

A Walk Through Hebrews

Introduction

Believers in Rome were under heavy persecution, and some were turning away from their faith. The author writes to them, to bring them back to their trust and hope in Jesus.

Hebrews gives five serious warnings to people who have heard the gospel so they will keep trusting and obeying Jesus, not drift away from Him.

The first warning is about quietly drifting away from Jesus by not paying attention to what God has said. Like a boat that slowly slips from the dock, a person can slowly slide from faith through neglect and spiritual laziness. God has confirmed the gospel with signs and gifts of the Holy Spirit, so ignoring this “great salvation” is very serious. Hebrews 2:1: "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it."

The second warning uses Israel in the wilderness as an example. They heard God’s voice but hardened their hearts and did not enter God’s “rest.” In the same way, those who hear Christ today must respond in faith and obedience “today,” not put it off until later. Hebrews 3:12: "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God."

The third warning rebukes believers for staying like spiritual babies who only want “milk.” Staying immature makes a person more open to falling into serious spiritual danger, so Hebrews urges them to press on to maturity and hold tightly to God’s promises.

Hebrews 6:4–6: "For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened... and then have fallen away, to renew them again to repentance..."

The fourth warning is about choosing ongoing, deliberate sin after knowing the truth. Such a person treats Christ’s blood as something cheap and insults the Holy Spirit. For that kind of hard-hearted rejection, there is only the expectation of judgment. Hebrews 10:26: "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins."

The final warning says not to refuse the God who speaks from heaven in His Son. Those who rejected God at Sinai did not escape; those who reject Christ face an even greater danger. Believers are called to receive the unshakable kingdom with reverence and awe, because “our God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:25: "See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven."

Draw near my friends, to the one who has always been your redeemer. He is the one who bought you, claims you and loves to walk with you by His side.

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Chapter 1

'Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. '

Hebrews 1:1-3

Jesus has it all. He has all of God's power, riches, kingdom and blessings. He has been with the Father since the beginning. He radiates the glory and character of God for all to see. The universe is held together because of Jesus' command. And He has done something amazing. He completely washed us and cleansed us of all sin, for all time. And now He sits forever at the majestic right hand of God.

Friends, our problem is solved, and our savior is ruling. Come to Him, receive His gracious gift, and enter into relationship with Him. Meet with Him yet again today. Listen to His voice. Read His word. Offer your praise and acclamation. Pour out your cares. You are loved and redeemed!

'This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names. For God never said to any angel what he said to Jesus: "You are my Son. Today I have become your Father. "

God also said, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son." And when he brought his supreme Son into the world, God said, "Let all of God's angels worship him." Regarding the angels, he says, "He sends his angels like the winds, his servants like flames of fire." '

Hebrews 1:4-7

Let all the angels worship the Son. For the Son is greater. The Son created our universe, and all that is in it. The Son was forever with the Father, and is God Himself. And all the angels adore the Son. They work for Him, coming throughout the world as ministering servants. And they are fast, effective and bold, like flames of fire. We love the angels for all they do, but we worship the Son, our God who brought us back to Himself!

'But to the Son he says,
"Your throne, O God,
endures forever and ever.
You rule with a scepter of justice.
You love justice and hate evil.
Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you,
pouring out the oil of joy on you
more than on anyone else." '

Hebrews 1:8-9

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There is nobody like the Son. And Father knows it! Father establishes the throne where Jesus rules forever.

Jesus holds a scepter of justice!

Have you been wronged?

Jesus loves justice and makes all things right.

Have you been maligned?

Jesus sets the world straight.

Have you been attacked?

Jesus hates evil.

He will square all the accounts.

Trust in Him!

Jesus rules!

'He also says to the Son,

“In the beginning, Lord,
you laid the foundation of the earth
and made the heavens with your hands.

They will perish,
but you remain forever.
They will wear out like old clothing.
You will fold them up like a cloak
and discard them like old clothing.

But you are always the same;
you will live forever.” '

Hebrews 1:10-12

The Father calls the Son "Lord" because the Son is in charge of all of creation. He spoke the words. He formed the earth and all that is in it, out of nothing. The earth and all will perish, but the Son, the Lord, will live forever.

Jesus is the Lord. The Creator. The Maker. The Controller. The Provider. The Handyman. The Planner and Deliverer.

He is in charge, and I can trust Him.

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'And God never said to any of the angels,
“Sit in the place of honor at my right hand
until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool
under your feet.”

Therefore, angels are only servants—spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation.'

Hebrews 1:13-14

It's Jesus sitting at God's place of honor. He is at God's right hand. He rules, chooses, decides, enacts. He is mighty and the Lord over all lords. He is watching you and watching out for you. He is an amazing god and friend.

The angels are His agents for your good. They are servants, doing what Jesus commands. So we don't worship angels, though we appreciate them. We worship the Son.

Come! Jesus is calling you!

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Chapter 2

'So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. For the message God delivered through angels has always stood firm, and every violation of the law and every act of disobedience was punished. So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak? And God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose. '

Hebrews 2:1-4

We have to grab it and hang on. This offer of salvation is precious, valuable, and everything to us. Many great messages came through the angels, but this offer of salvation came straight from Jesus. Are you in?

Jesus came with the message, and His people shared the very same with us. We cannot escape if we ignore His invitation. In fact, He confirmed it through His Spirit. We have no other avenue by which we can be saved, than to receive Him, give our lives to Him, trust Him and obey Him. Are you in?

'And furthermore, it is not angels who will control the future world we are talking about. For in one place the Scriptures say, "What are mere mortals that you should think about them, or a son of man that you should care for him? Yet for a little while you made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. '

Hebrews 2:5-7

When God made us, He didn't put us in place as rulers and judges, but as humans to learn from Him. He sent Jesus to teach us all things, and to redeem us back to the Father. For a little while the angels see more than us and have missives or instructions of what to effect on earth. This is our life now. But there is a time coming when we will join Jesus in glory and honor. As all things are subjected to Jesus, we will be a part, and will rule with Him. Who is man that God should think of him? And yet, He does. What plans lie ahead!

'You gave them authority over all things.' Now when it says "all things," it means nothing is left out. But we have not yet seen all things put under their authority.

What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was given a position "a little lower than the angels"; and because he suffered death for us, he is now "crowned with glory and honor."

Yes, by God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation. '

Hebrews 2:8-10

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Jesus came down from His place in heaven, to be the perfect man, yet suffering for my sin, for our sin. He paid the penalty that my sin deserved. When Jesus screamed "My God, why have You forsaken me?" He was bearing the separation that my sin earned. My blackened heart could never be in relationship with God who is perfect and awesome.

Jesus stepped down and took my place. Yet God accepted His sacrifice, poured life into Jesus and raised Him from the dead. He was there just "a little while" tasting death for everyone.

