



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McFee*

HEBREWS

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of Hebrews heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/Hebrews (or any book of the Bible).

The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 1	JESUS, EXALTED OVER ALL.....1
LESSON 2	THE GLORY OF JESUS, HIGHER THAN THE ANGELS9
LESSON 3	JESUS, OUR HEAVENLY HERO 18
LESSON 4	JESUS LIFTS YOUR UNBELIEF 27
LESSON 5	JESUS, YOUR MERCIFUL HELPER 36
LESSON 6	JESUS, OUR HIGH PRIEST FOREVER44
LESSON 7	STAY CLOSE TO JESUS IN EVERYTHING 53
LESSON 8	JESUS, OUR PERFECT HIGH PRIEST IN HEAVEN... 62
LESSON 9	HEAVENLY WORSHIP..... 70
LESSON 10	A NEW HEAVENLY WORSHIP 79
LESSON 11	THE POWER OF CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGEMENT ... 88

LESSON 12

COURAGEOUS FAITH.....96

LESSON 13

MORE HEROES OF THE FAITH106

LESSON 14

THE FAITH OF RAHAB—
AN UNEXPECTED HERO115

LESSON 15

OUR ETERNAL HOPE122

LESSON 16

SPEAK HIS NAME131

LESSON 17

THE MOTIVE OF LOVE.....139

LESSON 1

JESUS, EXALTED OVER ALL



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews Intro–1:2**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to *Hebrews Intro* and *Hebrews 1:1, 2*

The letter to the Hebrews shines as one of the brightest reflections of the wonder and superiority of Jesus Christ our Lord. To study this New Testament letter is to experience the person and glory of Jesus at the highest and deepest levels humanly possible. Jesus is exalted over all things—all religious figures past, present, and future—and exists as the sovereign Creator Lord of the universe who became human to lead you back to God.

Likely written by the apostle Paul to a group of Jewish Christians feeling the weight of persecution under the mad reign of Rome's Nero, Hebrews offers strong words for struggling Christians urging them not to shrink under pressure but to stand firm in the power of Jesus.

The opening theme of this grand symphonic letter rings with reflections on the wonder and power of God's voice—having once thundered to the world through the prophets and preachers of old and in many varied and exciting ways, God speaks powerfully and with grace and mercy in the person of His Son, Jesus. In the book of Hebrews, as in the book of Genesis, no attempt is made to prove God's existence. Both books *assume* God exists in wonder and majesty and unlimited power. Only look briefly into the starry summer night and know for certain God lives and exists in majesty and power (see Psalm 91:1). To deny such truths is to reveal a certain foolishness regarding the reality of God (Psalm 14:1).

But God exists not only to show His glory and reveal His gracious will, He also speaks and chooses to reveal to us His wisdom, grace, guidance, instruction, correction, and love. He is a God who speaks. He does not keep secrets—He resists teasing us with riddles or banishing us to a life of attempting to unlock hidden codes or cryptic messages. No, no, no! Our God speaks loudly—even softly—but deliberately, so we can know Him and experience His boundless goodness in every aspect of our lives. This is Hebrews: A beautiful, powerful reminder that God has spoken and continues to speak and wants us to hear His voice.

So, it makes perfect sense that the Creator God would determine to reach out to us and speak. That message is encompassed fully in what we know as the inspired Word of God, or the Bible—Genesis to Revelation. The first verse of Hebrews assumes the Scriptures we have are divinely inspired, meaning the Scriptures were brought into existence by the power of the Holy Spirit through human writers. All of God’s Word flows through the personalities and imaginations of human writers whom God supernaturally enabled to write each and every word (see 2 Peter 1:21). A miracle, indeed!

As you read the Old Testament, you agree with the writer of Hebrews that God spoke in many ways and in many different times and settings to reveal His gracious will and purposes for the world He had made. He spoke to Adam and Eve, He revealed Himself to Abraham, He preached directly to Moses and then through Him to Pharaoh, and offered redemption to the Hebrews suffering in slavery.

Later in God’s story He spoke to kings, like David and Hezekiah, and through many prophets, like Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Jonah. In fact, to David God revealed that a heavenly King would be coming in his line who would be the Savior of the world (see 2 Samuel 7). God did not offer that message to Moses, nor did He choose to reveal that to Abraham. But He did promise to bless the whole world through Abraham’s obedience and faith. God gave Moses a law that Israel was not to have an earthly king because God would be their king. God, however, knew the human heart, and in time Israel wanted to be like the other nations and have a human king. It was marvelous how God moved in a time like that. He granted their request, although He sent leanness to their souls. He used that as the method of revealing the world’s need for a Savior—to the Jews, the promised Messiah. God did not give all of His truth to Abraham, but added to it as He spoke through different individuals through the years. Then in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son. That truth develops throughout the Bible.

God was not limited in the way in which He spoke, either. Often, He appeared in dreams, spoke through the elements of nature (like wind and fire), sent angelic messengers with His divine oracles, and even spoke at times through animals (Numbers 22:28). He used all these different ways over a long period of time, using about 45 writers and communicating His Word over a period of 1500 years. How wonderfully faithful of God to continue to speak to us through the generations.

The multiplicity of writers included in God's Word alone makes the Bible a remarkable book. God used many human authors to write the Bible. He used people with varied ethnic, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds to reveal His Word. He could speak through a gifted orator like Isaiah as well as an uneducated fisherman like Simon Peter. Some writers through whom God spoke were gifted in language, like Jeremiah and Paul. Others, like Amos in the Old Testament and John in the New Testament, were tradesmen, farmers, fishermen, and carpenters—yet all were supernaturally enabled to pen God's gracious truth. In the Old Testament, God spoke through the prophets, often and in many situations and settings, each bringing God's lofty revelation down to where the rubber meets the road. He used the language they used down on the waterfront. He delivered truth in the lyrical refrains of poets. Through these diverse personalities, truth blazed like new light into the shabby, often sin-laden, lives of those who would hear and receive the powerful message from God. These great prophets thundered God's truth to all who would hear—and they did so courageously and faithfully. Then came the dawn of the New Testament—the fullness of time, governed by the gracious Spirit of God—when God finally, completely, adequately, and assuredly spoke by His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus came. God came down to earth and revealed Himself in the person of His only Son (John 1:1).

God has spoken finally through His Son—literally, “spoken to us by His Son.” The writer of Hebrews declares with certainty that we now have the last word from God to this world in Jesus Christ. God, in effect, introduced His Son to the world and invites all of us to listen to Him (Matthew 17:5).

Jesus Christ remains superior to all the Old Testament writers, because all revelation fills up in Him. He fulfills all of the Old Testament, and He Himself gives God's final word to all of us. Jesus Christ Himself made clear to His followers and all who heard Him teach that the same Holy Spirit that moved in the hearts and through the voices of the prophets would now receive from Him and make known to them God's final and comprehensive Word (see John 16:12-15). Everything is wrapped up beautifully and comprehensively in all He would do and say.

Jesus offers so much more than simply the mere spoken Word of God. He has been appointed by God the Father as the “heir of all things” (v. 2). Everything created, known and unknown, visible and invisible. All things in the seen and unseen universe belong to Jesus, God’s Son, the final Word. And not only does everything in the universe belong to Jesus, but everything was also created by Him, for Him, and through Him.

The Old Testament reveals to us that God gave to Adam, the first human, dominion over all of creation (Genesis 1:26). But Adam was no mere gardener or caretaker of rose gardens and vineyards. God gave Adam *dominion*, which has to do with rulership. God placed all creation under his care and rule. Initially, Adam ruled over creation with immense power and likely supernatural abilities. Yet, he lost all of that when he rebelled against God. When sin entered Adam’s heart, he relinquished his God-ordained dominion over the earth.

When the Lord Jesus came to this earth, He became a man. He performed miracles in every realm. He ruled over the afflictions of the human body. He had control of nature—He calmed storms, and He fed countless hungry people. He recovered what Adam had lost. The Lord Jesus exists as the ultimate *heir* of all things. Ultimately, Jesus Christ is the One who inherits everything in all of creation. No prophet in the Old Testament was ever promised anything like that. Jesus Christ is superior to everything and everyone God ever used to reveal His plans and purposes for the world.

Jesus not only rules over the world and the entire universe, He created all of it—and that creation extends not only to the physical world and all things seen and unseen, but also to the ages. Jesus’ creative power means He ordains and governs the unfolding of all human endeavors, activities, seasons, as well as all times past, present, and into the eternal future. He not only made the world, He made the ages to come and holds in His power the purposes for everything.

Not only did He create everything, He did it for a purpose.

God, in Jesus, has a program and purpose in everything—especially your wonderful life, whether you believe that or not. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, you can trace the various times and periods when God spoke uniquely and powerfully to His people and to the world. All those times and periods belong to Jesus and find their purpose and meaning in Him. From Abraham to Moses, to the kings and chronicles, to the fiery prophets thundering warnings to the fickle tribes of Israel, to the waiting and longing

peasants trapped in sin's dark shroud at the dawn of the New Testament, God spoke and revealed Himself until finally He spoke to us in Jesus! Jesus, the Creator and Ruler of all created things and times, brought grace and truth, hope and healing, freedom and peace, to a desperate world in need of Him. Now we have hope.

Now you can be saved by the grace He offers. Not through the Law, by which once God spoke, but in Jesus. You can tell Jesus your need for mercy and grace. In Him, you can find everything you need to bring you to God. No one can measure up to the righteous standard God has set and revealed to the world through the great prophets of old. But that's why now He has spoken to you in His Son, Jesus. Because He knows what you need. You need a word of grace, you need a word of truth, you need a word of forgiveness. Now in these last days God has spoken that Word in His Son who declares to you, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)!

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of this universe. And there is purpose to all of it, including to your life, because of Him. Just as sure as the rising of the sun and the sparkling orbit of the shining moon, Jesus faithfully and graciously governs the world He made as well as each aspect of your life. This is no mad, unpredictable universe in which you live and are left to fend for yourself. Everything belongs to Jesus, and He holds all things perfectly in place "by the word of His power" (v. 3). And that includes your life, too. He speaks to you today.

NEXT: Learn more about the majesty and deity of Jesus, God's Son.

7. Imagine God had consulted you before He began his work of creation. What would you have asked Him to do differently? How do even the parts of creation we don't like or understand (sickness, mosquitos, earthquakes, etc.) show us something about God?

LESSON 2

THE GLORY OF JESUS, HIGHER THAN THE ANGELS



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 1:2–2:10**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to *Hebrews 1:2, 3, Hebrews 1:3-7, Hebrews 1:8–2:4*, and *Hebrews 2:5-10*

We know so much about God the Father, in part from the revelation He has given in His Son. Dim reflections of Jesus Christ peek through the pages of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, but the spotlight focuses brightly on Jesus in the New Testament book of Hebrews. No one has seen God, but He is known through His Word and through the living Word, Jesus Christ. Just as the rays of the sun with their warmth and light reveal the nature of the physical sun, so the Lord Jesus reveals God to us. If you see and understand and begin to reflect on Jesus, you will start to see and understand God, because Jesus is the “express image” of His Father (v. 3).

Jesus Christ is the revelation of God because He *is* God. He is not just the printed material; He is the steel engraving of God, because He is the exact copy, the image of God (Colossians 2:9). He is wonderful.

Jesus not only created all things by His command, but He holds everything in the universe together—every moving galaxy, solar system, the orbits of countless planets, and everything else imaginable—all held in perfect coordination by His powerful voice.

His mission in coming to earth included offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice for sin when He died on the cross. In that great act of love, Jesus “by Himself purged our sin” (v. 3). And after doing that, He ascended to heaven, to return to His honored place at the Father’s right hand. And it is from that place that He controls the universe, holding all things together by the word of His command.

But it gets better! Jesus received glory and majesty upon His return to the Father’s throne. Something in heaven exists there now as reality that was not there in eternity past: The glory of Jesus is present in this exalted place, His nail-pierced hands and side—each reminders of His becoming flesh to purchase our salvation. His sitting down at the Father’s right hand shows us that the great work of redemption is complete—complete in Jesus.

Our Jesus is superior to the angels. This was an important truth for the first readers of Hebrews to embrace since they were Jewish Christians. Many of these believers had an over-fascination with angels, as well as being enamored with their spiritual heritage wrapped up in the Law of Moses, Abraham, and the prophets. They needed a fresh reminder that Jesus was all they needed.

Many passages from the Old Testament support this compelling truth:

- The king proclaims the Lord’s decree: *“The LORD has said to me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’”* –Psalm 2:7
- *Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.* –Psalm 45:6
- *Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, who boast of idols. Worship Him, all you gods.* –Psalm 97:7
- *Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end.* –Psalm 102:25-27
- *Who walks on the wings of the wind, who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.* –Psalm 104:3-4
- *The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”* –Psalm 110:1

Each of these powerful psalms reveal the deity of Jesus and show that nothing like this was ever spoken of about angels or any other individual revered by God's people. Jesus remains superior in every possible way, because He is God's exalted Son.

Christ is the Son; angels are servants. Christ is King; angels are subjects. Christ is the Creator; angels are creatures. Christ at this moment is waiting until His enemies will be made His footstool. The Father never gave such a promise to an angel, but He says one day His Son will rule over everything.

Yet, that exalted state does not disqualify Him from being able to represent you and all of sinful humanity before a holy God. Though He is exalted, He became lowly in order to bring you back to God.

Ready for more good news? You have a representative in heaven in the person of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

And though Satan has access to God as your accuser (Revelation 12:10), Jesus stands in your place before the Father and forever pleads your case to Him. That's why believers must pay attention to the warning regarding the peril of falling away from the faith. God wants you to make a deliberate commitment to pay attention to your faith and not to neglect the things of God in your life. That's the only safeguard against the drifting away from the faith.

Moreover, God always responds negatively to the heart of unbelief. In other words, just as sure as there are blessings that come in believing God's Word, there are sure consequences for rejecting His gracious message. Look what happened to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah when they ignored the angelic warning of God's certain judgment. Both cities met their fiery end and all their inhabitants because they discounted the message of God (see Genesis 18-19). If God responded with such fierce anger to those who ignored the message of angels, how much more important for us to embrace and believe the message delivered by His exalted Son, Jesus Christ.

Still, the humanity of Jesus must not be overlooked. No angel was ever subjected and made low enough to pay the penalty for all sinful humanity. Only Jesus willingly accepted that humble position when He became human (see Philippians 2:6-8). Only Jesus, not angels, was destined to rule over the future of the world (Hebrews 2:5), because He gave His life to save it.

Not only have angels not ruled in the past, they will not rule in the future. They have been servants and messengers in the past, and they will continue to be servants in the future. You have only to rehearse the refrains of the

psalms to understand God's perspective of the wonder of Jesus' humanity: "For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:5).

God made man lower than the angels at creation. Psalm 8 makes it abundantly clear that humans were made lower than the angels. Yet, Jesus—the God-man, who is higher than the angels—willingly humbled Himself to a position lower than angels to bring about our redemption.

The Jewish believers to whom Hebrews was written needed to understand that, though Jesus became lower than the angels, He was exalted above all things, including angels, the Law, and Moses, and is now sitting in the place of highest honor in heaven. Maybe you need to embrace that truth as well?

Ultimately, God's purpose for humanity is to honor us and exalt us as displays of His amazing workmanship—His ultimate creative achievement. Though created beings, angels were never given that astounding distinction. In fact, the Bible teaches us that people who trust God in Jesus will one day be joint heirs with Him and join Him in ruling over all God's universe for eternity. No angel was created for that purpose.

Though diminished from honor and cut off from God by sin's condemning power, humanity will once again be exalted to a place of honor by virtue of their relationship to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

You can join the psalmists of old and agree that the earth and the world's systems do not appear to be under the rule of Jesus. Yet, ultimately, that is precisely what God has ordained to occur. That everything—all known entities, governments, created powers both seen and unseen—will bow in humble submission to Jesus Christ, God's exalted Son. And you, as one who believes in Him by faith, will join Him in that exalted position (Romans 8:17).

God remains sovereign and Jesus sits in heaven as ruler and exalted king over all the universe. But He is not ruling in totality today. Yet, despite all the brokenness and heartache experienced around us, Hebrews declares that we can see Jesus as Savior and Lord. We see Him as the answer to our deepest need. We see Him as a friend to sinners. We see Him as our eternal High Priest. We see Him as He is, seated in power and glory at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

He literally came low enough to “taste death” for us so we would never experience the brunt of death’s blow. He became sin for us, He lovingly subjected Himself to gruesome suffering and humbly gave His life in our place. And it was in that horrible suffering that Jesus was made to be the perfect substitute for us to lead us back to God.

Because of what the Lord Jesus has done, we behold Him. We see Jesus. Not casually, but vividly and experientially. The word means we look upon Him with understanding and an embracing trust. We recognize that in Him is something our frail minds can never grasp, but that we can know. We look upon Him in faith, in trust, in wonder, in awe, and in worship. All of this comes wrapped in the phrase, “We see Jesus.” Do *you* see Him today? Have you opened your eyes to see Jesus for who He is?

At the dawn of the New Testament, the story of Jesus begins with a visit to a humble servant named Joseph. He was engaged to be married to Mary, who would become the mother of Jesus. One night in a dream, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in order to deliver to him a life-altering message from God: “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21).

That’s why Jesus was made a little lower than the angels. To become the Savior of the world. For that brief time He was on earth (33 years), He was made lower than the angels in order to fulfill the holy purposes of God.

He was made a little lower than angels in order to suffer and to die.

He was made a little lower than the angels in order to receive a crown of glory and honor.

He was made a little lower than the angels to redeem the world from sin.

He was made a little lower than the angels to lead us back to God in glory.

He wasn’t crowned with glory and honor by His death but because He came to this earth and died on the cross for us. Today, Jesus reigns in glory and honor. Though in eternity past He existed as the second Person of the Godhead, because He humbled Himself in obedience to suffering and death on the cross God exalted Him, in human form, to the place of highest honor—where He now intercedes for you before the Father’s throne. That’s the good news of Hebrews! Because He took upon Himself humanity, He was given glory and honor in heaven that wasn’t there before.

Jesus tasted death. He felt the sting of dying, of being laid in a dark and bitter grave. He went through all of that to satisfy the righteous demands of a holy God. No angel could have done that. Moses would have failed. Abraham was not up for that task. Only Jesus. Only He could receive the bitter cup of suffering. And He did. Pressed against His parched lips, Jesus drank every bit of it, including death. He did this for you.

Will you trust Him? Will you believe?

NEXT: Learn about the suffering of Jesus and what it meant for our salvation.

