HEBREWS

Hebrews
Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREWS

The Letter to the Hebrews is about Jesus Christ. But it is not about his earthly ministry. It is about his ministry in heaven on our behalf as our great High Priest. Because of Jesus' priestly ministry, we may draw near to God. Chapter 4:16 says, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence..." 10:22 says, "Let us draw near to God...in full assurance of faith." As we study Hebrews may we draw near to God through Jesus Christ. May our hope become surer, and our faith more joyful and confident. And may we learn to pray.

Hebrews may have been written by Paul. Some scholars, however, think it was written by Barnabas or even by Apollos. It was surely inspired by the Holy Spirit. The author wrote to Christians with a Jewish background. In the early days of their faith they had suffered joyfully for Jesus. But they had become spiritually lazy and had lost the joy of their early faith. So there are seven warnings and 13 admonitions beginning, "Let us..."

Hebrews is divided into two main parts: 1:1-10:18 is doctrinal. It is about our High Priest, Christ, and his heavenly ministry. 10:19-13:25 is practical. Faith, hope and love must be a practical part of Christian life.

GOD HAS SPOKEN BY HIS SON

Hebrews 1:1-4 (Sat.) May 15

Key Verse: 1:2

1. God spoke to our forefathers (1)

People reveal their thoughts and feelings through the words they speak. The Almighty God wants to communicate with those whom he created in his own image. He spoke when he created the world. He spoke to Abraham; he talked with Jacob; he spoke through dreams to Joseph. He spoke through the prophets. He wants us to know and worship him; so he speaks to us through the Bible, his written word. Here he tells us what to believe and how to live.

2. God has spoken to us by his Son (2-4)

The Old Testament was mediated to the men of old by angels (Gal 3:19). But Jesus Christ is God's final word to us. He is far above the angels. He is the radiance of God's glory; he is God who created all things and who sustains all things by his powerful word. He came in the flesh and died to set us free from the power and guilt of sin. Then he took his seat at the right hand of God, the Majesty in heaven. He is the One worthy of our worship. We must listen to him and obey him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for speaking to me. Teach me to listen to your word.

One Word: God has spoken by his Son

THE SON IS SUPERIOR TO ANGELS

Hebrews 1:5-14 (Sun.) May 16

Key Verse: 1:8

1. Jesus, worshiped by angels (5-9)

Jesus is not an angel; he is God the Son. When God brought his firstborn into the world, angels worshiped him (6; Lk 2:14). Angels are heavenly beings. They are God's servants; they are his messengers. Jesus is God who became man; as a man, he is a descendant of King David. His throne will last for ever and ever. He rules with righteousness.

2. Jesus, the Eternal Creator (10-14)

Jesus is the Word of God who was there in the beginning. He laid the foundations of the earth and he molded the heavens with his hands. Through him all things were made (Jn 1:1-3). Heaven and earth will wear out like an old coat, but the Eternal Creator will be the same forever. God did not tell the angels that they would reign, but he promised his Son that he would make his enemies his footstool. Jesus died and rose to defeat sin and death; he is seated at the right hand of God to reign forever.

Prayer: Praise the Father God who sent his Son to be our Savior. Praise Jesus who won the victory over life and death.

One Word: Jesus reigns forever

DON'T DRIFT

Hebrews 2:1-4 (Mon.) May 17

Key Verse: 2:3a

1. Pay careful attention (1)

There are people who have heard the gospel and know that it is true, but who do not allow it to change their lives. One who says he believes in Jesus, but does not acknowledge him as Lord does not have saving faith, for we express our faith by our obedience. We must hold God’s word in our hearts and walk with him in obedience every day, otherwise we will drift away into the world.

2. How shall we escape? (2-4)

The laws and covenants of the Old Testament were given by God through his angels. They were binding on God's people before Christ came and fulfilled them. Now God has provided a great salvation through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus. It was announced by Jesus himself, confirmed by the apostles, attested to by the Holy Spirit and by signs and wonders. It is God's unique way of opening the door of heaven for us. How can we escape if we neglect the only way of salvation?

Prayer: Lord, I want to walk with you in faith and obedience today and tomorrow and every day so that I may not neglect your great salvation.

One Word: Don't neglect God's salvation

JESUS TASTED DEATH FOR ME

Hebrews 2:5-13 (Tue.) May 18

Key Verse: 2:9

1. Jesus, the author of our salvation (5-9)

Psalm 8 praises God who created man in his own image to rule over all the created world. Mankind, however, does not rule; he rebelled against God and became a slave of sin. So God sent his Son to fulfill the prophecy of this psalm. He sent him into the world as a man, making him a little lower than the angels. Jesus suffered death so that, by God's grace, he might taste death for everyone. Then God raised him from death and crowned him with glory and honor. Thus he defeated sin and death and put everything under his feet.