And now He has been lifted up. He is far above the angels, and has made a way to bring us children into glory! That's you. That's me. That's people from every tribe, tongue nation and family. His authority is forever, and His power is limitless. Come to Jesus!

'So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters. For he said to God,
"I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters.
I will praise you among your assembled people."

He also said,
"I will put my trust in him," that is,
"I and the children God has given me." '

Hebrews 2:11-13

When you walk with Jesus, you have been made His brother or sister. The Father welcomes you home, at the table, in the family. Sin is gone, holiness resonates in you, and you too are able to trust Him and experience His family life.

We are no longer far off, sinners becoming saints, or trying to become sanctified. We are home, with Jesus at the family gathering. And every day is walking with Him, watching Him play it out!

So take time with Him, relish Him, turn the challenges over to Him, and see what family life is all about!

'Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. '

Hebrews 2:14-15

Jesus became flesh and blood, living as man, a full 33 year life. He taught us and showed us so much, and our hearts were turned toward the Father because of Him. And then He did something eternally extraordinary. He battled and beat sin and death. He delivered once and for all a full payment for our sin and death, and He broke the back of the devil. The devil held the power of death, and wreaked his domain over all mankind. He won it in the garden when he brought man into rebellion with God, and he thought he had won the eternal battle. But Jesus died, a perfect man and perfect sacrifice, meeting the

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full requirements of sin and death. But sinless, He conquered death, and for us gives life. He has set free all of us who once were fearful of death. The weight of death is gone, and life and healing have come. Carry this message to all who are under the curse, that Jesus has set us free. And you can be made free indeed. Receive Him and follow!

'We also know that the Son did not come to help angels; he came to help the descendants of Abraham. Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. '

Hebrews 2:16-17

Jesus came for one purpose, to help His brothers and sisters through atonement and redemption. He carried our sins and washed us clean. He is our High Priest, and we are restored to our Father because of Him. All those who find their redemption in Jesus are the descendants of Abraham and brothers and sisters with Jesus. Welcome home!

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Chapter 3

'And so, dear brothers and sisters who belong to God and are partners with those called to heaven, think carefully about this Jesus whom we declare to be God's messenger and High Priest. For he was faithful to God, who appointed him, just as Moses served faithfully when he was entrusted with God's entire house.

But Jesus deserves far more glory than Moses, just as a person who builds a house deserves more praise than the house itself. For every house has a builder, but the one who built everything is God. Moses was certainly faithful in God's house as a servant. His work was an illustration of the truths God would reveal later. But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God's entire house. And we are God's house, if we keep our courage and remain confident in our hope in Christ. '

Hebrews 3:1-6

Think carefully about Jesus. Stop and take time to consider him. We belong to God and are partnered with all those who have been redeemed. Jesus created this whole family by rescuing us, and He takes full responsibility for you and for me. Just like Moses obeyed God and led the nation out of Egypt, and all the way to the promised land, Jesus has stepped in and is leading His church. He isn't just visiting, He is permanent and fulfilling every detail of the work. He is completely executing the office of Savior and Lord. So take courage, maintain your assured hope in Him. So pursue His life in you, to the fullest because that is where He is taking us!

'But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God's entire house. And we are God's house, if we keep our courage and remain confident in our hope in Christ. That is why the Holy Spirit says,

"Today when you hear his voice,
don't harden your hearts
as Israel did when they rebelled,
when they tested me in the wilderness.

There your ancestors tested and tried my patience,
even though they saw my miracles for forty years.

So I was angry with them, and I said,
'Their hearts always turn away from me.
They refuse to do what I tell them.'

So in my anger I took an oath:
'They will never enter my place of rest.'"

Hebrews 3:6-11

Christ is our Lord. He is in charge of the whole house, the whole family of God. He is in charge of me. He is in charge of you. We are called to take courage and keep our hope in Jesus.

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Look what happened to Israel when they refused to trust and hope in the Lord.

Turn to Jesus, and obey Him. Take courage, for He can be trusted.

'Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. You must warn each other every day, while it is still "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ. '

Hebrews 3:12-14

We are careful, diligent, daily reaching to the Lord to stay hand in hand with Him. Defy evil and embrace God, trusting in Him. Check in on your brothers and sisters, compelling each one to walk in holiness and fleeing unbelief.

When Jesus saved us, it was done, completely. But growing in Christ and learning to walk with Him is a daily refocus, a constant urging to disown the world and grab ahold of the welcoming hand of God. I have an eternally secure place with Jesus, and a daily invitation to follow and walk with Him. It's both simple, and profoundly hard! So take hold and walk on with Him!

'Remember what it says:

"Today when you hear his voice,
don't harden your hearts
as Israel did when they rebelled."

And who was it who rebelled against God, even though they heard his voice? Wasn't it the people Moses led out of Egypt? And who made God angry for forty years? Wasn't it the people who sinned, whose corpses lay in the wilderness? And to whom was God speaking when he took an oath that they would never enter his rest? Wasn't it the people who disobeyed him? So we see that because of their unbelief they were not able to enter his rest.'

Hebrews 3:15-19

Listen for Holy Spirit to speak to you. Read His word. Ponder what He has been doing. Place all your trust in Him, and obey what He says. You will find life here. Don't be unbelieving. Don't give up hope. Consider Israel, and see where God works with His people. Those who persist in belief are the ones who enter into His land. Believe!

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Chapter 4

'God's promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it. For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God. For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said,

“In my anger I took an oath: ‘They will never enter my place of rest,’”

even though this rest has been ready since he made the world. We know it is ready because of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day:

“On the seventh day God rested from all his work.” '

Hebrews 4:1-4

Are we willing to enter into God's rest? When I put all my trust and hope in Jesus, I stop trying to earn His favor. And I stop trying to run my own life. I have finally decided to call Jesus "My Lord" and to listen and follow Him. He has rescued, He has redeemed, He has washed me and filled me with His Spirit. I am His. So I choose to start with Him, to go His way, to rest in His power and plan, to obey His word.

I am no longer earning His love, I am resting in His hands. I do hear His voice, and I follow Him. He knows me, and I have a whole new life. This is amazing, and I cannot wait to see where He takes me next!

So enter into His rest. Place all your hope and trust in His saving, and His redeeming. Keep resting as you learn to follow Him. There's rest for your soul, and amazing life. But we start in Him!

'But in the other passage God said,

“They will never enter my place of rest.”

So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted:

“Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts.”

Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come. So there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God. For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel

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did, we will fall. '
Hebrews 4:5-11

God has kept open another day of rest. His rest is still here for you, but there's a simple catch. You must choose to enter His rest.

We put down our agenda and plans. We put down striving for our own right standing with God. We put down our evil and sinful acts and thoughts. And we enter into His rest. He is established as our Lord, our King, our Master.