LESSON 2



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Jesus doesn't just tell us about God, but He shows us God. What is the difference, and why is it important?
2. For us, life can frequently feel out of control. But if Jesus truly holds the universe together by His word, how should that change the way we think about the things which overwhelm us?
3. Why was it important that the readers of the book of Hebrews understand that Jesus was superior to angels?

7. Imagine the Old Testament prophets could have foreseen exactly how God, in the person of Jesus, would fulfill the prophecies He gave them. What do you think their reactions would have been?

LESSON 3

JESUS, OUR HEAVENLY HERO



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 2:10-18**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 2:10-17** and **Hebrews 2:9-18**

In a time when just about everyone needs a hero, Hebrews delivers above and beyond anyone you could possibly imagine. Jesus is a dual wonder: He's not only fully God (exact in nature and likeness to God the Father), He's also fully human. He left all the benefits and surroundings of His deity in heaven to become a man, to live and love and listen and receive and know firsthand the full human experience, and ultimately to suffer and die as all humans do. Jesus was not merely a man in whom God did something. Neither does the humanity of Jesus mean He was some sort of religious genius. It doesn't mean He was a martyr to a cause. It doesn't mean He merely set a good example for all of us to follow. When Christ became human, He came to redeem the world from sin.

In His coming, Jesus accomplished two primary things: He received glory and honor to His name; and He personally accomplished everything required to redeem all humanity from sin. Christ took humanity to heaven. Not only is the glorified Son of Man in glory, but now heaven is home to a glory in Him that was not there before.

Who better than Jesus to lead all of us with Him to a glory we have never known? One of God's present purposes for your life is to cause you to

experience His glory through your relationship to Jesus. The future gets even more exciting, as God has determined all Christians will reign with Him as part of His eternal kingdom (Psalm 2).

God is moving forward with that program, but right now He is calling out a people for His name; He is bringing many sons and daughters to experience His glory. People all over the world, from every imaginable walk of life and background, are now turning to God by faith in Jesus Christ and experiencing glory new to heaven and earth.

Jesus leads all of that. In essence, Jesus earned that place of honor through the suffering He endured while on earth and, ultimately, by subjecting Himself to death on the cross. He is our captain (Hebrews 12:2) and the “Prince” of our faith (Acts 3:15). Everything we know and experience from the goodness of God begins with Jesus.

He originated our salvation, and He completed it by coming down to this earth and taking upon Himself our humanity. What did He do when He came to earth? He tasted death for every one of us. He came to redeem the world and to bring about our salvation. He revealed God on earth, and today He represents us as our hero in heaven.

But while on earth, God subjected His Son to the most intense suffering. And in that human, physical suffering, Jesus became the perfect substitute for us, in taking away our sin. He did everything God the Father required for all of us to come back to Him. Jesus did that—for you and for everyone.

In other words, He was “made perfect” through suffering. Although He was the Son of God, His perfect life doesn’t save us. His virgin birth doesn’t save us. Even His powerful words in all His teaching don’t save us. His miracles don’t save us, nor does His example save us. Only His death on the cross can save us. Jesus came down to earth and took upon Himself our humanity in all its sinfulness. Because He suffered and died on the cross, He was made complete and is able to bring us to God. And anyone who trusts Him as a result becomes part of His family. Jesus becomes your brother in the Lord. How wonderful is that?

You become part of Jesus’ holy family through the process of sanctification, which means to “be made holy and pure.” Jesus makes you holy when you put your trust in Him and what He did for you on the cross. Sanctification is a process that happens over time in believers’ lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does an inner work of God in us to make us the

kind of representatives He needs on earth. It is the work of the Spirit of God in the heart of the redeemed. However, sanctification is not a *condition* but a *position* believers have in Christ. He came as the holy One who took the place of the unholy (that's all of us) that He might bring us to God. He has brought us now into the family of God.

That's why Jesus loves to call believers "family," His brothers and sisters. You become part of God's family when you believe in Jesus. Jesus lives as the firstborn among all of God's children and as the *head* of the family. When you trust in Him, He sees you as His new brother or sister in the Lord.

Even the psalmist, centuries before the birth of Jesus, made reference to the glory He would bring to those who believe, writing, "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You" (Psalm 22:22). At first, Psalm 22 emphasizes the humiliation of Christ and points to the words Jesus uttered in His final moments before death. But then the psalmist describes joyfully His exaltation and the time in which Jesus would declare victory over all God's people! Though at the time the psalm pointed to God's people in Israel, there is a clear overtone related to the church, the Bride of Christ, joined to Jesus by faith. That includes you, if you belong to Him.

The psalmist was not the only Old Testament writer to look ahead to Jesus. Isaiah did too, writing, "And I will wait on the LORD, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; And I will hope in Him. Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion" (Isaiah 8:17-18).

That Old Testament passage shows how the Holy Spirit interprets Scripture. Many scholars stick close to an interpretation of the Old Testament prophets that eliminates any reference to Jesus Christ. In fact, Isaiah's words here seem to be only referring to the sons of Isaiah. But the writer of Hebrews, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, presents the prophet's words as evidence of Jesus' incarnation and His relationship to believers.

Jesus became like us in order to experience the fullness of our humanity—feeling the weakness of living in the flesh and blood of our bodies, knowing what it feels like to be human. He went through all of that just like we do. That makes Jesus more ready and able to understand what we go through every day.

Ultimately, His death brought about our salvation. In dying in our place for our sins, He removed not only the impact spiritually of death, but also the fear of dying. Because Jesus went there for us, when we trust Him we no

longer fear the experience of death. In His death Jesus saves us—not by His birth or by His life. His death brought to us salvation and deliverance from spiritual and eternal death.

When Jesus left heaven and came to earth, He descended past the angels and came to a fallen planet. He took on Him the seed of Abraham. He came in the line of Abraham. God began the preparation at the very beginning with Adam and Eve. At that time God said there would come the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). Jesus would come through the line of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, of the nation Israel. He was to be born of a virgin. The Lord put up enough highway markers so that everybody—not just the wise men—should have found their way to Bethlehem to see Jesus, God's Messiah.

He came to serve us—to be our High Priest and go before His Father on our behalf and to bring us back to God by paying the price for our sins. That's what it means for Jesus to be our faithful High Priest.

The Lord Jesus came down to earth in human form, and left everything rightfully His in His heavenly realm in order to take the form of a servant and to follow God's plan to redeem the world through His death on the cross (Philippians 2).

When Christ came to earth, He experienced poverty, physical suffering, pain, emotional stress, sadness, exhaustion, and everything else that you experience. The Lord Jesus deeply sympathizes with you and your struggles. He knows. He cares. He has felt the same burdens you feel. He has experienced the limitations of the human body, like fatigue and aching muscles and physical pain. He knows *you* and He understands you—not just because He is God, but because He became human. He knows exactly what you are going through in this moment.

Because of all that and so much more, Jesus can be a merciful and faithful High Priest.

In His life, His terrible suffering, and through His sacrificial death, Jesus established a place—a mercy seat—to which you can come in prayer and find what you need from Him. At any moment, for any reason. And God has in reserve an endless supply of mercy for those who trust Him. What a thought! Who doesn't need endless mercy today?

That mercy also includes strength to face the obvious and inevitable temptations. To be human is to face temptations.; that's part of the sinful human experience. Jesus knew that. So when He came, He willingly submitted Himself to the same range and intensity of temptations you face so that He can help you. But He not only helps you resist, He comforts you in the struggle.

Jesus never once sinned. He never gave in to human temptation. But that fact doesn't lessen the significance of what He endured. He faced the brunt, the fullest extent of human temptation, and successfully resisted it every time without sinning.

That alone proved He was God in the flesh.

Because He suffered in temptation, He is able to help you when you are tempted. Don't forget Jesus is alive at this moment. He is at God's right hand and stands ready and able to assist you whenever you need Him. He is available to you and to your family. When you wake up in the dark watches of the night tossing and turning from anxiety or fear, Jesus is there ready to hear your voice and come to your aid. He promises His presence and His peace in those moments when you need Him the most (Philippians 4:7). And He promises to be your personal source of comfort when you feel the heaviest burden of grief (2 Corinthians 1:3-5). Your High Priest is in heaven waiting and wanting to come to your aid. He knows you. He understands you. He has felt what you are feeling. And He is more than able to carry your burden for you if you will let Him. When that dark moment comes and you find yourself alone and battling thoughts of despair or discouragement or fear, He is there. No matter what happens, no matter what the test, He can help you. There is no reason to go it alone. He is available. He wants you to come to Him.

**NEXT: Learn how Jesus is superior to Moses
and the prophets.**

4. If sanctification is a process the Holy Spirit begins in our lives when we come to faith, what does it mean that it is also our position in Christ?

5. How could God possibly understand what it is like to be a human being?

6. It's easy to want to avoid suffering, but what can we learn from the life of Jesus that we can copy when it comes to encountering suffering?

7. Jesus left His rightful place in heaven to come to earth and die for us. When He did that, even though He was 100% God, He left behind some of His rights and privileges as God. What do you think might have been the most difficult part about God taking on human flesh?

THIS IS
HEBREWS:

A BEAUTIFUL,
POWERFUL REMINDER
THAT GOD HAS SPOKEN
AND CONTINUES TO SPEAK
AND WANTS US TO
HEAR HIS VOICE.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 4

JESUS LIFTS YOUR UNBELIEF



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 3**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 3:1-6**, **Hebrews 3:6-10**,
and **Hebrews 3:10-15**

Jesus Christ lives, exalted over all things. That is the message of the whole New Testament and most certainly the letter to the Hebrews. Jesus is worthy of all notice and consideration. All believers are invited to consider Jesus as the One who makes the difference in every aspect of our lives.

Maybe you need some strong encouragement like the first readers of Hebrews did. They were Jewish followers of Jesus. They loved God, revered the Old Testament Scriptures, and held in the highest esteem such people as Abraham and Moses. Maybe that's why they were thinking about leaving their newfound faith in Jesus to go back to familiar territory. Moses stood tallest in the hearts and minds of every good Jewish believer. God used Moses to redeem His people from the hand of Pharaoh and lead them graciously and victoriously through the wilderness to the land of promise.

Nonetheless, Jesus was so much more worthy of an even higher consideration—especially in a time of hardship and persecution. These believers were not only God-fearing Jews, but they had also become “partakers” of God’s heavenly gift of grace and a calling to live considering it.

As people of faith, the nation Israel had an earthly calling. You do, too, if you know Jesus. All the promises of the Old Testament given to Israel had to do with their lives on earth. He promised them rain from heaven; He promised them fertility of the soil and bountiful crops. All these promises related to physical blessings, although He promised them spiritual blessings, too.

But now followers of Christ live in a different time. We live in a time of grace, where Jesus has been revealed and ministers alongside the Father in the heavenly realm. That is a new reality for you and for anyone who calls on the Lord in faith.

During the days of Moses, and throughout the Old Testament, God's people observed the Law and participated in a system of sacrifices and ritual that urged them to acknowledge God. But now, all of that has been fulfilled in Jesus. He brings it all together in Himself and all He accomplished on the cross. The earthly calling to live by faith hasn't completely disappeared, but it has been transitioned into a heavenly focus—so that Christians, even Jewish Christians, are partakers of the heavenly calling.

Their calling came through their own confession of Jesus as Messiah and Lord of their lives. That is how your calling comes, as well. To know Him is to trust Him and confess Him as Lord in your life.

Jesus was worthy of a fresh look and renewed consideration at this juncture in these believers' lives. Our lives go through various phases and periods during which we must also make our own renewed consideration of Jesus and all He has done. How easy it is to slip into complacency or even indifference when it comes to our faith in Christ.

So, this became the first of several encouragements from the writer to these discouraged followers, to lift their heads and take a fresh look at Jesus.

In the minds and hearts of these Jewish Christians, Moses stood at the top of the heap. He loomed large as an example of faith and worthiness before the Lord. Yet, he was not higher than Jesus. In fact, the opposite is true. Jesus is superior to Moses in every way.

Just as Moses faithfully established or built a household of faith among God's people, the Jews, so Jesus in even greater ways faithfully carried out His task of redeeming the world from sin. In that work of redemption, He not only established a new house of faith, but He established a brand-new family of faith—the church.

Jesus willingly came to earth to represent His Father to the world, to us. He came down to this earth to represent God to man, and He is faithful as He represents us to God. That's why Jesus receives more glory than even Moses, because He represents the Father who is the builder of everything.

Not only is Jesus superior to Moses in that He is the Creator of all things, but also because He is the eternal Son of God. Moses became known as perhaps the greatest servant of the Most High God, but He was not *the* Son of God. That title and position belongs only to Jesus. He is wonderfully superior to Moses in that alone. There is quite a difference between the son in the house and a servant in a house. So Christ is superior to Moses on two counts: Christ is the Builder *and* He is the Son.

Jesus is also superior to the prophets, angels, and Moses. He is so wonderful. No wonder we are told to consider Him anew as the premier focus of our faith.

Once you realize Jesus exists as superior to all things—especially all things religious—you can tune your spiritual ears to listen to His voice above all other voices. When He speaks, He always has your best interest at heart. He wants the absolute best for you, and He desires that your understanding of and confidence in Him grow deeper and deeper. But that level of attentiveness requires a softened heart to spiritual truth. A readiness to receive His wisdom and follow His leading.

Here is the point: Since the word spoken by the prophets and the word spoken by angels and the word spoken by Moses was so important, how much more important is the word spoken by Jesus? Believers must not only carefully listen to His voice, but to heed it by making His Word part of our lives. When we do, we experience a peace and quality of life that run deep and feel like rest.

The writer of Hebrews includes a quotation from Psalm 95 to emphasize the importance of spiritual rest that comes from obeying and trusting the Lord. That rest is available for all believers—anyone who trusts in Jesus and follows His will for their lives. And the Bible describes different forms of spiritual rest.

THE REST OF REDEMPTION

The generation of Israel that came out of Egypt doubted God, and because of their doubt they never entered the land of Canaan. They missed out on the ultimate “rest” God wanted them to experience. But coming out of Egypt, they experienced the rest of redemption.

After Moses led God's people out of Egypt in obedience to the Lord, they experienced this special spiritual rest. They were no longer slaves in Egypt. They came out by blood—blood on the doorposts. They came out by power—God brought them across the Red Sea. He delivered them.

THE REST OF OBEDIENCE

God said He would take care of them. He wanted them to also know the rest of obedience—the reality of experiencing His promised provision that comes when we take Him at His Word. Yet, they did not believe Him, at least not in full. So God yielded to their wishes and let them send spies into the land He promised them. Although the spies did see the wonderful land, they were most impressed by the giants, and they saw themselves as grasshoppers. They didn't see God. They returned to the people with a false report—except Caleb and Joshua who insisted that God could handle the giants if they trusted Him. But the people accepted the majority report, and they spent forty years on a journey that should only have taken a few days (Numbers 12-14). What was the reason? Unbelief.

The Israelites refused to believe God. They believed Him enough to come out of Egypt, but not enough to enter the Promised Land. God said that generation of unbelievers would die in the wilderness and He would bring their children into the Land of Promise.

THE REST OF SALVATION

In the same way, but better, Jesus offered a new kind of rest that finds its fullness in His finished work on the cross. He invites all of us to *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will rest you; I will lift the burden of sin from you”* (see Matthew 11:28). Jesus took your sin on the cross and paid the price for your sin. He provided a way for you to experience salvation rest when you trust Him as your Savior and Lord.

Your sins are forgiven in Jesus, and you can know redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. That is salvation rest. You do not have to do anything to receive God's forgiveness; Christ did that when He died for you. All you have to do is believe and receive Christ.

When Jesus offered His soul rest, He offers that to you, too. To know the lighter burden of trusting Him and experiencing a rest from all the striving to make yourself right before God. That work belongs to Jesus, and it's already finished. All Jesus wants you to do is walk with Him and enjoy the blessings of the Christian life (Matthew 11:28-30).

THE REST OF HEAVEN

Ultimately, we find our eternal rest when we go to be with Christ in death. That rest is the experience of heaven (John 3:16). Canaan, the land God promised to Israel, is *not* heaven. But eternal rest is a promise that comes to all who trust God and believe in His Son. Meanwhile, while you walk with Jesus on earth, you can know a wonderful life of trusting Him, feeling His provision and protection, and knowing the perfect peace and strength He provides.

The Christians to whom Hebrews was written struggled to know this level of rest. They doubted God because their faith in Jesus was putting them in peril. Their difficult circumstances overtook their focus and weakened their ability to believe God.

That happens to all of us. Doubt creeps in and robs us of the joy and confidence of trusting Jesus. That usually happens when life takes harder turns and we feel out of control.

Yet, God urges us to resist those darker forces of unbelief. Nothing good will come of that. Just like the Israelites who struggled to believe God, we can find ourselves wandering in the wilderness of doubt and fear when we lack a simple faith. God wants us to avoid those unnecessary pitfalls.

In fact, God's remedy for doubt flows out of the encouragement of fellow Christians. Encouragement has the wonderful effect of lifting despair and bolstering faith. Kind words, offers of prayer, joyful Spirit-filled worship, and loving time spent encouraging one another—all are effective in defending against those nagging doubts that push us from God rather than nudge us closer and closer to Him.

Although this is primarily a warning to believers, it has application to unbelievers too. When people put up intellectual barriers to the message of the gospel, the problem they have is also unbelief. Unbelief blocks the light of Christ and prevents the glory of God in Him to penetrate their hearts.

In other words, some people are too smart for their own spiritual good. But unbelief is not an intellectual problem; it is a spiritual problem. Perhaps you resist the truth about Jesus because of what you perceive as an intellectual barrier. The minute your heart is ready to give that up, at that moment your intellectual problems will dissolve. God by His Spirit will lift the veil of unbelief from your mind and shine the light of Christ into your heart. That is how you come to know God.

You can experience the fullness of what God has planned for you in Jesus when you trust Him, when you believe His Word. You become a “sharer” in Christ of all God’s grace and goodness.

But we need to hold on tight to what we believe. Stay focused on Jesus and resist the doubt and fear and relentless pull of unbelief. When you do, God promises wonderful blessing and rest.

An entire generation of God’s people perished in the wilderness because they could not trust God to do what He said He would do. How sad. Sadder still would be for you to miss His goodness and blessing because you refuse to trust His Word for you. Jesus has invited you to trust Him with your whole life. In exchange, He promises to bring you to heaven one day where you will enjoy eternal life with God. And while you live your life on earth, He will provide all you need to live for Him and share His wonderful love and grace with others who need Him, too.

NEXT: Learn the ways Jesus is better than even Joshua.

7. Rest is so important to the writer of Hebrews because the Old Testament Israelites had failed to enter into their promised rest because of disobedience. Imagine you were able to go back in time and talk to those Israelites who failed to trust God and were forced to wander the desert for 40 years. What do you think they would have to say about their decision?