2. Jesus brings many sons to glory (10-13)

God sent his Son to be our Savior. Jesus, the sinless Son of God, was obedient to death on the cross. He was made perfect through suffering and became the author of our salvation (Heb 5:8,9). Jesus did not come as a superior being; he came as a human being like us. He called himself our brother. By his death and resurrection, he makes us holy and brings us to God and to glory.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for coming as my brother to suffer and die for my sins.

One Word: Jesus is my Savior and King

JESUS SHARED OUR HUMANITY

Hebrews 2:14-18 (Wed.) May 19

Key Verses: 2:14,15

1. Jesus sets us free from slavery to fear (14-15)

God did not send Jesus as an angel, but as a vulnerable man to share our humanity and to destroy the devil. The devil holds the power of death and he enslaves us by fear. Jesus crushed the head of the devil by his death and resurrection. He sets free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Lk 1:74,75).

2. A merciful high priest (16-18)

Jesus did not come as an angel to help angels; he came as a man to help Abraham's descendants. Abraham's true descendants are all those who have faith like his. Jesus shares our humanity in every way, so he suffered when he was tempted. He struggled to serve and obey God. He was obedient to death and so made atonement for our sins. He thus became our merciful and faithful high priest. He understands our weaknesses and he is able to help us when we are tempted.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for destroying the devil who has the power of death, and setting me free to serve you. Thank you for being my merciful high priest.

One Word: Jesus destroys the devil

FIX YOUR THOUGHTS ON JESUS

Hebrews 3:1-6 (Thur.) May 20

Key Verse: 3:1

1. Jesus was faithful (1-4)

Jesus was a faithful apostle. God sent him on a mission to die for the sins of the world. Jesus obeyed; he humbled himself and laid down his life on the cross. He offered the perfect sacrifice--his own blood--for our sins. He is our high priest who intercedes for us before the throne of God.

2. Jesus is greater than Moses (5-6)

Moses was faithful as a servant in God's house; but God himself is the builder of that house. Christ is faithful as the son set over God's house. Moses was faithful to teach the Bible to God's household. He was looking forward to Jesus. We who confess Jesus share in the heavenly calling to be God's house. We can hold on to our courage and hope and claim our inheritance by fixing our thoughts on Jesus instead of letting our minds wander in human hopes and worldly dreams.

Prayer: Lord, in a world full of tempting sights and sounds, help me to fix my thoughts on Jesus.

One Word: Fix your thoughts on Jesus

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER DAILY

Hebrews 3:7-19 (Fri.) May 21

Key Verse: 3:13

1. Today, if you hear his voice (7-11)

The Israelites of Moses' day heard God's voice, but they hardened their hearts and rebelled. The psalmist warns the people of his day not to make the same mistake. "Today" is every time we hear God's voice. We must repent as we read the Bible. If we harden our hearts in rebellion and disobedience, or if we allow our hearts to go astray, we cannot enter God's rest. We will live as restless wanderers.

2. Because of unbelief (12-19)

We must hold firmly to the end the confidence we had in Jesus at first. It is easy to be hardened by sin's deceitfulness; so we must encourage one another every day. The people of Israel made a good start when they crossed the Red Sea and left Egypt; but they failed to reach Canaan because of unbelief and disobedience. Today, we must hear God's word, believe, and obey him.

Prayer: Lord, guard my heart from unbelief; help me to be faithful to you to the end and help me to encourage others every day.

One Word: Encourage one another daily

THE PROMISE OF ENTERING GOD'S REST

Hebrews 4:1-13 (Sat.) May 22

Key Verse: 4:12

1. The promise still stands (1-11)

God's rest is first mentioned in Genesis 2:2. God invites those who believe and obey him to share it. The Israelites whom he delivered from Egypt are an example of those who failed to claim God's promised rest because of unbelief revealed in disobedience (Dt 12:10; Nu 13:31). Under Joshua, the next generation entered the Promised Land. But the Sabbath rest which God promised his people still remains. David wrote about it in Ps 95: "Today" is now, the day of opportunity, the day when we hear God's word of promise. (See Ps 95:7b,8,11;Mt 11:28-30.)

2. God's word is living and active (12-13)

God's word is sharper than a two-edged sword. We cannot hide our real motives or the thoughts of our hearts from God. His word penetrates the soul and judges the thoughts of the heart. His word of promise is sure. When we believe and obey his word, he dwells in us to rule and bless. And we have sure hope of entering God’s eternal Sabbath rest.