We hear His voice. He knows us, and we trust Him. And so, we follow and do what he says and where He leads. Enter in.

'For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable. '

Hebrews 4:12-13

Am I entering God's rest? Or am I striving on my own? Jesus calls us to enter into God's rest. His word will dig to the bottom and show you. His word will show me. His word cuts right down to the core, exposing every area where He can and wants to rebuild. He wants to restore. But I have to enter in.

What to do? Dig into His word. Read. Ask Him to expose any corner where I am not resting. Then come, lay this before Jesus, and put all my trust in Him. Rest from my own striving, and give Him the whole control. He can take me from here!

'So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.'

Hebrews 4:14-16

Come in! We have Jesus, the greatest. He made on His own, a place for us with God, in the Holy Place. Because of Him, we are called, "enter in." He knows us completely, and carries in Himself everything that we might lack. We have mercy here. We have His grace. And He gives these to us each and every time we need it. So we hold this tight, strongly connected with Jesus forever. Welcome home!

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Chapter 5

'Every high priest is a man chosen to represent other people in their dealings with God. He presents their gifts to God and offers sacrifices for their sins. And he is able to deal gently with ignorant and wayward people because he himself is subject to the same weaknesses. That is why he must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as theirs.

And no one can become a high priest simply because he wants such an honor. He must be called by God for this work, just as Aaron was. That is why Christ did not honor himself by assuming he could become High Priest. No, he was chosen by God, who said to him,

“You are my Son. Today I have become your Father. ”

And in another passage God said to him,

“You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.” ’

Hebrews 5:1-6

Jesus is our High Priest, appointed by God. He did not assume the role, but Father declared Him to be so. God revealed that Jesus is a priest in the order of Melchizedek. It's subtle, but Jesus as priest is an eternal appointment, a royal appointment. He is both our priest, and our God. And He will be so forever. Receive the offering!

While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers because of his deep reverence for God. Even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. In this way, God qualified him as a perfect High Priest, and he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him. And God designated him to be a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5:7-10 NLT

Jesus was equal with the Father. Yet he chose humiliation in order that he could live as fully man. He learned complete trust and dependence in suffering, praying, crying out and waiting for rescue. He plead and cried out in his prayers. And he learned obedience through his suffering.

We learn obedience in our suffering as well. God was refining Him. God was qualifying him as High Priest. In our suffering, He is qualifying us as well. He is preparing us for His future use.

It's not time to seek escape, it's time to draw close to our Father, and follow Him, even in suffering! Jesus showed us how this goes! We can trust Him.

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'There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don't seem to listen. You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.'

Hebrews 5:11-14

Jesus left His domain of Heaven, where He ruled with the Father, in perfect relationship. He became man with all of the frailties, faults and frustrations that humanity walked in. And He showed us through obedience, trust, prayer and endurance how to live a life of trust and dependence upon the Father.

God has elevated Jesus to be our High Priest, one who offers perfect sacrifices for sins. And what sacrifice could really cover sin? God's own Son, sinless, without blemish, yet perfect man, the perfect substitute.

We are supposed to be understanding these things, and celebrating, in warm fellowship with the Father. But many have not delved into Jesus, to know and understand what Father planned and then did. Many won't go there, and as such are infants in understanding. But you, dive into Jesus, His Word, and learn and understand what Father planned and how Holy Spirit now leads. It's time to be fully in!

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Chapter 6

'So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding. '

Hebrews 6:1-3

Yes, we love the coming of Jesus, and His redemption of us! That was all Day One for us. We don't live in a recurring Day One. Jesus restored us to a real thriving relationship with the Father. Jesus lives forever interceding and working in our lives. And Holy Spirit has filled us, working even today.

We have "Repent and Believe" down well. Just ask, we can share that! We've been baptized and filled with the Spirit. These are the beginnings. But there's far more ahead. Where are we going from here?

We break bread with fellow believers. Time at the Lord's table, time spent listening, singing, sharing meals and doing life together.

We work to cultivate love. Love for God and His Word. Love for one another. Even love for our enemies. We love those whom God loves.

We cultivate a life of prayer. We depend on the Lord, we seek His wisdom, we ask Him to lead us, we ask Him to direct our steps. We offer Him praise and worship as well. Our life is a living-out" of our relationship with God. And we go forward obeying what He says.

We give. The things we have are actually His, and we share generously. We care for others, we pour out blessings as we are able. As He gives, we give. Generously. Bless others!

We go! We are out making disciples. We are raising up leaders. We are investing in believers. We are sharing with non-believers. We are going to all the people of the earth, because God is all about all the peoples of the earth. What do we take to them? Everything here just mentioned.

All of this is much more than the simple milk of "Repent and believe." Yes it starts there. Now it's time to keep growing up!

'For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come— and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing him to the cross once again and holding him up to public shame. '

Hebrews 6:4-6

There's a terrible place where people go, far from the Father. We compel people to draw near to Him.

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But those who turn and walk away, having known God's love and goodness, these are lost. The only hope is if God Himself intervenes. The work is done on our knees. And we have much other work to do as well. These belong only to the Lord.

'When the ground soaks up the falling rain and bears a good crop for the farmer, it has God's blessing. But if a field bears thorns and thistles, it is useless. The farmer will soon condemn that field and burn it.

Dear friends, even though we are talking this way, we really don't believe it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation. For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do.

Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and endurance. '

Hebrews 6:7-12

When the field dries up, it's useless. When the farmer gets thorns and thistles, and not fruit, he condemns it. Such a frightening end to a great start.

Friends, we don't really think you are here, fallen away. And we ask that "instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises."

We are praying and asking for fruit to come, so you may know the rich love and grace of the Lord. Be the land that flourishes! We want the best from you and for you!

'For example, there was God's promise to Abraham. Since there was no one greater to swear by, God took an oath in his own name, saying:

"I will certainly bless you, and I will multiply your descendants beyond number."

Then Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised. '

Hebrews 6:13-15

Abraham had the promise, and so he rested in it. He lived in it. He followed, moved to another land, depended and trusted in the one who promises. God is good for His promise, and will keep His word.

You can count on Him just as Abraham did!

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'Now when people take an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves to hold them to it. And without any question that oath is binding. God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie.

Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.'

Hebrews 6:16-20

God has promised us refuge and relationship. He has sworn on His own name that we can come to Him. We have become His family, and He has welcomed us. Jesus has made it so. On His promise, I enter in. Thank you Father for sending your Son, my savior, for me. Thank you for giving me my high priest Jesus, who has given the perfect sacrifice for my sin. Thank you for changing my life forever!

