

Hebrews Devotionals 2

Our Daily Bread

Excellent Devotional Illustrations from Radio Bible Class
The Devotionals Provide Excellent Sermon Illustrations

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Moody Bible Institute

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Hebrews
Devotionals and Illustrations
from Our Daily Bread

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Hebrews 1:3 Unlimited Power

Why don't the stars fall down?" A child may ask that question, but so does an astronomer. And they both get essentially the same answer: A mysterious power or energy upholds everything and prevents our cosmos from collapsing into chaos.

Hebrews 1:3 tells us that it is Jesus who upholds all things by the word of His power. He is the source of all the energy there is, whether the explosive potential packed inside an atom or the steaming kettle on the kitchen stove.

That energy is not simply a mindless force. No, God is the personal power who created everything out of nothing, including the stars (Genesis 1; Isaiah 40:26); who divided the Red Sea and delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 14:21-22); who brought to pass the virgin birth of Jesus (Luke 1:34-35); and who raised Him from the dead and conquered death (2 Timothy 1:10). Our God, the one and only true God, has the power to answer prayer, meet our needs, and change our lives.

So when life's problems are baffling, when you face some Red Sea impossibility, call upon the wonder-working God who upholds all things. And remember that with our almighty God, nothing is impossible.— Vernon C. Grounds

Thou art coming to a King—
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such
None can ever ask too much. —Newton

God is greater than our greatest problem.

Hebrews 2:8-9

Look Up

We do not yet see all things put under [man]. But we see Jesus (Hebrews 2:8-9).

The disasters, heartbreaks, and injustices all around us prove the truth of Hebrews 2:8. We live in an imperfect world in which many things are beyond our control. A thirty-year-old farmer, unable to make his mortgage payments, wishes something could be done to prevent drought. A young mother of three children, widowed by the crash of a commercial airplane, can't understand why modern technology can't prevent such tragedies. A well-educated, successful professional man, convinced that we are headed for a nuclear holocaust, talks about suicide.

It is obvious that we humans are not properly exercising dominion over the earth, as we were created to do. But knowing this does not fill Christians with dismay and hopelessness. We look up and "see" Jesus at God's right hand. We know that He possesses "all authority" in heaven and on earth because of what He did almost 2,000 years ago. He lived here as a man, overcame sin, paid the price for our transgressions on the cross, and broke death's power. He is in ultimate control of everything—even now. Someday He will return to earth and make everything right. Now, however, we see Him through the eye of faith, and we experience inner joy and peace no matter what happens.—H. V. Lugt

When we can't see out, we can still look up.

Hebrews 2:14-18

Feeling Our Sorrow

When Christ became a man, He showed His willingness to be tempted, tested, hated, and hurt. During His life on earth, He faced the same struggles we encounter. He had been sympathetic to man's weaknesses before He came, but by taking a human body He identified with us in a dramatic way. His incarnation revealed the extent to which He would go to pay for our sin and to be touched by the trials and infirmities that make life so difficult for us.

On a smaller scale, people try to empathize with the sufferings of others. John Griffin, a white man, darkened his skin in an effort to understand what it meant to be black in a predominantly white society. He told about his experiences in a book titled *Black Like Me*. More recently, a thirty-year-old woman, an industrial designer, masqueraded as an elderly woman once a week for three years to find out how it feels to be old in America. What she learned is heartbreaking. She was robbed, insulted, and frightened by a world that isn't easy on its elderly.

As touching as these examples are, they are nothing compared with Christ's coming into our world. No one else left so high a position to feel what mortal man feels. Jesus gave up heaven's glory and was tempted in all points as we are, yet He did not sin. He bore our sins on the cross so that He could be merciful to us.

We have One who cares. When we face temptations and trials, we can go to Jesus. He knows the feeling. —M. R. De Haan II

Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot feel.

Hebrews 2:14-15

THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

At the southern tip of Africa, a cape jutting out into the ocean once caused sailors great anxiety. Many who attempted to sail around it were lost in the swirling seas. Because adverse weather conditions so often prevailed there, the region was named the Cape of Storms. A Portuguese captain determined to find a safe route through those treacherous waters so his countrymen could reach Cathay and the riches of the East Indies in safety. He succeeded, and the area was renamed the Cape of Good Hope.

We all face a great storm called death. But our Lord has already traveled through it safely and has provided a way for us to do the same. By His crucifixion and resurrection, Christ abolished eternal death for every believer and has permanently established our fellowship with Him in heaven. Although this "last enemy," physical death, can touch us temporarily, its brief control over our earthly body will end at the resurrection. The sting of death has been removed!

Now all who know Christ as Savior can face life's final voyage with confidence. Even though the sea may be rough, we will experience no terror as we pass through the "cape of good hope" and into heaven's harbor. The Master Helmsman Himself has assured our safe passage. - H G Bosch

Think of just crossing a river,
Stepping out safe on that shore,
Sadness and suffering over,
Dwelling with Christ evermore!
Anon

Christ has charted a safe course through the dark waters of death.

Hebrews 2:18

Irresistible Lures

For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:18).

We had everything set .for the first bass fishing expedition of the year. We had exotic new lures that we knew would be irresistible to those big six-pounders lurking beneath the surface of our favorite fishing lake. We would tempt them with Sassy Shads, brightly colored new Hula Poppers, buzz baits, a "killer" red flatfish with a black stripe, and a white double spinner with long bright streamers. And, if all else failed, we had some fresh Canadian crawlers. Out at dawn, we hit all the best spots with our assortment of delectable temptations. But nothing happened. We worked the shore. We cast along the weeds. We tried every lure in the tackle box—even the crawlers. Finally we gave up. Heading back to the cabin, we concluded, "The fish just aren't hungry."

Satan has a whole "tacklebox" of alluring devices he uses to tempt us. Some are gaudy and exotic, easy to spot—yet oh, so tempting. Others whet our appetites in quiet and subtle ways, appearing harm-less until the hook is set. Whatever the temptation, we can best resist if we do not let our thoughts dwell on evil but on things that are true, noble, just, pure, and lovely (Phil. 4:8). With mental discipline and the help of the Holy Spirit, we can keep our hearts full of goodness. Then, in frustration, Satan will have to say, "They just aren't hungry."—D C Egner

Every step away from the devil leads us one step closer to God.

Hebrews 2:18

He Was Tempted

We had everything set .for the first bass fishing expedition of the year. We had exotic new lures that we knew would be irresistible to those big six-pounders lurking beneath the surface of our favorite fishing lake. We would tempt them with Sassy Shads, brightly colored new Hula Poppers, buzz baits, a "killer" red flatfish with a black stripe, and a white double spinner with long bright streamers. And, if all else failed, we had some fresh Canadian crawlers. Out at dawn, we hit all the best spots with our assortment of delectable temptations. But nothing happened. We worked the shore. We cast along the weeds. We tried every lure in the tackle box—even the crawlers. Finally we gave up. Heading back to the cabin, we concluded, "The fish just aren't hungry."

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Every step away from the devil leads us one step closer to God.

Hebrews 3:7-8

Are You Listening?

"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 3:7-8).

One summer an annoyed senior citizen from Richmond Heights, Missouri, hung up on President Reagan. He did it not just once but half a dozen times. The elderly gentleman didn't knowingly refuse to talk to the Chief Executive; he just didn't believe that the President was calling him. He was sure it was a prank. But the Southwestern Bell operator and a neighbor finally convinced him it was for real. As a result, the man had the privilege of chatting with Mr. Reagan for about fifteen minutes.

Many centuries ago a young Israelite named Samuel also received a call from a surprising source. He didn't realize who was calling, even when it was repeated. It came from one greater than a president. At first Samuel was perplexed, but when Eli told him God was trying to get through to him, he listened.

We Christians sometimes have the same response when God speaks to us. Deep down in our awareness we may have a thought or conviction that we cannot understand. At first, we may not recognize it as God's voice. Then, when we're convinced it's Him, we're surprised that He would want to speak to us. But God is personal. He wants us to know Him. He has spoken through His written Word, the Bible, and through the living Word, Christ. In addition, He indwells us in the person of the Holy Spirit who enables us to "hear His voice."

God is always trying to get through to us. That means we must always be listening. —M. R. De Haan II

There are two kinds of Christians—those who wait on the Lord and those who keep the Lord waiting.

Hebrews 3:7-19 Let Go!

Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. —Hebrews 3:15

Read: Hebrews 3:7-19 | Bible in a Year: Ezekiel 16-17; James 3

A 14-year-old North Carolina boy refused to stop playing his Nintendo Game Boy during school hours. The principal was called in and he still refused to stop. When the school liaison officer tried to search him, the teen kicked and punched him. The police were summoned, yet the boy adamantly resisted. Only after the officers gave him two shocks from a Taser gun were they able to remove the toy from him. He was uninjured, but one officer was bitten by the boy.

How can someone be so obstinate! Consider Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to let God's people go despite numerous plagues (Exodus 5-9). Only after the seventh plague did Pharaoh begin to relent (9:27-28).

Pharaoh was foolish to harden his heart against God. Yet look at who hardened their hearts in the wilderness. Hebrews 3:15-16 says, "If you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?" Even those who had seen God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt rebelled against Him!

Today, let us ponder whether God is speaking to us. Could it be that we are clinging to some "toy" and refusing to let Him be Lord of our lives?

Dear Lord, help us when we don't know what to do.

Help us most of all when we know what to do but don't want to do it.

May it never be said that we cling tightly to what displeases You. Amen.

God must rule our hearts if our feet are to walk His way.

Hebrews 3:13 Harmless Little Sins?

Exhort one another daily, ... lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. —Hebrews 3:13

Read: Hebrews 3:12-19 | Bible in a Year: Song of Solomon 4-5; Galatians 3

What happened to the great city of Ephesus? Often mentioned in the New Testament, it was one of the cultural and commercial centers of its day. Located at the mouth of the Cayster River, it was noted for its bustling harbors, its broad avenues, its gymnasiums, its baths, its huge amphitheater, and especially its magnificent Temple of Diana. What happened to bring about its

gradual decline until its harbor was no longer crowded with ships and the city was no longer a flourishing metropolis?

