Ark of the Covenant. This was the most sacred place and the usage of its furniture was minimal, their presence was symbolic. The Ark of the Covenant was held as the most important piece of furniture. It remained until the temple was destroyed by the Babylonians.

The priests offered sacrifices of the old covenant every day in the first section of tabernacle. The High Priest went into the second section of the tabernacle once a year on the Day of Atonement “*not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people*” (Heb 9:7). The writer in the text in Hebrews commented that the Holy Spirit signified that the way to the holiest “*was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing*” (Heb 9:8).

THOUGHT: Holiness is always the greatest requirement.

PRAYER: Father, may I always strive to be holy.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29

HEBREWS 9:1-10
1 JOHN 1:5-9

“... and the blood of Jesus Christ his
Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

THE MEANING OF THE SACRIFICE

The writer deemed it fit to repeat the specifications of the old covenant for this was what his readers were familiar with and they needed to understand its spiritual significance. It was a demanding duty and its specifications had to be observed accurately. Albert Barnes (*Notes on the Bible*) gives a summary of this chapter in these words,

“The general design of this chapter Heb. 9 is the same as the two preceding, to show that Christ as high priest is superior to the Jewish high priest. This the apostle had already shown to be true in regard to his rank, and to the dispensation of which he was the ‘mediator.’ He proceeds now to show that this was also true in reference to the efficacy of the sacrifice which he made; and in order to this, he gives an account of the ancient Jewish sacrifices, and compares them with that made by the Redeemer. The essential point is, that the former dispensation was mere shadow, type, or figure, and that the latter was real and efficacious.”

Hebrews 9:9 says that it was a figure of the present time. This is an indication that it had a symbolic meaning and an interpretation that made it meaningful. The Hebrews presented offerings wherein they gave another life in place of their own. These substitutes pointed to another ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for the sins of all people. Those offered by the priests could not make them perfect. The sacrificial system included meats, drinks and diverse washings and carnal ordinances. The text indicates the need of giving proper meaning to these sacrifices in a time of reformation. That time of reformation had already come for Christ had already fulfilled all that the law signified and there was no longer a need to observe those sacrifices.

THOUGHT: Everyone needs to be washed in the blood of the Lamb.

PRAYER: Father, may my faith be in the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30

HEBREWS 9:11-28

JOHN 19:26-37

*“When Jesus therefore had received
the vinegar, he said, It is finished ...”*

THE REALITY SHOWN IN THE NEW COVENANT

While the old covenant was a picture of good things to come, the meaning is now revealed and confirmed to be fulfilled in Christ. The shedding of blood is the key factor that brings sanctification and forgiveness of sins. While the rituals of the old covenant were repeated, Christ offered Himself once only and remains a Mediator continually.

The old order is fulfilled in Christ as He is the High Priest of God for good things to come. A picture is different from reality. The thousands of offerings that were offered every year represented Christ. Christ is the only true High Priest and His offering is the only true offering. As He died on the cross He declared, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). This was to signify that the mission that He came to fulfil in the world was done. That was not the end of His mission but it was a price that was paid for the forgiveness of sins to satisfy God’s requirement and bring to pass man’s redemption. The text says that Jesus obtained eternal redemption for us. This was a milestone in the objective of the first advent of Christ.

The text tells of the superiority of the blood of Christ in comparison to that of animals: *“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* (Heb 9:13-14). The coming of Christ is a transformation of the old covenant to the new one.

THOUGHT: Christ became both the Priest and the sacrifice to fulfil the work of redemption.

PRAYER: Father, I am trusting in Thy Son for my redemption.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 31

HEBREWS 9:11-28

MARK 14:24-25

“This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.”

BLOOD WAS NECESSARY FOR SANCTIFICATION

Long before the institution of the Law of Moses, men knew the truth of the necessity of blood sacrifice. Abel was the first one to do so. Others mentioned in the pre-Mosaic era are Noah and Job.

The shedding of blood was necessary in the first covenant. Moses himself used the blood of calves and goats to sprinkle on the book and the people. He sprinkled also the tabernacle and the vessels. The understanding of animal sacrifice was that they sanctify the flesh. This was a ritual that dominated the old form of worship. The priests were permanently engaged in rendering the service of blood sacrifice. The high priest also offered the most sacred sacrifice once every year. These had to be repeated till the Messiah came.

The Apostles addressed the details of the changes that had to come with the new covenant as far as external observations were concerned. The people who were used to the old order were not easily persuaded to accept the new way. It is the Spirit of God only that could enlighten their understanding. Those who accepted also needed to know the particulars and application of the new order.

A testament has to have a testator and it remains even after the death of the concerned person. All this is summed up in Hebrews 9:22: *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”* This was commanded in Exodus 29:12 and Leviticus 8:15. Moses put the blood on the horns of the altar and poured it all beside the bottom of the altar to purify and sanctify, and to make reconciliation.

THOUGHT: “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee that I can be whiter than snow.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 1

HEBREWS 9:11-28

MATTHEW 26:24-29

*"The Son of man goeth
as it is written of him ..."*

CHRIST IS THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Christ is called "*the mediator of the new testament*" (Heb 9:15). This came to pass as God promised. As the mediator, Christ met all the requirements of the law so as to procure the promises of eternal inheritance. This work of Christ is given repeatedly in the Epistle to the Hebrews because it was the most important purpose of His coming.

When the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, He said of the wine that it was His blood of the New Testament which was shed for many for the remission of sins. This was what He commanded the Church to do in remembrance of Him. It was that same night that He was arrested and subsequently crucified. His blood flowed out when a soldier pierced His side. The Romans and the Jewish accusers saw Him as a common criminal who had to die. However, unknown to them, they were fulfilling a promise of God.

The Lord explained this paradox when He said that the Son of man would go as it is written, but a curse was pronounced on him who betrayed Him. He added that it was better if such a person was not born.

The whole episode of the crucifixion and death of Christ was to bring to pass that requirement of blood for the remission of sins. When Peter preached at Pentecost, he urged his listeners: "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:38). Salvation is only possible because of the shed blood of Jesus.

THOUGHT: The work of Christ as the Mediator was a necessity.

