

# **JESUS IS BETTER**

*A Lenten Devotional Guide from the Epistle to the Hebrews*

By the Meadow Brook Baptist Church Staff

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## **Introduction**

Since the second century, Christians have observed the season of Lent as a time for spiritual renewal and preparation prior to Easter. After all, Easter provides Christmas with lasting significance and ought to be a time of worship, celebration, and gospel proclamation.

As we approach Easter once again, may we consider the mission of our God. His mission is our redemption. As we read and reflect upon His Word, let us consider His eternal plan—creating, calling, and redeeming through the cross of Christ.

In this daily devotional guide, we attempt to merge personal reflection with theological faithfulness, using the content of Hebrews as a guide for thinking about the ministry of Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews repeatedly declares that Christ Jesus is better than the priestly and sacrificial system that preceded Him.

My prayer is that this daily guide would serve as a personal help during this season of Lent, as we commune and converse with the God who saves. May Christ be exalted!

Chris Jones

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**Read Hebrews 1:1-2:**

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

**To be Continued ...**

The author of Hebrews never identifies himself, yet he immediately identifies the source of his message: God. God spoke, and now God “has spoken” again. Because God has spoken, the human author writes. God spoke “in the past” (NIV) or “long ago” (ESV). Like the end of a popular TV series, Malachi leaves us wanting, waiting for the rest of the story. For more than four centuries, the biblical story is silent, with God’s people watching and waiting for His redemptive plan to be continued.

But now, in the arrival, ministry, message, and mission of the Son, the story continues. In other words, what God has now said “by his Son” belongs to what He already said “through the prophets.” This is the continuation of something already begun. God is faithful; He does not change. Therefore, as we prepare to reflect on the cross and celebrate the resurrection, we do so knowing that this, too, is a story to be continued, for the Son who “made the universe” and who came revealing the Father has left us His Spirit and will soon return in power.

Chris Jones

**Prayer**

Father, as I prepare now to participate in Lent by engaging Your gospel story, give me discipline to read Your Word and devotion to Your Son, my Savior. Increase my faith in Your promises and grant me greater love for my Lord. Amen.

**Read Hebrews 1:3-4:**

*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. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.*

**Very God of Very God**

Theologian A. W. Tozer (1897-1963) once said, "We know what we believe. Let no one with soft words and charming persuasion argue us into admission that Jesus Christ is any less than very God of very God."

As we begin this year's Lenten journey, it is important to remember the suffering of Christ on our behalf. However, we must remember that this season doesn't end with Holy Week but with the Risen Christ! In fact, this *season* has no end because Christ is risen and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus is not simply a spiritual man with a good message. This passage from Hebrews is of incredible importance, for it firmly establishes that Jesus is the Messiah, that His earthly ministry is complete, and that His ongoing ministry continues. Even His name alone shows His superiority.

David Vaughan

**Prayer**

Lord, when I cry to You for help, You hear me. You answer in your perfect timing, according to Your perfect plan. You have sustained me, yet far too often I have failed to see Your provision. Forgive me. When trouble abounds, grant me confidence and praise, leading me to seek and trust You to sustain me through the night. Amen.

**Read Hebrews 1:5:**

*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”?*

**Jesus is Greater**

When you turn on the TV or a movie about something that is spiritual, the first thing that you often see is an angel. From the old cartoons that showed the angel on one shoulder and the demon on the other to the latest apocalyptic fantasy about an angel encounter, angels captivate our imaginations. Even from the texts of Scripture, we see the biblical authors struggling to put into words the images of these heavenly beings.

Yet, there is One who is greater than even the angels. As our passage in Hebrews today explains, Jesus is greater than the angels. He is the promised Son of God. Today’s passage quotes two Messianic prophecies from the Old Testament. The first from Psalm 2:7 speaks about David’s relationship to God as His son while pointing to a greater Son, Jesus, who would come through David’s family tree. The second from 2 Samuel 7:14 speaks of Solomon while pointing again to Jesus who is the greater One who is coming. Jesus is greater because He is God with skin.