Prayer: Lord, help me hold your living word in my heart, obey you, and claim your promised rest.

One Word: God’s word is a two-edged sword

JESUS, THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Hebrews 4:14-16 (Sun.) May 23

Key Verse: 4:16

1. We have a great high priest (14)

Jesus the Son of God is our great high priest. He has gone to heaven into the very throne room of God to pray for us. Difficulties and problems are our opportunities to depend on him more.

2. He sympathizes with our weaknesses (15)

Our high priest knows how weak we are. He knows how we suffer because of our struggle with sin, because he too was tempted in every way, just as we are. He defeated sin. So he is able to help us.

3. Approach the throne of grace boldly (16)

We can approach God's throne in prayer with confidence because of our high priest Jesus. His mercy and forgiveness are available to us in times of need. We come to God as sinners, pleading only his mercy. We have confidence in Jesus, not in ourselves, for Jesus shed his blood on the cross to cleanse us from sin and bring us to God.

Prayer: Lord, I want to draw near you. Reveal my hidden sins and help me to repent. Have mercy on me and cleanse me from sin.

One Word: Draw near to God through Jesus

JESUS, THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL SALVATION

Hebrews 5:1-10 (Mon.) May 24

Key Verse: 5:8

1. A priest appointed by God (1-6)

God appointed Aaron high priest. Aaron's descendants were the only ones qualified to be priests in Israel. The high priest is a mediator between sinful man and the holy God. He too was a sinful man; so he had to offer sacrifices for himself as well as for the people. God appointed a new high priest, his Son Jesus. He is not from Aaron's line, but is a spiritual descendant of Melchizedek (Ge 14:18). This fulfills the prophecies in Psalm 2 and Psalm 110.

2. Jesus learned obedience (7-10)

During his earthly life Jesus was not a priest--but he was a man of prayer. Even though he was the Son of God, he did not live according to his own ideas or feelings. He learned obedience through suffering and he completed the work of salvation by his death on the cross. He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey (believe in) him.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the obedience that comes from faith. Help me to come to you in prayer through Jesus, my Savior and Priest.

One Word: Jesus learned obedience

BE DILIGENT AND KEEP GROWING

Hebrews 5:11-6:12 (Tue.) May 25

Key Verse: 6:11

1. Eat solid food (5:11-14)

God's children must grow up to be God's servants. Sheep must grow to be shepherds. Faith is like a living seed; unless it grows, it dies. Righteousness is a right relationship with God; it is not an academic matter, but is a life of obedience to God. We learn about righteousness when we train ourselves to distinguish good and evil by practicing constant obedience to God's word.

2. Don't become lazy (6:1-12)

If we study God's word and know what we should do to please God, but deliberately decide not to obey God's word, rejecting the leading of the Holy Spirit, then we are in danger of losing the spiritual light and understanding and joy we have tasted. All of us have spiritual ups and downs; all of us fail sometimes. But if we get tired of repenting and give in to fatalistic thinking, how can God help us?

Prayer: Lord, I am weak; help me grow. Help me not to be lazy, but to be diligent to make my hope sure.

One Word: Don't be spiritually lazy; grow!

AN ANCHOR FOR THE SOUL

Hebrews 6:13-20 (Wed.) May 26

Key Verse: 6:19

1. The certainty of God's promise (13-17)

God promised to bless Abraham and make him a blessing (Ge 12:1-3). When God trained and tested Abraham, Abraham believed and obeyed. God confirmed his promise with an oath. He

swore by himself, making his promise an unchanging covenant (Ge 22:16-18). When Abraham believed and obeyed and waited patiently, God kept his promises. God does not lie.

2. Our sure hope (18-20)

When we believe God's promises, hope is born in our hearts. This hope is in God, who has a redemptive plan for the world and who will not change his mind. It is a sure hope. Those who hold firmly to this hope do not despair; they cannot fall into fatalistic thinking. This hope is anchored firmly in the very throne room of God. Jesus is there interceding in our behalf, and we will be with him forever in the heavenly kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, I believe your promises. Thank you for giving me a sure hope in your kingdom.

One Word: We have an anchor for the soul

MELCHIZEDEK

Hebrews 7:1-10 (Thur.) May 27

Key Verse: 7:3

1. King and Priest (1-3)

In Genesis 14, God sent Abram a shepherd in time of temptation. Melchizedek blessed Abram. He was king of Salem (peace) and priest of God Most High. His name means "king of righteousness." Abram accepted God's word from him. Abram pledged his fealty to God Most High and gave Melchizedek a tenth of the plunder to symbolize his commitment to God alone. After this, he did not compromise with the world--he would accept nothing from the king of Sodom.