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Chapter 7

'This Melchizedek was king of the city of Salem and also a priest of God Most High. When Abraham was returning home after winning a great battle against the kings, Melchizedek met him and blessed him. Then Abraham took a tenth of all he had captured in battle and gave it to Melchizedek. The name Melchizedek means “king of justice,” and king of Salem means “king of peace.” There is no record of his father or mother or any of his ancestors—no beginning or end to his life. He remains a priest forever, resembling the Son of God. '

Hebrews 7:1-3

Melchizedek was both King and Priest. of God Most High. He was the one who takes offerings and makes sacrifice for man. Abraham brought a tenth of his spoils and offered them to God. Melchizedek is a type of Christ, a mold that points to God Himself. No beginning, no end, and restores men to relationship with the Father. That's what Jesus does.

When Abraham gave offering to Melchizedek, the system of law through the Levites was subjugated, or submitted under the priesthood and eternal law of God through Melchizedek. Jesus is a High Priest forever, in the order and line of Melchizedek. We needed a greater High Priest than the Levitical Law could give. And God has given us Jesus.

So don't miss the opportunity, come through Jesus today, our perfect High Priest!

'Consider then how great this Melchizedek was. Even Abraham, the great patriarch of Israel, recognized this by giving him a tenth of what he had taken in battle. Now the law of Moses required that the priests, who are descendants of Levi, must collect a tithe from the rest of the people of Israel, who are also descendants of Abraham.

But Melchizedek, who was not a descendant of Levi, collected a tenth from Abraham. And Melchizedek placed a blessing upon Abraham, the one who had already received the promises of God. And without question, the person who has the power to give a blessing is greater than the one who is blessed. The priests who collect tithes are men who die, so Melchizedek is greater than they are, because we are told that he lives on.

In addition, we might even say that these Levites—the ones who collect the tithe—paid a tithe to Melchizedek when their ancestor Abraham paid a tithe to him. For although Levi wasn't born yet, the seed from which he came was in Abraham's body when Melchizedek collected the tithe from him.

So if the priesthood of Levi, on which the law was based, could have achieved the perfection God intended, why did God need to establish a different priesthood, with a priest in the order of Melchizedek instead of the order of Levi and Aaron?

And if the priesthood is changed, the law must also be changed to permit it. For the priest we are talking about belongs to a different tribe, whose members have never served at the altar as priests. What I mean is, our Lord came from the tribe of Judah, and Moses never mentioned

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priests coming from that tribe. '

Hebrews 7:4-14

Melchizedek was a priest of God Himself. He was eternal, and far above the Law's Levitical Priests. And so is Jesus the superior High Priest. He is God Himself, come to sacrifice for us.

Jesus is exceptionally superior, different from all who came. He is the "Sent One" to rescue you and me. Quickly turn and receive Him. We die without His being our High Priest!

'This change has been made very clear since a different priest, who is like Melchizedek, has appeared. Jesus became a priest, not by meeting the physical requirement of belonging to the tribe of Levi, but by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. And the psalmist pointed this out when he prophesied,

“You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”

Yes, the old requirement about the priesthood was set aside because it was weak and useless. For the law never made anything perfect. But now we have confidence in a better hope, through which we draw near to God. '

Hebrews 7:15-19

So draw near to God. Jesus, the better High Priest has sacrificed, and God the Father has sent Him to bring you home to Himself. Come, running. He is eager, not just to hug and embrace, but to walk daily, lead, guide and relish your fellowship with Him.

The best part of waking up each day is meeting again with the Father, and beginning another day's walk with Him.

'This new system was established with a solemn oath. Aaron's descendants became priests without such an oath, but there was an oath regarding Jesus. For God said to him,

“The Lord has taken an oath and will not break his vow: ‘You are a priest forever.’”

Because of this oath, Jesus is the one who guarantees this better covenant with God. '

Hebrews 7:20-22

God's High Priest Jesus was established with an Oath. God's forever promise is good. You can take it to the bank. Jesus is forever the High Priest, and God will never change or switch, or fail.

So Jesus is our High Priest. God has sworn. And He guarantees the covenant which makes us forever clean and restored to right relationship with God.

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Our world and universe is held together by God's laws. And so is our salvation. He welcomes us home and we can count on Him forever!

'There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf. '

Hebrews 7:23-25

Death hovered over the priesthood for centuries. One priest comes, another goes. And year after year, sacrifices were brought to the temple. People were longing to be restored with God, and carry assurance that He was pleased. Uncertainty was the best we could hope for.

And then God sent Jesus. He lives forever, and opened the door once and for all. We are beckoned in to Him. Our perfect sacrifice restored us, and He lives forever to plead our case. God the Father is thrilled to invite us home, and the welcome mat is already laid out. So come on in, washed, redeemed, restored, and be refreshed with Him!

'He is the kind of high priest we need because he is holy and blameless, unstained by sin. He has been set apart from sinners and has been given the highest place of honor in heaven. Unlike those other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices every day. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this once for all when he offered himself as the sacrifice for the people's sins. The law appointed high priests who were limited by human weakness. But after the law was given, God appointed his Son with an oath, and his Son has been made the perfect High Priest forever.'

Hebrews 7:26-28

Jesus is our perfect High Priest, forever. He stands out: holy, blameless, unstained by sin, set apart for sinners, and sitting at the highest place in Heaven. He sacrificed only once, Himself. He gave the perfect sacrifice, and we are completely and forever washed clean because of Him! Because of Him, you are welcomed home to God. Come! Come quickly!

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Chapter 8

'Here is the main point: We have a High Priest who sat down in the place of honor beside the throne of the majestic God in heaven. There he ministers in the heavenly Tabernacle, the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands. And since every high priest is required to offer gifts and sacrifices, our High Priest must make an offering, too.

If he were here on earth, he would not even be a priest, since there already are priests who offer the gifts required by the law. They serve in a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven. For when Moses was getting ready to build the Tabernacle, God gave him this warning: "Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain."

But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for he is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises.'

Hebrews 8:1-6

Our High Priest, Jesus, sits at the seat of honor, next to God the Father. And Jesus is forever mediating the new covenant which redeems us to the Father. The covenant is founded on the promise of the Father. Whoever comes to Him through Jesus is completely redeemed, sanctified and adopted as son or daughter of the Father! Welcome home.

'If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it. But when God found fault with the people, he said:

"The day is coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah.

This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. They did not remain faithful to my covenant, so I turned my back on them, says the Lord.

But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day, says the Lord :

I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the Lord.'

For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already. And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins."

When God speaks of a "new" covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.'

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Hebrews 8:7-13

This is the New Covenant, Jesus as my Savior and Lord, God is my Father, and I am forever His People. His law is written in my heart, and the world is turning to Him.

It's already true for me. And it's ready to be received by people from every tribe, tongue, nation and family. Who is going with me? Let's go for the nations.