PRAYER: Father, may I find comfort in knowing that Jesus Christ intercedes for me.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

HEBREWS 9:11-28

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-21

*“For he hath made him to be sin
for us, who knew no sin ...”*

THE NEED OF A BETTER SACRIFICE

It was necessary for things of heaven to be purified with a better sacrifice than its earthly pattern. There could be no better sacrifice than that of Christ. He entered a place not made with hands and appears in the presence of God for us. He offered Himself once only unlike the repeated offerings of the old covenant. His one-time offering was all sufficient. He put away sin by His self-sacrifice. The old pattern of sacrifices was for the admonition of those who would benefit from the offering of Christ.

The ultimate end of all things is in the declaration that it is appointed unto men once to die and after this judgment. This will be on the basis of whether they believed in Christ or not. Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. He shall appear the second time to them that believe unto salvation.

Christ's offering of Himself for the sins of the world was eternally foreordained of God. It was first revealed in Genesis 3:15 after the fall: *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* This is commonly referred to as the proto-evangel. God fulfilled the promises of the old covenant at the first coming of Christ.

Christ's Second Coming will reveal the final reward. There will be a judgment for reward and a judgment for punishment. What reward do you expect? Every time one comes before the Lord it is needful to examine one's own heart on the basis of the truth of God's Word. *“When Jesus comes to reward His servants...”* what reward will you get?

THOUGHT: The Day of Christ will surely come.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for Thy better sacrifice.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

HEBREWS 10:1-18

GALATIANS 3:24-25

“But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST (I)

The text now lays stress on the perfection of Christ compared with the Law which is imperfect. The Law refers to those ordinances and commandments given under Moses which formed the old covenant. They are called a shadow or a picture of better things to come, i.e. a better covenant. That perfect covenant comes by Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of this revelation.

The merit of the Law is that it was a shadow and not the very image. The place assigned to it was its comparison with the schoolmaster (Gal 3:24-25). The Greek word is *paidagogos*, meaning an instructor of a child. Every educator knows the effectiveness of using pictures as teaching aids. They represent reality in the young minds. Children’s toys and activities can also illustrate this point. The children “cook” in mud, “build” a house, they “own” a car or “have” a baby. However when it rains they cannot take shelter in their “house” nor can the “car” take them to hospital when they are sick. Yet these toys are very meaningful to the children. Likewise the sacrifices were repeated but could not make one perfect. They were not effective but they brought an awareness of sin. The Day of Atonement which was observed annually was a constant reminder. The unbelieving Jews to this day still observe that day commonly known in Hebrew as *Yom Kippur*. It was highlighted in recent history by the Arab-Israeli war when the opponents took advantage of that day of rest. In history books, that war is named after the Day of Atonement.

The statutes relating to those ceremonies have been retained in the Scriptures as a reminder of what has been accomplished through Christ. The comparison helps us to appreciate the merits of the work of Christ. In practice, those ceremonies have been done away with because Christ has fulfilled the purpose for which they were given.

THOUGHT: The Day of Atonement foreshadows the day when Christ was crucified.

PRAYER: *“Make me to understand the way of thy precepts ...”* (Ps 119:27).

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

HEBREWS 10:1-18

MATTHEW 26:28

*“For this is my blood of the new
testament, which is shed for many ...”*

THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST (II)

Since perfection came with Christ, the office of human priests was abolished and sacrifices are no longer necessary. The feast days were also abolished. Only the Sabbath day is retained as it is part of the moral law which is eternal. The Sabbath in the Christian church has been changed to the first day of the week. This resulted in a difference between the Church and Judaism.

The shortcoming of the animal sacrifices is that they could not ultimately take away sin. They did not satisfy to God's requirement. David made this declaration: *“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me”* (Ps 40:6-7). Acceptable worship to God does not depend on the merit of external acts, but on the grace of God. God took away the first covenant and established a second. David declared again that he delighted to do the will of God. This coming on the heels of his acknowledgement that sacrifices were not what God desires shows that they were more than external observations.

THOUGHT: The value of the New Covenant is infinite.

PRAYER: *“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes ...”* (Ps 119:33).

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

HEBREWS 10:1-18

ACTS 8:26-40

*"I believe that Jesus Christ
is the Son of God."*

THE NEW COVENANT IS FULFILLED

The truth that a new covenant was to come was known to all Jewish religious teachers, but when it came to the time of fulfilment, they could not bring themselves to accept it. One of the reasons of dealing with this issue in this text is because there was rejection by the unbelieving Jews. Secondly, the church also needed to be able to explain the new covenant in relation to the old covenant. This had to be clearly laid out.

The perfection that comes through Christ is true sanctification when one accepts the truth that is in Him. In His Word, He declares the truth. In one of the messianic prophecies, Isaiah wrote the words of the Lord thus: *"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors"* (Isa 53:12). This was a sign to keen believers to know that change had to come and when it came they would recognize it. It was this same chapter in the book of Isaiah that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when Philip met him. He started from that text to tell him about Jesus Christ. The Son of God offered one sacrifice and sat at God's right hand. This is confirmed severally in the Scriptures to be true and He intercedes for sinners there. He will be there till He makes His enemies His footstool. By His offering He has perfected and sanctified them who believe.

Christ occupies the office of priest and He is the eternal priest, thus a mediator between God the Father and those whom He has redeemed. He is perfect and does not need to offer anything else in addition to Himself or to have His sacrifice repeated. When He stated in the Gospel of John that He is the way, the truth and life, He was making a comprehensive assertion. This puts Him in a superior position, one that is complete, needing no addition.

THOUGHT: Jesus paid for all our sins, and we owe all to Him.

PRAYER: "... quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word" (Ps 119:107).

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

HEBREWS 10:1-18

2 PETER 1:16-21

“... *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*”

THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALS THE TRUTH

Christ promised His disciples that He would send them the Comforter who would remind them of all the things He had taught them. The Comforter is a witness in the hearts of those who believe and He also directed the men God used to produce the written Word.

These are the words of the promise from Christ: “*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged*” (John 16:7-11). The ministry of Christ is thus continued by the Holy Spirit. The visible achievement is the completion of the written Word which holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). The new covenant is declared very clearly.

The Lord promised to teach them His Word and that He will put His words in their inward parts and write His words in their hearts. Everyone then, from the least to the greatest, will know the Lord, and He will not remember their sins anymore (Jer 31:33-34). There is no need for any other offering for sin, for Christ has offered Himself and He is the all-sufficient sacrifice.

The assurance of salvation comes only through the Word of Christ and His perfect sacrifice. The Law played its role and God made the gospel known and fulfilled in Christ. Jesus Christ alone by His blood can take away our sins.