So, the message for us today from Hebrews is simply that Jesus is greater. He is greater than the angels that we cannot even begin to picture. He is greater than David, the great king who followed God and wrote the Psalms. He is greater than Solomon, the one who built the immaculate temple for the worship of God. Jesus is greater.

Ben Birdsong

**Prayer**

Jesus, today, I worship You as the greatest being in all the universe! Help me to surrender to your greatness today.

**Read Hebrews 1:8:**

*But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.”*

**The Real Thing**

A few years ago, Coca-Cola had an advertising campaign labeling their popular soft drink... “The Real Thing.” The notion was that all other drinks were less than real, could not measure up, or were somehow substandard. Those that chose to quench their thirst with anything else had settled. No one wants to listen to a cover band play Beatles songs if you could hear the Beatles. No one wants to read about space exploration if you could talk to Buzz Aldrin. We want the real thing!

Likewise, in our passage today, the writer of Hebrews reminds us that while God had used the prophets and angels as His messengers in past times, now He had sent His Son ... the Son whose throne will last forever. He is greater than the prophets and angels for they are created beings who were to worship the One who inhabits the throne. This quoted text in Hebrews 1:8 is found in Psalm 45:7.

We now hear from God through the One whose throne has no end and the One who rules with the scepter of justice. A scepter, like a crown, or insignia, is a symbol or sign of authority and sovereignty. This One that God calls His Son will reign with righteousness and justice as His “sign” of authority. This king is like no other. This king is the Real Thing!

James Culbreth

**Prayer**

Lord, I pray that today will be a day that I recognize Your justice as You reign over me. I am grateful that God has sent You to be my righteous king. I trust You and love You.

**Read Hebrews 2:1-3:**

*We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.*

**The Gospel is Greater**

I love to swim in the ocean at the beach. Sometimes, however, I am unable to do so because of the color of the flags that lifeguards send up the poles to announce to the public whether or not current conditions are safe for swimming. Ignoring the red-colored flag could get me in trouble with the law, or even worse, cost me my life. I might make a poor decision to go neck-high into the ocean, ignoring the red flag on display. The strong undertow begins to take me under. A lifeguard jumps in. How much more of a poor decision would it be for me to ignore the help of the lifeguard who comes to my rescue?

It is clear throughout the New Testament that the gospel is greater than the law, because it brings about a righteousness in us that the law alone could not (Romans 8:1-4). Disobedience to the law given to Moses at Mount Sinai brought punishment to God's people. How much worse will it be for us if we ignore the gospel of Christ, which is meant to do what the law cannot—rescue us from sin and death and set us free?

David Eanes

**Prayer**

Father, thank You for the gift of Your Son Jesus, the good news of the gospel, and those who have spread the message across time. Help me to cling to the truth of the gospel and share it with others.

**Read Hebrews 2:5:**

*It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking.*

**The Paradox of Christ**

John Ellicott states, “It was needful that Jesus, as Author of salvation to man, should in all points be made like to those whom He saves, and in their likeness suffer and die; thus He becomes for them a merciful and faithful High Priest.” Jesus is Savior, God in human flesh—He is not part man nor is He part God. He has two distinct natures—fully divine yet fully human. His divine nature was not changed when “the Word became flesh” (Jn. 1:1).

Jesus was more than a man who had God within Him; He was God in fleshly form, the second person of the Trinity. He was “...the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb. 1:3). When I think of what Jesus did for me, I am reminded of a great song by Kurk Kaiser, “Just to Think of the Cross”—Just to think of the cross moves me now, the nails in the hands, His bleeding brow. To think of the cross moves me now, it should have been me, it should have been me, instead I am free, I am free! Because of Christ our Savior, we are free indeed!