Was it smitten by plagues, destroyed by enemies, or demolished by earthquakes? No, silt was the reason for its downfall—silent and nonviolent silt. Over the years, fine sedimentary particles slowly filled up the harbor, separating the city from the economic life of the sea traders.

Little evil practices, little acts of disobedience may seem harmless. But let the silt of sin gradually accumulate, and we will find ourselves far from God. Life will become a spiritual ruin. In the book of Hebrews we are warned of the danger of “the deceitfulness of sin” (3:13). James said that the attractive pleasures of sin are really a mask covering death (1:15).

God forbid that we let the silt of sin accumulate in our lives!

Christian, walk carefully, danger is near!

On in your journey with trembling and fear;

Snares from without and temptations within

Seek to entice you once more into sin. —Anon.

Little sins add up to big trouble.

Hebrews 4 The War Is Over!

The bitter conflict had finally ended between the North and the South. The soldiers of the US Civil War were free to return to their families. But a number of them remained hidden in the woods, living on berries. They either didn't hear or didn't believe that the war was over, so they continued enduring miserable conditions when they could have been back home.

It's something like that in the spiritual realm too. Christ made peace between God and man by dying in our place. He paid sin's penalty on the cross. Anyone who accepts His sacrifice will be forgiven by a holy God.

Sadly, many people refuse to believe the gospel and continue to live as spiritual fugitives. Sometimes even those who have placed their trust in Christ live on almost the same level. Either out of ignorance or unwillingness, they fail to claim the promises of God's Word. They do not experience the joy and assurance that should accompany salvation. They do not draw from their relationship with God the comfort and peace He intends for His children. They are the objects of His love, care, and provision but live as if they were orphans.

Have you been living apart from the comfort, love, and care of your heavenly Father? Come on home. The war is over!— Richard De Haan

We fail, O Lord, to realize
The fullness of what You have done,
So help us trust Your saving work
And claim the triumph You have won. —D. De Haan

Christ's victory over death means peace for His saints.

Hebrews 4:12

The Robber

When evangelist John Wesley (1703-1791) was returning home from a service one night, he was robbed. The thief, however, found his victim to have only a little money and some Christian literature.

As the bandit was leaving, Wesley called out, “Stop! I have something more to give you.” The surprised robber paused. “My friend,” said Wesley, “you may live to regret this sort of life. If you ever do, here’s something to remember: ‘The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin!’” The thief hurried away, and Wesley prayed that his words might bear fruit.

Years later, Wesley was greeting people after a Sunday service when he was approached by a stranger. What a surprise to learn that this visitor, now a believer in Christ as a successful businessman, was the one who had robbed him years before! “I owe it all to you,” said the transformed man. “Oh no, my friend,” Wesley exclaimed, “not to me, but to the precious blood of Christ that cleanses us from all sin!”

Hebrews 4: 12

Sigmund Freud

Few thinkers in recent times have exerted so pervasive an influence as Sigmund Freud. Although he claimed to be an atheist, he continually speculated about religious issues as if subconsciously haunted by the God whom he denied.

When Freud turned 35, his father sent him a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures he had given to him when he was a boy. Sigmund had read and studied that book, at least for a while. Enclosed in that worn copy of the Scriptures was a note from the elder Freud reminding his son that "the Spirit of the Lord began to move you and spoke within you: 'Go read in My Book that I've written and there will burst open for you the wellsprings of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom.'"

His father expressed the hope that Sigmund might, as a mature man, once again read and obey God's law. We have no evidence, however, that Freud took to heart his father's exhortation. How different his life and influence might have been if he had!

Hebrews 4: 12

A "Dangerous" Weapon

One Sunday evening at church a short-term missionary reported on her overseas experiences and told about crossing into a communist country. At the border, the guards asked, "Do you have any guns, drugs, or Bibles?"

Although they probably hadn't read it, those communist border guards apparently believed Hebrews 4:12. To them, the Bible was as dangerous as guns and drugs. Guns injure and kill the body. Drugs alter and distort the mind. The Bible exposes and destroys falsehood. But the Bible threatens more than their religion of atheism. It threatens their place of power and control over the people because it gives to the people what no government can. The Bible enriches lives, instills hope, and frees the human spirit, which makes it as threatening to an atheistic government as guns and drugs.

In Psalm 119, the psalmist refers to some of the powerful effects of the Word of God on his life. It revives his soul (v. 25); it imparts inner strength (v. 28); it guides him into truth (v. 30); and it enlarges his heart (v. 32).

We who are blessed with both the Old and New Testaments have God's full and final written revelation of Himself. When we meditate on the truths of this powerful book, we experience its impact on our lives by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who makes it real to us.

Guns, drugs, and the Bible all wield power, but only the Bible destroys what is false and builds what is true. —D. J. De Haan

No weapon in Satan's arsenal can destroy the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:14-16 Open At the Top

A preacher was delivering a sermon before a large congregation. He pointed out that believers aren't exempt from trouble. In fact, some Christians are surrounded by trouble—trouble to the right, trouble to the left, trouble in front, and trouble behind. At this, a man who had served the Lord for many years, shouted, "Glory to God, it's always open at the top!"

This man's confidence in God is fully supported by Hebrews 4. Because our great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, has ascended to heaven and is interceding there for us, we have good grounds for trusting Him in the midst of trouble (v.14). Jesus is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, for when He lived on earth He was tempted in every way that we are, yet He never sinned (v.15). His throne is completely approachable and is called "the throne of grace" (v.16).

In Hebrews we're urged to look up from our trials and to approach that throne boldly by faith. Through humble prayer, we will receive mercy for our failures and grace to help us in our time of need (v.16).

Are life's trials and temptations hemming you in? Has the tempter told you there's nowhere to go? Take heart. Keep looking up—it's always open at the top!—Joanie Yoder

When life's afflictions batter you
Like waves upon the sand,
Remember to look up to God
And take His outstretched hand. —Sper

To improve your outlook, try the uplook

Hebrews 4:15

The Puppy

A man put up a sign in his yard that read: "Puppies for Sale." Among those who came to inquire was a young boy. "Please, Mister," he said, "I'd like to buy one of your puppies if they don't cost too much." "Well, son, they're \$25." The boy looked crushed. "I've only got two dollars and five cents. Could I see them anyway?" "Of course. Maybe we can work something out," said the man. The lad's eyes danced at the sight of those five little balls of fur. "I heard that one has a bad leg," he said. "Yes, I'm afraid she'll be crippled for life." "Well, that's the puppy I want. Could I pay for her a little at a time?" The man responded, "But she'll always have a limp." Smiling bravely, the boy pulled up one pant leg, revealing a brace. "I don't walk good either." Then, looking at the puppy sympathetically, he continued, "I guess she'll need a lot of love and help. I sure did. It's not so easy being crippled." "Here, take her," said the man. "I know you'll give her a good home. And just forget the money."

Hebrews 5:14

Are You Sensitive to the Little Things?

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

Sensitivity to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, even in little things that seem harmless, marks the mature Christian. While preaching in a small church in Florida, a young evangelist noticed that his gold wristwatch sparkled in the light.

He wrote, "I saw people looking at it. The Lord said to me, 'Take it off. It's distracting.' I said, 'Lord, I can surely wear a wristwatch that my daddy gave me.' But it was sensitivity that God was teaching me—to be sensitive to the little things. I took it off and ... never wore it in the pulpit again."

It's not always easy to know when God is speaking, because inner urgings may arise from fear, selfish desire, or Satan. Yet if we learn biblical principles through reading the Word, and if we daily yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, we will gradually come to recognize His gentle prompting. The writer of Hebrews said that mature believers have had their senses "exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb 5:14). Whatever exalts Christ over self comes from God, and we can obey with confidence. But whatever is unkind, unloving, and self-seeking grieves the Spirit. When we do something like this, we must confess our disobedience to God at once to restore our fellowship with Him.

"Lord, make me sensitive" is a prayer that should always be on our hearts. —D. J. De Haan

When we yield ourselves to the Spirit's control, we do not lose our self-control.

Hebrews 6:4

Trampling Underfoot

Today's text speaks of trampling underfoot the precious Son of God. This warning, along with Hebrews 6:1-8, has caused untold agony to many sensitive Christians. It's as if Satan uses Hebrews 6:4 and 10:26 to create hopelessness and despair. But what do these passages teach? F. F. Bruce points out that they refer to people who have deliberately abandoned reliance on the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Raymond Brown said that theirs is not a single act of falling away, but a state of willful, determined renunciation of all dependence on Christ's atoning work. God has no other plan for saving those who regard Christ's sacrifice as useless. - D. J. De Haan

Hebrews 6:10

The Best Retirement Plan

God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love (Hebrews 6:10).

A. C. Dixon told the story of Johanna Ambrosius, the wife of a poor farmer who lived in the German Empire during the latter part of the nineteenth century. She and her husband spent many long hours in the fields, so she knew little of the outside world. But she had the soul of a poet. With her hope in God, she wrote down the thoughts that filled her heart. She had great sympathy for the struggling people around her, and her mother-heart expressed its joys and sorrows in poetry. Somehow, a bit of verse she had written found its way into print and later into the hands of the Empress of Germany. Impressed by the beauty of what she read, she asked that the author be located. On finding Johanna and learning of her meager lifestyle, the Empress expressed her love for the woman by supplying her immediate needs and by giving her a pension for life.

God calls many of us to serve Him in obscure places where no one expresses gratitude or even seems to notice what we do. But God observes everything we do to help bear the burdens of others, and He will reward us for our labors. He sees our struggles, knows the load we carry, and takes note of our faithfulness. He cares for us in our pilgrimage and will make it all worthwhile when He comes again.