THOUGHT: God gives us clear understanding through the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: “... O LORD: *give me understanding according to thy word*” (Ps 119:169).

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

HEBREWS 10:19-25

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23

*“And the very God of peace
sanctify you wholly ...”*

HOLDING FAST THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

The perfection that is in Christ consolidates the profession of faith. The writer exhorted on the need to hold fast the faith. He gave guidelines on the application of the truth in Christ.

The reasons for holding fast the profession of faith, he said, is that now believers have boldness to enter the holiest place by the blood of Jesus Christ. In the previous order, the entrance to the holy of holies was only by the high priest. It was a solemn and fearful occasion for even the priest himself was not sure if his offering would be accepted. All of them had to repeat the same ritual every year. That repetition was an indicator that there was no sufficiency in their regular offerings.

The writer highlighted that the new and living way had been consecrated for believers. This comes with a great reward: the assurance that all sins are forgiven through the shed blood of Christ and there is no need for repeated sacrifice. The veil separated the holy place and the holy of holies. But believers are able *“to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus”* (Heb 10:19). This again confirms the picture of the redemption in Christ as represented in those Levitical ceremonies.

The high priest was a minister in the temple that carried out the requirements of the law. When the Lord Jesus Christ came He fulfilled all the representation in the old ceremonies. He was the High Priest as well as the sacrifice. This fulfilment is the completion of the picture given of the life and work of Christ in the Law. The writer wrote at a time when there was no positive reception in the Jewish community. When there is no guidance of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the gospel is received carnally and thus will not benefit the hearers. However the work of Christ stands to bless those who respond positively through the working of the Holy Spirit.

THOUGHT: There is assurance of complete sanctification in Christ.

PRAYER: Father, sanctify me ever in the blood of Christ.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 8

HEBREWS 10:19-25

COLOSSIANS 1:23

“... and be not moved away from the hope
of the gospel, which ye have heard ...”

THE COURSE OF ACTION

The work of Christ stands to bless those who respond positively through the irresistible grace of God. In holding fast the profession of faith, believers have to act boldly in order to bring about a change. Even though the early Christians were a minority, the pioneers were mostly Jews. In a short time they had made great strides earning themselves a reputation as men who turned the world upside down. A real visible change had to come.

The writer delivered this call to those who believe: “*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*” (Heb 10:22). This again is symbolic washing, but the work of cleansing the heart from sin is the work accomplished in Christ. Faith is a necessary element; external transformation gives evidence of that inner change. He that is washed in the blood of Christ is taught by the Holy Spirit to be conformed to the will of God through the instruction received from the written Word of God and confirmed in the heart by the Spirit of God. This washing (Heb 10:22) is also similar to what the Lord said that one must be born again of water and of the Spirit so as to inherit eternal life.

The writer exhorted those who have experienced that change to stand fast in the faith without wavering. The point is here doubly stressed. It is so because it is easy to be tempted to deny the faith to some degree when tested. It could be persecution or some natural temptations. Thus, believers have to “*consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*” (Heb 10:24-25). Mutual encouragement in the Lord to hold fast to one's faith is much needed, and not to be neglected.

THOUGHT: Do I care for the spiritual growth of my brethren?

PRAYER: Father, may I always walk with Thee and be a blessing to my fellow brethren.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

HEBREWS 10:19-25

PSALM 133

*“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for
brethren to dwell together in unity!”*

FELLOWSHIP SUPPORTS THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

Many people whom Paul named in his epistles were blessed in their fellowship. Lydia is one example. As soon as she believed she invited Paul to her home. In the gospels there were also Mary, Martha and Lazarus who welcomed Jesus to their home and they were also equally blessed. The act of doing good to others is also a manifestation of the faith. Those who render good service in the Lord to others are eternally blessed.

One of the external manifestations of faith is the desire for fellowship with brethren. The writer said, *“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”* (Heb 10:24). This is one step that builds the faith. Believers must desire to have this togetherness. The writer added that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some other people; and that we must exhort one another since the day of the coming of the Lord is near. This calls for the believer’s participation in the local church.

“The ultimate reason that we should participate in the local church is because it is specifically commanded by God. Even in the New Testament days there were those who yielded to the temptation of absenting themselves from worship services of the local church. The writer of Hebrews pointed that members of a local church have an obligation to one another. They are to provoke one another to good works and to exhort one another to live consistent lives worthy of God. This can best be done within the context of a local church; so believers are commanded not to forsake the assembling of themselves together” (The King James Open Bible).

Christ has put us in the path of faith. We ought to take heed to the exhortations He gives in His Word. He has good reasons for His instructions to us, and for pointing us in a certain direction. We cannot stand alone, we need the fellowship of like-minded believers. This is possible as we keep the Lord’s Day and build stronger ties.

THOUGHT: The church should not go without fellowship.

PRAYER: Father, help me to cherish Christian fellowship.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

HEBREWS 10:26-39

ROMANS 3:23-31

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

THE DANGER OF DRAWING BACK

The challenge and the encouragement given in the current text are meant to show the children of God the way to follow and how to overcome the challenges of living a life of faith. The possibility of drawing back (Heb 10:38) is very real. Satan is ever present to deceive believers. The text tells of the consequences of such a move. The writer pointed out the need to fear God alone. The writer shared his testimony that he had to suffer, but he did not draw back. There is the need to endure and believe to the end as we have been saved.

There are repercussions to those who draw back. Earlier it had been noted that Christ as our High Priest offered Himself on the cross and became a sacrifice for us. This sacrifice was for the atonement of those who believe in His saving power. This truth is the heart of the gospel of salvation. Every believer will have knowledge of it. The writer said that there is no more sacrifice for sin if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth. Instead there will be fear, judgment and indignation. Since the message was mainly meant for Hebrew Christians, the writer used the example of the Mosaic Law. He said that it prescribed the death penalty for those who despised it under two or three witnesses.

In the same breath, it is also true that every transgression has its punishment. The wages of sin is death, so the writer added, *“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”* (Heb 10:29). Even in such circumstances, God did not close the door of grace. Despite the threat of punishment, His gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ always stands. Thus every sinner must repent.

THOUGHT: Discipleship is a life-long relationship with Jesus.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy grace see me through to the end.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

HEBREWS 10:26-39

MATTHEW 12:43-45

“... and the last state of that man
is worse than the first ...”