LESSON 5

JESUS, YOUR MERCIFUL HELPER



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 4**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 3:16–4:8**, **Hebrews 4:9-13**,
and **Hebrews 4:14-16**

All of Hebrews is an invitation to an experience of spiritual rest—a stress-free relationship with God through Jesus. Doesn't that sound amazing?

Like the early believers to whom Hebrews was written, many Christians today struggle to stop trying so hard to live a life of faith on their own. But Jesus doesn't want His children to struggle. He wants them to be free and to rest in Him. In fact, the writer to the Hebrews wanted his readers to know God had promised that kind of restful faith experience to them in Jesus.

The God who created you and made a way for your salvation is a God of rest. He invented rest—even He rested when He finished creating the universe. That's where we get the idea of the Sabbath, which means “rest.”

But for Christians today, their whole lives are to be an experience of Sabbath—of resting from all the work you may feel compelled to accomplish to please God and, instead, trusting in everything Jesus did. That is the rest God has promised to you.

What would keep you from experiencing that kind of life with God? The same thing that kept God's people from experiencing it: *Unbelief*. They did not believe God's promise. And when we don't believe God's Word, we wind

up expending unnecessary energy and effort in order to try and muster peace or wisdom or a sense of purpose and meaning. God promises to supply all of that freely and generously to anyone who trusts His Son and believes His Word.

Even the famous Joshua, whose name means “Savior,” could not provide the kind of spiritual rest God’s people craved, and he was one of the most talented and courageous leaders in all of history. He successfully led God’s people into the land of promise but fell short in providing the promised spiritual rest only Jesus brings.

The key to experiencing God’s rest is trusting His Word. And the Word of God can move powerfully and deeply into your life and bring about lasting change. The Word is living and able by the power of the Holy Spirit to heal emotional wounds, unlock stubborn attitudes, and transform an angry spirit into a gracious, loving soul.

That is the purpose of the Word of God—to impact your life.

The Word supernaturally points out things deep in your life that dishonor the Lord. It works with such precision it is like a surgeon dividing between your soul and your spirit. The Word powerfully examines your thoughts and even your heart’s motives, with the goal of bringing about changes in your life for the good.

You cannot conceal anything from God, yet He is gracious in bringing about lasting change when you trust His promise of spiritual rest.

Because the believers to whom this letter was written were also Jewish, they needed to understand that Jesus and all He offered was superior to everything they had come to know in Judaism. Since Judaism was primarily a system based on sacrifices made for sin administered by the priests, the writer worked hard to show how Jesus was their ultimate High Priest who made Himself the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice. And He is your High Priest, too. He is all you need.

The writer of Hebrews felt so strongly about this truth, that he spent nearly five chapters focusing on the impact of it (Hebrew 3-9). When Christians understand this amazing and fundamental truth about all Christ has done, everything changes—for the good.

Jesus Christ is your High Priest. But because many religions emphasize human mediators, the notion of what a priesthood is colors our thinking. A pagan priest often bars the common person's approach to God, claiming possession of some mystical power essential to bringing someone to God. They say you are required to go through a priest who claims special access to God or divine powers. But any such requirement denies the finished work of Jesus for you.

Because we are all human and in such need of God's goodness, we do need someone to intercede for us—a priest. Someone to point us to and provide us with access to God. Under the Old Testament system, that access was granted through the high priestly system of continual sacrifices and the shedding of the blood of animals for the sins of people. But now Jesus serves as our perfect and only able High Priest forever, because He has entered heaven and intercedes for us perfectly.

But keep in mind, though Jesus did not serve as a priest while on earth (Mosaic Law required one to be a Levite to serve in that function), He now serves in that role having laid down Himself as a perfect sacrifice for sin. Now in heaven, Jesus advocates for you and provides you with access to God because of His perfect sacrifice. The Lord Jesus was a member of the tribe of Judah, a kingly line rather than the priestly line. When He was here on earth, He came as a prophet speaking for God. He became a priest when He ascended into heaven to represent you to God. He died to save you, and He now lives to keep you saved (Jude 24). It is true that when He was here He offered Himself upon the cross and that is the function of a priest, but to represent you to God He had to wait until He returned to heaven.

Christ occupies primarily three offices or roles on our behalf. First, He came as a prophet to bring the message of God to the world (John 4:19). He was a prophet when He came 2000 years ago—that is the past. Second, He lives now in heaven with the Father as our perfect High Priest—that is for the present (Hebrews 4:14-10:18). Third, He is coming someday to rule as a King—that is for the future (Philippians 2:10-11). He occupies all three of these offices, and He is the great subject of this letter to the Hebrews.

That is a confidence worthy of all our praise and confession before the Lord, both in worship and to others who may not yet know Him. Yet, many Christians, perhaps like you, struggle to feel successful in living for Jesus. It feels impossible and often brings measures of discouragement and frustration. But the Lord has never asked you to live for Jesus on your own. That's not His desire for you.

But He has promised Jesus will live His amazing and all-powerful life through you. In His heavenly ministry on your behalf, He supplies the power, strength, wisdom, and direction for you to live for Him. That's part of what He does as your eternal High Priest.

Later in this study, you will be encouraged by a virtual hall of faith of people just like you who overcame intense struggle by believing the promises of God in Jesus (Hebrews 11). Because Jesus lived on earth and went through the same intense struggles as you do, He understands intimately all that you face and endure, and He cares deeply about everything that matters to you. That's how gracious and loving He is toward you.

Jesus Christ was tempted to sin but never gave in to those temptations. Every difficult temptation you face, He faced but without sinning. That's why He gets it. He has been there and felt the pressure to succumb to lust or fear or anger or unbelief. But He remained perfectly faithful. So, He knows what you are dealing with in your life because He has been there, too.

Jesus never yielded to sin's power. Moreover, He must have endured a mounting intensity of pressure that we would never experience. He endured the fullest extent of what any human could experience in the pressure to sin and rebel against God—and the most intense periods of personal adversity, grief, rejection, shame, and even unbearable physical torture. Yet, He never sinned against God. Never once did Jesus waver in His perfect obedience to the Father. That's why He can stand in the gap now for you when the pressure is on in your life. He can strengthen and encourage you with His presence and power. How great is that?!

The weight of temptation Jesus Christ carried was infinite—He didn't sin, but He *was* tested, and for that reason He knows how you feel in this very moment, whatever you are facing. You have a High Priest who understands.

Not only that, but you have a High Priest who is always available, and who will never shrink back from coming to your aid. His willingness to help you is yours when you go to Him in prayer and ask Him for everything you need. And because He loves doing it and has unlimited power to unleash for you, He invites you to come with confidence.

Jesus has made available complete access to God and a means to bring to Him whatever you need. He wants you to ask, and He invites you to ask with a certain freedom. He won't judge you for the words you use or even the simplicity of the request. The invitation is that you feel free to come anytime

with any need and you can expect He will hear you and offer His personal mercy and help. That's part of what He does as your perfect High Priest; He hears your prayers and moves on your behalf.

In other words, you can speak freely to Jesus when you need Him. You can share matters with Him that may be too personal or intimate to share with others. He understands you. He knows your weaknesses, your fears, your hang ups—and He has promised not to hold those things against you when you pray.

God's throne is a throne of grace not a throne of judgment for the believer in Jesus. It is a place of prayer and total acceptance and understanding for anyone who comes with confidence and faith in what Jesus has done. What a wonderful, peace-filled truth for all Christians to embrace and benefit from by faith.

What Jesus promises in return for our requests made in faith is an ample supply of mercy and divine, supernatural assistance. The apostle Paul shared his testimony of having received the mercy of God after once rebelling against His goodness. Paul declared it's that same mercy that has accomplished all we need for our eternal salvation (Titus 3:5). If honest, you would surely admit your need for mercy, too. We all need mercy. And it is available to endless supply at the throne of grace. Jesus promises that mercy to you as your eternal High Priest. He also promises to help you. To undertake for you in your need. Help is a very positive thing—it speaks of the future. You may obtain mercy and find grace to help in your time of need is Jesus' promise. Everything you need in this life and eternally is found in Jesus.

By the way, have you turned to Him yet today? You still have time. Let Jesus your High Priest hear your voice. Tell Him you love Him. Confess your sins to Him. He already knows everything, but He longs to have time with you. Push pause on your day—turn everything off and go to Him in prayer. He will be merciful. And He will listen carefully and without distraction. He will help you. That's His promise to you. Go ahead. You can trust Him.

NEXT: Learn more about why Jesus is our perfect High Priest.

7. What do you think is the link between the rest we can have in salvation and Jesus' role as High Priest?

LESSON 6

JESUS, OUR HIGH PRIEST FOREVER



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 5**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 5:1-7** and **Hebrews 5:7–6:1**

Because of what Jesus has done, all of us as believers in Him share in His priestly ministry to one another. We can pray for each other, serve each other, offer our lives in sacrificial loving ways to help each other in difficult times and stand for each other in times of injustice. What a joyful truth to meditate on and consider as you continue your study of Hebrews.

The praise of our lips can also be a priestly gift we offer to the Lord (Hebrews 13:15-16). Have you praised Him today? You can also offer the fruit of your hands in serving others, the fruit of your mind as you honor the Lord with worshipful thoughts, and by simply giving your time in His name. Believers can make all of these things an offering to Him. Prayer is the work of a priest, too.

God provides a simple definition of what it means to be a priest: a person ordained to advocate for us in things pertaining to God, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins (v. 1). A priest stands between our sinful self and a righteous, gracious God. Under the Old Testament Law, a priest would have been a designated individual from the tribe of Levi, set apart by God to mediate between the sins of God's people and God's righteous requirements. Also, being a high priest before the Lord was not something

you merely volunteered to do. This was a sober, monumental calling of the Lord on one's life that was never taken lightly. But a priest, under the Mosaic Law, was not the same as a prophet.

A prophet was called by God to deliver a specific message from God to people. Often that message came as a stern word of correction or warning. At other times, the word was a refreshing reminder that God had promised to act favorably toward those who would obey Him. A prophet comes from God to man with a message from God.

The priest, on the other hand, stood between God and His people in the Tabernacle, the place of worship. He did not proclaim God's message but served both people and God by mediating God's requirements. Joyfully, all of Hebrews explains how Jesus Christ now serves as your faithful, perfect High Priest forever, having given His own life as a once for all sacrifice for our sin.

You will see just how amazing this is as you continue this study.

In Jesus you have a High Priest who is fully qualified to represent you in every possible need before God. And because Jesus walked on earth as a human, experienced the press and pressure of humanity and the most intense of all human temptations without sinning, He represents you before God with genuine empathy, understanding, compassion, and grace. There is not a hint of judgment in His mind or heart toward you as He brings your need to God.

He shows us mercy, and neither condones nor condemns our sin. When we come to Him to confess our sins, He doesn't lecture us about doing better next time. Instead, He extends mercy to us. He provides a way for us to acknowledge our sin and have a fresh feeling of forgiveness every day (1 John 1:9). What a wonderful truth to embrace. Because Jesus endured the most intense of human suffering and temptation and did so without ever dishonoring the Lord by sinning, He is able to advocate for us in our sin perfectly and forever.

In the days of Moses, Aaron, the high priest, brought a sacrifice of blood from animals and offered it to the Lord in the Tabernacle as an offering for the sins of God's people. This annual occasion is known as the Day of Atonement. A man representing his family would bring the required animal to present to the priest as an offering, a sacrifice for his sin and the sins of his family. The priest would then take the blood of the slaughtered animals

and present it as an offering for sin. This happened repeatedly. But in Jesus, there is no more need for an offering for sin. He didn't offer a sacrifice for His own sin, but He offered His own blood on the cross as a final sacrifice to atone for the sins of the whole world.

In contrast to Aaron's priestly ministry, the ministry of Jesus is eternal. He stands as our advocate before God the Father forever. The writer to the Hebrews used the illustration of an obscure individual from Old Testament history to highlight this point. Melchizedek was a priest, most likely from the area of ancient Jerusalem, who received an offering from Abraham following an epic victory in battle.

But there was no known record of Melchizedek's birth or death, so he became legendary in the minds and hearts of God's people as somewhat of an immortal figure. He was used in this letter as an illustration of the true eternal nature of Jesus' priestly ministry.

While Jesus was on earth, He showed deep compassion for people in their needs, especially those who felt the shame of rejection and the sting of prejudice toward their origin or social status. These injustices broke Jesus' heart to the point that He often called on His Father with tears. In this way, Jesus served in His priestly role while on earth by advocating for the deepest human needs imaginable, the deepest of which was the condemning impact of sin.

Jesus understands your deepest concerns, too, because He is human. He weeps when people are hurting, He grieves when people experience great loss, and He enters our human sorrows that flow from the injustice and evil that run rampant in our world.

Scripture reveals a couple occasions where Jesus showed great emotion, though there are likely many more instances not recorded in Scripture. Jesus wept when He stood outside the grave where Lazarus had recently been buried following his death (John 11:35). The setting and sad ordeal moved Jesus, as graveside services do in our day. Although He knew He would restore Lazarus to life, Jesus' heart went out in sympathy to the two grieving sisters. Because He wept for *them*, most certainly He feels deeply for you when your heart hurts too.

Similarly, Jesus felt burdened for whole communities, as He did when He wept over the spiritual welfare of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37).

Thankfully, Jesus in His earthly ministry was not shielded from the intensity of human heartache and pain, but rather those things became part of what qualified Him to be our High Priest forever. Jesus enduring such intense human struggle, ultimately even death, guaranteed our salvation (Hebrews 5:8). To secure your salvation eternally, Jesus had to suffer. It made His work on our behalf full and complete. His obedience brought us to God.

Since Jesus is fully God and fully human, He didn't literally have to "learn" anything. Being God, He is omniscient, meaning He knows all things. Yet, by experiencing the fullness of the humanity and all the intense suffering and limitations all humans face, He demonstrated the value of submission (obedience) to God (John 6:39). In the same way, He helps you learn the eternal value of obeying God's Word and how that obedience leads you to a life of genuine, lasting meaning and blessing.

His obedience led Him to lay down His life as a perfect sacrifice through His death on the cross. All this means His obedience brought your salvation (Philippians 2). Jesus Christ took on the most intense of human experiences, including the agony of death and being buried, so that you could have a way to know God.

That's why it's so important that you open your ears and your heart to these things about Jesus. You don't want to grow dull or indifferent in your response to the truths about God and the offer of eternal life in His Son, Jesus. That was a problem the early Christians faced, and the letter to Hebrews warned against that sort of careless indifference, too.

Life crowds in and we can easily throw up our hands in despair, or we slip into a spiritual lull, not paying close enough attention to our spiritual condition. Jesus would have it another way. He wants you to tune your ears to hear His voice so He can guide you safely through life's more difficult passages. Jesus, as your perfect High Priest, offers that to you.

The danger is complacency. Allowing life to dull your senses. But God desires a spiritual alertness that requires some effort on our part. He wants us to remain thoughtful and intentional as we cultivate our relationship with Him. Jesus invited His followers, and all of us, to "abide in Him" with a consistency and attentiveness (John 15). All of that takes time and requires a daily, honest commitment to remaining in tune with Him. The writer of Hebrews honestly relayed his frustration at times in teaching the more complicated truths about God, because his readers had not made the commitment to grow in their knowledge of the Scriptures. So, he challenged

them to reengage with God at a new level of readiness. God wants that from you, too. That's how you can learn more of the deep things of God and experience firsthand an intimacy with Jesus.

There is always a time to learn the foundation truths, but then the invitation is to move past those fundamentals and learn the deeper truths. That's God's desire for you once you come to know Him through His Son.

The believers to whom Hebrews was written were having a hard time moving past the mere elementary teachings of the faith. Though important, the writer to Hebrews knew those basics would not be enough to ground these believers when adversity (particularly adversity from persecution) presented itself. So, he wrote Hebrews to challenge them to grow deeper roots by reviving their attentiveness to God's voice. But that required they develop an appetite for the "meat" of God's Word and leave their fetish for only the "milk."

Many Christians stay comfortable in their place of spiritual immaturity, never willing to do what it takes to grow in their faith and in their knowledge of His Word. That becomes a problem when their faith is challenged by life's inevitable challenges. But God uses those times to strengthen our confidence in Him and to deepen our devotion to His Son. We either grow up in God or we act like spiritual children when hit with adversity. Those are the only two options.

God's vision for all His children, including His hope for you, is that we mature in faith and in the knowledge of His Word to such an extent that we become wise and discerning as we navigate the inevitable challenges of living. You are then fully equipped to do His will and live your own life of obedience and trust in Jesus, come what may.

NEXT: Learn the danger of walking away from the faith.

7. If you could ask the first-century Christians who read this letter about their faith, do you think they would realize they were immature, or do you think they were surprised to read that in Hebrews?

Stay focused on Jesus

AND RESIST THE DOUBT AND FEAR
AND RELENTLESS PULL OF UNBELIEF.

WHEN YOU DO, GOD PROMISES

wonderful blessings and rest.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 7

STAY CLOSE TO JESUS IN EVERYTHING



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 6**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 6:1-9**, **Hebrews 6:7-20**,
and **Hebrews 6:17–7:2**

Just as a loving parent often warns children of dangers, God lovingly includes similar warnings in His Word—not to threaten or discourage His children, but to direct us along better paths. Though a challenging passage to understand, this section of the letter to the Hebrews carries a loving warning to those who follow Jesus: *Stay close to Him in everything.*

In the previous lesson, the danger signal was the peril of dull hearing—missing out on God’s best by remaining indifferent or ignoring His voice in your life. Now as the Jewish Christians to whom Hebrews was originally written can already see persecution coming, there was likely a danger of their turning from their confession of faith in Jesus and going back to Judaism. Judaism was the faith of their ancestors—a comfort zone, so to speak, that felt more appealing than paying too heavy a price for staying faithful to Jesus.

Still, there come times in our spiritual lives that we must grow up and face life with courage and maturity—to leave the basics and move toward a more resilient, effective faith. That was the call to the Hebrew Christians here. Jesus calls us to move on toward spiritual maturity. To leave the pettiness of a youthful, untested faith, and allow Jesus to lead us into deeper

waters of trust and obedience. The call here is to “leave” those things that are comfortable and that once represented our religious experience and move on toward a genuine and resolved faith in Jesus. All religions, not only Judaism, have their religious tenants, such as baptism, observances, rules and regulations, and endless traditions. But such things only serve to distract us from the genuine item, especially when we face a crossroad in our faith. The believers of Hebrews were facing intense persecution and were being tempted to shrink from following Jesus.