2. Priest of God Most High (4-10)

Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham, was greater than he, and thereby, greater than Levi, Abraham's descendant. Under the Law, priests must be descendants of Levi. Melchizedek was an exception to the law, and Jesus is too. He is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. He is the Son of God, without beginning of days or end of life.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for sending Jesus to be my high priest. I renew my commitment to you today.

One Word: A new commitment to God Most High

A PRIEST FOREVER

Hebrews 7:11-28 (Fri.) May 28

Key Verse: 7:25

1. By the power of an indestructible life (11-25)

God established the priesthood through the descendants of Aaron. Thus, God made a way through the blood of animals for sinners to come to God. But this sacrificial system was inadequate. It looked forward to a better priest and a perfect sacrifice. Psalm 110 speaks of a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. Jesus is that priest--not because of his human ancestry, but by the power of his indestructible life. Through him we may draw near to God.

2. A once-for-all sacrifice (26-28)

God established a better covenant through Jesus. He is holy, blameless, set apart from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He does not need to offer sacrifices every day. He sacrificed himself for the sins of the world once for all. God's oath appointed Jesus the Son as the perfect high priest forever. He is able to save completely those who come to God through him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus, a Savior who is able to save even me completely.

One Word: Jesus saves completely, forever

A SANCTUARY IN HEAVEN

Hebrews 8:1-6 (Sat.) May 29

Key Verse: 8:1,2

1. A high priest in heaven (1-2)

We do not need to depend on ritual and ceremonies, nor on animal sacrifices for forgiveness. We may go directly and personally to God in prayer, because our high priest is Jesus. He serves before the very throne of God in heaven. Everyone who believes in him, who has accepted his sacrifice on the cross, may draw near to God in prayer, and someday enter his heavenly kingdom.

2. A superior ministry and covenant (3-6)

Jesus was not a priest when he was on earth. He was not a "religious" leader. He was a layman and a shepherd. He is the mediator of a better covenant based on better promises, and his ministry is now in heaven, where he prays for us who have claimed his promises and entered into his new covenant. The tabernacle described in Exodus and the temple which took its place in Jerusalem find their real meaning in Jesus and in his heavenly ministry.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for opening the way for me to come to you for forgiveness and new life.

One Word: Jesus is my high priest.

THE NEW COVENANT

Hebrews 8:7-13 (Sun.) May 30

Key Verse: 8:11

1. The inadequacy of the old covenant (7-9)

The old covenant was mediated by Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 24). The laws given there were a part of God's training program to make a nation of slaves into a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5,6). The Israelites agreed to obey God's laws, and God promised to bless them and give them victory and abundance in the Promised Land. But the people disobeyed the laws and compromised with the culture and religion of Canaan. The covenant of law could not help them; it only condemned them.

2. The new covenant (10-13)

Jeremiah spoke about the new covenant; Jesus established it with his own blood, shed for the sins of the world. The Holy Spirit, given to all who repent and believe, writes God's law on our hearts. The new covenant enables each person to have a personal relationship with God (11). God promises to forgive our sins (12). We may know the Lord, and this is eternal life (Jn 17:3).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for keeping your promise and establishing the new covenant in Jesus' blood.

One Word: Bound in love by the new covenant

THE EARTHLY TABERNACLE

Hebrews 9:1-10 (Mon.) May 31

Key Verse: 9:7

1. The tabernacle (1-5)

The tabernacle described here is the one which Moses constructed in the wilderness. He carefully followed the pattern given him by God, so that God might come and dwell in the midst of his people. The altar of incense was the place of prayer. Hebrews places this altar within the Most Holy Place, next to the ark of the covenant. This ark, with the atonement cover, was the throne of God. This points to Jesus.

2. The priest and the blood (6-10)

Sinful people cannot come into the presence of the Holy God and live. The high priest alone could enter this Most Holy Place once a year. He could not enter without a blood sacrifice, offered for his own sins and for those of the people. But his work could not clear the guilty

conscience of the worshiper. It points to Christ, the perfect sacrifice, who shed his blood for the life of the world.

Prayer: Lord, you are holy and you hate sin. Cleanse me of sin by the blood of the Lamb and dwell in me.

One Word: Real cleansing and forgiveness

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Hebrews 9:11-14 (Tue.) June 1

Key Verse: 9:14

1. Christ, the high priest (11,12)

The tabernacle Moses built teaches God's holiness and man's sinfulness. Only God can open a way for sinful men to come to him. The sacrificial system points to Jesus. He is our great high priest who entered the Most Holy Place in heaven, the very throne room of God, to make atonement for our sins. Earthly priests entered the Most Holy Place in the earthly tabernacle once a year with the blood of an animal sacrifice, but Jesus entered into the presence of God once for all. By his own blood, he obtained our eternal redemption.