THE NEED TO FEAR GOD ALONE

When believers have known the truth and have been saved, they need to remain in that truth. The fear of drawing back is seen in the consequences that come with it. Jesus said that the return of the unclean spirit that has gone out of the man will make the condition of that man worse than before the spirit left.

In any situation God is the judge, and there is need to fear Him only. The text cited from the Law of Moses that God, as the supreme Judge, is the one who will recompense vengeance. It added that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:31). It is thus important to be reconciled to Him so that one does not need to live in dreadful fear. This is the counsel of the writer at this point: “*But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions*” (Heb 10:32). Since there was much opposition to the faith in those early days, the general public attitude was to look down on Christians. The believers were indeed “*made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions*” (Heb 10:33), yet they had stood with other believers in the same suffering. He told them to remember those days and what they had gone through. Their faith was not in vain. Thus he encouraged them to remain firm.

The writer used his testimony as an encouragement to the Hebrew Christians. This servant of God was imprisoned for his faith and they had compassion on him. They stood with him joyfully and were not ashamed of their faith or of their pastor. The persecution of believers had continued in those early days and it took on many forms. Imprisonment, deprivation of their property and general ill-treatment were common. The writer commended them for taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, for they had a better and enduring substance in heaven. Nevertheless these will not separate them from the love of Christ.

THOUGHT: “Stand up, Stand up for Jesus.”

PRAYER: Father, may I value salvation more than my possessions.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

HEBREWS 10:26-39

MATTHEW 5:11-12

“... *Even so shall it be also
unto this wicked generation.*”

ENDURANCE TO THE END

Persecution brings fear but the positive side is the promise of Christ of a great reward ahead for those who will endure. The writer also made reference to that reward when he told his readers not to cast away their confidence which has a great recompense of reward.

The context of this encouragement has to do with the doctrinal aspects that the writer had dealt with in the book. All these were geared towards giving the Christian church a strong foundation. The Hebrew believers were to be transformed from the old order to embrace the faith of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The appeal that the writer made in Hebrews 12:1-2 is also applicable in the current context. It is gratifying to know that God is faithful to His promises, the writer appealed to that faithfulness. The message here also has a universal appeal as it has remained preserved in the inspired text. It is the Word of God and belongs to the Church of Christ. It speaks today.

The writer gave them direction of enduring to the end: they had need of patience. Do the will of God and receive the promise. The enemy will deride and persecute them to make them give up. Their study of God's Word would give them direction and the Lord will not forsake them. The text says that the Lord does not delay His coming. In the meanwhile the truth of God always stands: “... *the just shall live by faith ...*” (Heb 10:38). There is need to adhere to that faith and see what God can do. While seeking to endure to the end, the danger of drawing back is real. The writer closed with a note of hope. He said, “*But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul*” (Heb 10:39). Can we join the writer in affirming this resolve?

THOUGHT: Knowing God and all that He is will always make one remain confident.

PRAYER: Father, may I stand to the end and see the salvation of the Lord.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

HEBREWS 11:1-20

GENESIS 4:1-5

“... And the LORD had respect
unto Abel and to his offering.”

THE COMMENDATION OF FAITH

In today's reading, faith is given a clear definition in a few words and also illustrated by many examples. These examples are the heroes of faith. Faith is the starting point of a person's salvation and moves forward as it is built up in the hearts of believers.

In the initial declaration of faith, the text opened with this apt definition: “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb 11:1). Then the writer began to follow the path of faith in the lives of the Old Testament saints. He said that by faith the elders obtained a good report. This could refer generally to the revelation of God as written in the scriptures. He then referred to the story of creation, that by faith it is understood that the worlds were framed by the word of God. There was no witness to God's creative act. God revealed the creation account to Moses and he recorded it.

Creation has been a subject of debate because carnal understanding is incompatible with faith. The Lord through history has proven that we can have faith in His promises for He brings all His promises to pass. The belief in the existence of God is also derived from faith, and His works are evident both in the things that He has made and also in the conscience. The text gives several examples of people who acted by faith and God subsequently vindicated their trust. It began with Abel. Man learned to worship God from that early time. Abel thus offered a lamb for sacrifice but his brother offered the fruits of the field. It is not revealed as to who had instructed him to offer a better sacrifice. God honoured him and his faith still speaks today.

The other example in the ancient world is Enoch. The text says that he was translated and did not see death. His works pleased God and he was accorded that privilege of going to heaven directly without the pain of death. This was a wonderful reward of faith.

THOUGHT: The journey of faith is the journey of salvation.

PRAYER: Father, may I have the faith of Abel and Enoch.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

HEBREWS 11:1-20

PSALM 55:22

*“Cast thy burden upon the LORD,
and he shall sustain thee ...”*

HISTORIC EVENTS SEEN BY FAITH

The writer stressed the work of faith when he said, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Heb 11:6). Faith is the language that touches the heart of God.

God warned Noah of a coming catastrophe which he had never seen. He commanded him to make an ark for the saving of his house. Noah by faith obeyed God. The Lord brought upon the earth a calamity of condemnation because of sin. However, Noah became an heir of righteousness by faith. The dimensions given of that ark are comparable to modern sea vessels that carry large cargo. Noah was to bring two of all the land animals, a male and a female, and seven of the clean animals. The ark therefore must be large enough to accommodate them all. When the Lord brought the flood upon the earth, Noah and his family were saved as the rest of humanity perished. The human race restarted from the eight persons from Noah’s household and became the multitudes that they are today. Noah believed God in all these things.

The next communication that came from heaven was to Abraham. God told him to move from the land of his fathers to a strange land that the Lord would show him. He looked to a city whose builder and maker was God. He moved to the land of Canaan which God promised to give to his descendants. He was a stranger in this land and had to request to buy a place to bury his wife when she died. He trusted God’s promise and gained the favour of the inhabitants of Canaan. God promised him and his wife Sarah that they would have a son in their old age. God promised him descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as sand on the seashore through that one son. Thus out of one came innumerable multitudes of people. Although Abraham departed from this earth without seeing all these, he saw all by faith.

THOUGHT: “Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.”

