
THE BOOK OF

HEBREWS

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

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HEBREWS 1:1-4

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 1:1-4 (NIV)

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

“...sustaining all things by his powerful word.”

3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those traveling that they will be aware of the presence of Christ in their daily routine and in each of their actions. Pray that God will show His full nature to them in a powerful way this week.

MESSAGE

The book of Exodus show us how God work with the Israelites in their journey into the Promised Land. With Hebrews I would like to move a few (quite a few) centuries into the future and see how God continues to talk to the descendants of those same people...and to us. Hebrews is a mighty book of theology, with lots of history included. It has an overarching theme showing the reader that Christ is Supreme. This is a difficult and controversial theme for its time, as it was written to the Jewish people less than 100 years after Christ walked the earth. Hebrews is a well-articulated and powerful book, yet difficult to read and comprehend. As we walk through this book, the beauty of God will shine through, clouded only by the limitations of our human understanding.

The writer starts out with the most powerful and also most argued point of all: that Christ is God. In the book of Hebrews we see some of the foundations of the theology of the Trinity. The writer starts this focus to show that Christ has the full power and being of God Almighty. Verse three reads, “The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.” Christ is God. What a message for them, and what a message for us today! Who is Christ to you? This week take time to see how He impacts your being.

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HEBREWS 1:5-14

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 1:5-14 (NIV)

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? 6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." 7 In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." 8 But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." 10 He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. 11 They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. 12 You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." 13 To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? 14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week as you pray remember those at home and the loneliness they may feel while family is away. Ask God to comfort them in a special way.

MESSAGE

The writer continues in prose and shows us both the position and power of Christ as we work through the first chapter of Hebrews. Many of us have been taught and understand that Christ is God and part of the Trinity; here in Hebrews we are shown in many ways and with many examples. My favorite verses are verses ten and twelve. While we see the position of Christ above the angels and on God's throne in several verses, I believe the power is shown in a practical and powerful way in these two verses. If you believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and you read what God says about Christ in verse ten, it is hard to not understand and believe that Jesus is not a man who became a god, but truly God who became man, for our benefit. In verses eight and following are phrases of description from God about Christ.

(Vs. 8: "...about the Son he [God] says...") In verse ten God says of Christ, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands." God calls Christ "Lord" and then ascribes the events of creation to Him. Hard to argue anyone but Christ is God. Verse twelve ends with this comment about Christ, "...your years will never end." We serve an eternal Savior who is the eternal God. This week remind yourself what a glorious Savior you have in Jesus Christ, the one true God.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 2:1-4

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 2:1-4 (NIV)

1 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. 2 For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment,

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"We must pay more careful attention..."

3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray as those who travel are away from family. Ask God to provide comfort to those at home preparing for the holidays on their own. Ask the Father to give His special comfort as family is missed during this season.

MESSAGE

Chapter two starts off with one of several warnings we will see in the book of Hebrews. This first warning is to "pay more careful attention." To what do we pay more careful attention? What we have heard! And what have we heard? The author is talking to Jews who had taken their faith to completion by salvation through Jesus Christ. They had heard and obeyed both the Old Testament Law and the gospel of Jesus Christ, and now saw how they were both integrated into one. The salvation the writer of Hebrews is referring to is the one that "God also testified to...by signs, wonders and various miracles..." Even today we have the potential to ignore "such a great salvation."

This warning from 2000 years ago is still valid. Our salvation is from our faith in God, and we cannot ignore it and expect anything less than separation from God. God showed great mercy to send us His Son to bring us to Him. We need to focus and pay attention to what He has told us: pay careful attention to this great salvation. Our lives should be carefully focused on the great salvation He has provided.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 2:5-18

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 2:5-18 (NIV)

5 It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. 6 But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? 7 You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor 8 and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...the author of their salvation..."

11 Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. 12 He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." 13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." 14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for God's mercy in the lives of those who travel. Ask God to give them special blessings as they face the emotions of family separation.

MESSAGE

Now we get back into the depths of theology and Christology. As you may recall in chapter one the writer establishes that Christ is God and that Christ is the Creator of the Universe. Here in chapter two we now see Christ as man incarnate. After a lengthy description of Christ's position both as God and as man in this world (and the complex relationship that is), we see in verses 14 and 15, "Since the children [that's us] have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

Here we see to the very core of every man. Not only is Christ the only power over Satan, but He is the power to save us from our worst fear, the fear of death. While most will admit it publicly, the reality of humanness is a fear of death, mostly because it is the fear of the unknown – the final unknown. This great salvation we talked about last week is not only a salvation into something (eternal life with Christ) but also a salvation from something else (slavery to the fear of death). As believers in Christ we no longer have to fear death, since we have an absolute assurance of life with the Creator of the Universe for eternity. PRAISE GOD for His mercy!

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 3:1-6

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 3:1-6 (NIV)

1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. 2 He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. 3 Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...God is the builder of everything."

4 For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. 5 Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. 6 But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that those left at home will see that God alone is in control of not only the activities at home but also the activities of the traveling partner. Pray that faith will grow for those traveling and at home.