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Chapter 9

'That first covenant between God and Israel had regulations for worship and a place of worship here on earth. There were two rooms in that Tabernacle. In the first room were a lampstand, a table, and sacred loaves of bread on the table. This room was called the Holy Place. Then there was a curtain, and behind the curtain was the second room called the Most Holy Place. In that room were a gold incense altar and a wooden chest called the Ark of the Covenant, which was covered with gold on all sides. Inside the Ark were a gold jar containing manna, Aaron's staff that sprouted leaves, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the Ark were the cherubim of divine glory, whose wings stretched out over the Ark's cover, the place of atonement. But we cannot explain these things in detail now.

When these things were all in place, the priests regularly entered the first room as they performed their religious duties. But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. By these regulations the Holy Spirit revealed that the entrance to the Most Holy Place was not freely open as long as the Tabernacle and the system it represented were still in use. '

Hebrews 9:1-8

God made a way to show us that we need redemption. He made us for relationship, but then showed us that we cannot go in. The Tabernacle was a special place, a holy place. Only "set-apart" men could go in. And inside was a place that only one person could go in, the Holy Place. And the one person could only go in by bringing an offering for sin. The offering was for his own sin. And represented the set-apart ones, and all those who hoped for restoration.

But it didn't work. We were closed off from access to God. A once-a-year offering of blood by the High Priest was a hope, an earnest. And a reminder that access to God was closed. Oh how we need someone who will break open the locks, remove the barriers, and somehow provide us free access to the one who made us!

'This is an illustration pointing to the present time. For the gifts and sacrifices that the priests offer are not able to cleanse the consciences of the people who bring them. For that old system deals only with food and drink and various cleansing ceremonies—physical regulations that were in effect only until a better system could be established.

So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. '

Hebrews 9:9-12

The old sacrifices could only give a ceremony, implying cleansing. But they could not wash the

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conscience or the pain. Jesus as High Priest offered a better sacrifice, a perfect, sinless offering that truly is able to wash the conscience, wipe out sin and pour God's grace and mercy through our souls. In one move, Jesus secured our redemption forever. Father God has received the redemption and given us life in Him. We are restored, Heaven is open, and the nations are beckoned! Come to Jesus and welcome His amazing salvation!

'Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant. '

Hebrews 9:13-15

Christ gave Himself, the perfect sacrifice. Perfection was given to the Perfect Father, in order to perfect you and me. Anyone who hears the call can come, there is a perfect sacrifice already given for you. The promise is there, and the covenant guarantees we will receive it.

With clear conscience we worship our Living God. Welcome home!

'Now when someone leaves a will, it is necessary to prove that the person who made it is dead. The will goes into effect only after the person's death. While the person who made it is still alive, the will cannot be put into effect. That is why even the first covenant was put into effect with the blood of an animal. For after Moses had read each of God's commandments to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, and sprinkled both the book of God's law and all the people, using hyssop branches and scarlet wool. Then he said, "This blood confirms the covenant God has made with you."

And in the same way, he sprinkled blood on the Tabernacle and on everything used for worship. In fact, according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified with blood. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. '

Hebrews 9:16-22

Forgiveness is very costly. Something living must die. The spilled blood is the payment. We see this in Genesis where God provided an animal skin to cover Adam's nakedness. God killed one of His creatures, and Adam's sin was covered. In God's economy, sin requires a sacrifice, life going to death, so that the sinful dead one might come to life. This is how His universe works. Without the shedding of blood, we shall find no forgiveness. Oh how we need a savior!

'That is why the Tabernacle and everything in it, which were copies of things in heaven, had to be purified by the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven had to be purified with far better sacrifices than the blood of animals. For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with

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human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. And he did not enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal. If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began.

But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice. And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.'

Hebrews 9:23-28

Once and for all, Christ appeared and conquered sin and death for us. He will come again, and bring the final rescue for every one of His kin - we who eagerly await His coming!

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Chapter 10

'The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.'

Hebrews 10:1-4

Much like the old tabernacle, the old religious practice of sacrificing sheep and goats could not provide a perfect cleansing. The old religion was a picture of a need, our need. We have a sin problem, and our works, even according to the law, are unable to bring redemption. Oh how we need a perfect sacrifice. How I need a sacrifice.

'That is why, when Christ came into the world, he said to God, "You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer. You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin. Then I said, 'Look, I have come to do your will, O God— as is written about me in the Scriptures.'"

First, Christ said, "You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings or burnt offerings or other offerings for sin, nor were you pleased with them" (though they are required by the law of Moses).

Then he said, "Look, I have come to do your will."

He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect. For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.'

Hebrews 10:5-10

Sin has a huge cost, life. The animals were dying every year, offerings for sin. But the sin continued. The sacrifices failed to remove sin. God was teaching us of a cost to cover sin. But these were symbolic. Animals cannot substitute for man.

God's plan, His will, was to provide the perfect man-sacrifice. He would once and for all provide absolute payment for all of man's sin. His Son stepped forward to fulfill the eternal plan. He came to do God's will.

The second covenant replaces the first. And the result is effective! We are made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ. His perfect life offered has become our perfect salvation. We are redeemed, and walk with the Father because of Jesus. It's a covenant, completed, and settled. Welcome home.

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'Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins.

But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. There he waits until his enemies are humbled and made a footstool under his feet.

For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy. '

Hebrews 10:11-14

It was for us. Jesus offered Himself once, the perfect sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then He sat down alongside the Father.

Jesus has made perfect all those who are being made Holy. This is God's will, that we be made holy, and forever be with the Father. Our sin is done and gone, and we have direct access as a separate people. We have a new relationship with God. The offer is to all who will come. The Father says it is enough!

'And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For he says,

“This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the Lord : I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

Then he says, “I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds.”

And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices. '

Hebrews 10:15-18

Friends, please know, sins have been forgiven. They are gone. There is no need to ever again offer sacrifice for sins. We are in a new covenant with the Father. He has put His laws in our hearts and in our minds. Draw near to Him, Jesus has made us acceptable and pleasing to the Father! Welcome in! Tell your friends - this is for whoever will believe!

'And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. '

Hebrews 10:19-22

Let's go in with sincere hearts, fully trusting Him! Wow, we are in the Most Holy Place. Our ancestors

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would never believe this. Yet Jesus is the door-opener, and Father compels us to come to Him! So, come!

'Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. '

Hebrews 10:23-25

As our Father has beckoned us in, we walk with Him. And this is how it plays out. We hold fast to Him, always keeping our assured faith, because He can be counted on. His promises hold! And we motivate one another, encouraging loving acts toward others, good works toward all. We keep meeting together, and we encourage one another. Jesus is coming back, and we persist in living with Him! So get after it!

'Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever. '

Hebrews 10:32-34

Dear brothers and sisters, when you are persecuted, celebrate. Take joy in joining Jesus. He too was beaten, ridiculed and persecuted. This affliction will end, and we will be with our Father forever. And in the meantime, let us consider each other, encourage, provide and supply what is needed. We have received an earnest in a kingdom which lasts forever!