PRAYER: Father, give me victory by faith.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 15

HEBREWS 11:1-20

LUKE 16:23-31

“... *They have Moses and the prophets;
let them hear them.*”

THE PROMISE OF HEAVEN STANDS BY FAITH

The heroes of faith died not having received the promises knowing that they were “*strangers and pilgrims*” on earth. They knew that there was an eternal home that they were destined for. Peter used the same terms (cf. 1 Pet 2:11). Jesus also explicitly stated that He was going to prepare a place for His disciples. In Bible narratives there are also scenes that depict heaven, confirming that it is a definite place.

Abraham and all the patriarchs believed in that celestial home and they looked forward to it. His departure from the earth was a forward move. Both Abraham and Israel desired the better city that God had prepared for them. The Lord made the promises to Abraham that He would give a land; and to Israel He described it as a land flowing with milk and honey. In Bible history, Jerusalem became the capital of this land. Since then, it has become a symbol of heaven, so that in Revelation the holy city that descended from heaven is called the New Jerusalem. It is a better city and God is not ashamed to be called their God.

Faith in Christ was also possessed by these heroes, as the writer brought up the episode of the offering of Isaac. The promise of God was in Isaac and thus Christ descended from him. Abraham believed in the resurrection and he knew that God would be able to raise his son from death. In the end he did not have to offer him as God provided a substitute. Isaac lived, and Christ was born as one of his descendants. Christ testified that Abraham rejoiced to see His day and he saw it. Abraham believed in Christ by faith. He was saved the same way that Christians are saved today.

THOUGHT: Abraham went to heaven for he believed in God.

PRAYER: Father, may I look forward to that celestial city by faith.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

HEBREWS 11:21-40

GENESIS 48:16-22

*“The Angel which redeemed me
from all evil ...”*

THE FAITH OF JACOB AND JOSEPH

This section begins with Jacob, the father of Israel. His name Israel was given to the nation. It touches on key figures in the Old Testament and others whose names are not mentioned. However they had one thing in common: they exercised faith and had good success. They demonstrated what faith could do and God greatly used them in their life time.

It is said of Jacob that by faith he blessed the sons of Joseph. This is a reference to Genesis 48, where Jacob adopted Ephraim and Manasseh as his own. When Joseph brought his sons before Jacob, he placed the elder son towards Jacob's right hand and the younger towards the left. However, Jacob crossed his hands in blessing the two boys: the younger would be greater than the elder. He had foreseen this by faith. This was not the only prophetic blessing that Jacob delivered. In Genesis 49, he blessed each of his twelve sons. Most notable is the gift of kingship to the house of Judah. The Lord came to fulfil the promises of His covenant through Judah. Jesus Christ was born out of this house. Ephraim was greater than Manasseh as Jacob had predicted.

Joseph also mentioned the departure of the children of Israel and he gave commandment concerning his bones. He died at the age of 110; this was eighty years after the arrival of Jacob in Egypt. It was to be more than three hundred years before the predicted Exodus took place. He saw all these by faith and commanded that his bones should be buried in the land of Canaan. The Egyptians were known for the art of embalming bodies that lasted for centuries without decay. Joseph's body was embalmed when he died and put in a coffin. When Israel left, they did as Joseph had commanded and buried his bones in the land of the heritage of Ephraim his younger son. The day that Joseph prophesied of came to pass.

THOUGHT: The faith of our fathers is still alive today.

PRAYER: Father, may the day of the Lord come as a blessing to me.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

HEBREWS 11:21-40

EXODUS 3:1-6

*“... God called unto him out
of the midst of the bush ...”*

THE FAITH OF MOSES IN THE EXODUS

God prepared Moses in a special way to lead Israel out of Egypt. It was by the faith of his parents that he was saved from death at infancy and accorded royal protection against the decree to kill all infants.

In the next stage of his life, he left Egypt by faith and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. When he grew up, he chose to suffer with God's people than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He became a shepherd in Midian not knowing what would befall him later. By faith he trusted God that all things would be well with him and things came to pass beyond his expectation.

The Exodus as a whole was a landmark event in the history of Israel and the world. God called Moses while he was looking after the sheep in Midian. The time came that Israel had to depart from Egypt under his leadership. The main obstacle was Pharaoh who would not allow them to leave despite the deadly plagues that the Lord had brought against the land. The Lord finally had to kill all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. Israel was asked to keep the Passover as God's means to protect them from that calamity. Each household had to slay a lamb and put the blood on the door posts. They did this by faith and were spared. This broke the will of Pharaoh and he allowed them to leave.

The next obstacle they encountered on their departure was the Red Sea. They were frightened as the Egyptian soldiers chased after them to get them back to Egypt. They complained against Moses, but he had great faith in God. He told them to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. In one night the sea was parted and Israel crossed it as on dry land. When the Egyptians tried to follow, they were drowned as the water came crashing on them. The faith of Moses was proven before all Israel. They sang a song of victory and praised the Lord for the wonderful deliverance.

THOUGHT: God seeks us when we are not seeking Him.

PRAYER: Father, may I look forward to the day of my spiritual victory.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

HEBREWS 11:21-40

PSALM 20

*“... we will remember the name
of the LORD our God.”*

FAITH IN SETTLEMENT IN CANAAN

The capture of and settlement in the land of Canaan were also acts of faith. Joshua won the first battle by faith. The fall of the walls of Jericho confirmed God's hand. They did not have to fight, but Joshua did what the Lord told him. Israel easily captured the city, and they obeyed what God had commanded Joshua, i.e. to kill everyone in the city. Only Rahab and her family were spared because she had saved the spies that Joshua had sent. They had vowed to her that they would not kill her and her family when the Lord gave them the city. She is mentioned in the text as one who trusted God.

The time of judges followed the time of Joshua and the text mentions Gideon, Barak and Samson as those who exercised faith. Gideon was called from threshing his father's wheat to become the captain of Israel and despite his initial fear to take up the responsibility, he was victorious. God gave him directions and he won the war through a simple strategy. Barak also, with the encouragement of Deborah the prophetess, brought victory to the army of Israel. Samson was given great physical power and he did many exploits in his time as a judge. During the kingdom period of Israel's history, David, Samuel and other prophets stood out as people who trusted God by faith and He used them greatly.

There are many others whose names are not mentioned. They subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness. They quenched violence of fire and escaped the edge of the sword. Women also received their dead back to life. Others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings. They were stoned and sawn asunder. They suffered so much yet they stood for their faith. They were trailblazers of this path. Ever since, many others have gone the same way.

THOUGHT: It is imperative for the present generation to follow the same path of faith.