MESSAGE

The writer continues to show the power and fullness of God's relationship to the readers. Remember the original readers were devout Jews who had accepted Jesus as their Messiah. They had been brought up in the language of the Old Testament and worshiped God in line with His commandments. The most important and central figure of spiritual leadership to them was Moses. Moses was the prophet who had led the people of Israel out of hundreds of years of slavery. No other prophet was held in such high regard as Moses. Now we are told that Jesus was greater than Moses. While this was a fact taught in the Old Testament (the coming Messiah would be the ultimate Savior, not only here on earth, but for eternity) the realization of this was a BIG deal to the Jews of that time.

Moses (like us) is a part of God's house; Christ is the BUILDER of the house and of all creation. We are also given great instruction on how to remember this relationship. Verse one says, "...fix your thoughts on Jesus..." This is the one and only way to a true relationship with God. This week meditate on the fact that Christ is the Builder and you are the house!

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 3:7-19

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 3:7-19 (NIV)

7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, 9 where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. 10 That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.' 12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...encourage one another daily..."

13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. 15 As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." 16 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? 17 And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? 18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those on the road as they may be discouraged and in need of encouragement. Pray that they will see God's hand in each day and be encouraged by the prayers and love of those at home.

MESSAGE

In the last chapter we were given the positive action to take: "...fix your thoughts on Jesus..." In the current passage, we are given the things NOT to do. What is the most important thing not to do? "Do not harden your hearts..." This is such a simple command, yet one that takes a lifetime to accomplish and an army of helpers to succeed. Daily we are faced with decisions that test our focus on God and His will for our life. (The test is not of our salvation, as it is secure because of Him and our decision to accept His gift - not because of us.) Each day we face challenges that ask us to put God first and place the worries of this life aside for the sake of God's will. This is not an easy task and God is fully aware of that. He has watched since eternity the struggle of each and every person. He has also provided a way to make that task easier, and it involves YOU.

We see the plan of God in verse 13, "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." We are the solution for both ourselves and others. If we spend our time encouraging others, it becomes very difficult to not be encouraged ourselves. This week seek someone who needs your encouragement and give them that encouragement! Prayer for the week: This week pray for those on the road as they may be discouraged and in need of encouragement. Pray that they will see God's hand in each day and be encouraged by the prayers and love of those at home.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 4:1-11

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 4:1-11 (NIV)

1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. 2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. 3 Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.' " And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. 4 For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." 5 And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Now we who have believed enter that rest..."

6 It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. 7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. 9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those at home without the companionship and help of their traveling partner. Ask God to give them the physical and spiritual rest they need.

MESSAGE

Rest...probably one of the most sought after "activities" in our society, maybe the world. We are a people without rest. We are constantly busy with the details of life. Even when we do take a vacation, we try to "get in" as much as possible. The use of the word "rest" in Hebrews refers to multiple types of rest. The first is the ultimate rest: salvation in Christ and an eternity with God Almighty. The second type of rest is a life here on earth that is resting in the power of Christ. Yes, God has a plan for us here on earth, and it involves real work. He also expects us to rest in His power and His will in accomplishing His goals.

Finally, God expects us to rest while here on earth. Okay, this time it means what you think. Stop your activities and rest. Verse 9 tells us that we have a Sabbath-rest from our work here on earth, and reminds us that God provided a great example for us by taking some time off after He created this world we live in. This week find ALL your rest in Christ, and then be sure and take the time to rest.

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HEBREWS 4:12-13

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 4:12-13 (NIV)

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that God draws you deep into His Word, penetrating your very soul and spirit.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"For the word of God is living and active."

MESSAGE

As we read through Hebrews it is easy to get lost in the theology and details of the book. Then along comes a verse that spells it out plain and simple. When that happens, the best thing to do is to read, meditate, and memorize from the roadmap of life, God's Word. "For the word of God is living and active.

Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

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HEBREWS 4:14-5:10

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 4:14-5:10 (NIV)

Hebrews 4

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 5

1 Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

“...approach the throne of grace with confidence...”

3 This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. 4 No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." 6 And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." 7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those traveling that they will see both God's forgiveness and mercy in their lives. Pray that they will rest in God's grace alone and not in the pleasures of this world.

MESSAGE

The verse last week ended with a reminder that we must give account to God for our every action. This can be a very frustrating and depressing verse, were it not for our relationship with Christ. Look closely at verse 16, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Just like rest, mercy and grace have multiple meanings or applications. The first is the initial relationship with Christ. It is God's mercy and grace found through Christ Jesus that places us in the kingdom of God and gives us the ability to approach the Throne of Grace (God Himself). How do we do it? It is accomplished by way of our relationship with Christ, who, as the next

several verses point out, is our High Priest. He is the one and only High Priest who has been given His position by God and has delivered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins so that God sees us just as he sees Christ: one of His very own. Additionally, mercy and grace are given to us in our daily lives to live out on earth what Christ has promised us. He is our provider and we come to Him for forgiveness, grace and mercy. So the fear of scrutiny in chapter 4, verse 13 is fully covered by the mercy, grace and forgiveness shown here. This week thank God for His mercy.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 5:11-6:3

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 5:11-6:3 (NIV)

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...and go on to maturity..."

Hebrews 6

1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And God permitting, we will do so.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week ask God to bring you to a new level of maturity. Pray that God will use the experiences of those traveling and those at home to draw them closer to His Word.