Our eternal pension is guaranteed. God will not forget our "work and labor of love." —P. R. V.

Work for the Lord—the pay may not be much, but the retirement plan is out of this world.

Hebrews 6:19

The Son Will Shine Again

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19).

A newsboy, thinly clad and drenched by the soaking rain, stood shivering in a doorway one cold day in November. To get a little warmth, he would hold one bare foot against his leg for a moment and then the other. Every few minutes he would cry out, "Morning paper! Morning paper!" A man who was well protected by his coat and umbrella stopped to buy the early edition. Noting the boy's discomfort, he said, "This kind of weather is pretty hard on you, isn't it?" Looking up with a smile, the youngster replied, "I don't mind too much, Mister. The sun will shine again."

Chilling winds of adversity and gray skies of a sinful environment easily discourage us. But we can count on better days because we know God is working in our lives. This hope is called an "anchor of the soul," and the Bible says that it abides (1 Cor. 13:13) and does not disappoint (Rom. 5:5). It promises righteousness (Gal. 5:5), eternal life (Titus 1:2), and the return of Jesus (Titus 2:13). It is a "living hope," founded on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3).

When circumstances get out of control and pressures threaten to overwhelm us, we know that Jesus died for us, is working in us, and will never leave us. We can hold fast to God's promises and patiently endure. The "anchor of hope" will hold us firm. —D. J. De Haan

It is always darkest just before dawn.

When life is over and daylight is past,
In heaven's harbor my anchor is cast,
When I see Jesus my Savior at last,
Oh, that will be sunrise for me! —Poole
© 1924 The Rodeheaver Company

Hebrews 7:25

Praying for Us

Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843), pioneer missionary to America, testified, "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me!"

Hebrews 9:11-28

"Blood Red"

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14).

Having trusted Christ as our Savior, we should never cease to glory in His sacrifice for us on the cross. The reality of being identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection should fill us with gratitude in the morning, give us refuge throughout the day, and be a pillow at night upon which to rest.

A small detachment of British troops, surprised by an overwhelming enemy force, fell back under heavy fire. Their wounded lay in a perilous position, facing certain death. They all realized they had to come immediately under the protection of a Red Cross flag if they wanted to survive. All they had was a piece of white cloth, but no red paint. So they used the blood from their wounds to make a large cross on that white cloth. Their attackers respected that grim flag as it was held aloft, and the British wounded were brought to safety (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, The Great Boer War).

Our enemy not only must respect the blood of Christ shed on Calvary's cross, he also is helpless against it. Christ's blood represents the sacrifice of One whose death removed the guilt and condemnation of our sin and broke its hold over us. It is absolute protection against the accusation of Satan, the defeating remembrances of past sins, and the downpull of our Adamic nature. No wonder we glory in the cross.—D. J. De Haan

Calvary stands for Satan's fall.

Hebrews 9:12

"Tired Blood"

but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place - Hebrews 9:12

God requires a blood sacrifice. From the time sin entered the world this has been true. He Himself slew the innocent animal, shedding the blood to clothe the sinful pair in the garden of Eden. Abel was accepted because he brought the offering God required: the firstling of the flock, a blood sacrifice. All of these were but promissory notes anticipating the Lamb of God whose blood was to be shed, providing the "one sacrifice for sins forever." Only His blood could atone for sin.

A friend facetiously sent us a card reading, "The Blood Donors Association wishes to inform you that no donation will be necessary because you have tired blood." This is true of Adam's family; we have not only tired but tainted blood, for "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

An unblemished sacrifice was essential in paying the price of man's redemption. Only the spotless Lamb, God's well-beloved Son, could atone by shedding His blood. The poet expressed it so well: "Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away the stain. But Christ the Heavenly Lamb takes all our sins away; a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they." Not the "tired blood" of a sinful man or animal, but the precious blood of the Heaven-sent Sacrifice makes possible the removal of our sins.

Let us not forget it: "Without shedding of blood is no remission," and it is "the blood that maketh atonement for the soul." God is satisfied with His Son's offering. Nothing more is required.

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? — Hoffman

God spells salvation with five letters: B-L-O-O-D

Hebrews 9:15 A Good Will

Perhaps you know someone who didn't receive the inheritance intended by a parent because of a faulty will. In an article titled "Money & The Law," attorney Jim Flynn says that if you want your estate to go to your chosen recipients instead of to members of the legal profession, you should avoid do-it-yourself wills. Such documents are usually legal but they are often unclear and fail to make provisions for unforeseen situations. Flynn advises having a formal will to be sure your wishes are carried out.

Man-made wills can fail, but there is no ambiguous language about the inheritance God has in store for us. The apostle Peter affirmed that God "has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1Peter 1:3,4).

No fluctuation in the economy can reduce this inheritance. It is not subject to review by the courts nor to debate by squabbling families. No amount of suffering or trials can diminish or change what God has in store for us. Our inheritance is certain and eternal (Hebrews 9:15). And as we live for Him, we are assured that His will for our lives today is "good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).— David C. McCasland

Why do we live like paupers,
When riches we possess?
We have become joint heirs with Christ
With blessings measureless. —Sper

The Christian's inheritance is guaranteed forever!

Hebrews 9:16

His Will Is Valid

A street evangelist in Edinburgh by the name of Robby Flockheart often spoke about Jesus as the Savior who died but who also lives. He would illustrate from personal experience the necessity of stressing both of these truths. He said that when he was called to serve in the army, he became friends with a man who was later condemned to die. The prisoner called for Robby and in his presence made out his will, leaving him what little money he had. But on the day of his scheduled execution, the man was pardoned. Recounting the circumstances, Robby said, "He lived, but I lost my legacy. A testament is not in force while the testator lives. Well, another time a person left me a small legacy, and I did not get it either, because some rogue of a lawyer came along and I never

saw a penny of it. I used to say, "If the man who left the will had been alive, he would have made sure his old friend Robby got his money.' But being dead, he had no power to see his will carried out."

Jesus, the great testator of the new covenant, did die; there is no question about that. Therefore, the will, certified by His precious blood, is valid. He has secured eternal redemption for us through His atoning death. But the Savior did not remain in the grave. After 3 days He arose, and today He lives to make sure that His will is fully carried out. His life ensures that every blessing promised by the New Testament will be given to everyone who trusts the Savior.

Thank God, the will is valid and our priceless inheritance is guaranteed! - P.R.V.

Hebrews 9:16

No Lost Legacy

For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:16).

Robby Flockheart, a street evangelist in Edinburgh, often told two stories to stress the importance of two truths—that Jesus died but also lives. In the first story, Robby told about becoming friends with a man who was later condemned to die. The prisoner called for Robby and in his presence made out his will, leaving Robby what little money he had. But on the day of the man's scheduled execution, he was pardoned. Recounting the circumstances, Robby said,

"He lived, but I lost my legacy. A testament is not in force while the testator lives."

In the second story, Robby told of another person who left him a small legacy. But Robby never got any of that inheritance either because, as he told it,

"some rogue of a lawyer came along and I never saw a penny of it. I used to say, 'If the man who left the will had been alive, he would have made sure his old friend Robby got his money.' But being dead, he had no power to see his will carried out."

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Christ died, making His will valid; and He lives, guaranteeing our priceless inheritance. —P. R. V.

Only a living Savior could rescue a dying world.

Hebrews 9:24-28

Winchester's Widow

Sarah Winchester's husband had acquired a fortune by manufacturing and selling rifles. After he died of influenza in 1918, she moved to San Jose, California.

Because of her grief and her long time interest in spiritism, Sarah sought out a medium to contact her dead husband. The medium told her, "As long as you keep building your home, you will never face death."

Sarah believed the spiritist, so she bought an unfinished 17-room mansion and started to expand it. The project continued until she died at the age of 85. It cost 5 million dollars at a time when workmen earned 50 cents a day. The mansion had 150 rooms, 13 bathrooms, 2,000 doors, 47 fireplaces, and 10,000 windows. And Mrs. Winchester left enough materials so that they could have continued building for another 80 years.

Today that house stands as more than a tourist attraction. It is a silent witness to the dread of death that holds millions of people in bondage (Heb. 2:15).

Hebrews 9:27

Taking Risks

Many accidental deaths result from taking risks. That's the conclusion of an organization in Canada that is seeking to decrease accidents between cars and trains. Roger Cyr, national director of Operation Lifesaver, puts most of the blame for fatalities on

drivers who are risk-takers. "Studies have shown that when people hear a train whistle their minds tell them to accelerate their speed," says Cyr. About 43 percent of the accidents occur at crossings equipped with flashing lights and bells or gates. Cyr also said that many drivers "even have the audacity to drive around or under gates." They take the risk, thinking they can beat the train and somehow miss the collision—but with tragic consequences!

Hebrews 9:27

Never Wait for the Storm

We were out on the lake and the fish were biting. Suddenly we heard a rumble in the distance. Looking up, we saw a mass of dark clouds in the west. The sound of thunder warned of a coming storm. It was a long way off, I thought, so I didn't heed the suggestion of my fishing partner that we start back to the cottage. I hoped the bad weather would move to the north or south of us. But then it happened! A fresh breeze sprang up, and the clouds mounted quickly overhead. We tried starting the motor—but no response. I cranked while my partner rowed frantically. The waves became whitecaps; the rain came in sheets; and the gale tossed our aluminum boat like an autumn leaf. That experience taught me a valuable lesson. Never wait when a storm is brewing!

It also preached a powerful sermon. Judgment is coming! It may seem far off to those who are in good health, but our motor can "conk out" at any time. To heed the foreboding signals of death is true wisdom. Look in the mirror before you go to work and observe some of its warnings. Notice those gray hairs and wrinkles. Remember your stiffening joints, shortness of breath, that dizzy spell—it's all "thunder in the distance." Why not hasten to find shelter in Christ before it is too late? Don't depend on your motor or the oars of self-effort. You will have no excuse, for you have been warned! —M. R. De Haan, M.D.