PRAYER: Father, may I follow the path of Christ in my faith.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

HEBREWS 12:1-13

PHILIPPIANS 2:4-8

*“Let this mind be in you,
which was also in Christ Jesus.”*

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

Endurance may not be comfortable, but it has a worthy prize. The example of Jesus in His incarnation best represents this fact. Chastisement also inflicts pain and is far from joyous, yet it is a proven corrective measure helping those who commit offences to repent and be restored. It also fortifies future stability after that experience. This is the message that the writer was putting across in connection with redemption and sustaining biblical morality.

The writer declared that we are compassed with a great cloud of witnesses. This was in reference to the long list of saints cited in the previous chapter. Their life of faith was overwhelming, as none can deny. On the basis of this witness, he exhorted that we lay aside every weight of sin which easily besets us. This is to enable us to measure up to the standard of those saints. Thus, he said, we should run with patience the race that is set before us. He indicated that we cannot sustain that endurance alone, we must look to Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith.

The weight of sin can be very heavy and anyone who refuses to lay it aside cannot make any progress in the race. The aspiration to put a mark in the arena of faith is both possible and impossible depending on the line of approach on our part. There is ability to do all things with Christ, but without Him we can do nothing. The example of Jesus is that He endured the cross because of the joy that was set before Him, i.e. the redemption of those He came to save. The sufferings of Christ are not limited to that painful crucifixion. This was only the climax of His humiliation. The incarnation of Christ as a whole was a life of suffering. He has set us a good example.

THOUGHT: The example of Christ is a worthy one for us to follow.

PRAYER: Father, remove every weight of sin from my path.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

HEBREWS 12:1-13

ISAIAH 61:1-3

“... the LORD hath anointed me to preach
good tidings unto the meek ...”

THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST

The Jews plotted to have Jesus tried. They colluded with one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot. They paid him thirty pieces of silver and he helped them to arrest Jesus. The injustice of the case was obvious from the beginning, but the unlawful trial still went ahead.

They brought Him before the high priest who sought false witnesses against Him. The high priest put a question to Jesus seeking confirmation if He was the Son of God. Jesus answered that He was, and they accused Him of blasphemy. They found Him guilty and desired to have Him put to death. However they did not have the authority under the Roman law to do so. Pilate the Roman governor sentenced Him to death although he confessed that he found no fault in Him. Jesus was crucified and He died. A soldier pierced His side with a spear and blood and water flowed out. He was thereafter buried in a tomb. This was the height of His suffering and humiliation. When the writer spoke of the endurance of Jesus, he was referring to this suffering that Jesus went through. Thus, we should not faint nor be weary when we live for Jesus. The battle with sin requires much sacrifice. Believers have not resisted sin unto blood. But it may become necessary to pay that price in defence of the gospel of Christ.

“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb 12:3). Jesus went to great length to pay the penalty of our sins. All who believe in Him do not need to suffer eternal damnation in hell for their sins. God offers this merit of Christ to repentant sinners. Though they do not deserve it, His grace reaches out to them.

THOUGHT: Look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee that Jesus Christ suffered for me.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

HEBREWS 12:1-13

PROVERBS 3:11-12

*“My son, despise not the
chastening of the LORD ...”*

GOD’S CHASTISEMENT IN LOVE

Chastisement is a means by which parents correct their wayward children. The exhortation of the writer here spoke as to children that they would not despise chastening. He said that the Lord chastens everyone whom He loves. God deals with us as sons. The child knows that his parents love him and any chastisement is meant for correction and to make him a better person. This is a fact in family relations. The writer reasoned that if this was the case, we as God’s children ought to *“be in subjection unto the Father of spirits”* (Heb 12:9). This is to say that God’s children ought to be discerning to know when God speaks to them through chastisement. Chastening serves to restore our fellowship with Him. Sin destroys holiness and our fellowship with God, and chastisement is meant to restore that desirable status. The writer added that chastening is not joyous but afterwards it yields the fruit of righteousness. Chastisement awakens us to make our feeble hands and knees active. It makes straight the path of our feet, and the lame to be healed (Heb 12:13).

Discipline and endurance with godly fear is a service that is acceptable to God. The exhortation is that God will honour our service for Him and has reserved for us a heavenly abode. The Apostle John was one of the prominent disciples of Christ. He and his brother had made a request to Jesus that each of them be made to sit at the left and right hand of Christ. Jesus told them that it was not for Him to give them their request. Later they learnt the lesson of life the hard way.

THOUGHT: Chastisement is good for me.

PRAYER: Father, may I learn to endure when Thou chastiseth me.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 22

HEBREWS 12:14-29

2 TIMOTHY 2:3-5

*"Thou therefore endure hardness,
as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."*

THE PATH OF ENDURANCE IS REWARDING

Endurance comes with a reward in the end. The response to the grace of God comes with peace and holiness. The root of bitterness and all rebellion is removed. The Law was frightening, but the grace of God in Jesus Christ opens a door of better hope. Endurance thus is obedience that brings great reward.

One step is to follow peace with all man as the writer exhorted. Every Christian knows that this is not always easy as we live among people controlled by carnal desires. Anger and frustration are the order of the day among the people who live after the flesh. Believers are to strive to bear a good testimony in this regard. The example of Christ as seen earlier is the best in building friendly relationship with others. This does not mean that everyone will love us, but our love is to be unconditional as the commandment teaches. In any community of Christians, it takes great endurance to meet this standard.

The writer again cited the Law and exhorted that we follow holiness for without it no man shall see God. This is freedom from sin. It is perfect purity or integrity of moral character, it is one of the essential attributes of God. A contrary character excludes one from the favour of God and he will not see heaven. The writer added that we must look diligently lest any fail of the grace of God, or *"lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled"* (Heb 12:15). He also exhorted his readers to avoid fornication and profanity, and not to be like Esau who for a single meal sold his birthright. This example explains the high cost of sin: it offers a little seemingly pleasant gain but its wages is always death. Everyone who yields to the temptation to sin knows the consequences, but the spirit of deception blinds them until they feel the pain of their deeds.

THOUGHT: Conversion is the beginning of a rewarding endurance.

PRAYER: Father, may I ever endure and never yield to temptation.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

HEBREWS 12:14-29

PSALM 68:17-19

“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels ...”