Clyde Dutton

**Prayer**

Lord I do praise You and thank You for Your mercy and for Your love. I thank You for sending your one and only Son to die in my place. I cannot fathom such wondrous love. My prayer, O Lord, is that many will come to know this wondrous Savior who died for all. It is in His precious name we pray, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 2:9:**

*But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

**It's for Everyone!**

Prior to verse 9, Paul quotes Psalm 8, which is a psalm of praise, beautifully describing the majesty of God's name and His rule and reign over all of creation. In this psalm, there is a prophetic reference to Christ in verse 5 that says, "You have made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor." This is a description of the humanness and deity of Jesus. In His humanness, He was a little lower than the angels, but make no mistake ... He was no less God. This is part of the beauty of the mystery of Christ. How can He be fully God and fully man?

Here in Hebrews, Paul's words are not prophetic but a direct reference to Jesus who has been seen and will be seen. The difference between the Psalms text and the Hebrews text is that Paul connects the dots by telling us that Jesus, being fully God and fully man, came to suffer and die for you and me. Best of all and even more beautiful is that He came to suffer and die for *everyone*.

David Vaughan

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank You for the mystery of the gospel. While I cannot fully understand, please grant me the faith to trust in Your Word and in the Spirit living within me. Thank You for dying in my place and giving me the free gift of grace. Thank You that Your love is so generous that You would do so not just for me but for any and all who believe. In the name of Jesus Christ I pray,

**Read Hebrews 2:10:**

*In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.*

**Maturing Perfectly**

As I look at my children, I can easily see (perhaps better than they) how they have grown and matured. When I think of Jesus, I have a hard time imagining Him as a boy growing and maturing. But because He was fully human and fully God, He grew physically as well as in maturity and experience. Of course, being God, He did so perfectly, without sin. When the author of Hebrews says, “the pioneer of their salvation,” he is saying that for the first and only time, the perfect sacrifice was made for you and me. Because Jesus lived in full obedience to the Father, His sacrifice was perfect. He is the unblemished Lamb.

David Vaughan

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, I cannot begin to understand fully how You walked this earth, knowing trials and temptations, yet fully and completely obeyed Your heavenly Father. Thank You for being the perfect sacrifice for me and for the gift of being called Your son/daughter. Help me as I walk through this life to do so in obedience to my heavenly Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 2:11-13:**

*Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."*

**Family of Faith**

Some of life's most treasured moments are those times when we gather with family for various holidays and celebrations. We must remember that as children of God, this is our privilege each week when we gather for corporate worship. We are family, and we are called to gather regularly for worship. Here in Hebrews, we see Jesus coming together with all of us for worship. Let's take advantage of each opportunity we have as God's family to worship together with focused attention on the One who calls us.

David Vaughan

**Prayer**

Lord, forgive me for depending on human resources rather than on You. You are enough. In fact, only You are able to save me, to lead me, and to keep me. Lord, You are loyal, faithful, sovereign, and righteous; help me to trust You. Amen.

**Read Hebrews 2:14-16:**

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of 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. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants.*

**He’s the Victor**

Everyone loves a good story. From the establishment of the characters, to the plot set-up, all the way to the final scene, we love escaping our reality to dive into another. Typically, the stories we love the most are those that take us to the edge in thinking that the villain is going to succeed only to miraculously be relieved when the hero is victorious.

The Bible is unlike any book ever written. Is it history – yes, a textbook – yes, beautiful literature – yes, and so much more. We all know the villain, Satan, and if we’re honest, to a degree we are fearful of him.

We also know the hero. He is three characters in one—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Hollywood can’t come up with a better story and characters. The biblical narrative tells the true story of God, who “by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death.” However, we don’t escape reality to join this story. The biblical narrative is our story! We are Abraham’s descendants. Therefore, we live in light of the fact that we are saved and God wins!

David Vaughan

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your victory over sin and death and over Satan. Help me walk in Your light as one that knows Your salvation and as one who is courageous to stand against Satan with willingness to spread Your light everywhere I go. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 2:17-18:**

*For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human 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. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

**Empathizer**

Society today celebrates uniqueness. While in and of itself there's nothing wrong with being unique, it's important to recognize that God has called us to oneness. Not sameness, but oneness. In other words, He wants us to be together, bonded in our identity to Christ.