2. The cleansing blood (13,14)

The blood of bulls and goats could not clear the conscience of worshipers from guilt; but the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross for our sins as he offered himself unblemished to God, cleanses our consciences from acts which lead to death, so that we may serve the living God without fear, in holiness and righteousness.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse me today with the blood of Christ and help me to serve you.

One Word: The blood of Christ cleanses

BLOOD MUST BE SHED FOR FORGIVENESS

Hebrews 9:15-22 (Wed.) June 2

Key Verse: 9:22b

1. The Mediator of a new covenant (15)

The old covenant was a binding agreement between God and the people of Israel. It was ratified on Mount Sinai when the people listened to the law and said, "We will obey." Then, Moses sprinkled them with blood (Ex 19,24). But they broke the law and became helplessly in bondage to sin. So God promised to make a new covenant, a covenant of grace (Jer 31:31). God sent Jesus

to be the mediator of the new covenant. He died as a ransom sacrifice for sin, so that all who believe in him might be forgiven and become God's holy people.

2. Without the shedding of blood (16-22)

A covenant with God is a life and death matter. It is like a will, which is ratified by a death. A covenant with God must be ratified by blood because we are sinners, and the wages of sin is death. Moses sprinkled the people with blood when they promised to obey the law; for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Prayer: Lord, I am bound to you by the covenant sealed in Christ's blood.

One Word: Forgiveness through the blood

CHRIST ENTERED HEAVEN ON OUR BEHALF

Hebrews 9:23-28 (Thur.) June 3

Key Verse: 9:26b

1. Copies and the real thing (23-25)

In the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, the priest entered a man-made sanctuary to purify copies of the heavenly things with the blood of animals. Everything, including the priest himself, needed cleansing again and again--every year. This earthly tabernacle points to Christ, who shed his blood on the cross for the sins of the world and entered into the presence of God to intercede on our behalf.

2. Christ died once for all (26-28)

Just as every person is destined to die once, and after that face judgment, so Christ died once for all. He appeared as the climax of God's redemptive history to give his life as a ransom sacrifice for the sins of all who put their trust in him. If we face judgment without Christ, we will go to hell--forever. If we face judgment with Jesus, we will go to be with him in heaven. He will come again to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I trust you. I commit my heart and soul and life to you, my only mediator.

One Word: Eternal destiny: heaven or hell?

I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL

Hebrews 10:1-10 (Fri.) June 4

Key Verse: 10:7,9a

1. Ritual cannot cleanse sinners (1-3)

The inadequacy of religious ceremonies to solve our sin problem is seen in the sacrificial system itself. Endlessly repeated religious ceremonies could not make worshipers perfect. In fact, the sacrifice of animals reminded people of their sins and made them feel more guilty. It is impossible for animal sacrifices or religious ritual to take away sin. For this reason, Jesus did not engage in religious rituals.

2. Jesus came to do God's will (4-10)

When Christ came into the world he said, "Here I am. I have come to do your will, O God." He based his knowledge of God's will on the promise of Scripture. Jesus understood that God did not want burnt offerings; he wanted obedience. So Jesus was obedient to death, even death on the cross. By his death he set aside the old system; by his death he fulfilled God's world salvation purpose; by his death we are made holy.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my selfishness. Help me to follow Jesus and do your will.

One Word: "I have come to do your will, O God"

FOR THOSE WHO ARE BEING MADE HOLY

Hebrews 10:11-18 (Sat.) June 5

Key Verse: 10:14

1. By one sacrifice he finished (11-14)

The Levitical priest did his religious duties every day. Every day he offered a sacrifice which couldn't take away sin. But our high priest Jesus offered himself--one sacrifice for all times. Then he sat down at the right hand of God to wait for his enemies to be put under his feet. By his blood, shed on the cross, he finished the work that makes us perfect. We who are covered by his blood must grow in holiness until we meet him in heaven.

2. His law on our hearts and in our minds (15-18)

Jeremiah prophesied about the new covenant (Jer 31:33). He promised that God's law would be written on the hearts and in the minds of God's people. The Holy Spirit, given after Jesus' death and resurrection, came to do this. He helps us overcome our sinful natures and live lives that please God. He gives us assurance that our sins--past, present and future--are forgiven by Jesus once and for all sacrifice.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for assuring me that I am forgiven. I am weak, but you are strong. Help me to live by your Spirit.