MESSAGE

Our last message in Hebrews focused on the fact that we are to approach with confidence the throne of grace. While any believer can do this, because it is the power of Christ that allows us to approach, the writer stops to discuss maturity. In this famous passage he chides the readers that they are at a point in their spiritual lives where they should be teaching others, and instead they are still feeding off of infant's milk (elementary teachings). Why is this so important? Just like our physical and intellectual maturity, spiritual maturity allows us to not only understand the world around us, but ourselves as well.

God knows and understands that we desire a stronger relationship with Him, and He has the same desire. The process to obtain this stronger relationship is growth leading to maturity. What does maturity in Christ give us in the long run? Verse 14 says it best, "But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." Just as children need to learn right from wrong to survive in this world, so do we.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 6:4-11

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 6:4-11 (NIV)

4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. 7 Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. 8 But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation. 10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. 11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for someone you know who desires to grow, and ask God to allow you to be someone who provides a witness to them.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

“God is not unjust; he will not forget...”

MESSAGE

The writer continues to warn us against the follies of drifting away from God by giving us the prescription to grow in Christ. Last week we were urged to gain maturity by feeding from real meat, not just milk. This week we continue to see how we can gain maturity (at least a level of growth; maturity is never fully complete until we see Christ face to face), as we listen to the reminder that God is a just God and will not forget what we have done. The source of our salvation is Christ. The proof-text (or visual for others to see) is our faithfulness to God and to His people. We go on to hear the writer ask us to not be

lazy but instead to imitate those who have maturity. Just as we teach infants, children, teens and even adults to grow by watching and imitating a good example, our spiritual maturity grows as we watch and imitate strong and mature believers. There is a reason to gather with the church body and a reason strong families are so important. This is the method God has given us to gain maturity. We grow and learn from what we see in action. A GREAT reason to display spiritual maturity to family and church – so what is imitated is what is correct.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 6:13-20

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 6:13-20 (NIV)

13 When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. 16 Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for God to give you the strength to be patient with Him. This is a dangerous prayer as it will cause you to be stretched – that is also why it is an exciting prayer!

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"And so after waiting patiently..."

MESSAGE

Patience is a virtue that we all seem to lack. Infants show no patience as they scream to be fed or changed. Toddlers and little ones are normally patient for all of two minutes. Into the teen years it seems that patience is something lost eons ago. Finally, as adults we know how to preach patience, but few know how to live it. We hear of the patience of Job, a man stripped of all he had and yet, in his newly minted poverty and illness, praised God for His mercy and grace. A mighty act of patience is to see the world as God does: a completed act with daily events going just as God has planned.

God made a promise to Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. Abraham was very old and had a barren wife, yet God still was in control. What did Abraham do? He was patient with God. Hebrews gives us the ultimate encouragement for our patience. Verse 19 says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." The hope and anchor is God's promise to hold our future in His hands. What is your hope and anchor today?

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 7:1-10

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 7:1-10 (NIV)

1 This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, 2 and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." 3 Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever. 4 Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! 5 Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham.

6 This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. 8 In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. 9 One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, 10 because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those that are traveling, asking God to show them His eternal promises.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...without beginning of days or end of life..."

MESSAGE

As we begin the New Year I would like to go back to Hebrews and examine how we are blessed by God's mercy and favor. For the next few weeks we will see the move from the Old Testament sacrifice to the Ultimate Sacrifice, Jesus Christ. Melchizedek. It is a tough name to spell and even tougher to pronounce. To the Jewish audience when this book was written it would have been a very important issue and concept to discuss. The Jewish nation built by God had a very distinct culture and working order. The priests of the church were an important part of life. Everything in life: work, family, government, all were intertwined. The priest was a most important person who led the way to God, interceded on behalf of men to God, making the sacrifice to God for the people. The priest was the life support of the community. The theologians see Melchizedek as the foreshadow of Christ, which this passage seems to confirm.

The name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness" and "king of peace". The Jewish priests were all direct descendants of the tribe of Levi. Melchizedek had no genealogy and could not be traced to Levi, yet he was given "a tenth of everything" by Abraham. According to Jewish law, this meant he must be greater than Abraham. Just as we saw last week, God is in control, and I believe the priest Melchizedek is God continuing to show us not only does He hold the future, but He has planned it from the very beginning. It is the "sneak peeks" behind the scenes that give us hope and excitement about how God works!

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HEBREWS 7:11-28

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 7:11-28 (NIV)

11 If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? 12 For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. 13 He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. 15 And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, 16 one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." 18 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself."

19 (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. 20 And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, 21 but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.' " 22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. 23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. 26 Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those at home as they miss their loved ones. Ask God to give those at home a special comfort as they long for the closeness of their family who is traveling.

MESSAGE

While the main part of this passage goes into further explanation of Melchizedek and the relationship to the priests of Aaron and to Christ, there is another very important message in this chapter. The message? A new chapter in the history of man is now here. This is the chapter that all previous chapters have pointed to for generations. While there is much discussion of how we got to this chapter of mankind,

verse 25 sums up all the issues, "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." Please reread that last sentence one more time, and try to absorb it completely. This is the reality of Christ: He and He alone is our salvation. This is the plan God Almighty has determined from the very point in time that He created this earth and all that is

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

CONTINUED

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MESSAGE

in it! Everything else was in anticipation and planning and preparation for this to happen: for Christ to come, to be our sacrifice, to rise from the dead, and to plead our case to the most Holy God. Why could the Jewish priests (or anyone else)

not accomplish this through the prescribed sacrifices and rituals? Because they were not perfect as Christ was perfect and they would not "...always live to intercede..." as Christ DOES!