In our dealings with one another, we can have sympathy (having feelings of pity or sorrow for someone else) or empathy (the ability to understand feelings of another). While we are grateful for the sympathy of others, we would much rather be consoled by those who are empathetic. Because Jesus was “tempted in every way – yet did not sin,” He is empathetic towards us (Heb. 4:15). There is nothing you have ever experienced or ever will experience that Christ is not fully aware of the temptation, sorrow, or hurt. As the unblemished Lamb, He was sacrificed for you and is now most merciful and faithful as our High Priest and Advocate. Praise be to God!

David Vaughan

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank You for knowing fully my every need, temptation, and hurt. Thank You for being my Advocate and for washing me clean through Your blood. Help me live my life connected to Your body, the church, where I can both give and receive sympathy and empathy. May my life be an offering of praise that glorifies You in all that I do. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 3:1:**

*Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.*

**Fix Your Thoughts**

When my daughters were younger, they would put something right up in front of me and want me to read it or see it. I could not focus my eyes as quickly as they wanted a response, so my general comment was, “Wait a minute, my eyes have to adjust!” I needed a moment to “play slide trombone” with the paper or object in order to bring it into focus. There is a focus zone where everything becomes clearer.

Today’s passage wants us to “fix our thoughts” on Jesus ... to bring the Apostle and High Priest into full focus. Jesus, the Apostle, is the One who was sent to us, the “holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling.” He comes to us; we do not go to Him. Our Father knew/knows our needs and responds. Jesus is not only the sent Apostle, but He is the High Priest. He is the One who pleads our case before the Father. Because of Jesus, we have an audience with the Holy God.

In a world that seems out of focus, where things seem unclear and clouded, take a moment to “let your eyes adjust” ... FOCUS! Focus on Who matters: Jesus.

James Culbreth

**Prayer**

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to me. Help me to focus my thoughts on the One who stands at Your right hand forever interceding on my behalf.

**Read Hebrews 3:2:**

*He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.*

**“Holy” Moses**

Could there be any greater Jew than Moses? He was the savior of the Israelites from Pharaoh's death grip, the leader through the wanderings in the wilderness, the bearer of the Ten Commandments, the voice of God to all of Israel! Moses was the most faithful, holy, dedicated prophet the Jewish people had ever known. Numbers 12:7-8 describe Moses' position as beyond the other prophets ...

*<sup>7</sup> But this is not true of my servant Moses;  
he is faithful in all my house.  
<sup>8</sup> With him I speak face to face,  
clearly and not in riddles;  
he sees the form of the LORD.  
Why then were you not afraid  
to speak against my servant Moses?"*

Therefore, when the writer of Hebrews describes Jesus as “faithful to the one who appointed him,” he was making a strong comparison that could be understood by his audience. “God's house” knew of Moses as the rescuer; they knew of his leadership, they knew of his experience with God and the burning bush, they knew of his presentation of the Ten Commandments, they knew of his faithfulness, they knew of Moses' position above all other prophets, they knew! The author was saying ... you know how great Moses was ... Jesus is greater!

James Culbreth

**Prayer**

16 Father, thank You for allowing us to see Jesus in some people, in some places, and in some situations. However, most of all, thank You for sending Jesus! May others see Him in me today.

**Read Hebrews 3:3-4:**

*Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. <sup>4</sup>For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.*

**Architectural Details**

Good design supposes “form follows function.” Function (usefulness) is the most important element in good design. In other words, no matter how aesthetically pleasing or beautiful any design is, if it doesn’t function or serve well, it is not a good design. Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Fallingwater* in Mill Run, PA is a good example. The architecture is spectacular with cantilevered balconies reaching into the beautiful natural setting of trees and shaping its design around a mountain creek. The long perpendicular flat lines of the house are exquisite! A real drawback, according to Edgar Kaufman, the original owner, is the lack of usefulness of the flat roofs and rooflines, causing many leaks. Kaufman renamed it the “Seven-bucket Building.” Furthermore, the poorly supported cantilevered balconies now require bracing to correct the dip and mitigate the danger. *Fallingwater* no longer functions as a home; it is now a museum!