'So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.

"For in just a little while,
the Coming One will come and not delay.
And my righteous ones will live by faith.
But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away."

But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.'

Hebrews 10:35-39

During the persecution, be strong. Keep following Jesus. Very soon we will be with Him, so be faithful. He will repay the evil, and we must walk with Him in the midst. In just a little while He will come!

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Chapter 11

'Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation. By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen. '

Hebrews 11:1-3

Faith is agreeing with God, even before the evidence or proof has come in. God said it - and I believe it. So I operate in the understanding. By faith we understand that the whole universe was formed by God's command. We read all about this in Genesis, and we say, "Yes."

Today, the "scientific explanations" have fallen far short, and the only theory which stands is that God, the Intelligent Designer, made the whole universe. What God says, I will trust and obey! And in my situation, persecution, fear or need, I still trust God.

'It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—"he disappeared, because God took him." For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him. '

Hebrews 11:4-6

Abel loved God, and was eager to bring Him an offering appropriate. And God loved Abel, and accepted the offering. Cain hated his brother, and despised the offering. Abel paid a huge price, being killed by his brother. Yet even today, Abel teaches us to love God, no matter the cost.

Enoch also loved God. He was pleased to live in faith, in trust and personal interaction with the Father. Faith is far more than intellectual assent. Faith is wholehearted pursuit of God, time spent talking, time spent listening, time spent diligently obeying. And faith is fully trusting in God, no matter my circumstance. God loved how Enoch walked, and lifted him straight to heaven, without even dying.

Anybody can come to God. You must believe that God is real, and that God rewards those who sincerely seek Him. So, sincerely go after Him. Take your time. He is worthy. And you are worth it!

'It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith. '

Hebrews 11:7

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Noah heard the word of God, the warning, and the command. And Noah obeyed the command, carefully following the warning. For Noah, whatever God said was true and whatever God commanded was obeyed. Nobody had ever seen rain become a flood. But God said it. So Noah knew it was true, and he believed Him.

What God says is true. What God commands must be obeyed. He loves us, and we place our whole trust in Him alone. And look what happened. The whole world was condemned for not believing. And Noah alone was commended with righteousness. Listen and obey, it's a matter of life and death.

'It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God. '

Hebrews 11:8-10

Abraham obeyed without knowing how it would go. He heard God's call, and he followed it. He lived this way in a foreign land. God commanded, and Abraham followed. His children obeyed the same promise. They looked forward one day to a city where God is at the center, to live forever with Him! Friend, hear God's call, and obey it! Look to the city of God!

'It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them. '

Hebrews 11:11-12

Sarah's faith brought forth a whole nation, innumerable! God made a promise, so outrageous and beyond belief, that Sarah laughed. Yet she chose to trust what God had said, in spite of the apparent foolishness in the promise. Would God really cause a woman who was decades past child-bearing years to suddenly become pregnant and have a son? We are cautious people who doubt the extraordinary. Yet God calls us to trust Him, to expect the unexpected, and to realize results which are outlandish and extreme. Because God keeps His promises. We must count on Him!

'All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. '

Hebrews 11:13-16

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These were completely committed to the promise. God had given a vision, and this was enough for them. It's enough for me too. Yet we have history on our side, all the ways God has intervened, and the coming of Jesus, born a savior. And we've learned how faithful our Father is in keeping us. So we are ever walking after Him. These heroes had the same commitment, but had not yet seen all the ways God has worked. Amazing pillars of our faith!

'It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted." Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead. '

Hebrews 11:17-19

Abraham believed God, and was already committed to obey whatever the Lord may ask. Abraham knew that God had changed his name to "Father of a Multitude" and that Isaac was the son given by promise. But more than that, Abraham knew that God is faithful, and can be trusted. So when the day came to offer his son Isaac in obedience to God's command, Abraham obeyed. He went forward, trusting that God had a plan, and Abraham could rest.

So it is with us. Commit your way to the Lord, and commit to obey whatever He commands. His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. So go forward. Keep trusting. Stay in conversation with Him. This is a very exciting ride!

'It was by faith that Isaac promised blessings for the future to his sons, Jacob and Esau. It was by faith that Jacob, when he was old and dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff. '

Hebrews 11:20-21

When my trust is in God's promises, I can confidently promise blessings on my children. I can confidently bless each generation. God is faithful, and I rest in His great faithfulness. He is solid, and I can trust!

'It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt. He even commanded them to take his bones with them when they left. '

Hebrews 11:22

Faith is when you look around, see the situation as it is, and then declare God's future over it. Yes, He has placed His vision in you. It's not what you wish. It's not what you want for yourself. It's what you see He can do. Ask Him for His vision. And then, declare it! A couple hundred years in slavery, no that will not change it. An oppressive dictator (a real one), no that will not change it either. Finding your people have gone from "beloved" to "disdained", no that will not stop the plan of God.

Joseph looked ahead, and declared that God has a future for His people. He even gave them

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instructions to bring his remains with them as they go.; He was living God's life. Long ago he set aside his own plans, and simply committed himself to Yahweh, the God of Israel. He remembered the dreams. He remembered the promises. His circumstances have no bearing on God's future. And so he lived in full faith and trust.

Do the same!

'It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command. '

Hebrews 11:23

Moses' parents trusted God, even under Pharaoh's edict. They feared and revered Yahweh much more. And so they hid the baby in a basket by the river. Then they watched. They knew their baby was from God, and He has a plan.

Friends, God still has a plan. The king may make laws, the judges may rule. But God has a plan. I am not afraid to disobey the king, or the ruler, or even my supervisor, if conflict arises between following the Lord and what my "king" may say. This is walking in faith. We trust and depend on the Lord! And He is trustworthy!

'It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. '

Hebrews 11:24-26

By faith Moses chose to walk with the Lord and be His person. He chose God's people over family riches. Start with the Lord, and you'll have all the riches you ever need!

'It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. '

Hebrews 11:27

Shifting away from what is safe and known is the crux of our faith. When God calls us to depend on Him, follow Him, and expect to hear His voice, we have the choice. But this is a call for "All or Nothing". He wants us to turn and go with Him. Where to? We don't know. What will we face? We are not sure. Then how can we go? Because we know who is calling, and we trust His love, plan and power for us. The real question is, "How can we not go?"

Keep your eyes on the invisible, just like Moses!

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'It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons. '
Hebrews 11:28

When Moses chose to obey God, the choice was firm. He was not turning away. His "Yes" was already given, and he simply waited for God's next command. Place blood on the doorposts? Certainly. Keep the Passover? Done. Trust in the safety under the Lord, even as the nation wailed and shrieked? Absolutely. Faith had already been settled. The only part left was walking in it.