We are not truly ready to live until we are prepared to die.

Hebrews 9:27

Never Wait When A Storm is Brewing

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Hebrews 9:27 A Sure Thing

A man who was suffering from poor health decided to move to a warmer climate. Wanting to make sure he would choose the area best suited to his needs, he visited several locations. While in Arizona, he asked, "What's the average temperature?" "What about the humidity?" "How many days of sunshine are there?" When he asked, "What's the death rate?" he received this answer: "Same as where you come from, friend—one death for every birth."

In spite of medical progress in prolonging life and improving its quality, the death rate remains unchanged. "It is appointed for men to die once" (Hebrews 9:27), because "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23) and "the wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23).

It is therefore essential to live with the right perspective—that death follows life, and that after death comes the judgment. Everyone who trusts Christ for salvation will come forth from the grave "to the resurrection of life," but everyone who rejects Him will "come forth ... to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:29). For unbelievers, death seals their doom. But for believers, death leads to glory.

Wise is the person who faces up to the certainty of death. And wiser still is the one who prepares for it.— Richard De Haan

As sure as setting of the sun
In evening's western sky,
This life's brief day will soon be done

Dying is the last page of time and the first page of eternity

Hebrews 10:19-25

Wait for the Promises

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope ... for He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23).

Suppose a wealthy man were to give you a note saying, "Sometime in the future, a time I've decided upon, you will receive fifty thousand dollars that I have set aside for you." Although you might become impatient as you wait for the money, you would confidently expect to get it. But if that same man were to say, "If everything works out, I might give you fifty thousand dollars" you'd expect the money only if he didn't go bankrupt, change his mind, forget his promise, or die. The first situation carries the greatest certainty.

That's the way it is in God's economy. His promises are dated in heaven. And since we know only "in part" (1 Cor. 13:12), we don't always know when they will be fulfilled. But that doesn't matter, for we do have the confidence that God will keep them. Nor does this diminish the value of God's promises, for He backs them all with the infinite riches of His character. He never changes. He never forgets His Word. He never dies. God may seem to delay the fulfillment of a promise, but we can be encouraged that every promise is as good as His word.

Most of us have come to the end of our resources. And there we have discovered that God, at the right time and in the right way, imparted His strength. He was neither slow nor tardy. So we need not be discouraged. We can keep on claiming the promises. God is the faithful promiser. —P.R.V.

Our prospects are as bright as the promises of God.

Hebrews 10:19-25

Stopping At Nothing

As we rounded a curve, the beams from my headlights suddenly shone on a woman desperately waving her arms. I did not want to stop. It was late and very cold. My wife and I were exhausted from ministering all day in a small church where I was student pastor, our small son was asleep on the back seat, and I had to be in class at 8:30 the next morning. "Somebody else will come along," I said to my wife, rationalizing to myself that the woman might be trying to lure us into a trap. But my conscience made me stop. And it's a good thing we did. In the woman's car we found four unconscious children, overcome by fumes from a faulty muffler. Quickly we loaded them into our car and headed for a nearby hospital, where they soon recovered after prompt treatment.

I don't advocate stopping along the highway for just anyone. Yet so many pressing needs go unmet. For instance, an elderly couple, no longer able to drive, haven't been to church for several months because no one has offered to take them. And a widow with multiple sclerosis wishes that somebody would take her grocery shopping and help her get to church on Sunday. "Why isn't somebody meeting these needs?" I wondered. Then I remembered my own initial response that night along the highway: Somebody else will come along.

Hebrews 10:24 holds the solution to this problem. As Christians, we can stir up fellow believers to love and good deeds by setting a good example. We can be that "somebody else." —H. V. Lugt

When it comes to doing things for others, some people stop at nothing.

Hebrews 10:19-25

"WHY GO TO CHURCH"

William Willimon, chaplain at Duke University, was invited to preach in an inner-city church. The service, with its long preliminaries, lasted 2 1/2 hours. When it was finally over, Willimon was exhausted and asked the pastor, "Why do these people stay in church so long?"

His friend replied,

"Unemployment runs nearly 50 percent here. This means that when our people go about during the week, everything they see, everything they hear tells them: 'You are a failure. You are nothing because you do not have a good job, you do not have a nice car, you have no money.' So I must get their eyes focused on Christ. Through the hymns, the prayers, the preaching I say to them, 'That is a lie! You are royalty! You are citizens of

the kingdom of God!' It takes me a long time to get them straight because the world perverts them so terribly."

The world is constantly pressuring Christians to conform to its values. We need to read God's Word and encourage one another so that we will be able to keep alive a strong sense of who we are in Christ.

Why go to church? Because God uses the exhortation and love of fellow believers to reassure us that the world's message is a lie and that God's good news is true. - D J De Haan

The world will try to pressure us
To fit into its godless mold;
That's why we need encouragement
To keep our hearts from growing cold. -Sper

Seven days without church makes one weak.

Hebrews 10:19-25 We Need One Another

If recent polls can be trusted, an upsurge of Lone Ranger spirituality is occurring in the United States. Church attendance is down. Biblical beliefs are being abandoned. More and more of our fellow citizens are looking inward, online, and out-of-doors for the uplift they once sought in church sanctuaries.

How different from Jesus! He made it His practice to join in synagogue services regularly (Luke 4:16). But today, people no longer take Him as an example. They settle for what is loosely called "spirituality" and try to nurture their souls without the timeless traditions of congregational praise, prayer, biblical instruction, and edifying fellowship.

To gather regularly with other worshipers is an uplifting source of comfort, inspiration, and emotional strength. The Bible urges us not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25).

We should, of course, have regular devotional times by ourselves. Just as surely, we need the blessing of uniting with other believers for worship and fellowship. We need to spend time together "in order to stir up love and good works" (He 10:24). We need to make it our habit to worship with others. We need one another.— Vernon C. Grounds

We each can have sweet fellowship with Jesus
As through the Word we learn to trust Him more;
But we must also meet with one another
As in His name we worship and adore. —Hess

**Christians are like coals of fire—
together, they glow; apart, they grow cold.**

Hebrews 10:22

Are You Washed?

Let us draw near ... having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (Hebrews 10:22).

While visiting in an Egyptian home, Bradford Abernethy saw a servant give a pitcher of water and a rug to a boy who lived there. Three times, the lad washed his hands, feet, face, neck, ears, and arms. Then he knelt on the rug, bowed his head to the floor, and began to pray.

The Scriptures teach that a right relationship to God comes from being "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 6:11) . The outward washing of the body referred to in the Old Testament was a symbolic act to remind God's people that when they entered the Lord's presence their hearts were to be free from unconfessed sin. David declared,

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Ps. 66:18) .

And in another psalm he wrote,

"He who has clean hands and a pure heart ... shall receive blessing from the LORD" (Ps. 24:4-5).

It is foolish for those living in sin to expect the Lord to hear and answer their prayers. It's the prayer of a "righteous man" that is effective (James 5:16).

The Word of God assures us,

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"
(1 John 1:9).

A clean heart is necessary if we expect God to hear our prayers. —R W De Haan

The words of our prayers are not as important as the condition of our hearts.

Hebrews 10:23

God's Promises are Dated

It has been said that God's promises are dated in heaven. And since we know only "in part," as the Bible says (1 Cor. 13:12), we don't always know then they will be fulfilled. But that shouldn't matter, for we do have the confidence that God will keep them.

Suppose a wealthy man were to give you a note saying, "Sometime in the future, a time I've decided upon, you will receive \$50,000 that I have set aside for you." Although you might become impatient as you wait for the money, you confidently expect to get it. But if that same man were to say, "If everything works out, I might give you \$50,000," you'd expect the money only if he didn't go bankrupt, change his mind, forget his promise, or die. Of course, the first situation carries the greatest certainty. And that's the way it is in God's economy. He dates, as it were, many of His promises according to His sovereign will and in keeping with His perfect knowledge of what is best for us. This in no way diminishes the value of God's promises, for He backs them all with the infinite riches of His character. He never changes His mind. He never forgets His word. He never dies. God may seem to delay the fulfillment of a promise, but we can be encouraged that every promise is as good as His word.

Most of us have come to the end of our resources and then have discovered that at the right time and in the right way God imparted His strength. He was neither slow nor tardy. So don't be discouraged, Christian. Keep on claiming the promises. God is the faithful promiser. - P.R.V.

Hebrews 10:23

Absolutely Trustworthy

He who promised is faithful.--**Hebrews 10:23**

A young paratrooper admitted that he had been frightened the first time he jumped. There was nothing but a big piece of fabric between him and death. What if the fabric accidentally tore apart? What if his ripcord didn't work and the parachute failed to open?

But when he jumped, everything functioned perfectly. Supported by the life-preserving umbrella over his head, the man floated earthward. He said, "I had a release from fear and a marvelous feeling of exhilaration."

What about the promises God makes in the Bible? Will they uphold us in times of crisis? It all depends on whether we believe them to be God's promises -- not merely printed words, black marks on white paper, nor simply the guesses of fallible human beings like ourselves. Because they are the promises of God, we can cling to them with assurance. This will bring relief from fear and impart a deep inner peace.

Throughout the ages, our God has been trusted millions upon millions of times. And He has never been proven untrustworthy. So let's trust Him today and add our personal testimony to that of the countless host of fellow believers who have found that our promise-keeping God is unfailingly faithful. - V C Grounds

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the promises of God.--Carter

Trusting God's faithfulness dispels our fearfulness.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Power of Encouragement

It wasn't like Scott Kregel to give up. He was a battler, a dedicated athlete who spent hour after hour perfecting his three throw and jump shot during the hot summer months of 1987. But just before fall practice everything changed. A serious car accident left Scott in a coma for several days. When he awoke, a long rehabilitation process lay ahead. Like most patients with closed head injuries, Scott balked at doing the slow, tedious work that was required to get him back to normal—things such as stringing beads. What high

school junior would enjoy that?