As we look at Hebrews 3:3-4 today, we are reminded again that Jesus is superior to Moses. Moses was the occupant of the house, but Jesus is the builder. Jesus directed its function and form. He put God’s house together in a way that would bring honor to the Father. Jesus is Creator, as well as Apostle, and High Priest!

James Culbreth

**Prayer**

Jesus, You are worthy of our honor and praise. You are our Creator, our Shelter, our Protector, and our Redeemer. Thank You for being both the owner and operator of God’s house.

**Read Hebrews 3:5-6:**

*“Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house,” bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. But Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.*

**God’s Chicken**

Christians love Chick-Fil-A. Truett Cathy really hit upon a good idea back in 1967 when he opened a restaurant serving just his chicken sandwich. He famously said, “We didn’t invent the chicken, only the chicken sandwich.” Not only do we love the product, but we also love the corporate values, the hard-working staff, the community partnerships, and we certainly love the “It’s my pleasure” attitude of every employee. Many have declared this “God’s Chicken!” I do not know about that, but I do know that Truett Cathy’s idea of an owner/operator has proven successful. CFA doesn’t just have someone putting up money to own franchises ... the owner works/manages just one location. He/she has a vested double interest in the restaurant success. It is both their investment and their job.

Similarly, Jesus is the owner/operator of God’s house. He is not just the caretaker or the occupant; He is the Creator, Overseer, and Faithful Son of His Father’s house. We, God’s people are God’s house. While Moses was a faithful servant, we can rest assured that our confidence and hope is in good hands (God’s hands) as Christ is the faithful Son.

James Culbreth

**Prayer**

Lord, I am grateful for the hope offered to me as a part of God’s house (family). Today, I sing, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness.”

**Read Hebrews 3:12-14:**

*See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 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 have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.*

**Persevering to the End**

The backdrop of these exhortations is the failure of the exodus generation of Israelites. After God delivered Abraham's descendants from slavery in Egypt, that generation failed to trust the Lord to bring them into the Promise Land. As a result, they wandered in the wilderness and did not enter the land.

When the author of Hebrews cautions his readers against turning away, he is calling for genuine faith in the Christ who saves so that we may enter His eternal rest upon His return. Elsewhere, the Scriptures are clear that salvation is secure for true believers; it cannot be lost (Jn. 10:27-29; Eph. 1:4). Persevering in faith until the end, then, is evidence of being "in Christ." This text is a warning to examine our faith, to consider our position before the living God.

Who are you trusting? Pause today, and take some time to consider where your confidence lies. The word "conviction" in verse 14 can be translated "confidence" (ESV). Is your confidence in the unequalled person and finished work of Jesus Christ?

Chris Jones

**Prayer**

Father, Your gospel is a message of grace, a gift I cannot earn. Even so, repentance counters my sinful nature. I feel the pull to be self-sufficient, to be my own savior, but I know I am not. Help me to trust Jesus fully and to hold that conviction to the very end.

**Read Hebrews 4:12-13:**

*For the word of God is alive 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.*

**The Living Word**

Concerning the phrase “word of God,” does it refer to the Bible, God’s holy word, or to Jesus the “Word?” In his sermon titled “The Living Word of God,” Dr. W.A. Criswell states, “We would say that it refers to both, the Word of God incarnate and the Word of God inspired. God hath joined the two together, and the two are in one. They rise, they fall, they live, they die together. The Lord Jesus Christ is in His Word, as one would ride in a chariot. And it is the quickening, living, powerful, piercing, dividing, discerning Word of God because of the life of Jesus in it.”

When we read God’s Word, it runs us through and through—it penetrates to our very soul, spirit, join and marrow. When we read God’s Word, we stand convicted because of our thoughts, words and deeds. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul writes, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (KJV). So I’ve messed up, my sins have been laid bare, but “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain, [but] He washed it white as snow” (from “Jesus Paid it All” – by A. Hall).