Is your "Yes" already established? Are you already "going" and awaiting God's direction? Walk in faith. Be like Moses!

'It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were all drowned. '

Hebrews 11:29

Sometimes we are called to do what is uncommon, even what is foolish, because of the call of the Lord. God's people leaving Egypt were obeying God's word. His command was all they needed. None of their steps made sense, yet God was there at every turn, leading His people, and confounding their enemies. Exodus counts 600,000 or more men leaving Egypt. With women and children, this crowd was more like 3 million people. Three million people who heard the direction, and obeyed.

This is faith. When He calls me, and He calls you, we must stop the analysis, and pick up the obedience. He is the Lord. We are His people. Walk in faith!

'It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down. '

Hebrews 11:30

Can you imagine, on Day 3, 2-3 Million people marching all the way around the city walls? Again? And, nothing... Going back to the tents. They are in the land, but not fighting. They are in the land, and it's a long slow trek. By Day 5, this was feeling like Egyptian Labor. Brickmaking. Dull. But they kept on.

How are you doing with the daily rigor? Does it feel like work? Is the view unchanging? And yet, you're walking in the very center of obedience. Here's a secret: God is at work, and He is faithful to complete what He starts. So, by faith, keep it up. Keep walking. God knows what He is doing.

'It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. '

Hebrews 11:31

Her story is different. Her people did not love God. They defied the people of God. And her life was

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not perfect. Her trade was questionable at best. She plied in sex, far from what we know of God's commands. But her heart was for God and His people. She welcomed them. Her faith literally saved her when the entire people group in Jericho was destroyed. So set your heart toward God and His people. He will take care of the rest.

'How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword.

Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. Women received their loved ones back again from death. But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. '

Hebrews 11:32-35

Here's the "everybody else" part. So many stories are here, and every one is worth a good read. There is a single message though. By trusting the living God, and obeying what He says, we overcome. Lions' mouths are shut. Kings are conquered. Dead are raised. And the challenge is simply this, that you commit to Him and keep trusting. There's also a follow-up call too. Keep reading His word, every day. Read the stories. Ponder what the people did, and what we should do. Walk in trust of God, and delight yourself with His results!

'Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. '

Hebrews 11:36-39

Terrible hard oppression. Discrimination. Torture. Hunger. Suffering. These were willing to endure the deluge so that they might be faithful to the promise. One day God will bring salvation. One day there will be restoration. One day we shall walk with the Lord. One day all will be vindicated. One day we shall see redemption. Living for that day, wholly clinging to the promise of God. This is the only reasonable course for children entering into their Father's house. We keep going forward.

'Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. '

Hebrews 11:36-38

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The remnants of belief in a hate-filled world look like these. Outcasts and beggars, prophets and evangelists, their hearts fixed in heaven. They are walking with the Most High, hearing His voice, obeying His direction. Every word from the Lord is a command to be obeyed. These great pillars resisted the world's charms, and held fast to the teaching and relationship with Jesus. When the world's demands conflicted, these men and women chose God's side. Let this be true of you as well!

'All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.'

Hebrews 11:39-40

All these powerful people, standing on the promises of God, did not receive the fulfilment. They longed for it, and took on any obstacles and battles required. They did this in order to be with the Lord forever. And yet they did not receive it.

God was holding it back, waiting. Yes His promise fulfils, but not until His timing is complete. He has been waiting for something. He has been holding back, because He wants you to receive it. He is inclusive, wanting every one of His sons and daughters to receive the promised land. There is a land, where we walk with God. He knows us and we are with Him. This promise has been there for the ages, and we are beckoned in. Come in! He's been waiting for you!

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Chapter 12

'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. '

Hebrews 12:1-2

Look around at the millions of believers before us. They already placed their hope and trust in the Lord, and they ran great races. Today they are beckoning us as well to run our race and finish our course. So fix our eyes on Jesus. Don't look at the circumstance but look on He who rescued us. He's leading and we are running. And then, run with endurance. Press on, go further, overcome obstacles and difficulties. Strip off every weight that holds us back, especially sin that pulls on us. We have His joy ahead of us too. So press on, complete the course, and celebrate by sitting with He and the Father, and all of our brothers and sisters who run with us!

'Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin. '

Hebrews 12:3-4

Seeing how Jesus endured hostility provokes me to dig in and keep on believing. Don't give up. Jesus did it, showed us how to trust God in the midst of heavy opposition. So learn the lesson, and keep on trusting. Father knows you like He knows Jesus. He beckons you to keep walking with Him and trusting His power and plans. Fight sin and pursue righteousness. You can do this!

'And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child." '

Hebrews 12:5-6

In the midst of the trial there's hurt and pain. And you are in the middle of it. But God has not abandoned you. He is taking you through the woodshed. He is sitting you down, and working directly on the hard parts of your life that need work. You do realize that you are His child, and His very best in you and for you is what He is working for. These indeed are hard times, and He is calling you in to Himself. He is taking you through the trials. You are His, and dearly loved. You're in the tunnel. There will be a light, and the days getting better.

'As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? '

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Hebrews 12:7-9

It's a hard course, being disciplined by the Lord. But He has pulled us in as His children. And He will spare no expense to bring out the very best in us and through us. He is at work. So trust Him, receive from Him, and know how precious you are!

'For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong. '

Hebrews 12:10-13

Discipline is hard. God is more gracious than our fathers. But we must go through it regardless. And the results are good. So set your mind to welcome it, to walk through it. Go through, and become strong!

'Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many. Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau, who traded his birthright as the firstborn son for a single meal. You know that afterward, when he wanted his father's blessing, he was rejected. It was too late for repentance, even though he begged with bitter tears. '

Hebrews 12:14-17

God's call to be holy is also a call to care for our people. We strive to obey the Lord, and invest in the ones around us. God's call is not to be isolated, but to make sure everyone is growing and living in grace. We eliminate bitterness and envy, and help each other live in God's grace. Esau did not value the Lord or His ways, and instead gave away his claim to the Kingdom for a bowl of stew. We must care for one another and help each one to keep the Lord in focus, and trust in Him. And the Lord meets us. He's been calling us in, yearning for a relationship with each of us. Come. Sit. Listen. Reflect. Praise. And pray too. You're home!

'You have not come to a physical mountain, to a place of flaming fire, darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai. For they heard an awesome trumpet blast and a voice so terrible that they begged God to stop speaking. They staggered back under God's command: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death." Moses himself was so frightened at the sight that he said, "I am terrified and trembling."

No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering. You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have

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now been made perfect. You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel. '

Hebrews 12:18-24

This is not fear and condemnation. You've come to the city of the Living God, a family of believing brothers and sisters, joy filled angels, millions whose names are written in the Book of Life. God Himself has brought you in with all people made perfect in Him. You have come to Jesus, our perfect sacrifice who sprinkles us with forgiveness and fills us with grace. You've come home!