THE OLD PATH AND THE NEW ONE

Mount Sinai was the first place that God communed with Moses in giving the Law. It became a symbol of the presence of the Lord in Israel. The writer reviewed the events that accompanied the delivery of the Law and the reaction of Israel then. This Law had its complications and did not bring believers to full perfection. This spells out the insufficiency of that Law and now something more was needed to make it meaningful. The obstacles had to be overcome.

The understanding of this passage is made clear in Galatians 4:24-26: *“Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.”* This clarifies the comparison.

The new path is gracious: Mount Sion, the city of the living God (also called the heavenly Jerusalem) where there are innumerable company of angels (Heb 12:22). Under the new covenant the conditions are different from that of the old one. The writer also stated the position of believers in their relationship with Christ when He said, *“To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect”* (Heb 12:23).

It is evident here that there is a relationship between the church as it is on earth and the church that shall appear in heaven. This assembly made perfect is the invisible church. However, members of the visible church will be part of this invisible church, but not all, for according to Christ, many professing Christians (who are not genuine) will be rejected.

THOUGHT: Heaven is a place for genuine believers only.

PRAYER: Father, lift up a standard to stand against the tide of deception in the visible church today.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

HEBREWS 12:14-29

GENESIS 4:2-4

*“And the LORD had respect unto Abel
and to his offering.”*

OBEDIENCE COMES WITH A REWARD

The new path, with endurance, leads to that desired destiny. Jesus Christ is the Mediator of this new covenant. Abel had offered the prescribed sacrifice to God and was accepted while his brother's sacrifice was rejected. The offering of bloody sacrifices continued from then until the true Lamb of God was offered. Jesus declared that it was finished. As this epistle affirmed, that sacrifice was all sufficient and there is no more need for any other. It was perfect and needed to be offered only once.

The writer exhorted that we *“refuse not him that speaketh”* (Heb 12:25). Those who refuse Him will not escape. Likewise, he said that we shall not escape if we refuse Him. Obedience to God is all important. This may refer to the rejection of Christ by the Jews. Their official position was contrary to the revelation of God in His Son. If they rejected Him when He spoke on earth they would also reject any message from heaven. It is said that His voice shook the earth, and He has promised that He will not shake the earth only but also heaven. God is the Creator of heaven and earth and everything in them. He has power over them. In this instance He would shake them only by His voice.

When Jesus spoke, nobody could withstand His speech. The Apostles who went out to preach in His name had the reputation of having *“turned the world upside down”* (Acts 17:6). It was not their words but the words of Christ that shook the world. This shaking would result in the removal of those things which were shaken. The things which cannot be shaken will remain. The writer added, *“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Heb 12:28). This must be the way forward for the believer. *“For our God is a consuming fire”* (Heb 12:29).

THOUGHT: Endurance clothed with godly fear is acceptable.

PRAYER: Father, lead me to follow Thy steps with endurance.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

HEBREWS 13:1-6

1 CORINTHIANS 13

*“Charity suffereth long, and is kind;
charity envieth not ...”*

A MANIFESTATION OF LOVE

One main theme of this epistle is the superiority of Christ in reconciling men to God. Following that reconciliation, believers must live in obedience to God's commands. God's commandment is a guide in seeking holiness that God requires. In the brief passage the writer touched on things that required a careful watch in order to sustain that holiness. They are guided by love, observing God's standards in morality and being content to depend on God.

Brotherly love is a virtue that is incompatible with pride. Love upheld at all times builds holiness. In Romans 12:10 Paul wrote, *“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.”* This is the heart of the Law of God. It ought to continue because it was always there in the fellowship of the faithful. This love is shown in affection one to another in honour preferring one another. This is against the spirit of the flesh where hatred, jealousy and bitterness reign. It is always easy to resort to this negative direction and thus this exhortation of the writer.

Entertaining strangers is another virtue based on the love that is taught to every Christian. The writer stressed the point noting that some as a result have entertained angels without knowing. This is possibly a reference to Abraham and the angels that had been sent to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He had welcomed them as earthly visitors only to learn later that they were heavenly guests. Such demonstration of love is something cherished by everyone and it has heavenly approval. One can recall the joy of entertaining strangers and the happy relationship that develops after. Hospitality is also part of witnessing for Christ. The love of brethren extends to everyone.

THOUGHT: Love for your neighbour is the second greatest commandment.

PRAYER: Father, may I testify for Thee by showing my love to others.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

HEBREWS 13:1-6

PSALM 51:1-10

*“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.”*

OBSERVING GOD’S STANDARDS IN MORALITY

The marriage institution is one where morals have greatly been corrupted. Satan has chosen to attack this basic unit of society so that he may rule and win many to his side. The writer said that marriage is honourable in all. It was ordained of God from the beginning and has continued since then. It is meant for mutual comfort, procreation and prevention of sin. Adultery is forbidden and condemned. This has ever been a gnawing transgression that has destroyed many homes. The Scripture said that *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled ...”* (Heb 13:4). But today many (including some who claim to be pastors) lead the shameful, sinful life of *“whoremongers and adulterers.”* God’s standard is enshrined in the commandment: *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (Exod 20:14).

Contentment comes with dependence on God. Our manner of life must be without covetousness. God’s commandment also asserts this need. It is necessary to be content with such things as we have and to seek God’s kingdom first, and all things will be added to us. Paul asserted that godliness with contentment is great gain (Matt 6:33, 1 Tim 6:6). Contentment also comes when one trusts in God to take care of all his needs. Living a holy life is righteousness. David testified that he had been young and then he was old and he had not seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging for bread (Ps 37:25). As the epistle comes to an end, the expected outcome of all the instructions that have been given is that the readers will pursue after holiness. God in all His character is holy and expects that holiness in His children. These exhortations have great value to those who are resolved to follow the Lord. The fear of man is one reason many believers are not willing to be identified with their faith in decisive moments. Take time to be holy.

THOUGHT: Scriptural exhortations on morality are of great value to one’s life when one obeys and follows.

PRAYER: Father, grant me the grace to overcome the carnal spirit in me and the deceitfulness of sin, and to act upon Scriptural guidelines.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

HEBREWS 13:7-17

TITUS 2:11-15

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”

HONOURING AUTHORITY IS HONOURING GOD

The writer in winding up this epistle outlined the qualities of a service that pleased God. He spoke of His representatives who preached His words and led the church. He stressed the need of holding to true doctrines. He also looked into the sacrificial work of Christ. This leads to offering true worship to God.