Clyde Dutton

**Prayer**

My loving Lord, I come to You, a sinner saved only by Your amazing grace. As I read Your Word, I am convicted of my sins, and I realize that I need forgiveness. Thank You for being a loving and forgiving God. In Christ’s name I pray, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 4:14-16:**

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

**He’s Been in Your Shoes**

Magicians and illusionists fascinate us, don’t they? After they seem to do the impossible, we want to applaud them. But, then, immediately the next thought comes: “How did he/she do that?” We would love for the presenter of the amazing trick to show us how it was done. Such information might satisfy our curiosity, but probably wouldn’t help us much with daily life.

Our passage today reminds us that Jesus, our Great High Priest, did what is impossible for us to do alone—successfully escape tempting situations without succumbing to sin. The writer of Hebrews writes that Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” You might say He’s been in your shoes. However, He had a 100% success rate against sin when tempted. You might be thinking, “How did He do that?” Sometimes He commanded the enemy to leave His presence or quoted Scripture. Every time, He trusted that doing the will of His Father was better than giving in to the flesh. Faithfully study Jesus’ life, and daily approach Him in prayer with confidence. The mercy and grace you’ll find will most definitely help you in daily life!

David Eanes

**Prayer**

Father, help me to spend time daily in Your Word and in prayer. When I’m tempted to sin, help me to look to the example of Jesus and reach out to You in my time of need.

**Read Hebrews 5:1-4:**

*Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.*

**They are Weak, but He is Strong**

The Levitical priests were meant to represent the people before their Holy God, “to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.” These priests had to meet two qualifications: They must be “selected from among men” and “be called by God.” I imagine it would have been easy for God’s people to elevate these priests in their minds to a status before God that was higher than their own. But, today’s passage reminds us of the humanity and imperfection of these chosen representatives, in order to further lead us to the realization that we need a Great High Priest.

Your staff at Meadow Brook Baptist, as well as every staff member at every Christ-following church, was also “selected from among men” and believes we have been “called by God.” But, always remember that, just like the priests in Christ’s day, we also easily identify with sinners because we, too, are “subject to weakness.” We need the love and forgiveness of Jesus as much as anybody. So, let’s seek Him together!

David Eanes

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You for those You have called and we have chosen to serve at MBBC. Help me to pray for them in light of the fact that we all “fall short of the glory of God,” and need Your Son, our Great High Priest.

**Read Hebrews 6:1-3:**

*Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God,<sup>2</sup> instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.<sup>3</sup> And God permitting, we will do so.*

**My Faith Has Found a Resting Place**

At this stage in my life, I feel that I should have the fundamentals of my faith pretty well “nailed down!” In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul talks about Christians that are “mere spiritual infants,” not able to eat solid food, who still need “milk.” So, it’s time for me to move onward and upward in my spiritual journey. It’s easy to get “wrapped around the axel” about things like “foot washin’, laying on of hands, and things about “eternal judgment.” I should know what I believe and what I stand for. I should be in the Word, not just reading the Word; I need to be studying and praying about it daily.

Paul exhorts us to “Do [our] best to present [ourselves] to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Ti. 2:15). It’s time for “my faith” to find a “resting place.” E. Howitt, in the hymn from whence I drew the title of this devotion, directs us not to be all consumed by the way we do things or creeds, but that we put our faith and our hope in the ever-living One, Jesus Christ. Then we need no emotional argument because Jesus died for us and that’s enough.

Clyde Dutton

**Prayer**

Lord of all wisdom, thank You for your living Word that directs me daily. May I study and correctly handle Your holy Scriptures. It’s in the mighty name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

**Read Hebrews 7:23-25:**

*Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

**The Eternal Mediator Who Represents Us**

Throughout the Old Testament system of worship, a priest stood between the people and God and served as a mediator between the two. When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain that separated the people from the presence of God in the holy of holies was ripped in two. Because of Jesus' work for us at the cross, we can have direct access to God through Him.

In today's passage, we see that in the old priestly system there were multiple priests, and the high priest would change with the death of the priest. In Jesus, we have a priest that lives forever. He is forever stationed to bridge our relationship with God the Father and to go to God on our behalf.