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 8:1-13

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 8:1-13 (NIV)

1 The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man. 3 Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. 4 If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. 5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." 6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. 7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...he has made the first one obsolete..."

8 But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. 10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 11 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." 13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those that are traveling, asking God to help them understand His sacrifice of Jesus Christ that is His everlasting covenant with us.

MESSAGE

The last few chapters have helped us see how Christ was like Melchizedek and like the priests of the Old Testament. Now we will see how he is not like them. The Old Testament priests were human and the sacrifices they offered to cover the sins were animal sacrifices. The sacrifices made had to be repeated over and over again. Each new sin required a new sacrifice, as the old blood did not cover the new sin. There was a need for a sacrifice that lasted forever, that covered sin once and for all. We see clearly in chapter eight that, "We do have such a high priest,

who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man." Christ is the perfect completion. The sacrifice in the Old Testament was a shadow or copy of what was to follow: the true and full sacrifice, Jesus Christ. The true tabernacle is not here on earth; it is in heaven with the Father, from where Christ came and returned and now reigns with the Father. Verse 13 is a fitting end to this chapter as it reveals, "By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 9:1-10

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 9:1-10 (NIV)

1 Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. 2 A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, 4 which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. 5 Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...external regulations applying until the time of the new order."

6 When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. 7 But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. 8 The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. 9 This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. 10 They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that God allows those traveling to see clearly His sacrifice in their life, and to give Him the glory for their salvation.

MESSAGE

Last week we discussed the old covenant being a shadow of the new and how it would someday be obsolete and disappear. Hebrews chapter nine is a reminder to us of this concept, with an emphasis on the fact that the old covenant had an earthly sanctuary (or tabernacle) to worship in including specific regulations on how to worship and the role of the priest in that worship. God's desire and plan for man has not changed since creation: a desire by the Creator to have a relationship with the created. God has dealt with His people in the same manner, a manner of continual love, grace, and forgiveness, throughout history. We see in this chapter a reminder of how God hates sin and requires the sacrifice for and the covering of sin by shed blood, innocent blood.

At the same time it reminds us that the blood of animals was temporary. God's plan included a permanent solution, one for which His people were waiting. The tragedy of today is that so many are still focused on the temporary and are unwilling to acknowledge God's final and permanent solution: His son Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 9:11-22

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 9:11-22 (NIV)

11When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. 12He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. 13The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! 15For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. 16In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who

made it, 17because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. 18This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. 19When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. 20He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." 21In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. 22In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those on the road that they will see God's sovereignty in their lives and the lives of their families.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood..."

MESSAGE

When we last looked at Hebrews we talked about the need for blood to cover sin during the Old Covenant. Now we see blood cleansing sin. There is a big difference in this blood. Christ was the perfect sacrifice. His blood did not just cover our sins as the blood of goats and bulls did, but instead the blood of Christ was offered to the Father unblemished to "...cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death..." It is only because of Christ's perfect sacrifice that we have access to the Father. One of the most important points we can understand in this is that we are set free of all of our sin, past, present, and future.

The inheritance we received was because of a death, the only possible way to receive an inheritance. The death was to cleanse us from sin, and the death of Christ was accomplished "...once for all by his own blood..." It does not have to happen over and over again. We were set free at the cross, leaving us free today and forever to rest in the completed work of the Father. This week rest in the knowledge and assurance that God alone has already planned and paid for your future.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 9:22-10:18

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 9:22-10:18 (NIV)

22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. 23 It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. 25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Hebrews 10

1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; 6 with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. 7 Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God.' " 8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). 9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. 15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: 16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." 17 Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." 18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week ask God to show you His rest. Amid the busy week and its many issues, settle in with Him and seek His peace.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Here I am...I have come to do your will, O God."

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MESSAGE

In this passage we see again that the Old Testament was a shadow or a preview of future events. The Old Testament sacrifices were a covering (not a cleansing as we saw last week) and prepared and performed by man, but the final sacrifice of Christ was done in heaven and executed by God alone. Verse 25, "Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again..." as the old sacrifice would have required. It goes on to say in verse 28, "...Christ was sacrificed once..." With this, the need for a covering was no longer there. The cleansing had been accomplished. We can now rest in Christ's sacrifice. The focus for us today is how He did what He did. "Here I am...I have come to do your will, O God." The scripture goes on to say, "And by that will [God's will], we [YOU and I] have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Please notice this is a completed task; we are not waiting for God to make us holy, He has accomplished it at the cross. After the cross then what? "But when this priest [Christ] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." First He offered Himself to the Father to do the Father's will, and then He sat down at the right hand of the Father and rested in Him. He wants us to do the same thing: rest in Him. "...Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." By doing the Father's will Christ has already made us holy in His holiness. It is a completed action, already accomplished, that we do NOT have to work for. We can REST in Him! What a BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR. Christ accomplished the Father's will by resting in the Father, so shall we.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 10:19-39

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 10:19-39 (NIV)

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. 26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

“...for HE who promised is faithful.”

29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. 35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. 37 For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay.

38 But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week as your loved ones are at home and you are traveling, hold each family member up before God and ask Him to work His will (not yours) in their life.

MESSAGE

As we move from several chapters of deep theology and much discussion of the old and the new covenants, these final verses of chapter 10 are a great transition to the "hall of faith" in chapter 11.