Tom Martin, Scott's basketball coach at the Christian school he attended, had an idea. Coach Martin told Scott that he would reserve a spot on the varsity for him—if he would cooperate with his therapist and show progress in the tasks he was asked to do. And Tom's wife Cindy spent many hours with Scott, encouraging him to keep going. Within 2 months, Scott was riding off the basketball court on his teammates' shoulders. He had made nine straight free throws to clinch a triple-overtime league victory. It was a remarkable testimony of the power of encouragement.

Church Attendance

Some people don't need much of an excuse to stay home from church. If it even looks like it might rain, they don't want to risk getting a little wet.

The hymn writer Frances Havergal gave several reasons for attending church—especially on rainy days.

1. God has blessed the Lord's Day, making no exceptions for stormy days.
2. I expect my minister to be there. I would be surprised if he stayed at home because of the weather.
3. I might lose out on the prayers and the sermon that would have done me great good.
4. For important business, rain doesn't keep me home; and church is, in God's sight, very important.
5. Bad weather will prove how much I love Christ. True love rarely fails to keep an appointment.
6. Those who stay home from church because it's rainy frequently miss on fair Sundays, too. I mustn't take one step in that direction.
7. Christ said that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).
8. I don't know how many more Sundays God may give me. It would be poor preparation for my first Sunday in heaven to have slighted my last one on earth.

Enough said! P.R.V.

Hebrews 10:25

The Man Who Refused to Attend Church

A book in my library includes a humorous tale about a man who refused to attend church. When a pastor asked him why, he answered, "I don't go to church because every time I do they throw something at me." "What do you mean?" the preacher inquired. The man went on to explain. "When I was just a baby and my parents took me to church, the minister threw water on me. When I got married, the wedding ceremony took place in a church, and they threw rice at me."

Hearing this the pastor quickly responded, "And if you don't start going to church soon, the next time you do I'm afraid they'll throw DIRT on you!"

Sadly, this describes the situation for many people. As far as church attendance is concerned, it's "three times and out." They go to church to be baptized, married, and buried—and that's about all. For an obedient child of God, however, that will never do. He does not forsake "the assembling together commanded in Hebrews 10:25. Rather, thanking God for the church, the dedicated believer takes advantage of the opportunities his local assembly offers for fellowship, for the ministry of God's Word, for the observance of the ordinances, and for service. The church is a special blessing that God Himself has provided for believers. - R W De Haan

Hebrews 10:25

DON'T MISS IT!

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. Hebrews 10:25

At the time these words were written, Jewish believers were experiencing great persecution. They were being watched, beaten, and some were even killed. Any defection from their profession of faith was a source of great satisfaction to the enemies of Christ. One way which demonstrated to the world that they were holding "fast the profession of ... [their] faith" (Heb 10:23) was their assembling together. Matthew Henry wrote, "Forced absence from God's ordinances and forced presence with wicked 'people are great afflictions; but when the force ceases and such a situation is continued of choice, then it becomes a great sin." Some are unavoidably detained from meeting with other believers. Pro-longed illness, an unalterable work schedule, residence in a re-mote

area — these could be legitimate reasons why one could not gather with other Christians, for fellowship and instruction. To such comes the encouragement of His Word, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

Every Christian should desire to be with God's people when they assemble. The church service is where the power of the Word is brought to bear upon the hearts and lives of those who profess to be children of God. I remember well the little widow in our home church who with her eight children walked nearly two miles summer and winter in order to meet with other Christians. She has seen the influence of that training multiplied in the lives of her son and daughters.

Christ's promise to be "in the midst" should be sufficient incentive for every believer to be present.

I love Thy church, O God!

I prize her heavenly ways;

Her sweet communion, solemn vows,

Her hymns of love and praise. — Dwight

CH __ CH means nothing unless **UR** in it!

Hebrews 10:25

Should You Be "Court Martialed?"

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is . Hebrews 10:25

A minister once asked a G.I. to give a few words of testimony. The congregation had just sung, "Like a mighty army moves the Church of God," so when the young soldier arose he said, "You might have been able to sing that hymn some years ago without anyone challenging you, but now millions of men know exactly how an army does move. And it doesn't operate the way a lot of you do. Suppose the military accepted the lame excuses you present as an alibi for not attending services. Imagine this if you can. Reveille sounds, and the squads form on parade ground. The Sergeant barks out, 'Count off! One, two, three ... say, number four is missing. Where's Private Smith?' 'Oh,' says a chap nearby, 'Mr. Smith was too sleepy to get up this morning. He was out late last night and needed the rest. He said to tell you he would be with you in spirit.' 'That's fine,' says the sergeant, 'remember me to him. But where is Brown?' 'Oh, he's playing golf. He gets only one day a week for recreation, and you know how important that is.' 'Sure, sure,' says the sergeant cheerfully, 'I hope he has a good game. Where's Robinson?' 'Robinson,' explains the buddy, 'is sorry not to greet you in per-son but he is entertaining guests today. Besides, he was at drill last week.' 'Thank you,' says the sergeant smiling. 'Tell him he is welcome any time he finds it convenient to drop in for drill.' Honestly, folks, did a conversation like that ever happen in any army? Why, if any G.I. tried to pull that stuff, he would get twenty days in the brig! Yet you hear things like that every week in church. 'Like a mighty army!' Why, if this church really moved like a mighty army, a lot of folks would be court-martialed within the hour!"

Christian, read Hebrews 10:25 again and then ask yourself, "Should I be court-martialed?"

Suppose you had to "run" for church membership each year on the basis of what you had done for Christ during that period, would you be "re-elected"?

Hebrews 10:26

Willful, Determined Renunciation

Today's text speaks of trampling underfoot the precious Son of God. This warning, along with Hebrews 6:1-8, has caused untold agony to many sensitive Christians. It's as if Satan uses Hebrews 6:4 and 10:26 to create hopelessness and despair. But what do these passages teach? F. F. Bruce points out that they refer to people who have deliberately abandoned reliance on the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Raymond Brown said that theirs is not a single act of falling away, but a state of willful, determined renunciation of all dependence on Christ's atoning work. God has no other plan for saving those who regard Christ's sacrifice as useless. - D. J. De Haan

Hebrews 10:32-39

Trudging the Trail

On a warm summer afternoon, three young people and I decided to hike along a five-mile stretch of the picturesque Tahquamenon River in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. We started out with energy and vigor, taking the first few hundred yards with ease. But then the

path began to twist and turn as it followed the river's course. We trudged through low, muddy areas and scrambled up steep ridges. Fallen trees blocked the path, and we had to climb over or crawl under. To cross some of the creeks that flowed into the river, we either jumped or walked gingerly along narrow logs. We weren't sure how far we had to go or what lay ahead. Yet we knew our friends would be waiting at the end of the trail, so we had to keep going.

When we did stop for a brief rest, we talked about some parallels between our obstacle-ridden walk and the Christian life. We usually begin our Christian walk with great vigor, excited about our salvation. But it isn't long before we come upon the twists and turns of temptations and trials. We can get mired in the mud of mediocrity or plunge from the peaks of pride. All sorts of dangers and difficulties block our path. We aren't sure what's ahead, and we get weary and discouraged. But we know what awaits us in eternity, so we "run with endurance" the path that is set before us.

All of us get discouraged and tired at times. How pleasant it would be to stay where we are. When that temptation hovers, we must take a deep breath of the Spirit and keep moving on. For rich rewards await us at the end of the trail. —D C Egner

Falling drops at last will wear the stone.—Lucretius

Hebrews 11:1

Closed Gates

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

Songwriter Oscar Eliason wrote,

"Got any rivers you think are uncrossable? Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?"

He responded to these questions by saying,

"God specializes in things thought impossible."

Every Christian faces obstacles along life's pathway, and walking in God's will doesn't guarantee that our way will be easy. But no matter how difficult, we can trust God and go forward in faith.

At the entrance to a local hospital is an automatic gate designed to rise when a car activates a hidden sensor near the entrance. When I drive up the ramp toward the gate, it remains down, blocking the entrance. But as I get closer, the arm swings up, allowing me to proceed. If I were to park my car a few yards from the entrance, the gate would stay closed. Only when I move forward does it open.

Someone said, "If God built a bridge a yard ahead, it could not be a bridge of faith." It's the first step into the unseen that proves we have faith. Abraham, for example, "went out, not knowing where he was going" (Heb. 11:8). He obeyed God and relied on Him to clear the path.

When we walk in obedience to the Lord and come upon a closed gate, we can confidently take the next step of faith. As we move forward we will see God open the way. —P.R.V.

Faith is the gate between our peril and God's power.

Hebrews 11:3 Ten Words You'll Never Forget

As part of a marketing campaign to attract subscribers, National Geographic magazine produced a remarkable brochure called "10 Pictures You'll Never Forget." Included in the pamphlet were photos such as astronaut Buzz Aldrin on the moon, Mount St. Helens erupting, a

Brazilian jaguar sprawled across a tree branch, and a cherubic Russian schoolgirl signaling her age.

As I gaze at this brochure, I'm reminded that these 10 unforgettable scenes are possible only because of 10 unforgettable words: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Ge 1:1).

In this age of sophisticated sciences, we can be influenced to miss this key point because so much of what we read assumes a godless origin of this world. We need to remind ourselves that God made the moon, mountains, jaguars, and little girls.

Scripture tells many times that God is the first cause behind all that is: "You have made... the

earth" (Ps. 102:25). He is "the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them" (Acts 14:15).

Just 10 words. Don't forget them. They are the foundation of all the beauty and majesty of the

Wind and water, light and sod
Speak so faithfully of God;
Let us give to Him our praise
For the goodness He displays.
-- Anon.

All of creation bears God's autograph.

Hebrews 11:6 Finding God...