The spiritual condition that is warned against in this passage is a subtle and difficult to understand warning about falling away from the faith:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. –Hebrews 6:4-6

Is the writer referring to believers who fall away and can never be brought back to repentance, or is this a reference to “almost” believers, who come so close, but fall away too soon before every receiving the gift of eternal life in Jesus?

Before you start doubting, remember God’s Word makes clear the certainty and assurance of your salvation once you genuinely receive it by faith in Jesus. The following represent some of the more standard and encouraging Scriptures to support that certainty:

- Once you are in Christ you can never be condemned (Romans 8:1).
- Once God has done His ordained work of salvation in you, no one has the power or authority to reverse it (Romans 8:33).
- Because the finished work of Jesus is settled in heaven and established in the eternal revelation of God, nothing can separate the believer from His grace (Romans 8:34-39).
- The certainty of your salvation is established in the spoken word of Jesus Himself (John 7:27-29).

The tone, and perhaps hyperbole, of this warning ought to encourage you as a believer to take with great seriousness the significance of your faith. And to acknowledge the great disregard for Jesus when you take your right standing with God for granted.

There are believers who come to know God, experience the goodness of being in His care, and even come to benefit from the supernatural gifts and rewards of sharing in His family of grace. Yet, because of the way they live, they fall back, some even walk away from their original excitement of knowing Jesus and leave Him entirely. Apart of the loving mercy and kindness of God, it is impossible to bring a person like that back to their original spiritual zeal.

Since there is no possible way you can lose your salvation, the warning is about falling so far away that you are unable to bring yourself back to an attitude of humble repentance. To repent and live in humble submission is what ensures you receive all the good benefits of faith in Jesus—the list is wonderful: The goodness of God, the ministry of the Word, the sharing in the fellowship of God’s people, and the assistance of the Spirit’s power. Why would you risk losing all of that by falling far away from your love for Jesus?

Jesus wants to reward you for your faithfulness in following His will. Your life can be like a fruitful field that benefits from fresh rain and the warm sun of spring. But to walk away from the Lord brings you out from under His protective care and provision. Like a field without rain, the crops burn up in the heat of the day.

Scripture gives us examples of people who “fell away.” The apostle Peter fell, but Jesus restored Him by His grace (John 21:15-17). John Mark, the apostle Paul’s young apprentice, broke rank and left for home during Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 15:37-39), yet in the grace of Jesus found himself wonderfully restored to a place of invaluable service to the gospel at the end of Paul’s momentous ministry life (2 Timothy 4:11).

An attitude of repentance flows from a life of humble obedience. That’s why this warning is so stark. It was written to highlight the serious nature of continuing to live sinfully after having tasted the goodness of God in Jesus. That’s what is at stake when we take our salvation for granted and live without regard to offending God.

Jesus wants you to remain connected intimately to Him, to receive spiritual nourishment, His gracious protection, and to enjoy a loving, personal relationship with Him. He becomes like a life-giving grapevine from which flows everything you could possibly need to live and experience a fruitful, abundant life (John 15). To separate from Him by living in ways that disregard His goodness (falling away) risks exposing our lives, our families, and our well-being to the harsh consequences of leaving God’s protective care.

Instead, God promises to reward you and remember your faithfulness to Him and to the cause of His name as you serve others and proclaim His gospel. Serving Jesus means living with joyful diligence and spurring ourselves and each other to greater faith and a more resilient endurance. God has made a lot of promises to us if we are faithful to Him.

In the same way God made a promise to Abraham and made certain all of the provision of that promise came to pass, so God will faithfully make certain you receive a reward for remaining faithful to Him. And all of that is based on the promise or oath of His Word.

Abraham was an excellent illustration to these Jewish believers of someone who refused to shrink back from believing God. He wasn't perfect, but he believed. And the result of that level of honest, steady trust brought much blessing and favor to Abraham and his countless descendants.

God's Word is all you need to have the assurance of blessing. You don't need to swear an oath or take anyone else's word for it. If God promises it, and He has in Jesus, it will come to pass. That's the message of Hebrews.

Oaths are tricky business. When you take an oath, you receive it based on something greater than you. Since there is nothing greater than God, He swore by Himself when He made the promise to Abraham. The promise of blessing for Abraham was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. So His promise to you in Jesus can be trusted, too. God is faithful.

You grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him through the study of His Word and as you grow in relationship to His people, the body of Christ. All of that contributes to your genuine sense of assurance of your salvation.

God's promise to you in Jesus is based on two unchanging truths: God's own eternal Word and the eternal ministry of Jesus in heaven. Not only do we have the promise made to Abraham for our encouragement, but we have a far richer revelation of God's love—the gift of His Son.

The writer to the Hebrews used the image of a fortress to convey the unchanging nature of God's promise. The image of a refuge would have, in the minds of these Jewish believers, conjured memories of God's great ministry to Israel during the wilderness years, as God provided cities of refuge for His children seeking protection (Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 19; Joshua 20-21). Those refuge cities foreshadowed the ministry of Jesus sheltering sinners from death and offering them safety or salvation.

Jesus wants to be your refuge, too. His desire is for you to find your ultimate safety and salvation in Him. That fulfills the promise of God to Abraham to bless him and bless all the nations or people of the world. That blessing comes through Jesus.

Christ is your constant and reliable friend, and He lives in heaven to serve as your perfect and eternal High Priest. Though you deserved death because of your sin, Jesus took that punishment for you on the cross and satisfied God's anger. He made a way for you to be saved and come to know God.

Because He died in your place, you are free. You have been delivered from the penalty of sin; a penalty removed from you forever, if you have trusted in Jesus. You are guaranteed eternal life with Jesus. You are set free to serve Him while you live. You now have a High Priest, a resurrected Savior, to whom you can go with all your needs. What a wonderful picture of your Savior. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *Regardless of what you are facing today, you have a real hope because of Jesus.* You don't have to live with the burden of feeling you have to figure life out on your own. None of that is true if you are in Christ—if you have called on His name. With great encouragement God wants you to know that you have “this hope ... as an anchor for the soul, both sure and steadfast” (v. 19). And that hope is secure in the promise of Jesus—a promise founded on the very Word of God.

When Christ ascended to heaven, He assumed the office of High Priest. As your High Priest, Jesus entered the heavenly tabernacle (see Hebrews 8) and passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God. Once there, He presented His blood as a sacrifice for sin once for all. He did that for you.

Does any of this speak to you personally today? Perhaps God is stirring something in you that is causing you to question everything you have believed about yourself and how you can come into a relationship with God. He longs for you to know His Son, Jesus. To fully realize all that Jesus accomplished for you in His death and what He desires to do in you if you trust Him.

How would you like a fresh beginning? Not a makeover, but a brand-new heart, a new spirit and mindset? Jesus can do that for you. If you turn to Him in faith, He will make all things new (2 Corinthians 5:17). That is God's promise.

With Jesus as the anchor for your soul, you have an even stronger encouragement than Abraham had. Jesus, your High Priest, has entered in advance into the presence of God for you. Speak His name. He is listening.

NEXT: See more of Jesus as our perfect High Priest in heaven.

4. What things has God given us that can help prevent us from falling away from the faith?

5. Again and again, we see in Hebrews that mature believers are those who are faithful. Who is there in your life that is an example of faithfulness you can follow?

6. Life can leave us feeling like we are alone. How can the truth that Jesus is our refuge change our minds in those times?

7. If the writer of Hebrews were writing today, what word pictures might they have used to illustrate what it means to fall away from the faith?

LESSON 8

JESUS, OUR PERFECT HIGH PRIEST IN HEAVEN



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 7**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 7:2-19** and **Hebrews 7:20—8:2**

Jesus rises high above all other individuals and powers as our High Priest forever.

The Jewish believers originally reading this letter needed to be persuaded that there was nothing and no person able to exceed what Jesus offered to them to bring them into a right standing with God. The ancient prophets could not attain that, Moses was unable, angels and entities fell short. Jesus surpasses all things.

In the Old Testament, one obscure figure rose to the top in terms of “celebrity” status in the minds of God’s people. His name was Melchizedek. He was a priest of God, but not in the line of Aaron. Rather he served in the region surrounding what was ancient Jerusalem. While there are not many references to Melchizedek in the Old Testament, there are quite a few references to him in this letter to the Hebrews.

At one point, Melchizedek encountered Abraham, another Jewish celebrity who was also held in high esteem by Jews. The writer to Hebrews uses this encounter to illustrate an important aspect of the superiority of Jesus.

The story of Melchizedek's encounter with Abraham unfolds beginning in Genesis 14. A report reached Abraham that his nephew Lot and family had been taken captive by an enemy force. Abraham immediately armed several hundred of his men to pursue the perpetrators and secure Lot's release. The operation was so successful that he not only rescued Lot and his family, he was able to help the king of Sodom, who had also fell victim to the same group. The result was a triumphant celebration and a ceremony of gratitude. Not long after, Melchizedek, having heard about it, met Abraham in the valley and brought fresh supplies of food for him and his men.

Melchizedek was referred to as the priest of the Most High God. It was at that encounter that Abraham offered to Melchizedek a tithe, or offering, of all he had received in the battle spoils. Abraham, though great and called uniquely by God, showed great reverence and submission to Melchizedek.

Melchizedek is a type of Christ—he represents Him in several ways. He was called the king of peace and king of righteousness. The Lord Jesus Christ is a King. He offers us His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Melchizedek was “priest of the Most High God.” The Lord Jesus is our Great High Priest.

And since Melchizedek was considered immortal because of the absence of any known record of his birth or death, he is also considered like Jesus who serves as our eternal High Priest in the heavenly places. Jesus comes out of eternity, and He moves into eternity. He has no beginning and no end. He *is* the beginning. He *is* the end. You can't go beyond Him in the past, and you can't get ahead of Him in the future. He encompasses all of time and all of eternity.

Melchizedek came and ministered to Abraham, and Abraham submitted to him by offering a gift. This story would have resonated with these Hebrew believers as a compelling example of humility and submission—of a great individual, even as great as Abraham, humbly blessing a revered priest like Melchizedek. And yet, Jesus is far superior to both Abraham and Melchizedek.

In Abraham the sons of Levi, who were descended from Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek. This shows that Melchizedek was superior to Aaron and his family. In the mind of a Jewish believer, no one was higher in the priestly line than Aaron. And if Melchizedek is greater than Aaron, then how much more significant is the truth that Jesus is greater than even Melchizedek.

Because of Jesus, we are no longer bound by the Law of Moses. That system is no longer operational. The Mosaic Law belonged to the Aaronic priesthood where they offered bloody sacrifices. The Mosaic Law and the Aaronic priesthood go together.

The Lord Jesus came in the tribe of Judah and therefore could never be a priest here on earth. The priestly tribe was the tribe of Levi. The priesthood had to be changed since Christ did not come from Levi. But through His obedience and perfect suffering and sacrifice, Jesus was made a High Priest forever by God's gracious will (Hebrews 7:16-17; Psalm 110).

Christ became a priest by His resurrection from the dead; He has an endless life. The Mosaic system eventually went out of style—it wore out. It never provided humanity's greatest need: perfection. Now we come to God through Jesus Christ, our perfect and perpetual priest.

The prophecy of Psalm 110, which the Hebrews writer used as part of his message, reveals the superior nature of Jesus' ministry as our High Priest. It is superior because it is an eternal ministry along the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4).

God's promise to us in Jesus is so much better than the promise He made to His people. Everything is fulfilled in Jesus. Everything you could ever need is found in Him.

Obviously, the only way to qualify for an eternal priesthood would be if one never died. Since all earthly priests, including all from Aaron's line and even Melchizedek, eventually died, the only qualified individual to be an eternal high priest is Jesus.

In other words, the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Testament always ended by death. Aaron died, just as Moses did. When Aaron died, God's people lost their high priest, the one who had gone with them through the wilderness, the one who knew them and understood what they had experienced. In Jesus you never lose access to your eternal high priest. He lives forever to make intercession for you. Jesus' priesthood will never be interrupted by His death. He died once for your sins, but He will never die again.

Jesus' priesthood is based on His eternal nature and His resurrection. Right at this very moment He is alive. You can know Him today as your High Priest at God's right hand. My friend, that is where we need to put the emphasis. He died down here to save us, but He *lives* up there to keep us saved.

Because Jesus eternally lives on your behalf, He is able not only to save you but to intercede for your salvation into eternity future. That means His priestly ministry is superior and comprehensively above anything else. In other words, He is able to keep on saving you. He is able to save you completely and perfectly. Once you belong to Jesus, you will always belong to Him. And He is able to keep you in that place of favor with God until one day He will present you before God the Father, perfect, without a single fault (Colossians 1:22).

He is the Great Shepherd who up to this very moment has never lost one of His sheep. Do you want to know something wonderful? He *never will* lose one. If you are one of His sheep, you may feel like you are going to be lost, but He lives eternally in heaven to watch over your life forever.

But there's so much more, too. Jesus lives forever as your High Priest to pray for you before His Father in heaven. He actively and graciously oversees your life and goes before you in prayer, speaking your deepest needs before His Father—needs that relate to your physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being—needs related to your future, provision for you and your family, and strength and courage to face adversity and even periods of intense temptation or persecution. That's also how Jesus lives as your perfect High Priest.

When you need fresh cleansing, He hears your confession and forgives your sin (1 John 1:9). When you feel the burden of guilt, He carries that load for you (Matthew 11:30). And in our sinfulness, Jesus stands for us as our Advocate, our Defender (1 John 2:1). An advocate is a comforter—a companion, really, who willingly and faithfully remains by your side in the toughest times. Your advocate is Jesus. He is Jesus Christ the righteous. Everything He does is right. Everything He does is righteous. We shall be saved by His life.

How wonderful to know we have a living Savior and High Priest in Jesus. You are not alone. He is there and faithfully prepared to advocate for you no matter your need. And He is exalted in all His holiness and perfection. When was the last time you turned to Him in prayer? Or set your mind on His promise to care for all your needs?

He became sin for you so that you could know God and stand before Him in perfect righteousness. That is how gracious Jesus is for you. Christ is just what we need; He is just right for us—we couldn't have anyone better than He is.

Jesus knows none of the malice and displeasing aspects of sin that so lays hold of us. There is not a hint of selfishness, defilement, or evil intentions in Him. He is perfectly holy and good on our behalf. What joy it is to have such confidence in Him and not in ourselves.

He is also “separate from sinners.” He is like us, yet unlike us. He could mix and mingle with sinners, and they didn’t feel uncomfortable in His presence, but He was not one of them. His enemies accused Him of associating with publicans and sinners, but He was not in any manner influenced by them. And since He was sinless Himself, unlike other high priests, He had no need to offer sacrifices for His own sin. Instead, He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice, once for all, for the sins of the world (John 1:29).

One powerful thought you could consider: If it were necessary for Jesus to come to earth and die for you again, He would return. Yet, none of that is necessary because He died once for all and for you. Imagine living under the old system of sacrifice—beneath the tiresome monotony of year after year having to bring your sins before the high priest to make a sacrifice to God. Now in Jesus your sins have been removed and settled based on the perfect sacrifice of His own blood. He accomplished all you need in His body on the cross. His blood covers your sin, past, present, and future—eternally.

For God explains,

For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.

–Hebrews 7:26-28

Jesus lives for you and stands for you forever. He has perfectly made a way for you to come to know God through His once-for-all, perfect gift. Will you trust Him forever?

NEXT: Learn about the heavenly tabernacle not made with human hands.

7. What sins did you commit today? Jesus paid for those. The same for the sins you committed yesterday and the sins you will commit tomorrow. How can that knowledge change your words, thoughts, and actions?

LESSON 9

HEAVENLY WORSHIP



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 8**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 7:25—8:6** and **Hebrews 8:6-13**

Not only is Jesus alive, but He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. He offers unlimited access on your behalf to the Father, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. That ought to change your perspective on just about any set of circumstances you might be facing today.

The Hebrew Christians were growing weary in their battle to stand firm in the faith in the face of mounting persecution. Turning back to a more comfortable, familiar system of religion like Judaism sounded more and more appealing. Sometimes we face such difficulty in our lives that we start to doubt the work Jesus has done. Maybe you're struggling with doubt, too.

But knowing the truth about Jesus' ministry in the heavenly tabernacle can make all the difference when life has you doubting. Jesus excels above all others because He lives in heaven, seated at the right hand of God. He is in the most exalted place and in that place is at work ministering on your behalf.

There is not a priest in the line of Aaron who ever had a chair in the heavenly tabernacle where he sat down. He was on the run all the time. Why?

Because he had work to do. All of these things are shadows that point to a finished sacrifice. Now that Christ has died, all has been fulfilled, and we

do not need to wonder if we are *doing* enough to merit salvation. All we need to do is turn to Jesus Christ and trust Him as our Savior. He sat down because He had finished our redemption. He asks only that we trust Him.

The early Tabernacle would have been a beautiful structure to experience. One can only imagine the wonder of the heavenly place of worship where Jesus ministers for us. But everything in the Tabernacle was man-made (although the Holy Spirit directed the work). Bezalel was the master craftsman who made the beautiful articles of furniture (Exodus 31:1-6). The mercy seat and the golden lampstand were crafted of gold and highly ornate material. In contrast, Jesus ministers in a heavenly tabernacle that He Himself made.

The original readers of this letter needed a fresh dose of encouragement to stand strong in their faith and resist returning to Judaism. The Tabernacle was a centerpiece of Jewish worship—it was the place where God’s people met the Lord and brought their sacrifices for the forgiveness of their sins.

But in Jesus, none of that is still necessary. These embattled believers needed a fresh reminder that Jesus had accomplished a once-for-all atonement for sin when He sacrificed Himself on the cross. Facing the threat of persecution, the Hebrew believers perhaps felt they would be better off, even safer, if they retreated to Judaism. Judaism, after all, did not draw Rome’s anger as did the claims of those who followed Jesus. So, the temptation to go back must have been real and strong. But they needed to be reminded that nothing in that old system of Judaism offered them what they needed.

Only in Jesus could they experience the lasting forgiveness and freedom they desired. Jesus paid it all. Everything they needed could be found in Him.

God delivered to Moses the blueprints to build the Tabernacle in the wilderness. What Moses didn’t know at that time, is that the earthly Tabernacle would be a shadow of the real tabernacle in heaven, made by God Himself.

The Tabernacle in its beautiful simplicity becomes itself a picture of Jesus. The Tabernacle was called a tent, the sides of which were upright boards, covered on both sides with gold. It measured thirty cubits long and ten cubits wide and was divided into two compartments. The first compartment was called the Holy Place. In it were three articles of furniture: the golden lampstand, the golden table of showbread, and the golden altar where incense was offered—no sacrifice other than incense. The lampstand was a type, or foreshadowing, of Jesus, the light of the world.