It is good for us to consider a couple of things prior to looking into the lives of the spiritual men and women of chapter 11. So let's look at what it takes to be counted among them.

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MESSAGE

A lot is poured into these last few verses in chapter 10 including insistence on holding on, what to do and not to do, and how dreadful it is to be in the hands of THE living God! While these can be very thought-provoking and even confusing things to consider, they become much clearer when we understand and apply the principles we have seen in the past verses. Principle number one is that Christ fulfilled the Father's will and therefore we as believers are fully captured in our relationship with Him. Principle number two is that our faith and our power to accomplish all these activities and actions are to be accomplished by "...He who promised," who also happens to be "Faithful."

The life of the Christian is VERY difficult if we are expected to accomplish it all in our own power. But fortunately God has a different plan; HE is the power, HE is how we accomplish HIS will. It is His will and power that allows us to spur on one another to good deeds; it is His will and power that allows us to hold unswervingly. We need to do just as Christ did at the cross, REST in the Father's will and allow His will and His power to be our life. He IS our functional life source.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 11:1

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Now faith is..."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week ask God to show you His rest in your life and in the life of your family.

MESSAGE

Hebrews 11:1,

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." As we move from theology to application, I wanted to make a very short reminder of what faith is. Though we have spent several weeks looking at the theology of faith and our salvation, and we are about to see many "ancients" called out who show us practical applications of faith, I thought it important to have a short definition of faith prior to moving forward. I have had a handwritten note in my Bible for many years next to verse one above: "Faith is putting your undivided confidence in God, and then acting on it." Recently after a study of Ephesians as well as some time with a trusted mentor,

I have edited my handwritten note to read as follows:

"Faith is putting your undivided confidence in God, and then resting in Him." I trust you will see as we look closer at these men and women of faith in the weeks to come that the object of their faith was God alone, and they held NO confidence in the flesh. They simply rested in the will of the Father. I look forward to this journey together through the "hall of faith."

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 11:3

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:3 (NIV)

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...the universe was formed at God's command..."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week ask God to show you His presence as you look in wonder around this glorious universe He created for our enjoyment.

MESSAGE

Theology, science, faith – the crossroads for many is this small verse: "By FAITH we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." I find it very interesting that those who argue for a non-God-formed universe stake their claim on science and say we must throw faith out the window. The science crowd claims we can only believe what we can see or what we can prove. Yet at the same time science is focused on finding the proof, and can only discuss theory, theory that has yet to be proven. Did God create a world devoid of science? Of course not. He simply created a world and asked us to acknowledge HIS creation of it and of ourselves. This is a very simple "theory" that seems to have a much better probability of actually happening than many of the scientific theories of how we might have ended up here.

Has our great knowledge deluded us into becoming dull thinkers? So the choice becomes (a) faith in God who has come and told us how He did it and how He loves us, or (b) faith in a theory that is still hotly debated among even those who do believe it is exactly what has happened and how it happened and when it happened. The question then is what is the difference between faith in an almighty creator God and faith in an unproven and critically debated scientific theory? I guess if nothing was riding on this question, then it matters not who has the right answer

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HEBREWS 11:4-6

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:4-6 (NIV)

4 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. 5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week seek God. Seek Him in an honest and open way with a focus on listening not telling, asking and waiting. He promises to reward you with Himself.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

“...He rewards those who earnestly seek him...”

MESSAGE

Many times in life the focus is on rewarding those who perform. Do the right thing, and you will be rewarded. Work hard enough, and you will succeed. Make an effort, and you will find success. The emphasis is on what WE can do. With God it seems to be the opposite. In verse 6 we see the duty of those desiring a relationship with God, “...earnestly seek Him.” Wow, that does not sound too hard! Reflect back on last week’s science debate. The science world works VERY hard to find a solution to the theories of life. What does God require? That we earnestly seek Him and in doing that He offers a reward! Over the next few weeks (and in MANY places throughout the Bible) we will see what the rewards are. Let’s discuss the first and most important. God offers a reward to those who seek Him. It is a relationship with Him. A relationship? What is the big deal with that?

If you look carefully at society (and yourself) the thing we all desire the most is relationship, and the best kind of relationships are those where we have an ABSOLUTE trust in the other party. How about one with the creator of the universe – a real, live, personal one on one relationship? As we travel through the rest of Hebrews we will find a group of people who have done the first thing required of them, they earnestly and honestly sought God. We will then begin to see the rewards they received, the first being their personal relationship with God almighty, creator of the universe.

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HEBREWS 11:7

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:7 (NIV)

7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen..."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for your family and their relationship with God. Ask God to touch each family member with His gentle hand this week, and draw them closer to Himself. Call others in your family and pray with them this week asking God to touch them in a special way.

MESSAGE

Do you want to see the future? Most of us are very anxious about tomorrow (and the many days thereafter), but few if any would really trade the act of living one day at a time for knowing exactly when and how they would die! God gave Noah a unique view of the future. He gave to Noah the knowledge of what would happen in about 100 years, and Noah was given a very specific plan to deal with it. So what did Noah do? Genesis 6:22 tells us, "Noah did everything just as God commanded him." Noah acted on the command of God. God was asking Noah to fulfill God's will NOT Noah's will. God was for Noah ALL the resources necessary to make the ark and gather the animals. It was by God's power that Noah responded to and fulfilled God's request. This is the relationship God desires to have with YOU! He is showing us in Hebrews and throughout His word by the examples set forth that: • He sets the agenda, • He IS the energy, power, materials and whatever else is needed to accomplish His will, • He simply desires us to be the vessel of His will. • We seek Him and He rewards us! Is this your life, or are you still trying to accomplish God's will on your own power?