Tourists rarely take great photographs. They seldom make the effort to be at the right spot at the right time to get the right angle of light in the right weather conditions. To capture beautiful outdoor pictures, professional photographers are careful to view the scene from different angles, during different seasons, and at different times of day.

This makes me wonder if the reason some people don't have a clear picture of the beauty and glory of God is that they make snap judgments. They come to wrong conclusions about God based on a bad church experience, or an encounter with someone who claims to be a Christian but isn't living like one. They misjudge what the Lord is like and turn away from Him, feeling disillusioned.

The pursuit of God involves more than casual observation. King David told his son Solomon, "If you seek Him, He will be found by you" (1Chronicles 28:9). The psalmist said, "Blessed are those who ... seek Him with the whole heart!" (Psalm 119:2). And the author of Hebrews wrote that God rewards "those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

To see and know God in all His fullness and glory, we can't approach Him like tourists. We need to seek Him at all times, with all our heart.— Julie Ackerman Link

Lord, I am seeking You with all my heart,
With all my soul and all my mind;
For wondrous blessings You alone impart—
In seeking I will surely find. —Hess

To find God, we must be willing to seek Him.

Hebrews 11:8-10 Our Home is Ahead

Now that I'm getting closer to the end of life's journey, I'm thinking more like a transient. I suppose it's natural. Abraham first described himself as "a foreigner and a visitor" when he was buying a burial plot for Sarah (Genesis 23:4). Time and death make you think about such things.

Most elderly believers say the same thing: There's no home for us this side of heaven. Like Pilgrim in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, once we've caught sight of the Celestial City we can never be content with anything less. Like Abraham, we look for a city whose builder is God (Hebrews 11:10).

In Tolkien's *The Lord Of The Rings*, as Frodo and the other hobbits set out on their great adventure, they sing, "Home is behind, the world ahead." But for Christians, it's the other way around: The world is behind; our home is ahead.

There are no valleys of weeping there, for "God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). That promise makes the present journey easier to endure.

Put another way, it's the hope of going home that keeps me going. I can hardly wait to get there! — David H. Roper

I have a home in heaven above,
From sin and sorrow free,
A mansion which eternal love
Designed and formed for me. —Bennett

**The more you look forward to heaven,
the less you'll desire of earth.**

Hebrews 11:13

By Faith

These all died in faith, not having received the promises.- Hebrews 11:13

Every day Lisa and David Holden asked God for a baby. She writes that they prayed

"sometimes with bitter disappointment, sometimes with a confidence that seemed infallible, and sometimes with frustration and a hurt so deep it ached."

Lisa finally conceived, and 4-year-old Peter now brightens their lives.

Lisa and David had close friends who also wanted children. They too prayed fervently about their situation. Eventually they decided to adopt but were told they were too old. Both couples prayed in faith. One request was granted; the other was denied.

In Hebrews 11:11 we read, "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive." But in contrast, when the apostle Paul prayed that his unidentified "thorn in the flesh" be removed from him, the Lord responded, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9), and the "thorn" remained. Even Christ Himself prayed to His heavenly Father that the cup of agony awaiting Him at Calvary

might be taken from Him, but He added, "Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

O Lord, whether or not our deepest longings and most desperate prayers are granted, our faith is in You. Help us to desire Your will above all else. Amen. - DCE

I prayed -- the answer long deferred
Brought not the thing I sought;
He answered better than my plea,
Yes, better than my thought --Anon.

When God's answer is negative, His reason is affirmative.

Hebrews 11:30

Fleeting Opportunity

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days (Hebrews 11:30).

As a sculptor showed a visitor some marble figures displayed in his studio, an unusual sculpture caught the guest's attention. It had two peculiar features. Where the statue's face normally would have been, the sculptor had chiseled a covering of hair, and on both feet were wings.

"What is the name of this one?" asked the visitor.

"Opportunity," the artist answered.

"Why is its face hidden?"

"Because," said the craftsman, "we seldom know opportunity when he comes to us."

"And why does he have wings on his feet?"

"Because he is soon gone, and once gone, he cannot be overtaken."

The apostle Paul spoke of the quickly passing nature of opportunity in Ephesians 5:16. The word time used in this verse can also be translated "opportunity"—suggesting occasions for accomplishing high and noble purposes. But what are these opportunities? They are brief moments of personal contact—the passing incident, the turn of a conversation, or the "chance" meeting of an old acquaintance. Such times present golden opportunities for caring, for witnessing, for eternal good.

Alexander MacLaren, the noted Baptist preacher from England, said,

"Every moment of life is granted us for one purpose: becoming like our dear Lord. That ultimate, all-embracing end is reached through a multitude of near and intermediate ones."

Like the young shepherd David, when our faith is strong we will have the wisdom and courage to see every obstacle as an opportunity. —P.R.V.

To believe only possibilities, is not faith, but mere Philosophy. —Sir Thomas Browne

Hebrews 11:30

BELIEVING GOD

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down... Hebrews 11:30

In the story about Joshua and the city of Jericho, we have a most vivid illustration of faith. God commanded Joshua to gather all the men of war and have them march around Jericho once a day for six days. Then, on the seventh day, they were to compass the city seven times, after which the priests were to blow with the trumpets and all the people were to shout with a great shout. The Lord promised Joshua that if they did this, the walls of the city would fall down flat.

Have you ever tried to put yourself in Joshua's place, and imagine how you would have reacted to such a command? When the Lord gave him these instructions, do you suppose Joshua responded: "Lord, that's a reasonable thing to do. In fact, I'm rather ashamed of myself that I didn't devise such a brilliant plan in the first place. It really makes a lot of sense." Of course, he said nothing of the kind, simply because God's command was not a "reasonable" one to Joshua's mind. That is, he couldn't take out his "slide rule" and calculate scientifically that the predicted results would necessarily follow such actions. And yet, even though some would have ruled it an insane plan thus to attempt the conquest of Jericho, Joshua obeyed God anyway, simply because he had faith! Yes, he was willing to rely on the word of the Lord, despite the fact that it seemed contrary to his own understanding of things. That's what God expects of us today. He wants us to believe His Word — to accept the Bible record in its entirety — whether we can comprehend it or not. There is much in the Book we cannot explain: for example, the Trinity, the virgin birth, Christ's substitutionary death, His resurrection, and His coming again; yet we believe these things with all our heart just because God says so! Remember, without such faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

The tow'ring walls of Jericho did seem a barrier strong,

Yet trumpet blasts and shouts of faith did conquer it ere long; And so today as we go 'round our Jerichos of doubt, Let's trust the Lord for victory; He knows what He's about! —H. G. Bosch

God said it, I believe it; that settles it!

Hebrews 11:30 The Bible Stands

Unbelievers have long scoffed at the biblical story of the fall of the ancient city of Jericho. That's why I was delighted to see this headline on the front page of the newspaper:

NEW STUDY BACKS BIBLICAL VERSION OF JERICHO'S DEMISE

The Associated Press article began, "The walls of Jericho did come tumbling down as recounted in the Bible, according to an archaeological study." Archaeologist Bryant G. Wood of the University of Toronto said, "When we compare the archaeological evidence at Jericho with the biblical narrative describing the Israelite destruction of Jericho, we find remarkable agreement." Wood noted that the Bible places the event after spring harvest and indicates that the Israelites burned the city—both facts confirmed by the archaeological remains. Once again, archaeology bears testimony to the truthfulness of Scripture.

Our belief in the authenticity of the Bible does not depend on scientific research but on its claim to be God's Word. As 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." We can therefore have complete confidence in what it says.

It's a fact—the walls of Jericho did indeed fall. The Bible stands!— Richard De Haan

The Bible stands like a mountain towering
Far above the works of men;
Its truth by none ever was refuted,
And destroy it they never can. —Lillenas
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To the wise, God's Word is sufficient.

Hebrews 11:32-40 In Light of Eternity

Our light affliction... is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2Corinthians 4:17

After the 1991 military coup in Haiti, the international community imposed an embargo on the tiny Caribbean nation. Life for many Haitians became a daily struggle for survival.

A missionary told me about a Christian woman who stood up in a meeting and prayed, "We thank You, Lord, for the embargo. It has taught us to depend more fully on You. And it has given us a greater longing for heaven."

Those believers were able to live joyfully, though weak and undernourished, because they kept their eyes of faith focused on the riches and glory they would one day receive in heaven.

We who enjoy comfortable houses and have plenty of food could learn from our Haitian brothers and sisters who live in one of the poorest countries of the world. We need to look at life with an eternal perspective.

I anticipate the time when all sin and pain and sorrow will have ended. I am troubled by all the suffering and evil in the world. But I'm sure those Haitian believers who were sick and hungry, and who sometimes lived under the fear of being killed, had a greater sense of anticipation than I do.

Lord, help us view life in light of eternity, even when things are going well. -- Herbert Vander Lugt

THINK ABOUT IT - How have difficulties caused you to think more about eternal issues? How can you remember those lessons in good times? Are you looking forward to heaven?

We must walk in the light to keep eternity's values in sight.

Hebrews 12:1

Run with Endurance - Hebrews 12:1 tells us to "run with endurance" the race set before us. George Matheson wrote, "We commonly associate patience with lying down. We think of it as the angel that guards the couch of the invalid. Yet there is a patience that I believe to be harder—the patience that can run. To lie down in the time of grief, to be quiet under the stroke of adverse fortune, implies a great strength; but I know of something that implies a strength greater still: it is the power to work under stress; to have a great weight at your heart and still run; to have a deep anguish in your spirit and still perform the daily tasks. It is a Christlike thing! The hardest thing is that most of us are called to exercise our patience, not in the sickbed but in the street." To wait is hard, to do it with "good courage" is harder!

Weighted Down by Plunder - The army of Alexander the Great was advancing on Persia. At one critical point, it appeared that his troops might be defeated. The soldiers had taken so much plunder from their previous campaigns that they had become weighted down and were losing their effectiveness in combat. Alexander immediately commanded that all the spoils be thrown into a heap and burned.