The table of showbread symbolized Jesus as the Bread of Life. The golden altar at which the high priest offered prayer spoke of Jesus, who now serves as our faithful Intercessor. Then on the great Day of Atonement, the high priest passed through the separating veil to the inner compartment, the holy of holies, in which were two articles of furniture.

One piece of the ark of the covenant was made of wood and covered with gold inside and outside. That box held the stone tablets on which God etched the Ten Commandments. The box also contained a pot of manna and Aaron's rod which had budded green leaves.

Around the Tabernacle was a court, surrounded by a barrier of vertical linen drapes 100 cubits long and 50 cubits wide. In that outer court were two articles of furniture. The first was the brazen altar where all sacrifices were made. The sin question was settled there, but since saints still sin, there was also a laver where the priests could wash, signifying the cleansing from sin. It was in this magnificent structure with all its ornate spaces where the high priests carried out their ministry and where they worshiped the living God.

No one but the high priest (and he only once a year) entered into the next compartment, the holy of holies. But when the Lord Jesus died, the separating veil ripped completely from top to bottom.

If you had been in the wilderness with Israel, you would have seen the Tabernacle in the heart of the encampment, with the tents of the tribes camped all around it. You would have seen the pillar of cloud over the Tabernacle by day and the pillar of fire by night. You would have seen the priests busily and faithfully carrying on their ministry of offering sacrifices and observing all of the rituals God had commanded.

Everything then was mere shadow of a reality to come. The *reality* itself was in heaven. In fact, that's where Jesus is in this moment—in the heavenly tabernacle offering His grace and ministry to God on your behalf. Now, because of the reality of the heavenly tabernacle, you can enter the presence of the living God through your relationship with Jesus. That is what the writer is talking about.

Jesus now ministers on your behalf in a better tabernacle, the genuine tabernacle in heaven. He has made the throne of God a throne of grace, and you have been invited to come there with great confidence and assurance to receive mercy and help in your time of need.

Through prayer and by exercising your faith, you can access all riches and blessings of God that are prepared for you in Jesus. It pleases God when you trust Him and turn to Him through Jesus.

Everything is better in Jesus. The promise, or covenant, once made with Abraham and God's people is now a better covenant confirmed in the finished ministry of Jesus on the cross. Now anyone who believes in Jesus can worship God and enter His presence at any time. You can bow to Him in private prayer in the quietness of your bedroom, or while you commute to work, or in the middle of the hallway at school. He hears your voice and brings your requests and needs before God the Father.

The ministry Jesus now has on your behalf is far better than the ministry of the high priests carried out in the earthly Tabernacle. Jesus delivered a once-for-all sacrifice for your sins, by offering His own body and shed blood to God in the heavenly tabernacle.

Jesus now intercedes, or prays, for you to the Father in heaven. He enjoys such proximity to the Father, seated at His right hand, that He has unlimited access to Him. No earthly high priest could ever claim such access in his ministry in the Tabernacle. Jesus' ministry is far better.

All of this converges in Jesus who now lives in heaven for you. He is the better *priest* who ministers there. He is the better *sacrifice*—He offered Himself. And He ministers in a better *tabernacle*, for He offered His own blood for your sin and the sins of the world.

Through Moses, God established the Law that would provide the system whereby His people could receive atonement for their sins. God established that system and designed it to be administered by the high priests in the tent or Tabernacle. But now everything is better in Jesus.

The New Covenant is established upon better promises. And Jesus is the mediator of the better covenant, because it is forever and based on everything He accomplished in His death.

Sin has always been the problem for humanity. Always. You certainly know how deeply and fully sin can take control of your life. Under the old covenant, you had to have that sin covered every year by bringing a sacrifice to the high priest who would make that offering for you behind the veil in the holy of holies. But in Jesus you now have access to God through Him.

And you no longer need to offer a yearly sacrifice for your sin. Jesus did that for you when He died on the cross and shed His own blood. His sacrifice and blood were presented to God in the heavenly tabernacle once, never to be required again. The problem never was with God's covenant. Just as God redeemed His people by performing such a work by parting the Red Sea, Jesus redeemed you by completing the work of taking away sin once and for all. You have been redeemed forever in Jesus.

In Jesus, the New Covenant is written on the hearts of those who believe. Because His law is etched in our hearts by His Spirit, we know the boundaries of righteousness, we can have an intimate relationship with Him. Everyone has the opportunity to know God in Jesus because this is a spiritual promise that is alive in the human heart.

In Jesus there is full forgiveness. There is total pardon. There is no longer a penalty for sin. No more condemnation, and no more weight of guilt on the conscience. That's what Jesus accomplished.

That New Covenant God made through Jesus Christ is permanent. Nothing that took place in the earthly Tabernacle in regard to sin was permanent. Nothing could take care of the guilt of your sin forever. The Law of Moses couldn't do that. The earthly system had no power to change the nature of your sinful heart (Romans 7:18). Only in the eternal ministry of Jesus is that accomplished. Now through the Holy Spirit's power you can live a life that is holy and pleasing to God. And you can do that with a clear conscience. No more guilt or shame.

The Law could not accomplish what Jesus did in His death. It just won't lift you from your sin; it *can't* lift you out from under sin's condemning weight. But a new principle is introduced: the Holy Spirit. What the Law could not do, the Holy Spirit is able to do. Therefore, you can be saved and now live for Jesus based on this new principle. You have a New Covenant based upon better promises, God has given you the Holy Spirit, and you have Jesus in heaven standing in the gap for you.

NEXT: Learn about the superior sacrifice of Jesus.

7. Not only is Jesus superior to the old way of doing things, but so is the Holy Spirit. How is it an advantage for you—over the saints of the Old Testament—to have the Holy Spirit in your life?

EVERYTHING IS
FULFILLED IN
JESUS.

EVERYTHING
YOU COULD EVER NEED
IS FOUND IN *HIM.*



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 10

A NEW HEAVENLY WORSHIP



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 9**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 9:1-7**, **Hebrews 9:2-24**, and **Hebrews 9:6-27**

Knowing Jesus means you can worship God with unlimited access.

Before Jesus offered Himself as a once-for-all sacrifice for sin, God's people were limited in their access to true worship. They were forced to follow all the guidelines, rules, and regulations of the Mosaic Law and the system of sacrifices which took place in the earthly Tabernacle.

The place of worship, or sanctuary, was on earth—it was a literal tent, or Tabernacle, a place where God's people could come and present their offerings to the Lord. But only the high priest had access to God's presence.

The Tabernacle was an elaborately decorated series of rooms set apart by long, heavy hanging drapes, like a huge outdoor tent. In each room were beautifully, hand-crafted relics and pieces of furniture and high symbolic items from Israel's history with God in the wilderness. Each one signified something important about God's relationship with His people and His faithful promise to provide for all their needs.

The first draped off room contained the candlestick and a special wooden table, along with bread, all of which were used for various aspects of ceremonial worship.

Then, in the background, was the golden altar, the altar of incense, which symbolized access to God through prayer.

Beyond that was the area of the second veil, or draped wall, which was the holy of holies. Through that veil you would find the gold laden container which housed the most holy relics, including the ark of the covenant, the pot of manna from the wilderness, Aaron's rod which had budded with green leaves, and the tablets of stone inscribed with the Ten Commandments.

Everything changed when Jesus came.

When He died on the cross, He gave His human life and offered a perfect sacrifice of His blood. That sacrifice ended the need for sacrifices in the earthly Tabernacle.

When He died, the long, heavy veil in the Tabernacle that blocked access to the holy of holies tore from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). The barrier was now removed.

Jesus did that for you. He removed the barrier to God so you can worship Him. Only through Jesus can anyone come to worship God (John 14:6).

Now, in Jesus, you have a High Priest who prays for you continually in the heavenly sanctuary to the Father. That means He prays for you all the time, every day. One of the aspects of Jesus' work on the cross was to bring you into a right standing with God so He could mention you and your name before the Father in the heavenly place (Romans 5:1).

Before Jesus came, the high priest was required to enter the holy of holies every year at the same time to atone for his sins and for the sins of God's people. This became known as the Day of Atonement. But Jesus in His death ended that requirement when He offered His own body and blood as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. He became the perfect High Priest. Jesus entered the heavenly holy of holies, the throne room of God the Father, and presented His own blood as a final sacrifice for sin.

We do not worship God by going through endless rituals. God doesn't require you to burn candles or offer incense or approach an ornate altar made with human hands. God invites you simply to offer your voice in prayer or in praise and song because Jesus is in heaven as your perfect High Priest.

In other words, everything about the earthly system, including the various rooms and relics in the Tabernacle, only reminded God's people of the limited access they had to Him. None of the rituals or sacrifices were able

to make the worshipers perfect before the Lord. But in Jesus you have been given His righteousness which guarantees unlimited access to God. He has made the way for you.

Jesus brings you to God because His sacrifice was perfect and complete. Through His death, Jesus provides us with all the good things we can experience because we are now at peace with God. He brings you peace when you are troubled, He comforts you when you grieve, He calms your anxiety, and provides what you need when you need it most. Life can be discouraging, even depressing at times. Jesus brings you His perfect and powerful presence and can lift you from despair because He lives now in God's presence and prays for you.

None of that was possible under the old system put in place by Moses. The heavenly tabernacle where Jesus serves was not made with human hands, but it delivers for us everything we could possibly need to experience peace with God.

When Jesus went back to heaven following His resurrection, He entered the holy place where God is by offering His own body and blood as the perfect sacrifice for sin. His sacrifice opened the way for us to worship God and to experience His personal and powerful presence. That's what Jesus did. We have intimate access to God because Jesus sits at His right hand and offers Himself continually to God on our behalf.

How amazing is that?

He entered heaven victoriously, having completed eternal redemption—that means our salvation is secured forever in Jesus.

You can't know God simply by following the teachings of Jesus. God wants you to know Him through a personal encounter of faith with Jesus. It's impossible to please God by simply doing good deeds or attempting to live up to the teaching of Jesus. What we need is a perfect heart—we need to be able to present to God perfect righteousness. Since our righteousness will always come up short, we need the righteousness of Jesus to satisfy God's demands.

Jesus offers His righteousness on our behalf and provides a way for us to come to God. The only way He is able to do that is because of His death. Because He laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sin, He made our eternal redemption possible.

Nothing in your life that once carried the burden and brokenness of sin remains that way in Jesus. He promises to make all things new. Because our sin is the ultimate barrier between us and a gracious, holy God, God has provided a way for our sins to be removed, for the stain of sin's condemnation to be made purer than pure white snow (Isaiah 1:18). That's a completely new start for anyone who comes to God by trusting in the righteousness of His Son, Jesus. You can be made perfectly clean. Jesus actually became our sin and took it with Him to the cross, where His blood washed its power and impact away forever (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The sacrifice of Christ provided redemption for the future—for your eternal salvation. It also provided redemption for the sins of those in the Old Testament, people who also trusted God's promise by faith. If the blood of Jesus is so eternally sufficient to cleanse the portals of heaven and provide eternal salvation for those who believed God in the Old Testament, how much more can the blood of Jesus make you perfectly clean from all of your sin?

If the blood of animals could remove ceremonial defilement, surely the blood of Christ can take away the guilt of your sin. After all, if the blood of bulls and goats had been adequate, Christ never would have had to shed His blood.

Still, there's so much more. Not only are your sins covered by the blood of Jesus, but your conscience—that internal voice that makes you feel responsible or guilty for wronging God—is also cleansed and made new. How would you like to be forgiven for your sins but also set free from that nagging burden of guilt over your sin? Jesus offers that to you in His death. That's what He provided for you when He died on the cross.

All of us experience the full benefits of God's grace and mercy when we embrace the sacrifice of Jesus. He alone carries absolute authority and power to forgive and cleanse us from sin. Our consciences are made alert by the Word of God and bring us to a place of realizing our need for a Savior. But not only that, but once you know Jesus, your conscience can rest in the promise of eternal life, no more guilt for the sins of your past.

Jesus, now seated in heaven with God, makes all that possible. And He continues to provide a bridge for you to experience the benefits of that promise forever. He is your eternal mediator. This principle is similar to the provisions of a will—a legal document that provides for the benefit of individuals left without a provider when someone dies. You can't benefit from the provision of a will until there is proof the creator of that will

has died. The same is true of Jesus—it was His death that opened up the unlimited resources of grace and forgiveness on behalf of those who trust in Him. His death provided for the eternal need for redemption.

Another way of expressing this truth would be that the life of Jesus, though lived perfectly and in pure love and goodness, couldn't provide salvation. Only His death made salvation possible. His shed blood from His sacrifice on the cross, satisfied the full demands of God for holiness.

It is the *death* of Christ which saves you.

Amazingly, even the heavenly realm needed purifying by the blood of Jesus. Sin originated in heaven, as Satan devised his insidious rebellion while in his heavenly office. The blood of bulls and goats has never been shed in heaven—there is no denying that would be crude. However, the blood of Jesus, entered heaven with Him and became part of providing for your eternal salvation. So, though mysterious and hard to grasp with a finite imagination, heaven itself benefited from the purifying power of the blood of Jesus.

Jesus didn't offer His blood by entering the earthly Tabernacle—that was never His plan. Instead, He offered His blood as a once-for-all sacrifice when He entered the heavenly tabernacle. The Tabernacle on earth was just a figure—the reality is in heaven. “Now to appear in the presence of God for us” (v. 24) means before the very face of God. Christ has not entered into a manmade sanctuary. It is spiritual, but real. He died on earth to save us; He lives in heaven to keep us saved. He is there for us.

Here is how the writer of Hebrews framed it: If it had been necessary for Jesus to offer sacrifices for sin in the earthly Tabernacle, “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26).

You can understand this truth very simply: There exist only two places for your sin—either your sin is on you or it is on Jesus. If you have not accepted the sacrifice of Christ, if you are not trusting Him as your Savior, if you have not granted Him full authority over your life, then nothing awaits you in eternity judgment. God is always right. So if your sin remains on you, nothing can remove it but the death of Jesus.

He is going to return to earth, but not to save the world from the penalty of sin. He accomplished that when He came as a human, lived a perfect life, died a horrible death, and made a perfect sacrifice with His blood. When Jesus returns, He will return to present Himself and all who have trusted Him as evidence of His eternal salvation, finished and offered for all who will believe. Will you believe?

NEXT: Learn of the importance of encouraging one another in tough times.

7. If you were a Jewish Christian who had seen the beauty of the Tabernacle, would it have been hard for you to imagine there was a better, more beautiful, true tabernacle in heaven?

LESSON 11

THE POWER OF CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGEMENT



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 10**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to *Hebrews 9:25–10:24*, *Hebrews 10:9-36*, and *Hebrews 10:26-39*

The sacrifice Jesus made for you supersedes all other ways to come to God.

When God revealed Himself in the Old Testament, He wanted to bring a simple message: Believe My promise and live. Though the outward system seemed elaborate and perhaps impossible to manage and not enough to satisfy a holy God, the Good News reveals that Jesus Christ finished all of that when He died on the cross. Only Jesus could satisfy God's holy requirements.

In Jesus you stand in a new place with God, a higher plane altogether. For instance, God wants to bring *joy* into your life. The Law never promised joy. There was thunder and lightning, and people were smitten dead at the giving of the Law, but when Jesus came, He died to make possible a life of abundant joy and fulfillment.

The sacrifices made under the Mosaic Law merely reminded God's people of their sin—day after day, year after year. Those sacrifices only represented a dim shadow of what was to come in Jesus. The blood of animals never had the power to take away sins or cleanse the conscience from guilt. It only served as a temporary place holder that satisfied God for the time being.

Ultimately, God never wanted the blood of animals to be shed and offered on the altar (Psalm 40). He wanted a relationship of love and trust between Himself and His people. He desires that for you, too,

But our sin is always a barrier between us and God. So, Jesus came to this earth, grew to manhood, and at thirty years of age He began His earthly ministry. He lived a holy, harmless, undefiled, and blameless life. He finally offered His own body to pay the price for our sin.

Jesus also received from the Father a new body, the church, as His bride. Jesus loves us; He paid the price for us. And once He returned to heaven to be with the Father, He continues to stand before God for us.

Once, God's people lived under the provision of the Old Covenant. God first made that promise to Abraham and then delivered it to Moses through the Ten Commandments. That promise, though centered in the commitment of God, only temporarily provided for the problem of sin.

In Jesus, God ushered in the New Covenant, the promise that would reside in the minds and hearts of all who would trust His Son for their salvation (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Now in Jesus we have a new experience with God we know through the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, you become a representative of this New Covenant as a follower of Jesus. And it's an experience that not only promises eternal life but guarantees a new life on earth filled with hope, fulfillment, joyfulness, and a supernatural peace—especially in tough times. The Holy Spirit makes you a new person in every possible way; He gives you a new mind, new motivations of your heart, and provides you with a perfect standing before God, forever. That's why it's such good news.

And it is through the blood of Jesus that you can come into the very presence of God. And come to Him boldly, with great confidence He will hear and respond to you in all His love, grace, mercy, and power.

The veil that once covered the entrance to the holy of holies in the Tabernacle was torn in two when Christ died on the cross. What a powerful symbol of the dramatic removal of sin's barrier to God. Jesus Christ has opened up for you a new and living way to God through His death. The old sacrifices won't help you any longer. Because of Jesus, you have a standing invitation to come to God now that you have been made holy by His blood. Your conscience is clean, and you have been made new.

In Jesus' death, God established a foundation for our faith (1 Corinthians 3:11). That's knowledge, but it is faith that puts you there. Faith is an action based on knowledge. That means that as a believer in Jesus, you became part of a holy priesthood. You have as much right to be in God's presence as anyone because you enter by the "newly sacrificed" way Christ made for you. You come to God on that basis.

One of the best results of realizing your new relationship to Jesus is that you can serve others as a priest of encouragement. God invites you to seek out ways to be an encouragement to others, especially when they struggle in their faith. You can pursue this ministry with enthusiasm. You can make all the difference in the world for a believer on the edge of despair. It's part of your holy calling in Jesus. This is possible because you have that ministry in Him.

If there ever was a time when believers needed to encourage one another, it's in these days. Instead of chopping each other down, we need to draw together in love around the person of Christ. Believers can strengthen and encourage one another in prayer, by studying the Scriptures together, offering loving words of encouragement and gratitude—all targeted at the discouraged spirit.

That's one of the main reasons God wants Christians to commit to worshiping together and being in fellowship on a regular basis. Life is too hard to go it alone, especially in a culture that grows increasingly hostile to the things of God. A priestly work occurs in our hearts when, because of our access to God in Jesus, we encourage each other. This encouragement becomes a lifeline and safeguard against falling back into sin.