The passage goes on to say that Jesus intercedes for us. He is the One who is bringing our requests before God and praying to God on our behalf. I don't know if you have ever felt like there were times when you didn't know what to pray. Jesus intercedes for us and communicates the unexpressed longings of our heart to God. In Jesus, we have been given access because we have a Mediator who makes an eternal way for us to experience a relationship with God and also leads us in how to approach God in prayer.

Ben Birdsong

**Prayer**

Jesus, today, I praise You for making a way for me to stand before a perfect God. Let me not forget the privilege of approaching You in prayer.

**Read Hebrews 7:26-27**

*Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 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.*

**The Perfect One Who Stands in Our Place**

Because of the cross, we don't just have salvation. We have Jesus to represent us before God. He stands as the perfect One who through His perfect life lived the life we couldn't live, died at the cross the death our sins deserved, and makes the way for imperfect people like us to come into the presence of the perfect One.

In the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, priests were sinners like us. For them to represent the people before God, they had to confess their own sinfulness and first be reconciled to God on their own. In Jesus, we have a High Priest who never sinned. Because the perfect and sinless One took on our sins at the cross, the sacrificial system was ended at Calvary. The sacrifice of Jesus was the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. When Jesus said "it is finished" at the cross, the system of reconciliation shifted from sacrifices offered in the temple to trusting in the forever sacrifice of Jesus.

Jesus meets our need as the perfect High Priest because He is the One who serves as both the mediator of the sacrifice and the sacrificial Lamb. It is by resting in His work for us that we can now live our lives for Him.

Ben Birdsong

**Prayer**

Jesus, help me to live in light of Your sacrifice for me today.

**Read Hebrews 7:28:**

*For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.*

**The Perfect Fit**

In the last few days, we have seen the shift that has happened in the sacrificial system because of Jesus. In Jesus, we see the flaws in the old system being perfected. While priests died and were replaced, Jesus stands as the eternal High Priest. While priests were sinners, Jesus is perfect. While priests offered sacrifices over and over, Jesus's sacrifice was once for all.

So, why would there be an imperfect system? The old sacrificial system had its flaws which caused it to point to a better system to come. The shortfalls of the sacrificial system were all fulfilled in Jesus. Even the Israelite system of worship in the temple points to the longing for a Messiah to come. It points to the promise of a Jesus who is truly sufficient.

Jesus serves as the perfect fit to the holes in the Old Testament system. Just like the longings and holes in the sacrificial system are fulfilled in Jesus, He has also come to fulfill our longings and the broken pieces of our lives. Though we can never be perfect, Jesus came to live the perfect life for us. Though we could never be holy enough to be in the presence of God, Jesus came to be our holy Mediator. Though we will one day face death in this life, Jesus came to bring us eternal life. Jesus is truly the perfect fit not just for a broken sacrificial system but for our broken lives as well.

Ben Birdsong

**Prayer**

Jesus, thank You for being the perfect fit for my broken life. Help me to rely on Your sufficiency today.

**Read Hebrews 8:10-13:**

*This is the covenant I will establish with the people 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. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.*

**No More Sins**

The author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah here, distinguishing between the old covenant, or promise, between God and the Israelites, and the new covenant now implemented through the gospel of Jesus. The issue with the old was human error. No human—prophet, priest, king, or anyone—could obey the law fully. The Mosaic Law was a religion of external sacrifices and commandments meant to regulate Israel's relationship with the Lord. It provided a way to practice spiritual devotion and worship that God could accept. But it was repetitive, and it did not provide lasting forgiveness.

God knew this, so the law was never His permanent solution to humanity's sin problem. Paul writes, "So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). As our "guardian," the law exposed error and provided necessary discipline, teaching the truths of God as His people awaited the true Savior. Through the work of Christ, God has been "merciful toward [our] iniquities, and [He] will remember [our] sins no more." Are you trusting the work of Christ? If so, your sins are forgiven and will never be brought against you by God again.

Chris Jones

**Prayer**

Lord, Your forgiveness is so sweet. Thank You for doing for me what I could never do on my own. In the name of Christ I pray, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 9:7-8:**

*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. 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 functioning.*

**The Inner Room**

To be invited into one's home expresses sincere care and humble hospitality. To be shown the full house displays an even greater level of honesty and vulnerability, fitting for only those counted as friends. For a time, the tabernacle was God's earthly home.