God knows the future, and He has a plan for you in that future. He has the tools and equipment needed to execute that plan. He needs you to be available to Him, relax in Him, and allow Him to be your functional life. The future will resolve itself for you just as it did for Noah and in a much shorter time, as Noah lived 950 years and spent 100 of those years building the ark! Over the next few weeks as we travel through Hebrews, I plan to add a few Psalms along the way as they reinforce our relationship with God.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 11:8-12

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:8-12 (NIV)

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful

who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week ask God to speak to you about His will, and then STOP and listen for His voice in your life.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"By faith Abraham, when called to go...obeyed and went..."

MESSAGE

When most of us are given a task at work or home, our first question is, "Why?" Our second is possibly an unspoken one, but is usually some form of the expression, "And what benefit is this to me?" And the third many times is, "How can I get out of this task?" These questions get even more in-depth and difficult the more profound the request is. The request by God of Abraham was simple, "Move your entire existence, including your whole family. Uproot them and go to a place you know nothing about, and I will tell you about it once you get there." Abraham's response? Abraham "...obeyed and went..." There are more stories of Abraham after this first request including having a child when he was 100, offering (but not executing) that same child as a sacrifice, and other "very easy" acts of obedience.

A reminder of one definition of faith: Faith is putting your undivided confidence in God, and then resting in Him. Abraham would not have been able to accomplish God's will had he not rested in God alone. In fact as we review his life it is those times that he took God's plan into his own hands that problems arose (e.g. his son Ishmael born by the maid Hagar, his lies to the Pharaoh of Egypt.) Just as God used Abraham, He intends to use us as the vehicle to accomplish His will. Many times we tend to get confused and reverse that process, expecting God to accomplish our will through His power. Whose will are you working on this week?

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HEBREWS 11:13-16

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:13-16 (NIV)

13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week as you pray, pray for God to continue to provide the faith in your life and the transforming of your mind to His will.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

“...they are looking for a country of their own.”

MESSAGE

What are you seeking?

As we continue to look at the lives of those mentioned in Hebrews, and continue to dwell on the promises of the word of God as seen in the Psalms, life begins to come to a much more clear focus. Twice in our passage this week we are told that these individuals are either seeking or longing for a country of their own. They feel as if they are strangers and aliens on this earth. Today it seems the opposite strategy is being implemented by many people. The search is on for how to fit in, to find one's place in life (or work or school or church or ??). We do all of this searching when what God wants is for us to see our place with HIM. Once that is established the rest seems to fall into place.

Once we have been touched by God we now both long for and seek HIM. We should feel like aliens and strangers in this world we live in. We have no need for the spoils of this world; our true desire is for His world, and He has given us the tools to be part of that world. It is Christ alone these people were waiting for and we also seek to meet. He reminds us to seek His face in Romans 12:2, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” This is what these people in Hebrews have done. They have turned over their will and agenda to Christ and allowed God to set HIS will and agenda in their lives, giving them that feeling of longing and looking for Christ.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 11:17-22

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:17-22 (NIV)

17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph,

when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week ask God to provide the faith you need to allow you to be His vessel of His will and agenda. Then REST in the assurance that He will provide all you will need.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"By faith..."

MESSAGE

Whose faith is it anyway? A quick reminder of our definition of faith: Faith is putting your undivided confidence in God, and then resting in Him. One of the most important things to remember is that our faith comes from GOD, NOT from us. This is sometimes difficult to understand. We have a tendency to work hard to have the faith we need to live our lives as we "should". This is NOT what God intended. He is the giver of Faith, and we need to openly ask for it and then be willing to receive it, NOT try to do it ourselves. God has given us the eternal source of faith, it is Christ alone. Think of the faith required by Abraham seen in these verses. He takes the steps of a long journey to make a sacrifice, and then he builds an altar upon which to make the sacrifice. Next he has to physically put Isaac on the altar. The final step is to hold the knife up ready to make the sacrifice.

Human faith would have moved forward to make the kill, or human faith probably would never have started out on the journey in the first place. Fortunately for Abraham, he had already yielded his life to the complete control of God alone, and allowed God's faith to work in and through him as the instrument of God. It was God's faith given to Abraham that allowed Abraham to make the journey and accomplish God's ultimate will. It was also God who provided the ram for a sacrifice just at the moment it was needed.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 11:23-31

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:23-31 (NIV)

23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"By faith..."

27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. 29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days. 31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week ask God to provide the faith you need to allow you to be His vessel of His will and agenda. Then REST in the assurance that He will provide all you will need.