'Be careful that you do not refuse to listen to the One who is speaking. For if the people of Israel did not escape when they refused to listen to Moses, the earthly messenger, we will certainly not escape if we reject the One who speaks to us from heaven! '

Hebrews 12:25

Heed the warning! Listen to the call. God Himself is inviting you. Come to Him. Come with all your faults, your junk, your sin. Come, and be sprinkled clean with the blood of the Lamb. Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. Forgiveness is complete, and it is offered to you. Let Jesus wash you clean, and become forever His. Come.

'When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: "Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also."

This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed, so that only unshakable things will remain. Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. For our God is a devouring fire.'

Hebrews 12:26-29

Unshakeable you. Unshakeable is who God has created you to be. We live amidst turmoil and challenge. We have discrimination and manipulation all around. Persecution and punishment come from the world who hates us, and from the evil powers and principalities who hate Jesus. But God's love and grace have filled you. They are making you more and more like Jesus, and the Father loves it. His call is to walk in trust and faith. Shake off the threats and fears. Enter into the continual faith and trust, and watch Him carry you through. The world will be shaken, but we are well established in Him. Our two roles through this are Thanksgiving for all He is doing, and Worship of Him. Grab those and hang on. We become the unshakeable ones!

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Chapter 13

'Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies. '

Hebrews 13:1-3

What follows praise and worship? It's love. Keep caring for our brothers and sisters. Keep caring for strangers. Open those doors and give, share, listen and care. Remember those in prison. Go visit, giving time, and respect. Remember every person being mistreated, even as you know how it feels. Our lives thrive when we worship and praise our God. And they are bolstered when we turn that into love for others as well. Let's do this!

'Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery. '

Hebrews 13:4

Bless your wife! Love your Husband! Pour into each other. Build the relationship. This is who we are made for. This is how God wants us to thrive. Marriage is joy, and heartache, and exploration, and exhilaration, and quiet walks, sunsets, births, celebrations, and hard times too. But this is the core of where we were designed. Faithfulness is crucial. Be faithful. Break off any relationship that might harm your marriage. Invest time and wealth to build further your loved one. Our marriage is a picture of the forever love of Christ for His Church. So do this well!

'Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?" '

Hebrews 13:5-6

I have no fear, my God is supplying what we need. He never leaves, and He never fails. What He gives is plenty. He is my helper, and I can fully trust in Him.

'Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith. '

Hebrews 13:7

You're following Christ whose love never changes. Remember also the leaders who poured their lives into you. Consider how they opened up God's Word for you, helped you grasp His love and grace. Look at their example, and follow them as well. Live your life like they live theirs. Invest in others too. This is how we make our faith work out in real life!

'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your strength comes from God's grace, not from rules about food, which don't help those

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who follow them. '

Hebrews 13:8-9

Dear brothers and sisters, don't get enchanted with another new idea, a nuanced interpretation, or a theological speculation. Come back to grace. God has seen you and me, knows the full depth of our sin and brokenness, and has completely covered what we lacked. He has completely paid for the evil we did and do. He has completely washed all of our tarnished soul and demented spirit, in the blood of His Son. And He has given us a perfect clean life in which to go forward. Don't be chasing speculations when you could instead spend time with our Father, relish His goodness and celebrate His grace. Jesus is the same, and you continue to be His choice of adopted brother and sister! Draw close and fellowship with Him! You are deeply loved - stay in that love!

'We have an altar from which the priests in the Tabernacle have no right to eat. Under the old system, the high priest brought the blood of animals into the Holy Place as a sacrifice for sin, and the bodies of the animals were burned outside the camp.

So also Jesus suffered and died outside the city gates to make his people holy by means of his own blood. So let us go out to him, outside the camp, and bear the disgrace he bore. For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come. '

Hebrews 13:10-14

Go outside the camp, to a new altar, where Jesus has borne all our sin. Come to Him! The old ways didn't work, and the old priesthood and controls were a jail. Nobody was saved, nobody was forgiven. We must leave that old camp, and go outside. Go to the new table, where God restores man. Be restored. Be reconciled. Exult in your new relationship with the Father. Grace! This is a whole new world. This is a whole new home!

'Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God. '

Hebrews 13:15-16

I come to Jesus' altar, outside the gates. What do I have to give the King who has everything? My hands are empty, my resources are gone. I will elevate His name. I will speak of His greatness. I will proclaim His attributes. I will tell of how He has done great things for me. I will bring an offering of praise. Continually. Wherever I go, I will keep speaking of Him. And whatever I see, I will help. I will assist. I will care. I will do good to brothers and sisters, to strangers and those far off. When I see a need, I will step in. Join me. God is pleased with these offerings.

'Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit. '

Hebrews 13:17

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Walking hand in hand with God, answering His beckoning, includes hearing and following your spiritual leaders. God sent apostles and teachers to help you walk. He continues using these key people. So listen to them. Hear their heart, and follow Jesus even as they do.

'Pray for us, for our conscience is clear and we want to live honorably in everything we do. And especially pray that I will be able to come back to you soon. '

Hebrews 13:18-19

You've come to the Father, outside the camp, where His son was sacrificed. And you've been welcomed into a new life, a power filled walk with the Father. Jesus has covered everything, and Holy Spirit is now working, leading and guiding. His power is overcoming in your life. You are caring for the brothers, the strangers, and listening to your leaders. Keep it up.

Here's a request that you pray for the apostles who went before you. They brought the good news, won people to faith, healed and taught. And now they ask you to pray for them. Pray they will continue to live honorably in all they do. And pray that they might be able to come back to you and spend time among you as well.

Now may the God of peace— who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood— may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21

A benediction, a prayer to cover you. We recognize our God who sent us a Shepherd, His Son. And God ratified the contract of redemption when He raised Jesus from the grave. God loves us, gave us a shepherd, offered Him for our redemption, and raised Jesus to prove that redemption is done! Praise Him! And may He give us everything we need to do what He says. Every word, we will follow! And He gives us everything we need to be pleasing to Him. God wins, and we are His!

'I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, to pay attention to what I have written in this brief exhortation.

I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released from jail. If he comes here soon, I will bring him with me to see you.

Greet all your leaders and all the believers there. The believers from Italy send you their greetings. May God's grace be with you all.'

Hebrews 13:22-25

After the blessing, there's a couple thoughts for us. First, pay attention. Our Father has made a way to restore us to Him, and He calls us to enter in. Do this! Don't miss your renewed walk with God. He is worthy. And you are worth it.

Timothy may be coming too. He's out of jail. Think of this, our brothers went to jail because of their proclamation of Jesus. Join in. Be ready to go to prison. Our Lord is worthy.

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Everyone says "Hi." And also, keep on, persevere, to stay in His grace. Jesus did it all, for us!