The men complained bitterly but soon came to see the wisdom of the order. Someone wrote, "It was as if wings had been given to them—they walked lightly again." Victory was assured.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Always Pointing West

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2).

In *The Complete Disciple*, Paul W. Powell describes a picture of a rugged wagon train painted by a famous artist of the American West. It is night, and the wagons have been drawn into a circle for protection. The men are gathered around the campfire, and the wagon master has a map spread out before him. On the map a heavy black line traces the zigzag course they have followed. They had swung north a little, then south, but always toward the west. An argument seems to have erupted about which way to go next. But the leader, with weary determination, has placed one finger on the end of the black line. With his other arm he is pointing toward the shadowy mountains. He seems to be saying, "We may have to go south around a mountain, or north across a river, but our direction will always be west."

Every Christian should have a similar resolve. Running the Christian race is not always easy. High mountains may stand in our way as we continue on the course God has marked out. Difficult circumstances and temptations may cause us to veer in one direction or another. But if we keep our eyes on the goal by "looking unto Jesus," we will not stray from the path He has outlined. As we stay true to the Lord, we will keep heading toward our goal.

And whenever distractions or temptations cause us to stray off course and lose our way, we can look again to Jesus, confess our sin, and He will help us to keep our eyes on the goal. —D C Egner

An obstacle cannot stop us if we keep our eyes on the goal.

Hebrews 12:2

REPRODUCTIONS IN MINIATURE

Looking unto Jesus ... Hebrews 12:2

Many years ago the "High School Christian" related the following pointed incident: A young unknown artist wanted to copy a large beautiful picture that hung in a palace at Rome. While people were permitted to visit this royal gallery, they of course were not allowed to take a chair and easel and sit there and paint for long periods of time. The ambitious young man, however, did make one such attempt, but was told to move. He therefore decided to copy from memory the massive painting, and repro-duce it in miniature. Hour after hour he would spend before the masterpiece until he could shut his eyes and see it in all its lovely detail. Then, hurrying home, he would begin to paint. Each day as he gazed on the picture, he saw some new loveliness. At last his small copy of that outstanding canvas was finished. The people who came to see it said, "Oh, this is so beautiful we must go and see the large, original picture," and then they would hurry off to the palace.

Christian, would you like to be like that artist? By grace you can be, for you can give to others a miniature view of the loveliest Person in the universe — the Lord Jesus Christ. To do so, however, you must spend much time with Him each day reading His Word, listening to His voice, and heeding His blessed ad-monitions. Then, as time passes, you will become more like Him as the Holy Spirit impresses the Savior's graces on your character and life. As a result, others will come to see that the Lord you serve is such a wonderful Person they will want to know Him too.

May the Lord help us to become so conformed to the image of His Son that we will be blessed reproductions in miniature of Him who is altogether lovely!

Oh, to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer,
This is my constant longing and prayer.
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear. — T. O. Chisholm

Be sure you have the "mind of Christ," for the thoughts you think irradiate you as though you were a transparent vase! —Maeterlinck

Hebrews 12:2

Easily Distracted

My son Steven is just beginning to learn the game of soccer. So we spend quite a bit of time kicking the ball around in the front yard. As I've tried to convey to Steven the little I know about the sport, he has developed some of his own strategy. For instance, he said, "I know how to get past my man. When I'm dribbling the ball, I can say, 'Hey, look over there!' When he does, I can dribble past him!"

As simplistic as this strategy of distraction sounds, it's similar to a scheme Satan uses on Christians --and it works. He has developed hundreds of ways to say, "Hey, look over there!" All he has to do is distract us, and he has us doing something other than glorifying God.

One of the goals we should have as we strive to live for the Lord is to keep "looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:2). We look away from Jesus when we put our attention on others to criticize them. We

look away when we let everyday concerns make us worry. We look away when we neglect His Word.

Satan is the great distractor. Let's ignore his urgings and keep our eyes on Jesus. When we do, we will find it easier to live in a way that glorifies God. Then we won't be doing Satan's will (2 Tim. 2:26). -- J D Branon

There's victory for you over sin and its shame:
Look only to Jesus, there's power in His name.
The devil can't harm you nor cause you to sin;
By trusting the Savior the victory you'll win.- Anon.

Satan's ploys are no match for the Savior's power.

Hebrews 12:3

A Hole in the Head

Consider Him who endures. - Hebrews 12:3

Private Raymond Cote was in Germany with the 12th Infantry after World War II. During maneuvers, he was put on sentry duty to guard some pontoons on the banks of the Rhine. Because of an oversight, he was not relieved for 6 days. He knew the general

order that states: "To quit my post only when properly relieved." So he stayed on duty day and night even when it rained heavily. Sympathetic farmers gave him food and milk. When he finally was relieved and got back to his outfit, his commanding officer praised his "strong sense of duty." But some of his buddies wisecracked that Cote had "a hole in his head."

Followers of the Savior also need a strong determination to carry out faithfully whatever duty the Commanding Officer may assign. It may involve much discomfort, perhaps causing people to regard us as having a hole in the head. But our faithful Commander, whose head was lacerated by a crown of thorns, also had holes in His hands, feet, and side because He did His Father's will.

What will strengthen us to remain faithful when tempted to quit some God-assigned post before our Lord properly relieves us? It is the thought of "Him who endures such hostility from sinners against Himself" (Heb. 12:3). - VCG

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care.
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.--Walter

To remain faithful where God has placed you, give God first place in your heart.

Hebrews 12:5-11

Bad Weather

My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction (Proverbs 3:11).

Scientists tell us that the seeds of certain types of desert bushes must be damaged by a storm before they will germinate. Covered by hard shells that keep out water, these seeds can lie dormant on the sand for several seasons until conditions are right for growth. When heavy rains finally bring flash floods, the little seeds are banged against sand, gravel, and rocks as they rush down the slopes. Eventually they settle in a depression where the soil is damp several feet deep. Able to absorb water through the nicks and scratches they acquired on their downhill plunge, they finally begin to grow.

Sometimes Christians are like those seeds. We need bad weather to stimulate our spiritual development. We do not take life seriously until something drastic happens. Although the heavenly Father never allows His children to suffer needlessly, sometimes He lets us experience nicks and scratches that let the water of His Word seep in and soften our hearts.

An unexpected stay in the hospital, stacks of unpaid bills, or family disruption can quickly awaken a sleeping saint. Such difficulties hurt for a while, but if we yield to the Lord we will find that life's bruises can mark the beginning of spiritual advances. Occasionally God will let us be roughed up to grow up. We may prefer to remain seeds, but He wants us to become fruitful trees. —M. R. De Haan II

There are no gains without pains.

Hebrews 12:11: Pain and Gain

Years ago I was an extremely anxious Christian. When I began spiraling downward emotionally, God didn't intervene, for He knew I needed to reach the end of myself. When I finally hit rock bottom, the "rock" on which I fell was Jesus Christ.

The Lord immediately began rebuilding me, applying truths from His Word to teach me trust and faith. Gradually He changed me into the joyful, God-dependent person He intended me to be. Through this painful but profitable experience, I learned that when God disciplines us, our greatest gain isn't what we get but what we become.

In Hebrews 12, we read that our heavenly Father loves us too dearly to let us remain immature. Like any loving father, He disciplines, corrects, and trains us—often through difficult situations. God uses our times of struggle to help us grow and make us more holy (vv.10-11).

Many people are motivated to live for health, wealth, and ease, and they try to avoid pain at all costs. But the abundant life that God intends for His people isn't trouble-free. Growth and change are often unsettling, but the gain is worth the pain.—Joanie Yoder

We shrink from the purging and pruning,
Forgetting the Gardener who knows:
The deeper the cutting and paring
The richer the cluster that grows. —Anon.

God uses setbacks to move us forward.

Hebrews 12:11 Pain is Not Pointless

During times of hardship, I often feel like whining, "Who needs this pain? I certainly don't!" But Isaiah 28 and my own experience tell me this is a shortsighted reaction. Not that we need hardship just for its own sake, but we do need to be changed and to mature. In God's hand, hardship can be an effective tool to bring about our much-needed growth.

In verses 23-28, we read the prophet's "poetic parable," written to help the people of Israel understand how God works and what He intended to accomplish in their lives through tough times. A farmer is portrayed skillfully plowing the ground, planting his crops, and threshing the harvest. If the soil could talk, it might have whined, "Who needs this painful plowing?" But the pain is not pointless. Isaiah said that the farmer is taught by God to work in measured and well-timed ways, handling delicate crops with care and others more vigorously, but always with a sure harvest in view.

Our reassurance during tough times is that the farmer's God is our God, "who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance" (v.29). His dealings with us are always thoughtful and purposeful, producing in us "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11).—Joanie Yoder

God has a purpose in our heartaches—
The Savior always knows what's best;
We learn so many precious lessons
In every sorrow, trial, and test. —Jarvis

When you trust in God, pain is an opportunity for progress.

Hebrews 12:7-11 Out of the Thorns

The gorse bush is a shrub that was imported from Europe and now grows wild in the Pacific Northwest. It has dense, dark green shoots, and in springtime it provides a dazzling display of fragrant, vibrant yellow flowers. But it's best known by hikers and fishermen for its vicious spines.

Remarkably, the flowers grow right out of the thorns.

Missionary and artist Lilius Trotter wrote, "The whole year round the thorn has been hardening and sharpening. Spring comes—the thorn does not drop off, it does not soften. There it is as uncompromising as ever, but half-way up appear two brown fuzzy balls, mere specks at first, that break at last—straight out of last year's thorn—into a blaze of golden glory."

So it is with the suffering that accompanies God's chastening. Just when our situation seems hopeless and hardest to bear, tiny signs of life appear that will soon burst into bloom. Take the toughest issue, the most difficult place. There, God in His grace can cause His beauty to be seen in you.