MESSAGE

Whose faith is it anyway? A quick reminder of our definition of faith: Faith is putting your undivided confidence in God, and then resting in Him. One of the most important things to remember is that our faith comes from GOD, NOT from us. No, this is not a repeat from last time, but the same beginning to refresh and set the stage for today's verses. Each of the people we see in these verses, Moses' parents, Moses, the people of Israel seeing the walls of Jericho fall, all experienced things that ONLY God could provide. NONE of them were things that any one of them could have done through their own will and volition. This can be difficult for us to understand given the influence of today's action films where one man (or woman) can overcome any and everything to make the world a safe, comfortable and perfect place again. In God's world each of these men and women in the verses below had to empty themselves of self and self-will and allow God and God alone to perform

the necessary task. Could a mother really give up her newborn and place him in a river and just "hope for the best"? Could an entire nation listen to Joshua and then march around a city and blow trumpets and expect to win a war against an enemy who was far stronger and superior to them? None of this could happen by the power of men. Faith is allowing ourselves to be the vessel of God's power and will. We need to remind ourselves that God alone is the power to overcome our burdens; we are the vessel of HIS choosing. We are His vessel for both the BIG and SMALL things. This week rest in the comfort that He has chosen you to be HIS vessel.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 11:32-40

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:32-40 (NIV)

32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"God had planned something better for us..."

refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. 37 They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. 40 God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week let God's FAITH overwhelm your life. Ask God to envelop you with HIS GRACE, and then rest in the assurance that He will.

MESSAGE

Whose faith is it anyway? A quick reminder of our definition of faith: Faith is putting your undivided confidence in God, and then resting in Him. One of the most important things to remember is that our faith comes from GOD, NOT from us. When we reflect back on the "heroes of faith" from the last two weeks we see lots of victory, victory that came through faith, victory that we have the comfort of viewing with the outcome already known. In today's passage we see both victory AND defeat. We see nameless people who have received much and been through much, but we also see many who faced some of the cruelest punishment this world has to offer. Once again we need to understand their faith came from God alone NOT from their own will or effort. Each of these suffering heroes had completely given their life to God and asked Him to live it out. Just as we described last week the impossibility

of human faith being able to believe the victory, human faith alone cannot accept or endure the defeat we hear about in this passage. It is the FAITH of God living in each one of these individuals that makes their life as fulfilling as those who had the victory. The final word from heaven? The world was not worthy of them, which means they were worth the presence of God Himself who is their reward. And for us? We have the privilege of knowing that God had planned something better even for us, and we will see that clearly when we meet them in heaven.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 12:1-13

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 12:1-13 (NIV)

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. 4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it.

How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week seek God's face, asking Him to reveal His care for you. Ask Him to allow you to think as a child and respond to His love and care.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..."

MESSAGE

Wow. In the last few weeks we have seen example after example of those men and women who have "made the grade" and been written down in the "hall of faith." Now we look this week and see words like endure, run, preserve, struggle, resist, endure and lots of other very hard things. We have talked much about the understanding of resting in God as the exercise of our faith. But is life just filled with tough times to teach us hard lessons? T. Austin Sparks, in his book *God's Spiritual House* helps us understand a few of the words used in these verses of Hebrews. We are in a school for a tremendous destiny. We are

in the school which has as its end something of such significance and importance that we can scarce imagine; and so we have not to regard lightly the child-training of the Lord. Oh, again our human ideas must not be brought into the Divine realm when we use the word "chastening." What a poor translation! Even the Revisers have not helped us very much. It is simply "child-training." I think that, as a youngster, that chapter in Hebrews was my pet aversion in the Bible when I heard it read! My whole being rose up against that. I suppose that is quite natural; but if only we had been given the two words instead of that deplorable word "chastening."

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

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MESSAGE

It might at least have taken the edge off things. "My son, despise not thou the child-training of the Lord." There is something better about that. "Whom the Lord loveth. He trains." He child-trains.

God is not looking over us daily with his rod of justice seeking to correct our every wrong-doing. He IS watching over us loving us as His children, expecting us to respond as a child – in complete trust.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 12:1-13

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 12:1-13 (NIV)

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. 4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it.

How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week ask God to open our heart to His training and truth. Pray that He will answer your spiritual problems like no one else can.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..."

MESSAGE

We continue to review the first part of Hebrews to see where God is leading us in this area of child training. We have focused in weeks past on resting in Christ alone and allow Him to be our faith. The Father has one focus with His children: that they grow in Him. This is a tough one to understand because we are taught both by this world and many times in the church to grow in ourselves. That is NOT the point of Hebrews; instead it is a continual focus back to the Father and our relationship with Him and His Son Jesus. Once again this week I bring T. Austin Sparks from his book *God's Spiritual House* to our time for

another reflection on this concept of spiritual growth we are seeing in Hebrews... It just means this, that God is going to put and precipitate us into the most difficult situations. A situation is only difficult if you cannot cope with it. If you find the thing altogether beyond your measure; your measure of strength, your measure of wisdom, your measure of knowledge, then you are in difficulty: and that is the sort of thing the Lord does with people who mean business with Him. He puts them into difficult situations, and His whole object is to get their spiritual senses exercised, so that they may gain

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MESSAGE

experience, may have the root of the matter in themselves. Thus all our nice, comfortable line of things falls away at once and we find ourselves in a realm with which we cannot cope, for which we are not sufficient. We have been in the habit of asking questions and getting them answered: now, no one can answer our questions, no answer comes from the outside. Of course, people can say things to us and we may get a measure of help from those who have experience; but God is going to shut us up to the fact that it has to become ours by experience and in truth. It does not matter what anyone else says, we know quite well that we have to prove that for ourselves: they cannot lift us out of our difficulty. We constantly revert to the old childish way of running around asking somebody to solve our problems, but we have to come out of that. That is not going to work any longer. Really, deep down in us, we know that it does not work. We are not getting what we are after. We know now we have not to have something said to us, but something done in us.