One Word: Victory through Jesus

HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL

Hebrews 10:19-25 (Thur.) July 1

Key Verse: 10:23

1. Hold unswervingly to hope (19-23)

Jesus opened for us a new and living way to God. His blood cleanses us from all sin. Because of this, we have confidence, by faith, to draw near to the Holy God. We believe God's promises because he is faithful. He promises forgiveness, eternal life and his kingdom. His promises give us a sure hope. Let us hold unswervingly to this hope we profess.

2. Let us encourage one another (24-25)

Christians can't live irresponsible lives. Because Jesus loved us, we must love one another. We are responsible for our influence on others. We must not give bad influence--but this is not enough. We must spur one another on toward love and good deeds. A spur is not pleasant to a horse, but it is necessary to make him move. We must meet together for prayer and worship and Bible study. Christians who think that their absence or presence doesn't make any difference are wrong. Everybody counts.

Prayer: Lord, I don't like to interfere with others. Forgive my selfishness and help me to encourage others.

One Word: Be faithful, for God is faithful

PERSEVERE

Hebrews 10:26-39 (Fri.) July 2

Key Verse:10:35,36

1. The hands of the living God (26-31)

Anyone who deliberately keeps on sinning after he knows the truth is rebelling against God. He is guilty of trampling Jesus underfoot, of despising the blood of the covenant and of insulting the Holy Spirit. Such a person will be judged by God who said, "I will repay." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

2. Don’t shrink back (32-39)

Life is a pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God. We must press on. We must not throw away our confidence, for God will keep his promises. We must not shrink back, for God is not pleased with those who shrink back, who stop fighting and stop growing. Our confidence in God must lead us to persevere to do God's will.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for wanting to sit back and rest. Wash me and restore my spirit so that I can fight a good fight of faith to the end.

One Word: Persevere and receive what he promised

FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD

Hebrews 11:1-7 (Sat.) July 3

Key Verse: 11:6

1. What is faith? (1)

Faith is being sure of what we hope for. To have faith means to have hope. Our hope is not in the world, but in the kingdom of God (1Pe 1:3,4). By faith we walk toward this goal (Php 3:4). We must walk with Jesus, whom we cannot see (Mt 28:20), for faith is "being certain of what we cannot see." No one saw God create the heavens and the earth out of nothing. But this fundamental fact is the foundation of all truth; it can only be grasped by faith.

2. The ancients who were commended for faith (2-7)

Abel unintentionally died a martyr's death because of his faith. He came to God humbly, bringing his best, believing that God would accept him even though he was unworthy. God saw his faith and commended him as a righteous man. Enoch lived in godless times, but by faith, he walked with God. He had faith that pleased God. Noah believed God's word and obeyed him and was saved.

Prayer: Lord, help me to learn faith that pleases you from the men of old. Help me to live by faith, not by feeling or common sense.

One Word: Faith that pleases God

A CITY WITH FOUNDATIONS

Hebrews 11:8-16 (Sun.) July 4

Key Verse: 11:8

1. Abraham's life of faith (8-10)

Abraham's life shows us what it means to live by faith. First, by faith he obeyed God and went to Canaan. Second, he lived in the promised land like an alien. Even though he did not own a foot of ground, he believed God's promise, so he lived in tents and moved around from place to place. He and his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob looked like restless wanderers, but they were not. They had a clear destination: the city with unshakable foundations--the kingdom of God.

2. Children of promise (11-10)

Abraham and Sarah were old; Sarah was past the age of childbearing, but they believed that God who promised was faithful. So by faith, they bore Isaac and from him came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. All who believe God's promises, and believe his almighty power, and obey him are children of Abraham.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live by faith, with a clear destination--your kingdom.

One Word: Live like a holy pilgrim

THE RESURRECTION FAITH OF THE PATRIARCHS

Hebrews 11:17-22 (Mon.) July 5

Key Verse: 11:17

1. Abraham offered Isaac (17-19)

Abraham believed God's word of promise, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." So when God tested him, telling him to offer Isaac as a burnt sacrifice, he prepared at once to do so. He was ready to obey because he believed that God would keep his word. He believed that Almighty God had power to raise the dead.

2. Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (20-22)

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph all had a sense of God's history. They looked at the future with the eyes of faith. They believed that God is the same forever, and that he keeps his promises. So Isaac and Jacob could bless their sons, and Joseph could be sure that God would bring his people out of Egypt and back to the promised land. Their ultimate hope, however, was not in the earthly kingdom, but in the kingdom of heaven.

Prayer: Lord, teach me Abraham's obedient, resurrection faith and teach me a sense of history.

One Word: Believe and obey Almighty God

MOSES' FAITH

Hebrews 11:23-28 (Tue.) July 6

Key Verse: 11:27b

1. Moses’ parents’ faith (23)

Moses' parents saw that Moses was not an ordinary child. They feared God more than they feared the king. So they defied the king's edict and protected their infant son. They planted faith in his heart (Ex 2).