Continuing to live a life marked by sin and rebellion against God after receiving the grace of Jesus carries grave consequences. That's why the writer of Hebrews made such a startling statement: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (v. 31). To keep on sinning after you have received Jesus' grace and forgiveness makes a mockery of His death. Such a blatant disregard for His gracious gift angers God and puts you at risk of receiving the consequence of His anger. God cannot turn a blind eye toward sin. He is holy and just. It flies in the face of grace for Jesus' followers to act as if His death falls short of fixing our sin problem.

God hasn't surrendered His right to judge. Every one of us will appear before Him as the sovereign ruler of this universe. So, the warning includes both believers and unbelievers. God includes in His Word an amazing story about King David, Israel's shepherd king. He loved God passionately but fell

into a pattern of willful sin. Through a series of painful consequences and a very pointed confrontation from the prophet, Nathan, God brought David back to a humble attitude toward his sin (Psalm 32). He needed a strong reminder of the price he'd pay for disregarding God's goodness.

David attempted to cover up his sin, but God forced him to confess it and deal with it. For a similar reason, sometimes God's heavy hand is upon us who are His children. However, God's hand of chastening is altogether different from His hand of judgment.

If you despise what Jesus did on the cross, there is nothing ahead of you but judgment; you have no hope whatsoever.

This is the same point the writer is making to these Hebrew believers. Under the Mosaic Law they could bring a sacrifice every year—or any day if they wanted to. But because of Jesus' death, that process is no longer operational. Only Jesus can satisfy God's righteous standard.

At times, simply honest reflection on our past can bring us back to a right attitude toward our sin.

The believers to whom Hebrews was written had apparently suffered intense persecution and likely deep personal loss because of their faith in Jesus. In the early days of their faith, they had their hearts fixed on Him and the hope He offered to them of eternal life. But life had grown extremely hard for these Jewish believers. Their faith brought great heartache and affliction into their lives because of persecution. Many of them paid a huge price for following Jesus.

But they refused to shrink from their faith, because they had focused their hearts on the finished work of Jesus. Some faced imprisonment and others lost their homes and were forced to surrender all their possessions because they refused to renounce their faith. But in return they received the blessings of His grace, the joy of suffering with Jesus.

So, the call was to remember those days. To look back and recall what life was like when they first met Jesus and felt the spray of grace and the fresh freedom of forgiveness. The writer simply reminded these Jewish Christians of their faith and the patient endurance God supplied during those trying times. Patience and faith go hand in hand in Scripture. After exercising faith in a time of adversity, followers of Jesus can display patience with the future hope of the fulfillment of faith, which is eternal life.

That's what it means to live by faith. You trust the promise of God in Jesus no matter the circumstance (Habakkuk 2:3-4). By faith, you are made right with God; that's what it means to be "justified" before Him. All of that is based on what Jesus did in His sacrifice for you on the cross. By faith you can receive the benefits of God's presence, such as His comfort when you experience personal loss, His perfect peace when you are anxious, His wisdom when you need to make a difficult decision, and His mercy to help you in your time of temptation. And there is so much more that you can receive from Him by faith.

All because Jesus lives in heaven for you. He intercedes for you, and He stands before God and claims you as His own because you trusted Him. You put your faith in Him and in His perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for you.

Your faith in Jesus rests on the promise of God's Word. And in the same way that you receive the promise of eternal life by putting your faith in Jesus, you are enabled to live for God also by putting your faith in Jesus and all He is doing for you in heaven. You have everything you need to stand firm in your faith, even when facing mounting pressure to go back to your former life. You can "go on" with God because Jesus gives you the grace to trust, the strength to keep going, and the patience to endure even the most painful of life's circumstances.

Like a sailor who lets out her sails to move forward into the open seas, you can "let out your sails" of faith and trust that Jesus will bring you safely through to the other side.

The writer to the Hebrews did not consider that the believers to whom this letter was written had drawn back. But it was necessary that they receive a clear warning about the dangers of doing so.

They could take heart (and so can you) in the knowledge that God is faithful. To remember that Jesus is alive and is seated in heaven as your perfect and powerful High Priest forever. The message of Hebrews is this: "Let us go on with God." Feel stranded on an island of discouragement or depression? Let out your sails and go on with God. Shipwrecked on the shoals of hardship or fear? Take hold of the promise and go on with God. Let out the sails of your faith. Jesus is with you and God is faithful.

NEXT: Discover the courageous faith of many who died believing the promise of eternal life in Jesus.

7. Imagine you were reading this letter in the first century. What effect would these strong warnings have had on you? What effect do they have on you today?

LESSON 12

COURAGEOUS FAITH



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 11:1-7**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to ***Hebrews 11:1-3***, ***Hebrews 11:3-6***,
and ***Hebrews 11:5-7***

“By faith” are two of the most important words in all the Bible.

Hebrews 11 has come down through the ages as the “Hall of Faith” chapter in the Bible. It chronicles the lives of individuals—many well-known, others obscure—who changed the world by believing God.

This chapter illustrates how an ordinary life can give witness to the power of courageous faith.

These are stories of individuals who not only walked a road less traveled but who traveled an altogether different route. They walked by faith—the way God wants all of us to walk each day.

We also learn that the opposite of faith is unbelief—the worst sin anyone can commit. No *act* you could commit today would God not forgive tomorrow. But God has no remedy if you continue in a state of unbelief.

Faith is defined as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (v. 1).

You only have two ways to come to know God: You can either live a perfect life marked by perfect deeds, or you can come to Him in faith. Yes, if you can present perfection in your works, God will accept you—but so far nobody has been able to hit that mark. So that's not a satisfactory way to come to God. Yet, countless people try that in the name of religion every day. Maybe that's your story, too.

The only other way to come to God is by faith. Sadly, many people believe faith requires taking a leap in the dark, an uncertainty, or counting on winning a gamble. If that is what it means to you, then you don't have faith. Faith, according to God's Word, rests on the foundation of truth, which comes from God.

To others, faith remains shrouded in mystery. It's a sort of sixth sense, or an unexplainable intuition that tries to understand the spiritual realm. Faith to some is like belonging to a secret order into which you are initiated by mystical works which God will accept in lieu of good works. Faith for these people is like a fetish or good luck charm you hang around your neck. But none of that is faith, either.

Faith is believing truth that has been revealed by God. Faith means obeying God. It's also a hope in what God has revealed about Himself, the world, and things to be in eternity.

Faith rests upon truth, and truth originates with God. In chemistry it would be the chemical which settles at the bottom of the test tube after you have completed an experiment.

Refusing to believe the truth God reveals is sin. And sin is what keeps you from knowing God. The question is whether you believe God or not. The sin of unbelief keeps you from coming to God. It's the heart that needs to believe (Romans 10:10-17). When you are ready to give up your sin, the Holy Spirit will make real to you the Word of God.

But faith not only stands on the foundation of truth; it's verified by evidence of it. There are knowable and tangible realities that prove what is unseen. That's also faith. Without evidence, you can't convict someone of a crime. Evidence shows that what is believed, though unseen, is true. It is real.

Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith is not false hope. Faith is *substance* and *evidence*. If you really want to believe, you can. You can believe a whole lot of foolish things, but God doesn't want you to do that. He wants your faith

to rest upon what He has revealed in His Word, the Bible. Hebrews 11 offers several examples of real people who lived their lives by believing in the truth of God, even though it couldn't be seen. They lived by substance and evidence that God exists.

For the believing Jews to whom Hebrews was written, reading that their forefathers lived according to faith was a profound assurance of their own faith. These people laid the foundation for trusting God, and ultimately paved the way for Messiah, God's promised Deliverer. These Old Testament worthies believed God, and for them it was not a leap in the dark and it was not a false sense of hope. Their faith rested upon evidence.

Noah built an ark, and he did it by faith. What kind of faith? Was it just some dream he had? No. God gave him an abundance of evidence because Noah *had trusted God's message* for many years.

Abraham shines as another credible example. Though he had never known or seen God, once he encountered God's voice and call, he believed Him. He put his faith in God. When Abraham believed, God granted him righteousness. He made him new (Genesis 15:6). Abraham received true righteousness, not because of his stellar life, but because he *believed* God.

Faith helps us grasp the origins of the universe, too. God commanded the world and the entire universe into existence. That's what is revealed in the Bible. It is faith that allows us to accept that truth.

In the case of Abel, Adam and Eve's son, God made clear that people must approach Him on only one basis: by faith. In other words, Abel and all individuals after him could find favor with God when they trusted Him—demonstrated faith in His Word.

Abel had apparently received a revelation from God. So did Cain. They were both in the same family. But Cain ignored God's command and did his own thing, bringing the fruit of the ground, or crops—that which *he* had produced. In other words, here is the first man who brought *his works* to God. A lot of people today try to make themselves right with God the same way—by presenting their own good deeds or by relying on their own resourcefulness.

Abel, on the other hand, brought a sacrifice of a lamb, as God had commanded. He shed the blood of the lamb, signifying the shed blood of Jesus, and trusted God's Word. He showed faith in God.

From the very beginning of the Bible story, you learn how God cleared the way to Himself: Blood had to be shed for sin. That's God's standard. You cannot receive the forgives or canceling of the penalty of sin without the shedding of blood (Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22). Initially, and for countless generations, that blood came from animals sacrificed before the Lord. But all of that foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice and the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus for you, so your sins could be forgiven too.

Abel's offering pointed to Jesus, and he responded to God's command by faith—that is the way of salvation. Today, though a man be a stranger and a wayfaring man and a fool, he need not go astray (see Isaiah 35:8). God has made it very clear to us: Christ is the way to Himself; God gave Him to die for our sins. Abel, therefore, illustrates to us the way of faith—it is the blood-sprinkled way, the way that is Christ.

Another example was Enoch, an Old Testament individual who also lived by faith in God's Word. He walked with God. He trusted Him. He believed what God revealed to him. If you come to God through Jesus by faith, then you are to walk with Him also by faith. It is then the walk of the believer that becomes important.

Genesis 5 records Enoch's mysterious story. And it's a relatively sad story, to be sure. Many people's stories are sad, representing a life filled with heartache, disappointment, loneliness, and loss. Maybe you feel your life is made of endless sad chapters with no end in sight. If so, Enoch's story is for you. Because despite all that sadness, God revealed Himself to this man shortly after he became a father. There's no evidence as to what God said to Enoch, but he trusted Him regardless. And it became for him eternal life.

Genesis 5 records the generations of Adam. Line after line reveals that one of Adam's sons had his own son and those sons had sons and on and on it went. Eventually, every one of them died. That's what happens in the human experience. No one lives forever. Some die prematurely, others at the end of a long, adventurous or at times tortured life. It's the story of humanity. Genesis 5 reads like a narration of someone walking through a cemetery and reading the endless names on grave markers. There's a monotony to life that ultimately ends in death. But in the case of Enoch, mysteriously, he did not die. He put his faith in what God revealed to him and he was translated into God's presence at the end of his life.

Faith makes all the difference in our relating to God. You simply cannot live a good enough life to please God and find His favor. What pleases God is when you believe Him. When you put your faith in what He has revealed.

If you want to come to God and be found acceptable by Him, you must believe that He exists and that He is who He claims to be. You must believe everything He has revealed about Himself in His Word.

Do you believe God? This might be good time for you to reflect on what it is you are trusting for your life's purpose and direction. You may believe in yourself, in your dream, in your own resourcefulness, perhaps your intellect or charm. None of that adds up to eternal life, to a life of meaning and genuine fulfillment. That only leads to emptiness and ultimately death, and an eternity apart from God.

God always rewards anyone who responds to Him or seeks Him with faith in their heart. Faith is what prompts God to offer life. God always rewards faith. But salvation is not a reward—it is a free gift from God when you believe in Jesus.

Salvation comes by faith, and the walk of the Christian is also by faith. Enoch walked with God by faith.

Then there's Noah, who perhaps ranks as one of the top ten most famous heroes of the faith in all the Bible. The reason is because of how much he had to defy logic and plain common sense in order to believe God. When God commanded Noah to build an ark, Noah had never even seen rain or a storm, let alone imagine something as substantial as a floating vessel. But he believed. He received God's command, and out of reverence for God, he believed. And his faith saved his entire family. His salvation included the salvation of his entire household (Genesis 6).

In response to the blatant wickedness running wild on earth, God determined to judge the earth with a great flood. He was bent on totally destroying everything He had made. He was done with sin.

But Noah had lived a life of faith. He stood out to God as a man who trusted what God had revealed. Noah became, in a sense, a deliverer. The one who would by believing God, preserve a remnant of faith, when everything else would be destroyed.

Noah believed God when God told him He was going to destroy the earth by a flood. Would you have believed God if He had told you something similar?

Is there something God has revealed to you, or commanded you to believe, that seems so far outside the realm of possible that you're struggling to trust Him? That's a compelling place for you to be. God wants you to trust Him, to believe His promise!

God used Noah to warn people of this pending judgment. And it was not only Noah's words that became the basis of God's judgment, but also his faith. Because Noah did build the ark according to the specific instructions God had revealed. So, when the ark was complete, and it began to rain, God's truth was made known.

Noah's faith saved him and his entire family. But it also guaranteed favor with God. That's the power of faith—it brings you to God. And now your faith is in Jesus, God's Son. He did everything for you. And when you put your faith in Him, there will be no judgment for you, only deliverance. Only life, and life forever with God.

That's God's promise. Will you have faith?

NEXT: Learn of God's blessing on the father of all who believe: Abraham.

7. Imagine you got a chance to write a follow up to Hebrews 11, which is another chapter about the examples of faithful Christians. Who, from history or your own life, would you include and why?

**GOD IS ALWAYS
GRACIOUS.**

That's His way.

**HE LONGS TO MEET YOU
WHERE YOU ARE AND
SHOW HIS GRACE
TO YOU.**



THRUtheBIBLE

LESSON 13

MORE HEROES OF THE FAITH



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 11:8-30**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to ***Hebrews 11:8-19*** and ***Hebrews 11:20-30***

You can't think about faith without Abraham coming to mind. Abraham is identified in the Word of God as "the man of faith."

We have seen in this letter to the Hebrew Christians that worshipping God leads to faith in God and work for God. It leads to doing the thing God wants you to do.

ABRAHAM'S FAITH

Genesis chapter 12 records the beginning of Abraham's story of faith. Abram, his name before he meets God, came out of Ur of the Chaldees and traveled to the land of Canaan. When he got to the land, God finally appeared to him. It was faith that moved Abram to believe God when He called him to leave everything he knew and the comforts of his surroundings, and travel to a land he had never seen. Even when he arrived in that land, a place he had never seen, he trusted God by confidently looking forward to a city with eternal "foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

What a lifechanging encounter that began a new way to live for Abram and his entire family. It changed him. He honored God, worshiping God and building altars for worship in each place he stayed. When God promised Abram the blessing of a nation and a heritage, Abram believed God, and he was transformed (Genesis 15:6).

Even Sarah, despite her advanced age, was able to believe God when He promised to give her a child—a son through which God would keep His promise to Abraham. From Sarah’s son, Isaac, a nation of God emerged—a population of people whose numbers exceeded the number of stars in the heavens and the sands of the seas! Yet, neither Abraham nor Sarah lived long enough to see everything God promised to them come to pass. Yet, they died in faith, believing God would be faithful.

Believers today trust God for the same unseen reality. Though you may live your entire life by faith, trusting God’s promise to be fulfilled, having prayers answered, receiving God’s provision of wisdom, you also pass to life eternal with the same faith. It’s your faith in God that allows you to not fear death, but to look forward to being in a better place, a “heavenly homeland,” which God prepares for all who trust Him—by faith.

Abraham also by faith offered his only son Isaac, as a sacrifice back to God. Talk about faith! Knowing God promised to give him a line of people, a nation, from his son, it must have been an enormous step of faith to do what God asked and trust Him.

Sometimes God tests us, too. He wants us to grow in our faith, to deepen in our willingness to believe He is able to provide for us. At times, He allows us to be stretched beyond anything we thought we could possibly endure, in order to demonstrate His faithfulness to us. That’s how your faith grows and your endurance and patience deepen (James 1:2-4).

ISAAC’S FAITH

Abraham’s son, Isaac, also made the list of heroes of the faith. Isaac represents the *willingness* of faith. Isaac was most likely an adult when he went with his father Abraham to the altar of sacrifice. He would have known he was to be the sacrifice God requires, and so he willingly believed God would work all things out for good. He too trusted God’s promise to provide at just the right time.

His faith in God and in His Word compelled him to bless both his sons, Jacob and Esau, trusting God's provision for them. His faith transferred to his sons and started a legacy of faith as he trusted God for their futures.

JACOB'S FAITH

Isaac's son was Jacob. Perhaps the most enigmatic, infamous of all Isaac's children.

You must wait until the end of this man's life before you can say he was a man of faith. At the time of his death, trusting God's eternal plan, Jacob blessed both of the sons of Joseph, his grandsons, and he worshiped God "leaning on the top of his staff."

Jacob's life illustrates several important things about faith. He illustrates human nature and the fact that it is by grace God redeems us. If not for grace, Jacob would have been lost. He had no human merit—none whatsoever. He lived life on his own terms. He rarely acknowledged the things of God. He attempted to bless himself rather than rely on the goodness of God.

There was no blessing in the *life* of Jacob. It was a life of sin and deception, chicanery and crookedness—and no blessing ever eventuates from sin.

Yet, it becomes evident from his story that God is able to redeem even the most rebellious of human hearts. He can turn anyone's life around and bring about genuine transformation. Faith eventually broke through into Jacob's troubled life but only shined with brightness at the end of his days.

JOSEPH'S FAITH

Without question, the writer to the Hebrews, through the direction of the Holy Spirit, could have chosen multiple examples of faith from the life of Joseph. He was a man of impeccable character. And though on the receiving end of some of the most shocking cases of injustice, he stayed confident in the Lord's sovereign control and faithfulness.

Few in the Old Testament more closely represent the life and ministry of Jesus than Joseph. He epitomizes the picture of Christ. Read his story for more detail—it will thrill you how God works. Joseph provides a compelling example of how God's power accomplishes His purposes in your life.