We have to be brought ourselves to a position, not to a mental solution; and if you are all the time trying to get intellectual solutions to your spiritual problems, you are still in the nursery. If you are going really to come through to God's full and intended end, you have to know the Lord for yourself in an inward way, and unto that it may be necessary for the Lord to suspend all external helps and render all others incapable of coming to your rescue, flinging you wholly back upon Himself; to prove Him, to know Him, to be deeply, deeply exercised in your own spirit. That exercise enlarges capacity, and enlarged capacity means enlarged impartation from the Lord. This then is the struggle spoken of in our verses these past two weeks, and the result we have seen from those God trained are now written for us in chapter 11, those mighty "halls of faith."

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 12:14-29

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 12:14-29 (NIV)

14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. 16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. 17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears. 18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; 19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, 20 because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." 21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. 25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? 26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those in your family that are struggling as you are away or unable to be with them face to face.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...you have come to mount Zion...the city of the Living God."

MESSAGE

"...so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe..." Like so many things in life, the use of extremes allows the intended message to become distorted. Over the years as I have participated in a variety of denominations and churches, I have found that the extremes have clouded my view of God. One group of people worships God with a very pious and devout attitude, unable to even approach Him with praise much less a request.

Others tend to look at God as a big "sugar daddy" who only has their best interest in mind regardless of their personal relationship and attitude towards Him. The author of Hebrews is focused on a people who had made God both too distant (no one could achieve the results their god demanded) and yet involved in every moment of their daily life. What I see too much of today both inside and outside the church is a casual attitude about God,

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MESSAGE

one that allows for us to seemingly be the control of His influence and attitude in our lives rather than He in ours. In Hebrews we are shown that we need to, "...worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire'. " God has a desire to consume our very life, to be the ONE who is both the power and the controller in all we do. This is the joy we find once we have "...come to mount Zion...the city of the living God."

It is Christ in us that allows us to be part of the "kingdom that cannot be shaken." Consider your relationship with the ONE and mighty God, and allow His Spirit to focus you on both reverence and awe as He consumes you in the living fire of Christ Jesus.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

HEBREWS 13:1-6

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 13:1-6 (NIV)

1 Keep on loving each other as brothers. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. 3 Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. 4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." 6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those you know in prison or who are being mistreated or the unloved of this world.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Keep on loving each other as brothers."

MESSAGE

So how much love is that? We have many times heard the expression, "I love him as a brother." It is the image of a very deep love, a love that will go the distance and do whatever is necessary to protect and care for the other. So what does that mean in real life? A few short verses here in Hebrews seem to give us some very good examples of activities and emotion. The first is that we should entertain strangers. This seems to be a lost art in the world we live in today. Strangers might be bad people or might harm us or might... You know the thoughts, just click on almost any TV drama, and you will know why this is a bad idea. Remember those in prison. Well this is easy for us. We remember those in prison because we are angry at them for their actions and the money they cost us to incarcerate and the fact that they never seem to be rehabilitated. Oops! Hebrews says to remember them as if you were their fellow prisoner. WOW.

Now that sounds a little different. And the same for those being mistreated, think about them as if you were going through the same thing! All of this brings back another very old and oft quoted comment, "There but for the grace of God go I." Do we really understand the grace of God? Do we really understand that we need the power of Christ to have these attitudes and emotions? They cannot be maintained by our flesh. The power of the flesh will only mask our true feelings. We need to erase them by the power of Christ in our life. A thought from a previous week: Justice: getting what you deserve Mercy: not getting what you deserve Grace: getting what you don't deserve. This week remember that it is the grace of God and the power of His Son Jesus in our lives that allows us to keep on loving as a brother and entertaining strangers.

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HEBREWS 13:7-25

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 13:7-25 (NIV)

7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. 9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. 10 We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. 11 The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. 12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. 13 Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. 14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. 15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. 17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

18 Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. 19 I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon. 20 May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 22 Brothers, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written you only a short letter. 23 I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you. 24 Greet all your leaders and all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings. 25 Grace be with you all.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week PRAISE GOD!

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise..."

MESSAGE

Life is completed in God; we need to praise Him for that. Many believers find it difficult to understand and to realize that all is done. There is not more need for sacrifice. The book of Hebrews has attempted to help people move from an understating of an ongoing sacrifice that was to foreshadow the coming sacrifice which was fully completed on the cross. This sacrifice was not BECOMING complete, or SOON to be complete, or TO BE completed at some future time. It was all FULLY

completed at the cross. There is no need for further completion. It is past tense! It is over and done; we are now one with Christ and He is living in our heart and life and is our completion! We do not have to accomplish anything. HE has accomplished it all. This leads to our quote for the week. Since God has fully completed it all on the cross, our sacrifice is that of PRAISE. We have become thankful children, fully consumed by the life of Christ. I have come to see how the most enjoyable prayer is not a request, but a

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MESSAGE

praise, praise to God that He has in fact already completed the desired outcome, His outcome. Fear is replaced by FAITH, terror is exchanged for TRUST, judgment gives way to

FORGIVENESS, and the frustration of living by performance yields to the JOY of living by GRACE. That is the message of Hebrews.