2. Moses' value system (24-26)

Moses had a spiritual value system: He rejected the easy-going life in the palace of Egypt and chose to be mistreated with God's people. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt. He was looking to God for his reward.

3. He saw him who is invisible (27-28)

With eyes of faith, Moses could see the invisible God. So, in spite of the king's anger, he led his people out of Egypt. The only way to persevere in the life of faith is to see him who is invisible. Moses feared God's judgment, so he kept the passover.

Prayer: Lord, help me to make my choices in life according to a right value system.

One Word: See him who is invisible

BY FAITH, THE PEOPLE

Hebrews 11:29-31 (Wed.) July 7

Key Verse: 11:29

1. By faith, they crossed the Red Sea (29)

The Israelites' way out of Egypt was blocked by the Red Sea. When the Egyptians attacked, there was no way of escape. Moses depended on God, and when God told him to march through the sea, he obeyed. The waves parted and they crossed the Red Sea as on dry land. But when the Egyptian army tried to follow them, the walls of water collapsed and they were drowned. The people of Israel did by faith what could not be done by human ability.

2. By faith, Rahab (30-31)

God promised to give Canaan to his people. But they had to enter and conquer the land by faith. Jericho was their first challenge. When they accepted God as their Commander-in-Chief and obeyed him, the walls of Jericho fell. But faith to conquer Jericho was planted in them by Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute who believed in the Creator God and risked her life (Jos 2-6).

Prayer: Lord, help me to cross my Red Sea by faith and help me to live by obedient faith.

One Word: Challenge the impossible

MEN OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:32-40 (Thur.) July 8

Key Verse: 11:38a

1. Men who served their times (32-34)

Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah lived in times when people were ignorant of God's word, and they were men of their times. Everyone did what he thought was right. These men had many human weaknesses, but they were men of faith, and God used them. They were shepherds who obeyed God; they delivered their people from the hands of oppressors. David was the shepherd king. He became the symbol of messianic hope. Samuel was a king-maker who taught God's word; the prophets planted faith and hope in the dark times of the kingdom's demise.

2. Gained a better resurrection (35-40)

While some conquered enemies by faith, others won inner victories by resurrection faith. They overcame fear, suffering and sorrow to remain faithful to the Lord. They believed God's promises and looked forward by faith to the risen Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live by faith. Give me victory over enemies without and within.

One Word: Faith is the victory

FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS

Hebrews 12:1-3 (Fri.) July 9

Key Verse: 12:2

1. Let us run with perseverance (1)

The Christian life is a race. A great crowd of men and women of faith have run the race before us. They set the example. They are cheering us on. In order to run a good race we must first throw off whatever hinders us. Especially, we must cast off the shackles of sin by daily repentance. Second, we must run with perseverance. This means that we must not give up.

2. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus (2-3)

As runners, we must have a clear destination. We can find our direction and our destination when we fix our eyes on Jesus. We do this through Bible study and prayer--and by bringing our thoughts under Christ's control. Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Jesus set the example. He didn't like the cross, but he endured it. He also endured the opposition of sinful men. Therefore, we who follow him must not grow tired when small or large hindrances arise.

Prayer: Lord, help me to fix my eyes on Jesus who endured the cross for me.

One Word: Let us fix our eyes on Jesus

THE LORD DISCIPLINES THOSE HE LOVES

Hebrews 12:4-13 (Sat.) July 10

Key Verse: 12:6

1. Don't make light of God's discipline (4-5b)

Everybody needs training. Parents who love their children discipline them. God trains us because we are his children and he loves us. Life's hardships are God's opportunity to train us. Some people take God's training lightly. When they encounter difficulties they don't pray or struggle spiritually--they look around for an easy way out.

2. Don't lose heart (5c-9a)

We should not lose heart when God rebukes us; it is a sign that he loves us; we know that we are his children when he trains us with various kinds of hardships.

3. God disciplines us for our good (9b-13)

God's training has a point: He wants us to share in his holiness. Discipline is not pleasant, but it produces a harvest of peace and righteousness.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for loving me. Help me to grow in Jesus' image through your training.

One Word: God disciplines his children

DON'T MISS THE GRACE OF GOD

Hebrews 12:14-17 (Sun.) July 11

Key Verse: 12:14

1. Make every effort (14-15)

We must make every effort to live in peace with all people and to be holy. We are defiled and our relations with others are broken when we allow a bitter root to grow in our hearts. If we want to be holy and see God we cannot hold a grudge or allow jealousy or self-pity to dwell in our hearts. These things defile us, and cause trouble with others.