No chastening seems pleasant at the time, "Yet when it is all over we can see that it has quietly produced the fruit of real goodness in the characters of those who have accepted it in the right spirit" (Hebrews 12:11 Phillips).- David H. Roper

For all the heartaches and the tears,
For gloomy days and fruitless years
I do give thanks, for now I know
These were the things that helped me grow! —Crandlemire

God's hand of discipline is a hand of love.

Hebrews 12:12-24 Road Builders

The cover of a recent Our Daily Bread pictures a leaf-strewn road through the mountains of Vermont. Those who use the road can enjoy a smooth and beautiful ride over difficult terrain. To make this possible, others had to work hard to chart the route, clear the trees, and level the rough spots.

In a way, all Christians are road builders. We are paving the way of faith for the next generation. The faithfulness of our lives may determine how difficult their journey will be. Will they have to repair the damage we have done to the road? Will they be able to build new roads for others to find the way to God?

To be good road builders, we must heed the advice found in God's Word. The author of Hebrews instructed us to live in peace and be holy (12:14), to make sure no one misses the grace of God, and not to permit a root of bitterness to grow and cause trouble

(v.15).

Those of us who have come to Jesus owe gratitude to those who have made "straight paths" for our walk of faith (v.13). In turn, we must remember those who will follow us and make straight paths for them. Let's practice our faith in a way that makes it easy for others to come to Jesus and to follow Him. What kind of road builder are you?— Julie Ackerman Link

Oh, may all who come behind us find us faithful;
May the fire of our devotion light their way;
May the footprints that we leave lead them to believe,
And the lives we live inspire them to obey. —Mohr
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A life lived for God leaves a lasting legacy.

Hebrews 12:25-13:6 Frozen Snowball

Baseball pitcher Tug McGraw had a wonderful philosophy of pitching. He called it his "frozen snowball" theory. "If I come in to pitch with the bases loaded," Tug explained, "and heavy hitter Willie Stargell is at bat, there's no reason I want to throw the ball. But eventually I have to pitch. So I remind myself that in a few billion years the earth will become a frozen snowball hurtling through space, and nobody's going to care what Willie Stargell did with the bases loaded!"

The Bible tells us the earth will someday "melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). Yet McGraw's point is valid: We need to keep life in perspective. Most of the things we worry about have no eternal significance.

The writer of Hebrews was concerned about our perspective. Throughout the book, he keeps our eyes focused on heaven and away from earth. Unless our minds are on heaven, we will have little eternal influence on earth.

There will come a time when the earth will be shaken, and things that once seemed permanent will be gone (Hebrews 12:27). What you fear most today will be forgotten like yesterday's headlines. What really matters is what you do today that has a touch of eternity about it.— Haddon W. Robinson

O for a heart that is willing to serve,
Laboring while it is day!
Nothing is lost that is done for the Lord,
He will reward and repay. —Anon.

The one who lives for this life only will have eternity to regret it.

Hebrews 12:25-29: He Is A Fire

On December 5, 2002, the headline announced:

Ring Of Fire Encircles Sydney

A firestorm was raging outside the Australian city. Many people feared that this bushfire would prove to be Sydney's worst in decades. Fanned by strong winds, high temperatures, and low humidity, the fire jumped across roads and rivers, consuming everything in its path.

When we think about the destructive power of that kind of inferno, we gain a better understanding of the startling words of Hebrews 12:29, "Our God is a consuming fire."

Why did the author of Hebrews use such graphic imagery to describe the Lord? In his letter he was dealing with spiritual life-and-death issues—what his readers believed and the reality of their faith. Their response would reveal whether they were investing their lives in the kingdom that will last forever, or in the one destined for destruction.

We too need to remember that this world and all we possess are only temporary. If our faith and hope are in Jesus Christ, we are part of a kingdom that cannot be destroyed (v.28). Knowing that our days on earth are numbered and that "our God is a consuming fire," let us serve Him and invest in things that are imperishable.— Albert Lee

Our God is a consuming fire
And will destroy earth's temporal things;
He seeks to purify our lives

Hold tightly to what is eternal and loosely to what is temporal.

Hebrews 12:25,29: Revelation & Response...

Read: Romans 1:18-32

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks... For our God is a consuming fire. --Hebrews 12:25,29

I tried to tell Felix about my faith. He was polite, but he said he would rather not discuss religion. His goal in life was to be a decent person and to find as much enjoyment as he could. He had concluded that death ends everything. He said he was happy with his beliefs.

Apparently Felix refused to think seriously about God's revelation of Himself in nature (Job 38; Ps. 19:1-6; Ro 1:20) and within his own conscience (Ro 1:18-21; 2:14-16).

God has revealed Himself in the created world, in our inner nature, and in the Bible. All people are responsible for what they do with God's self-disclosure. We can rationalize away His revelation in the created world. We can refuse the inner witness of our conscience. We can reject the Bible. But those responses lead to hell.

The best and most appropriate response to God's revelation is awe, acknowledgment of sin, and confession. This leads to forgiveness, inner peace, and everlasting life.

If you've rejected God's revelation of Himself, repent and turn to Him before it's too late. If you've decided to open your heart to Jesus Christ, you can be sure you'll be welcomed into His presence for all eternity. --H V Lugt

The Lord reveals Himself to you
In many different ways;
So don't reject and turn away;
Instead, give Him your praise. --Sper

Sooner or later you'll have to face God.

Hebrews 13:16: Give Thanks And Remember

One of today's most popular syndicated newspaper columns is "Dear Abby." Started in 1956 by Abigail Van Buren, the advice column is written today by her daughter Jeanne Phillips. In a recent edition, she included this Thanksgiving Prayer written many years before by her mother:

O Heavenly Father:

We thank Thee for food
and remember the hungry.

We thank Thee for health
and remember the sick.

We thank Thee for friends
and remember the friendless.

We thank Thee for freedom
and remember the enslaved.

May these remembrances
stir us to service.

That Thy gifts to us may be used
for others. Amen.

The words of this prayer echo the clear teaching of Scripture. Our thanksgiving to God should always be accompanied by thinking of those in need. "Therefore," said the writer to the Hebrews, "by [Jesus] let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

But there is more to it than thankfulness. We are to put actions behind our gratitude. "Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (v.16).

Be thankful for God's many blessings, but be sure to remember those who have less.— David C. McCasland

Serving others is a way of thanking God.

Hebrews 13:5: God's Astonishing Promise

The writer to the Hebrews quotes God as saying to His people, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). How does that strike you? Is it just some pleasant piety that evokes a wide yawn?

This isn't like saying we have coffee with the President or a Supreme Court justice. Knowing people like that would say something significant about us. But to claim that God is with us every moment of every day, as close as our skin, in every turn of life, tear-stained or drenched in smiles—some would say that borders on insanity.

Yet throughout history men and women have staked their lives on that truth. Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Joshua, David, Esther, just to name a few. The promise was true for them, but how can we know it's true for us?

It is true for us because of Jesus. By His coming, He says, "I want to be with you; I gave Myself to you; I gave Myself for you. Do you really think I would ever forsake you?"

How do you respond to this astonishing promise? Say it's too good to be true. Say it sounds unbelievable. But don't ignore it. In your hurts, your fears, your struggles, your temptations, there is no more wonderful promise than this: "I will never leave you nor forsake you."— Haddon W. Robinson

Though all around is darkness,
Earthly joys have flown;
My Savior whispers His promise
Never to leave me alone. —Anon.

No matter where you go, God goes with you.

Hebrews 13:14 Glad to Get Home

In wintertime, a condition known as a "whiteout" sometimes occurs along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The air becomes so filled with powdery snow that you can't see more than a few feet ahead. You feel totally helpless, especially if you're driving, and that's what we were doing on a bitterly cold December day.

Our family had been invited to my sister's house for Christmas dinner. As we headed west toward Lake Michigan, the weather became treacherous, but we made it to our destination. Later, however, as we were driving home after dark, the situation grew even worse. The expressway was covered with ice, traffic slowed to a crawl, and several cars were in the ditch. Then all at once we were enveloped by a brief whiteout. Believe me, it was frightening. After a slow, tedious journey, we finally reached Grand Rapids and pulled into our driveway. I think every member of the family said, "I'm sure glad to get home!"

I wonder if we'll have a similar feeling when we enter heaven. The dangerous "whiteouts" of our earthly journey will be over. The temptations, stresses, and failures will all be in the past. Best of all, we'll be safe with our Savior.

Yes, we'll be so glad to get home!— David C. Egner

When we all get to heaven,
What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus,
We'll sing and shout the victory. —Hewitt

Heaven for the Christian is best spelled H-O-M-E.

Hebrews 13:15: Be Filled With Thankfulness

Throughout history, many cultures have set aside a time for expressing their thankfulness. In the US, Thanksgiving Day originated with the pilgrims. In the midst of extreme hardship, loss of loved ones, and meager supplies, they still believed they were blessed. They chose to celebrate God's blessings by sharing a meal with Native Americans who had helped them survive.

We know we've lost the spirit of that original celebration when we catch ourselves complaining that our Thanksgiving Day has been "spoiled" by bad weather, disappointing food, or a bad cold. It's we who are spoiled—spoiled by the very blessings that should make every day a day of thanksgiving, whatever our circumstances.

Billy Graham wrote, "Ingratitude is a sin, just as surely as is lying or stealing or immorality or any other sin condemned by the Bible." He then quoted Romans 1:21, one of the Bible's indictments against rebellious humanity. Then Dr. Graham added, "Nothing turns us into bitter, selfish, dissatisfied people more quickly than an ungrateful heart. And nothing will do more to restore contentment and the joy of our salvation than a true spirit of thankfulness."

Which condition describes you?— Joanie Yoder

A grumbling mood of discontent

Gives way to thankfulness

When we consider all God's gifts

And all that we possess. —Sper

Gratitude is a God-honoring attitude.