- Joseph wore a coat of many colors setting him apart from his brothers. They called him a dreamer. The Lord Jesus, too, came with a message, and faced constant ridicule and even rejection from his brothers.
- Joseph obeyed his father, just as Jesus delighted to do His Father's will.
- Joseph was sent by his father to seek out the wellbeing of his brothers; God the Father sent Jesus His Son, to seek and to save sinners.
- Joseph found his brothers who were shepherds in a field; shepherds came by night at the birth of Jesus.
- Joseph's brothers constantly mocked him; Jesus felt the scorn of rejection.
- Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave; Jesus was betrayed for a sack filled with silver.
- Joseph's coat was dipped in blood; Roman soldiers gambled for the garments Jesus wore to the cross.
- Joseph was sold into Egypt where God raised him up to save the world; Jesus fixed his eyes on the cross upon which He became the Savior of the world.
- While viceroy of Egypt, Joseph supplied bread to the people; Jesus referred to Himself as the Bread of life.
- While in Egypt, Joseph got a gentile bride; the Lord Jesus is calling out of this world a people to His name.
- Joseph made himself known to his brothers when they came to Egypt; someday soon Jesus will make Himself known to His own.

God wants you to be encouraged by the connection between these remarkable individuals of faith and the opportunities in your life to believe God. Seeing how he was like Jesus, Joseph provides a compelling example of the power of God to accomplish His purposes in your life. When life crowds in and people let you down, faith keeps you focused on the One who promises never to leave you or let you down. That's His promise to anyone who trusts Him.

MOSES' FAITH

Perhaps one of the most famous examples of faith in the Old Testament is Moses, Israel's bold deliverer who became the friend of God (Exodus 33: 7-11). To the writer of Hebrews, Moses represents the *sacrifices* of faith.

We see faith at work in the life of Moses. Moses had godly parents who were willing to take a real stand for God. Faith was involved even at his birth. And then through miraculous turns of events, Moses was then brought up in Pharaoh's palace. Yet still, Moses had faith to choose God's plan.

Like Moses, you have choices in life that offer opportunities for your faith to shine. When you trust God in those times, He graciously demonstrates His power and provision in your life.

Moses had faith to act—faith reveals itself in action. God lifts to eternal life without requiring we present our works. But the faith that brings you to God, through Jesus, produces a life of faithfulness in you. Even while living in a pagan nation like Egypt, Moses kept the faith and observed the Law of God. It required immense courage as well as faith for Moses to leave Egypt to obey the calling of God. His mind was on God who he could not see but believed would be faithful to him.

Moses also encouraged God's people to sprinkle blood on their doorposts to ensure the death angel would pass over their families. Moses understood the ways of God.

Moses had faith to obey God. God spoke His word and Moses responded in faith. He forsook the pleasures of Egypt, went out into the desert, and came back to deliver God's people. He did all of that by faith, trusting God's Word and promise.

Like Abraham, he saw Christ's day and rejoiced. But perhaps the most dramatic act of faith in his life came on the shores of the Red Sea. While running from Pharaoh's armies, Moses led God's people across the sea on dry land—by faith. To believe God at this dramatic juncture required remarkable courage. Defying logic while risking ridicule in the chance his plan would fail, Moses reached out across the sea and did all God commanded him to do.

At times, God asks you to trust Him with something that only He can accomplish, to stand down from taking matters into your own hands and leave the results with God. Believing God against all odds and in ways that defy logic—that's faith, too.

JOSHUA'S FAITH

Joshua followed Moses in the journey of faith.

He had some big faith shoes to fill. Joshua trusted God and led His people into the land of promise. But he also believed God when God commanded him to march the people around the fortified city of Jericho seven times before blowing trumpets and shouting at the top of their lungs. We have in the life of Joshua the *watch* of faith.

After the death of Moses, Joshua had the unenviable position of having to lead God's people. Moses had become legendary among God's people, yet Joshua faithfully took up the mantle of leadership and responded to God in faith.

Joshua learned the power of humility and in leaving his future to the Lord, trusting the outcome of every battle into the gracious and powerful hands of God.

In Joshua we see the watch of faith. Faith to believe God—to trust Him to keep the promises of His Word and bless him with His provision of grace and power.

NEXT: Learn from several more examples of people who dared to show their faith in God.

7. If you could go back in time to interview Abraham or one of his descendants about faith, who would you choose? What would you ask?

LESSON 14

THE FAITH OF RAHAB— AN UNEXPECTED HERO



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 11:31-40**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 11:31-34** and **Hebrews 11:35-40**

If you have ever felt too far outside God's grace, you need to know Rahab's story. God includes her in the faith chapter in Hebrews because she demonstrated great trust in God despite intense personal risk. Her story is told in connection with the story of the walls of Jericho in the book of Joshua.

Once Joshua successfully led God's people across the Jordan River after their 40 years wandering in the wilderness, they came to the valley of Jericho. The city of Jericho sat as a looming, impregnable fortress. In order to know the city's weakness, Joshua dispatched spies to assess Jericho's walls.

While scaling the walls at night, the spies encountered Rahab, whose apartment lay tucked in the side of one of Jericho's outer walls. She no doubt had witnessed Joshua and the army of Israel marching around the city walls. Now it was her time to show faith.

You can read her testimony in the Old Testament book of Joshua. She told the spies who were on the roof at night, "For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon

as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath” (Joshua 2:10-11).

She clearly believed in God—she says she’s heard about what He has done, and she believes it. Apparently, God had been giving the city an opportunity to believe in Him, to trust Him, and to turn to Him.

If God showed grace to Rahab, a prostitute and woman who would feel the scorn of society, how much more will He offer His grace to all who turn to Him?

The Bible is full of stories of unexpected people like Rahab coming to faith in God. People of all walks of life, troubled by all manner of life’s issues, turn to God and receive His grace. The list goes on and on in Hebrews 11. God graciously reaches into the lives of people who may feel as if life has passed them by or at times when all hope seemed lost. But God is always gracious. That’s His way. He longs to meet you where you are and show His grace to you. Just like He did with Rahab.

Many of the names near the end of Hebrews 11 might sound familiar to you. They each have a story of how they showed their faith in God. All the details of their lives are different, but they have something in common: They believed God. There was a category of ruler or warrior. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, and Samuel all held significant roles in God’s story as prophets to His people Israel. David, one of the most beloved kings of Israel, conquered his most trying circumstances by believing God’s Word—they all lived by faith.

Gideon actually had very little faith when the Lord called him. He served as a judge of Israel at the time the Midianites had taken the land of Israel. These invaders bullied God’s people. They made it hard for them to harvest their crop. Gideon tried to harvest his crop while hiding. This is where God made His move (see Judges 6:12).

God called Gideon “a mighty man of valor” and Gideon almost laughed in denial. He knew fear gripped his heart. He was no warrior. But Gideon acknowledged the Lord’s voice. God determined to use Gideon’s weakness to demonstrate His power and grow the young judge’s faith. As time went on, God strengthened Gideon’s faith until there came the day when, with only 300 men, he realized victory over the Midianites. Faith drove Gideon’s life forward.

In that list of heroes in Hebrews 11 is an odd mention of Samson. One of the biggest failures in Old Testament history, Samson did believe God. You can read his story in Judges 13-16. There was a time when the Spirit of God came upon him and he delivered Israel, though failing in his ways. But Samson did fulfill his mission.

The writer goes on to mention Jephthah and David (oh, we could stop and talk a long time about David!) and Samuel and the prophets. But the writer makes it clear that time would fail him to mention them all.

But notice what all these people did: Theirs was the war of faith. What an amazing litany of courageous warriors of the faith who subdued kingdoms, battled on the frontlines for causes of righteousness, received the promises of God, and even stopped the mouths of lions. These people were heroic in their faith when facing life or death ordeals, many escaping or even enduring the flames of persecution and the sharp sting of death by sword—all for remaining firm in their faith. These were the martyrs of faith called out by God as triumphant examples.

Many stood as examples of courageous faith. They didn't gain great victories on the battlefield. Nor did they enter the arena of life before large audiences and perform great feats for God. But they suffered greatly because they believed God's Word. They stood firm in their faith and faced ridicule and unbelievable acts of violence and persecution and even imprisonment. Others were stoned to death. Still others had their bodies sawn into while still alive. Others faced financial ruin and even death when they refused to give up their confidence in God.

Yet in every case, God protected those who trust him. He keeps a watchful eye on your life, especially in times of trouble. That promise doesn't guarantee you will survive cancer or not face persecution or not succumb to violence because of your faith. Followers of Jesus around the world suffer terrible living conditions, persecution, and even death because of their faith. But as you stand for Him, Jesus deepens your experience of His power and grace (see 1 Peter 4:12-14).

The prophets of old faced hardship, persecution and even death because they aligned themselves in faith with God. And those who followed after them in the time of the early church faced similar trials, persecution, and threats. Also in the list of heroes in Hebrews 11, we read of a company of people who lived by faith, simply called "others." These "others" past,

present, and future suffer greatly for their faith. The suffering has ended for many of them, and they have already gone into the presence of the Lord and will never have to die again. You can draw strength and encouragement from their stories in your own struggle to endure suffering for His name.

God offers the promise of eternal life and His sufficient grace and presence for those who suffer for their faith. God made many promises, and many of them received the promises He made to them. But the promise of seeing an earthly kingdom established was never realized for all who have suffered for Jesus and gone to be with Him in heaven. The fulfillment of that promise remains a future prospect—for them and us. That hope steels us for the struggle. It undergirds our faith when we face trials because of our relationship with Jesus.

God continues to call out a people to His name, and through the suffering of faith, He is “bringing many sons to glory” (Hebrews 2:10). When we suffer, our faith is made more complete and substantial. Our faith is strengthened and deepened when we face adversity for what we believe.

God always has you in mind when allowing suffering for His name. He graciously allows suffering to bring about a fuller, more perfected faith in you. He patiently calls people out of this world to believe His name—and that is the church. And He will not stop until His church is completed.

When you're tempted to shrink back because of trouble or doubt your faith in a time of difficulty, be encouraged by the lives of those who have gone before us and stood firm in their faith. When trusting God seems impossible, calling to mind the faith of a grandparent or mentor or a missionary who served all their lives in obscurity can encourage your faith in tough times. They become like a cloud of witnesses, offering their lives as evidence that faith works and the promise that God is faithful. They found out that it works.

Read again how Hebrews 11 ends (specifically verses 5-38). Your faith will be encouraged by the triumph of those of whom the world is not worthy. Take a few minutes and bow in prayer, thanking the Lord for these people of faith who, because of what they endured for Jesus, were too good for this world.

NEXT: The power of hope and all you have in Jesus.

7. If you could ask the martyrs and persecuted in Hebrews 11 if their faith had been worth it, what do you think they would say? What do you think was present in their lives that needs to be in yours?

LESSON 15

OUR ETERNAL HOPE



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 12:1-16**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 12:1, 2, Hebrews 12:3-11**, and **Hebrews 12:9-16**

Let's get moving and not just drift along. That's a powerful message for believers stuck in fear or complacency about the future. Jesus calls all of us to run the race of faith as if we really want to win.

In fact, countless faithful believers in Jesus did just that, facing terrible odds against them, and now enjoy their heavenly reward. They are a “cloud of witnesses” cheering you on to run your race of faith by keeping your focus on Jesus.

We're also encouraged to be soldiers who stand firm, as a believer is to walk by faith, and as an athlete, to run the race in order to gain the prize. When certain “weights” impede our running, we must throw those things off so we can run our race of faith with agility and freedom (1 Corinthians 9:24; Galatians 5:7).

Think of all the people you know who trusted Jesus all their lives and live now with Him in heaven. When you consider how they lived their lives, you realize the Christian life is worth it—and running the race of faith, free of the habitual sins and emotional baggage from your past, is worth the ultimate prize: Life with Jesus.

What holds us back from running free? Anything that causes us *not* to believe God. In fact, unbelief is *the* sin that hinders you from moving forward and growing in your faith. If something from your past—a memory, a personal offense from someone close to you, a stubborn sin or attitude, or your own anxiety about the future—causes you to doubt God’s Word, that sin of unbelief takes hold. It keeps you from running like the wind.

By focusing on Jesus and all He endured, we let loose of all those chains that bind us in sin. We can run freely, without hindrance.

Jesus showed us the way to run through His perfect life. He endured immense suffering, rejection, pain, discouragement, temptation to sin, depression, even doubt, at times. Yet those pressures strengthened Him and forged a spiritual patience in Him that fueled His own race of obedience.

Focus on Him and what He endured, and you will protect your mind from negative thinking. Jesus’ perfect life will spur you on to keep going. Meditate and read God’s Word and you will train your mind and get the spiritual fuel you need to keep running. Part of God’s training program includes adversity. It will correct you when you sin or stray and strengthen your faith.

God loves us as a father loves his children. He’s willing to allow difficult circumstances into our lives to help form our spiritual character. At times, He uses adversity to discipline us or make our response to Him more genuine and lasting. We shouldn’t be discouraged by His attempts to correct us but encouraged by the love that motivates His actions toward us.

“Why do Christians suffer?” is a question many believers ask to help sort out their spiritual doubts. God’s Word offers several answers:

First, *suffering can be the result of our own sin or rebellion against God* (1 Peter 2:20). Often our own selfish ways or stubborn hearts toward the things of God result in negative consequences. There’s no spiritual benefit added to us when we suffer because of willful disobedience to God.

Second, *suffering can come because of standing for righteousness* (1 Peter 3:14). Many believers who take a stand for God often pay a heavy price for that conviction—many losing their jobs, possibly facing public ridicule, still others around the world experiencing physical and personal harm or imprisonment.

Third, *we suffer because of unconfessed sin in our lives* (1 Corinthians 11:31). Sin unchecked chokes our ability to live free and powerful lives in Christ. And God uses adversity to root out those sinful patterns. We have a

responsibility as followers of Jesus to judge our hearts, attitudes, and actions, and to make certain each are in line with the Spirit of God. We suffer for *sin* in our lives. However, if we are God's children and refuse to deal with the sin in our lives, *God* will deal with it. He will judge us.

Fourth, *we can suffer because of the sins of our past* (Galatians 6:7-8). Though God offers mercy to anyone who calls on His Son, Jesus, for salvation, our past patterns of sin can still issue into our experience a host of consequences. That is particularly true if we continue to sin after we have trusted Jesus. When we sow continually to the winds of sinful habits and patterns, we risk experiencing destructive results of epic proportion.

Fifth, *believers can suffer for some lofty purpose of God* (Isaiah 55:8-9). This principle is illustrated vividly in the Old Testament story of Job—a godly servant of the Lord who suffered enormous personal loss as part of God's plan to carry out His purposes.

Sixth, *many believers suffer because of their courageous faith in God*. Hebrews 11 chronicles several examples of courageous faith against enormous odds. Some demonstrated their faith and great victories were won; others were delivered by the sword; some were slain by the sword.

Finally, *believers suffer adversity as part of God's design to forge spiritual character* (Hebrews 12:6-9). The Lord's discipline deepens our experience of His grace, expands our ability to trust Him—especially in difficult situations—and purifies our motives and attitudes of our hearts. When we stray from His perfect will, we need to be checked or disciplined, not as punishment, but as gracious correcting. Punishment is to uphold the law. A judge punishes, but a father chastens and he does it in love. God uses chastening to demonstrate His love for us.

God wants you to live a Christian life in all its fullness—but He cannot abide someone who represents His name yet continually lives in such a way that brings dishonor to Him and to the gospel. He will move against that person through circumstances to bring about repentance and a restored spirit of obedience. His doing so flows from His heart of love for His children and His desire that we live in holiness and surrender.

Becoming a fully mature follower of Jesus in fellowship with Him requires God's loving discipline. This process God uses to bring about spiritual maturity is not always pleasant. In fact, at times it can feel unbearable, depending on what you experience. But the promise of God is that as

you yield to His plan and humbly obey His voice, He will produce in you a genuine spiritual maturity. God always moves in love in His purposes and plans for you.

What matters is how you respond to God's gracious actions in your life. You can respond to His hand of correction in your life in several ways:

My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline ... (v. 5). You could miss God's purpose entirely in allowing adversity in your life if you ignore it or discount it as just another bump in life's road. That would qualify as "making light" or "despising" His discipline. By simply maintaining an awareness of God's ways and His desire to grow your faith and strengthen your spiritual character, you can avoid this flippant response.

And don't give up when He corrects you ... (v. 5). You may also be tempted to give up on God or walk away from your commitment to Him because the pressure of His correction feels like too much to bear. God urges you to resist that temptation and not to "faint" or "give up" on His loving purposes for you. Hang in there and trust His hand, and He will faithfully see you through the present trial. That's how much He loves you.

As you endure this divine discipline, remember God is treating you as His own children ... (v. 7). Another response is to *remember* that God works continually in your life. He longs for you to trust Him in deeper ways and to expand your faith in His purposes for you. That often comes because of many periods of adversity that He either allows into your life or brings upon your life, all lovingly designed to strengthen your spiritual muscles. Remember God works this way. He helps you endure.

But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way ... (v. 11). The best response to God's loving discipline is to learn from it and allow Him to work in you. When you allow God to train you how to live more effectively in the power of Christ, you join Him in His loving purpose for you. How much better it is to submit to God's plan, even if that means you must endure hardship or loss in order to receive training in your walk with Him.

That level of adversity is never pleasant and can be painful at times. But by remembering God's loving ways, you can endure it and hold to the promise that He only desires good for you and for your family.

Even the great apostle Paul understood the value of disciplining himself, perhaps to avoid the more painful process of enduring God's hand of discipline. He resorted to pounding on his own body (maybe a reference to intense physical workouts) to ensure that debilitating temptations did not overtake him (see 1 Corinthians 9:27).

We need to be trained and taught by the Lord's discipline, and then we will not find ourselves in the position of going "weak in the knees," spiritually speaking. It's easy to lose heart when life takes difficult turns. But God has loving purposes for you in those periods of trouble. You must trust Him on that.

Unbelievers watch with intensity how you respond to adversity and disappointment, knowing of your faith in God. God can use your response to His loving discipline to bring someone closer to their own encounter with His Son. Resist complaining and whining, but instead give the world an example of what it means to follow Jesus.

Keep yourself on a straight path of obedience and guard yourself against responding negatively to God. When you stray from God's path, you risk stumbling and experiencing unnecessary injury—disruptions or distractions that hinder your walk with God. He can put you back on course, but you might walk the rest of your days with a "spiritual limp." Instead, God wants His followers to live at peace with everyone and to see their lives as testimonies of His goodness and grace.

More than ever, it seems, people need to see an authentic example of Christians living their lives by faith in God. People struggle to live peaceful, meaningful lives. They need a vibrant, honest, example to follow. Perhaps that example could be you. And how you respond to adversity, especially when it is part of God's loving correction in your life, could be key in drawing someone into a genuine encounter with Jesus.

When we live our lives in holiness—in ways that are pleasing to Him and honoring to His Son—people are attracted to authentic living. God can use your response to tough times to draw someone to Himself. When we are at peace with God through Jesus, we can be channels of that offer of peace to those who need it most (Romans 5:1).

NEXT: Learn of the danger of allowing bitterness to take hold of our lives.