2. Don't be like Esau (16-17)

Esau was a man who couldn't be trained because he lived by his feelings; he did not struggle against sin. When he was hungry, he ate; when he wanted to have sex, he did. He was immoral

and godless, so he did not value spiritual things. Later, he regretted missing his father's blessing, but it was too late. As God's children, we must accept God's training and grow in holiness. Holiness means being different from animals. Holiness is the image of the righteous and loving God in us.

Prayer: Lord, help me to strive for holiness. As I have been loved and forgiven, help me to love and forgive others.

One Word: Seek peace and holiness

A KINGDOM THAT CANNOT BE SHAKEN

Hebrews 12:18-29 (Mon.) July 12

Key Verse: 12:25

1. God spoke at Mount Sinai (18-21)

When the people came to Mount Sinai and stood before the Lord to receive the Law, the Bible, the mountain shook; fire, smoke and thunder terrified the people. They were afraid to hear the voice of the awesome God. Even Moses trembled with fear.

2. Do not refuse him who speaks (22-25)

Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, symbolizes the dwelling place of the Holy God. Myriads of angels and all of the saints of past ages are with him. He is the living God, the judge of all men. We come to him through a new covenant, sealed in Jesus' blood. Abel's blood called out for justice; Jesus' blood speaks of forgiveness.

3. A kingdom that cannot be shaken (26-28)

When the final day of judgment comes, all created things will perish; only the eternal things will remain. We have received a kingdom that will not perish.

Prayer: Lord, I come to worship you with a reverent heart. Thank you for the new covenant. Help me to listen to your word.

One Word: Our God is a consuming fire

JESUS, THE SAME FOREVER

Hebrews 13:1-8 (Tue.) July 13

Key Verse: 13:8

1. Keep on loving each other (1-6)

Human love grows cold when it is not reciprocated, but Jesus' love is forever. He commands us to keep on loving each other--and he helps us to do so. We must welcome strangers and feel pain with those who suffer. Marriage commitments must be honored by all. If Jesus is in our hearts we can be faithful. We can overcome the two great temptations that Satan uses to make us his slaves--money and sex. We can be content.

2. Jesus is the same (7-8)

The men and women who have overcome the world and lived by faith are an encouragement to us. But the greatest encouragement is Jesus, who is the same forever. The Jesus of the Gospels who was patient and compassionate, who taught God's word with authority, who called and trained his disciples is the same Jesus who is our Good Shepherd. His promises and commands are for us. He was with us in the past, he is with us now, and he will be with us forever. He is faithful, so we must be faithful.

Prayer: Lord, help me to keep on loving others, for your love for me never changes.

One Word: Jesus is the same forever

SACRIFICES THAT PLEASE GOD

Hebrews 13:9-16 (Wed.) July 14

Key Verse: 13:15

1. Be strengthened by grace (9-10)

Real strength comes from God's grace, not from any religious ceremony or activity. Jesus was crucified like a common criminal, outside the city gate. He suffered a shameful death to make us holy. We are forgiven and made holy by the blood of Jesus, so that we may draw near to God. We do not need to fear criticism or disgrace, for Jesus bore our disgrace on the cross. Our hope is not in being recognized, nor in establishing our worldly "city." We wait for the enduring city.

2. The sacrifices God accepts (11-16)

God does not want worship that is superficial or ritualistic. He wants the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, offered to him with a pure heart. He wants the sacrifice of selfless service for others, done for Jesus' sake.

Prayer: Lord, strengthen my heart by your grace and help me to offer to you the sacrifice of praise. Cleanse me of selfishness so that I may serve others for Jesus' sake.

One Word: The sacrifice of praise

OBEY YOUR LEADERS

Hebrews 13:17-25 (Thur.) July 15

Key Verse: 13:20,21

1. Spiritual order (17-19)

If we are to grow in faith and in usefulness to God, e must accept spiritual order in the Christian community. Leaders must give an account to God for their ministry and for their influence. Shepherds are not necessarily more able or qualified than those under them, but they are our leaders. When we submit to their authority with joy, we can learn obedience to God--and this is how our faith grows.

2. Our Great Shepherd (20-25)

Jesus is our Great Shepherd. Through his death, he sealed our blood covenant with God. He was established by God who raised him from the dead. God himself equips us with everything good for doing his will; he works in us what is pleasing to himself--when we trust and obey the shepherds whom he has appointed to be our leaders.

Prayer: Lord, help me to learn deeper faith through obedience to the leaders you have raised up. Help me to do your will, depending on the equipment you give. Help me to glorify my Great Shepherd Jesus.

One Word: Obey your leaders