The writer understood the importance of service that pleased God. He called on the Hebrew Christians to remember them that had the rule over the church and who had preached to them the Word of God. The one who had the rule was both a leader and a teacher of the words of God, and so are pastors today. Their authority deserves honour, just as God’s authority deserves honour. These leaders are also to be examples to believers. Thus the writer exhorted his readers to follow their leaders’ faith, *“considering the end of their conversation”* (Heb 13:7). Believers are to listen, obey and follow.

There are many who have the designation “pastor” in front of their names or some other title that is supposed to bestow on them the dignity worthy of the office of a man of God. However, their works and way of life speak the contrary. They are destitute of true doctrines because of their unbelief. This opens the floodgates for more departures from the faith. They are not pastors but false prophets. They do not deserve any honour worthy of a true servant of God.

On the other hand, servants who have proven their worth ought to be accorded that respect. In addition, the church must look after their welfare and show an appreciation of what they are doing, as the writer thus exhorted. This is a service that pleases God. Jesus is always the same, yesterday, today and for ever. This means that His truth always stands.

THOUGHT: Christians must not be passive believers. They must be active in learning and teaching God’s Word.

PRAYER: Father, help me to submit to Thy lawful authority.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

HEBREWS 13:7-17

2 PETER 3:8-13

*“... what manner of persons ought ye to be
in all holy conversation and godliness.”*

THE TRUE APPLICATION OF DOCTRINES

The writer knew of the presence of false doctrines and thus he gave a warning in Hebrews 13:9. Such false doctrines have to be countered by direct opposition and also by teaching the true doctrines clearly.

In the Old Testament order of worship, there was an altar and the priests who served. They had to kill the animals whose blood the high priests brought to the sanctuary but the bodies were burned outside the camp. The writer mentioned all these because he was addressing Hebrews who were familiar with that order. Since Christ has come (as explained earlier in this epistle), these ceremonial observations were no longer valid. This knowledge helps believers to appreciate the value of the work of Christ's atonement when He shed His blood on the cross.

Jesus is all sufficient and is able to sanctify the people with His own blood. This is a truth He asserted severally in the gospels and preached by the Apostles. His suffering and crucifixion fulfils the prophecies of the Old Testament and brought to pass the purpose in which it was designed. He was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem to bear our reproach. The atoning work of Christ is the main message of the gospel which the Jews were not willing to accept, at least in their official capacity. The writer stressed the differences that had been wrought with Christ's first advent. He added that we do not have a continuing city, but we seek that which is to come, i.e. where Christ is. This is heaven. The writer said this to dispel the opinion of a sacred city on the present earth. In the old order, Jerusalem had that status since God had chosen it. It was held in high regard and carried much interest in the hearts of Christians as well. However, the present earth as a whole will be destroyed by fire. Peter said that the elements will melt with fervent heat and all is going to be burned up (2 Pet 3:10). Look then to Jesus!

THOUGHT: Jesus is my all sufficiency and the Creator.

PRAYER: Father, may I always render a service that pleases Thee.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 29
HEBREWS 13:18-25
1 TIMOTHY 2:1-8

*"I exhort therefore, that, first of all,
supplications, prayers, intercessions,
and giving of thanks, be made for all men."*

A SHOW OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Love is a virtue that strengthens the fellowship of believers. The epilogue to the epistle shows the mutual relationship and brotherly love that the writer had with his readers. He called on them to intercede for him and his companions, hoping to see them soon after. The salutation also revealed the affection they had for one another.

The final request, *"Pray for us"* (Heb 13:18), was a call for intercessory prayers. The Apostles depended on the prayers of the saints as a concerted effort to bring to pass the will of God in their ministry. They were sure and had a good conscience in all things and were willing to live honestly. The Lord gave them the ability to do His work. He also directed His servants to the fields that He had chosen and moved the hearts of sinners to believe. This was evident at the beginning of the Apostolic ministry in the book of Acts where they related instances of clear heavenly guidance in sharing the good news. Prayers of the faithful made this possible. The Apostles served with confidence knowing that it was the will of the Lord to be thus engaged.

On the other hand, there were preachers who abused their religious privileges, resulting in their hearers' rejection of the gospel. These preachers were equated to followers of false religions or professing Christians who did not have Christ.

The writer here defended his ministry saying that he had a good conscience and was willing to live honestly in all things. Prayer would prove his words to be true. He requested for prayer that he might be with them soon. The hope of his soon restoration to his readers seemed to imply that he had been compelled possibly by imprisonment to be away from them. The ministry of the gospel did not give him physical comfort but he was satisfied with his work.

THOUGHT: If God is on one's side, the prayer of the church would help one bear any negative consequences.

PRAYER: Father, may I always support Thy servants' work for Thee through prayer.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

HEBREWS 13:18-25

2 PETER 3:8-13

*“... To him be glory both
now and for ever. Amen.”*

THE BENEDICTION

The meaning of benediction is given thus in the Webster Dictionary: “The act of blessing; a giving praise to God or rendering thanks for his favours; a blessing pronounced; hence grace before and after meals.” The pronouncement in the text gives also some truth concerning God the Father and Jesus Christ.

God is the God of peace. Nobody will comprehend the real meaning of peace until he goes through a time of war or when he faces some adversity that does not give peace of mind. Only God can give perfect peace, thus that designation. Also in relation to salvation, He is the one who brought from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ. He has the ability to restore to life that which is dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ put Him in a state of exaltation contrary to the humiliation that He faced in suffering and death. It is this act of God that gives hope to those who believe in Christ for their salvation and eternal life. He is called the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Jesus calls Himself the good shepherd and David said that the LORD is his shepherd (Ps 23:1). This title given to Jesus tells of His position in looking after His people. Christ occupies such a position and is concerned about the complete welfare of His flock.

It was through the blood of the everlasting covenant that the full benefit of the work of Christ was accomplished. In the old order the penitents came to the priests to offer sacrifices for their sins. These had to be repeated at all times during the prescribed regular seasons or when a need arose as indicated in the law. The demand of these ceremonies served to demonstrate the high worth of the sacrifice of Christ. It had been noted earlier that His one offering was all sufficient. When He shed His blood once on the cross, He sealed an everlasting covenant.

THOUGHT: When God works, He does perfect work.

PRAYER: May the blessings and glory be to Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen!

Notes

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