7. Think about the metaphors of an athlete and a soldier. What other metaphors for living a disciplined life could apply to the Christian?

A person in a dark jacket and blue jeans is walking away from the camera on a rocky, dirt path that winds up a mountain. In the distance, a large cross stands on a hilltop under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is misty and atmospheric.

DO YOU WANT A SECURE
PLACE ON WHICH TO REST
YOUR SALVATION?

Go to Jesus.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 16

SPEAK HIS NAME



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 12:15-29**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to **Hebrews 12:15-24** and **Hebrews 12:25–13:8**

Staying the course and keeping your focus on Jesus, even when it gets hard, is part of the command of being a disciple. Jesus not only wants you to follow Him, He calls you to follow Him ... to the end. Even if that comes at personal cost.

That's what He did for us.

And that's why we need His grace in unlimited supply. He doesn't simply call us to follow Him then leave us to ourselves. His grace provides the strength, focus, courage, and energy we need to stand strong in the face of difficult circumstances.

Now God has a tremendous reservoir of grace, and He wants to lavish it on His children. He loves to do this! Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins, God the Father is rich in mercy and grace, and He wants to pour it over us. The problem is that many of us don't benefit from His grace because we turn from it. Yet His grace is a wonderful resource to lay hold of and rely on in life's tough times.

In fact, have you turned to Him today and asked Him for strength for your struggle? Have you talked with Him in prayer and come before Him the way

a child would turn to her Father? That's how you can experience His grace in your time of need. That's how you can prevent falling back from your commitment to follow Him.

When we allow life's pain or personal offenses to get the best of us, we easily become bitter and jaded toward the things of God. That sort of festering attitude in our hearts poisons our relationship with others and especially with God. God uses the strongest of images to warn against harboring resentment. He likens it to being unfaithful to someone you love. That's very serious.

What God has in mind is spiritual unfaithfulness. When bitterness lingers, it threatens your intimacy with God. It makes it easy to follow sinful desires. You either go forward in your relationship with Jesus or you fall back—you won't naturally stay in the same place. Bitterness creeps in and, sooner than later, you grow hard to the things of the Lord and miss out entirely on the blessed life He wants you to enjoy.

An example of this troubled approach to faith is the Old Testament story of Esau. Esau traded the promise of God's blessing for a plan to "bless" himself. He threw away the opportunity to see God fulfill His promise to him by taking matters into his own hands (Genesis 25:29-34).

Another example comes from the history of God's people, the Israelites, while they followed Moses in the wilderness. Having received redemption from God as He used Moses to deliver them from bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt, they allowed the bitter water of fear and unbelief to rob them of God's blessing. Joy and trust in God gave way to a bitter resentment when life didn't pan out on their terms (Exodus 19). How sad.

Yet God remained faithful. And in His Son, Jesus, He fulfilled all His promises to His people and provided a way for them to come to Him through the final and ultimate sacrifice of His Son. There was no longer a need for the elaborate Old Testament system of making sacrifices for sins that was described in the Mosaic Law. Everything these believers needed, they had received by faith in Christ.

As believers in Jesus, our names are found "written in heaven," which secures our hope of eternity. What a wonderful promise from God to those who trust His Son. In the same way, you join the countless believers from times past who now enjoy a heavenly reward because they believed God.

Jesus and His sacrifice made all of that possible, and He stands between as the ultimate mediator between God's promise to Israel and all He has promised to us in Jesus. The promise includes both your spending eternity in heaven with God, but also someday being ushered into the very presence of Jesus, God's now exalted Son, the mediator of the new covenant.

The Jewish Christians to whom Hebrews had been written were being tempted to revert back to an Old Testament system of sacrifice. But Jesus was all they needed. He accomplished everything necessary to secure an eternal salvation, through the shedding of His blood.

The writer urged his Jewish readers to take their eyes off the temple, off a bloody sacrifice, off a ritual, and to focus their faith on Jesus. And God urges you to do the same. No person on earth, no matter how trustworthy, charismatic, or winsome in personality can satisfy what God requires for you to come into a right relationship with Him. Only Jesus holds the power and answer to salvation.

"Consider Him; look to Jesus" was the message ringing from the pages of this letter. Yet too often this message is oversimplified, making it too easy for someone to assume they have been saved. But God reveals that so much has occurred in order for the offer of salvation to be made in Jesus.

As believers, we must continually guard against oversimplifying the truth of the gospel. The message of God's love and grace as offered in Jesus at times can be watered down to less than truth. The price Jesus paid to provide the hope and assurance of eternal life can't be calculated in human terms. But it can be imagined and reflected upon as you read and meditate on Scripture. Read through the accounts of Jesus' suffering, death, and burial, and grow deeper in your appreciation for what He did for you.

To follow Jesus means trusting in His finished work on the cross and also devoting your life to serving Him with gladness and personal sacrifice. That's what obedience means.

Receiving the gift of salvation costs you nothing, but following Jesus comes with an enormous price: You're committing your whole life to Him. But Jesus promises you a joyful and abundantly fulfilling life when you do (John 10:10).

God warns against refusing to respond in faith to the message of Jesus and the salvation He offers. No one will escape God's judgment who dies

without having believed in the work of His Son. To ignore His warnings and to spurn His gracious invitation to follow Jesus places you in eternal risk. That's also the message of the gospel and the letter to the Hebrews.

The human heart is evil and filled with sinful attitudes toward the things of God. That's why you need a new heart—a conversion from the Holy Spirit to make all things new (2 Corinthians 5:17). When someone says, “Give your heart to Jesus,” that simply refers to everyone's need to have their hearts transformed and made new by Him.

God desires to work in you in such a way that you become deeply sorry for your sin and determine to turn from your former way of life to a new life in Jesus. And in His kindness He leads you to both the realization of your need and to a point of being willing to turn to Him in humble faith and repentance (Romans 2:4).

In other words, since Jesus offers such a wonderful message of hope and forgiveness, it pays for you to give attention to Him—it will be very profitable to you. But to refuse His voice means certain punishment and judgment. There will be no escaping the judgment of God for your sin, apart from the grace and kindness of Jesus.

God's people, the Jews, notoriously rejected His offer of grace and forgiveness. He offered them refuge and hope if they would simply turn to Him and believe His promise. But they refused. Ultimately, they refused the offer that came again in the person of Jesus (John 1:11-13).

It's a serious mistake to ignore these continued warnings in Scripture. God takes His Word and His offering of it very seriously. At the giving of the Law there was an earthquake, and God shook the earth (Exodus 20:18-19). That occurred at the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. But the writer to the Hebrews mentions a second event when God will again shake the earth (Haggai 2:6).

When God speaks, there is a corresponding substantial response on earth. The apostle Peter also warned us that God will eventually destroy the earth with a cataclysmic event (2 Peter 3:7). God's revelation and offering of His Word is not to be taken lightly. How much more serious is refusing to believe that gracious Word when it is offered in the person of His Son, Jesus.

God says He is going to shake the earth and heaven itself. Why? To let all His created universe know some things are unshakeable—including your faith in

Jesus Christ. He is the Rock we rest upon, and He cannot be shaken. Do you want a secure place on which to rest your salvation? Go to Jesus.

That's why it's so important to build your life upon the foundation of faith—by trusting in the promises of God in Jesus. That kind of life cannot be shaken and will stand into eternity for you. God will remain. His Word will remain, and the eternal kingdom to which believers belong will remain when everything else passes away.

As believers we are moving toward a heavenly kingdom, but we must continually recognize our need to serve Him and remain faithful to Jesus while on earth. Through His Spirit and the ministry of His Word, we can serve the Lord with a genuine reverence, humility, and with a heart of gladness. That's the freedom you come to know as you follow and obey God. It becomes an increasingly joyful experience as you deepen in your understanding of your life in Jesus.

Christianity is not “playing church.” Neither does following Jesus mean maintaining an outward façade of spirituality. Following Jesus is a living, vital, and genuine relationship with Him that transforms your life and anchors you in the Word of God.

All of these truths ring as solemn reminders that grace is available for you to serve God, but also not to trifle with Him. God is gracious, but He is also formidable when ignored or dishonored. Don't think you can play fast and loose with God and get by with it.

God is gracious. He demonstrated this grace when He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for your sin. He didn't wait for the world to turn to Him before ushering in His grace. Even when we were determined to live apart from Him, He made His move toward us in mercy and love (Romans 5:8). That's the wonder of the gospel He proclaims.

To receive that gift by faith brings to you lasting reward and unlimited divine resources to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. To ignore it means you're gambling with your eternal destiny. Have you turned to God in repentance and trusted in His Son, Jesus? You can do that now. Simply bow your heart and ask Him for forgiveness.

NEXT: Learn the secret of following Jesus and walking with fellow believers in love.

7. Why do you think the writer of Hebrews mentioned the earthquake at the giving of the Law? Imagine you had been present then. What impact do you think the ground shaking under your feet would have had on you?

LESSON 17

THE MOTIVE OF LOVE



Begin with prayer



Read **Hebrews 13**



Listen at [TTB.org/Hebrews](https://www.TTB.org/Hebrews) to *Hebrews 12:25–13:8*, *Hebrews 13:3-16*, and *Hebrews 13:10-25*

The love Jesus shows us is the same love that motivates us to love each other.

Love compels us to live our lives thinking about our fellow believers and serving each other's needs. The love of Jesus holds us all together and fuels our actions and attitudes toward one another. It's the spiritual glue that holds our lives together in Christian community.

The Christian life is a life of faith and of love toward God and of love toward others. But that love for Jesus leads us to care for and serve the needs of strangers, too. You never know the impact you may be having on someone's eternal destiny when you offer sacrificial love to them in the name of Jesus. You may even unknowingly be serving an angel of heaven.

In a culture so divided on the issues of refugees and immigrants, having a love for strangers as representatives of Jesus' love can be a powerful antidote to hate and injustice. Jesus' love makes all things new. Showing hospitality to one another, and especially to strangers in need, is the mark of the love of Jesus impacting our lives. Opening our homes, serving the poor, and sheltering the homeless all flow as genuine acts of Christian charity and love.

The love of Jesus applies to every aspect of our lives as Christians. It impacts how we treat one another and how we receive and serve strangers. But it also impacts the marriage relationship. Marriage was God's gracious design. He created the bond of marriage in the beginning when He created Adam and then brought Eve to him to be his wife. So marriage is godly and holy, a gift from the Lord. That is why marriage should be kept pure and holy between a man and a woman. There is to be no intimate relationships outside the boundaries of marriage—we ought to value our relationships with our mates with great honor, respect, and purity.

God takes marital infidelity very seriously, too. He judges it and promises to reward sinful actions with a whirlwind of consequences. And it's the love of Jesus formed in us that keeps our marriage relationships pure and faithful.

Christ's love also governs your conversation—the words you use when you speak to those closest to you. Your words reflect the grace and love Jesus brought to you in your salvation. Our words must be seasoned with that same grace and kindness Jesus showed to us in bringing us eternal life (John 3:16).

Our lives are filled with relationships with people who intersect with us in so many ways. Few relationships impact our experience in life as our relationship with those who govern—nationally and locally. God wants us to relate to others in ways that reflect the light of Jesus. We do this because this is what Jesus commands and also because we could impact their eternal destinies.

This quality of love reflects the wonderful nature of Jesus—that He remains unchanging in His ways, in His mercy to the world, and in His righteous care over all our lives.

Today, your sorrow is His sorrow, and your joy is His joy. He will be the same in the future—"the same yesterday, today, and forever." He is never going to change.

The world is filled with all manner of religious cults and rituals, all offering a promise of meaning and fulfillment. Under the Old Testament system, God's people were commanded to follow countless and often tedious sets of rules and regulations that ensured they remained faithful to their faith.

Sadly, many Jews today fail to recognize all of that has now been fulfilled and satisfied in Jesus. Dietary laws and regulations regarding how to worship and live no longer apply to someone who has trusted in Jesus. Only

the Word of God can bring you to a knowledge of Jesus and enable you to experience His glory. Your relationship to Him, not the keeping of a system of rules and regulations, keeps you in right standing with God.

Under Old Testament law, animals were killed according to a strict procedure, then the carcasses were taken outside the camp to be burned. This ensured a pure process that honored the Lord in all possible ways. This was referred to as the “sin offering.”

Sin is our greatest problem. Sin separates us from God and prevents us from experiencing the promise of eternal life. Sin mars our identity as image bearers of God. That’s why Jesus came to take away our sin and offer Himself as a perfect sacrifice—a perfect sin offering—to God for our sin.

The love that compelled Jesus to do such a thing for you is the love that compels you to live your life in honor of Him. You no longer need religious rituals to satisfy God’s demand for righteousness. You have everything you need in Jesus.

The writer is saying to these Hebrew Christians, *“Don’t mind leaving the temple. Don’t mind leaving the rituals. Those things are not helpful. Go to Him—go to Christ.”*

We, too, are to go to Him. We are on our way to a heavenly Jerusalem. In Jesus we are separated unto God, in holiness and love. Those are the virtues that mark you once you come to know Jesus.

Real separation is not *from something*, but *to something*. The apostle Paul wrote that he had been separated *to* the gospel, separated *to* Christ, separated *to* the Word of God (Romans 1:1). In fact, the word “Hebrew” means the “one who crossed over.”

Abraham was called a Hebrew because he had come from the other side of the Euphrates River, signifying that his old life was gone. The children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, and they were delivered from slavery; they were redeemed, and a new life was then possible. Then they had to cross the Jordan River to live in the Promised Land, the land of Canaan, all symbolic of our new life in Jesus.

As followers of Jesus, we have the privilege of representing His suffering to the unbelieving world. The Hebrew believers struggled to leave the temple and their religion. In the same way, Christians today struggle to live their Christian life outside the comfort of the church service or their association

with a particular denomination. But Jesus calls you to a higher purpose of love. The life you live on earth is one that hopes for an eternal destiny in heaven. That keeps you focused on representing Jesus in love to the world.

Your life as a follower of Jesus is a life of praise and worship for His grace and love. Your life becomes a literal sacrifice of praise for all He has done for you.

The Bible highlights several ways your life can be a sacrifice of praise to the Lord:

1. You can sacrifice your *person* (Romans 12:1). Someone has said, “When one truly gives oneself to the Lord, all other giving becomes easy.”
2. You can sacrifice your *purse* (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).
3. You can offer the sacrifice of praise and worship (Hebrews 13:15).
4. Finally, you can offer the sacrifice of doing good deeds (Hebrews 13:16).

Sharing the love of Jesus through acts of grace and kindness reflect the reality of His life living in us. As a believer, you can live your life as a servant of God offering your life as a sacrifice of praise and love for those who need it most.

That’s why it’s especially important that believers in Jesus live respectably and in submission to people in authority—when possible—and give honor to them as to the Lord. This applies significantly to the way believers ought to conduct themselves within the community of faith, humbly serving Jesus and willingly submitting to the spiritual authority in the body of Christ, the overseers.

Specifically, if your pastor serves God humbly and in holiness and teaches the Word of God faithfully, then you joyfully and willingly obey the Word that is taught and apply truth to your life. You can do this by praying for your church leaders and servants. In places around the world, ministry leaders—many who are pastors and missionaries—have been imprisoned for their faith. It is a special privilege to pray for these individuals, that Jesus would stand by their sides and sustain and protect them.

Hebrews closes with a moving benediction, a blessing:

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. –Hebrews 13:20-21

In Jesus we have not only a perfect High Priest, but also a Great Shepherd. He cares deeply for your welfare and desires to lead you in places of peace and goodness.

As the Great Shepherd, Jesus gently perfects the sheep and builds them up. He leads us beside the still waters and leads us to the place where the grass is good and green and very tender—that is, to the Word of God (Psalm 23). Then in Psalm 24 He is presented as the Chief Shepherd. “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Peter 5:4). He died in the past as the Good Shepherd; He is the Great Shepherd today; and He is coming again as the Chief Shepherd for His sheep. He oversees His children, all believers, through His blood and in His sovereign application of His eternal covenant which promises eternal life to all who believe.

He wants you to deepen your knowledge of Him and the truths of God and to grow your faith so you become fully mature spiritually. The vision of Jesus for every believer is spiritual growth and a work that He not only begins but also finishes in your maturity.

Spiritual maturity aims at bringing you to a place where you humbly accept and pursue God’s will for you and your life. And Jesus offers His power at work in you to bring you to that level of trust and obedience. What is the important thing for a child of God? To do His will—to allow Him to work His will in your life, “working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

At the close of the blessing, the writer mentions a personal friend and brother in Jesus, Timothy. The writer wanted the readers to know of Timothy’s safety and well-being and that he had apparently been released from prison.

Such a tender reference to a dear brother fits the challenge to care for one another in the love of Jesus. God lovingly and graciously takes great care to provide for you in Jesus so that you have everything you need to stand firm in the faith no matter the circumstances.

He offers His personal power and unchanging presence as a source of both comfort and strength to face life’s inevitable challenges. As God had been faithful to their ancestors in the past, He would prove faithful to these believers in Jesus, as well.

They lived in solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Jesus who lived in Rome and across Europe. We too as believers share the blessings of being part of a spiritual family united in the love of Jesus and in the fellowship of His Holy Spirit. The joy of being in fellowship with one another, though separated by ethnic boundaries and different cultures, provides us with the courage and hope to stand firm in our faith in trying times.

God is faithful. Jesus has accomplished for us our eternal salvation, and we have everything we need to walk faithfully with Him to the end.

“Grace be with you all ...” (v. 25).

7. Most of us don't deal with sheep regularly, so the image of Jesus as the Great Shepherd may not resonate. What other pictures for Christ might the writer of Hebrews have used if the book was written today?

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

**LEARN HOW TO SHARE
THE MOST
IMPORTANT
MESSAGE OF
YOUR LIFE.**

TTB.org/HowCanIKnowGod

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets from the TTB.org website. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden table.

**GET ANSWERS TO YOUR
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
BIBLE AND LIVING THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE.**

TTB.org/booklets

**KEEP YOUR BIBLE BUS JOURNEY
GOING ANYWHERE AND ANYTIME.**



[TTB.org/listen](https://www.ttb.org/listen)

**GET THE GOSPEL TO THE
ENDS OF THE WORLD
WITHOUT LEAVING
YOUR HOME.**



[TTB.org/give](https://www.ttb.org/give)



THRU the BIBLE

with *J. Vernon McGee*

CONNECT WITH THRU THE BIBLE



Box 7100, Pasadena, California 91109-7100
P.O. Box 25325, London, Ontario, Canada N6C 6B1



1-800 65-BIBLE (24253)



TTB.org



BibleBus@ttb.org



/ThruTheBibleNet



/TTBRadio