The tabernacle contained a "Holy Place," attended to by the Levitical priests, and a "Most Holy Place," only entered by the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). This inner room was where God's presence resided among His people in a special, or heightened, way. Only the right person could enter the inner room, and he could only do so in the right way and on the right day, because sin separates God and humanity.

The presence of the veil, separating the two parts of the earthly tabernacle (and later temple) reminds worshipers that they cannot directly enter God's presence. However, Hebrews insists that time has passed, for when the Son of God gave His life for our sins, "the curtain of the temple was torn in two" (Lk. 23:45). Now, we Christ-followers can enter the inner room. We can approach God confidently through the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19), for He forgives and welcomes us.

Chris Jones

**Prayer**

28 Father, through Jesus, You invite us into the inner room. You invite us to know and enjoy You personally and relationally. Thank You for opening the way, for inviting me in. Lead me to commune with You today.

**Read Hebrews 9:9-10:**

*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. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.*

**External Regulations**

Rules and regulations are good, but they do not perfect the conscience. The external regulations of the Mosaic Law were meant to regulate a relationship between God and His people, but those regulations could not make us perfect. They may have cleansed physically, but they could not truly cleanse spiritually.

Teachers and parents understand this, for they know that rules do not win the hearts of their children. Rules regulate and teach, but in and of themselves, they do not develop and transform character.

The coming of Christ brings a “new order,” purifying and perfecting consciences through the cleansing work of Christ. True forgiveness and freedom from guilt come by way of faith in Jesus, for He took our sin and gave us His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21).

Chris Jones

**Prayer**

Lord, thank You for cleansing me by Your grace. You have forgiven me and cleared me of my guilt. Through Jesus, I am a child of God. Lead me to worship you today. Amen.

**Read Hebrews 9:11:**

*But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation.*

**Our Great High Priest**

Our Great High Priest, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Spotless Lamb, came through the heavenly tabernacle, God's creation, and He also passed through its earthy replica, man's creation. Why is this important for us to know? People could learn about heaven from the temple. People could learn about Christ's work from the work of Israel's priests. But then Christ came, and the reality was here. When people have the real thing, a copy has no further purpose.

The real house of God is greater and more perfect than anything on this earth. People make images of false gods, and they make temples for those images. But nobody can make a house for the God who made heaven and earth (Acts 7:48-50). Let us worship the God of heaven, and let us praise the Lamb for what He accomplished for each of us. "To God be the Glory, great things He has done, So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, who yielded His life – an atonement for sin, and opened the life gate that all may go in" (Fanny Crosby).

Clyde Dutton

**Prayer**

All glory is ascribed to You, our living Lord. Thank You for providing our Great High Priest that went through both heavenly and earthly tabernacles for a sinner like me. Thank You that Jesus paid it all. In the name of the Spotless Lamb, I pray. Amen.

**Read Hebrews 9:12:**

*He 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, thus obtaining eternal redemption.*

**The Sufficiency of Christ**

Each day as I sit at my breakfast table, I look outside my window and am reminded of the many gifts that God has provided: warmth from the sun, air from our atmosphere, food from the land and sea, living creatures, rains in their seasons that replenish the earth—the list is endless. God is so good, and He loves us so much that He has provided all we need.

Throughout history man has tried, in some way, to repay God for His goodness—through gifts, through sacrifices. The writer of Hebrews compares the work of Israel’s priests to the work of Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest. Only Christ is found sufficient. The blood of bulls and goats brought only temporary atonement (Heb. 10:4). But it was the blood of the all-sufficient One, the Christ, that offers complete and permanent atonement.

Clyde Dutton

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You for our all-sufficient Savior. Thank you for Your good and perfect gift. In Christ’s holy name I pray, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 9:13-14:**

*The 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. How 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!*

**Without Blemish**

As we see in Numbers 19, the ashes of the red heifer were sprinkled on the unclean, especially those that had touched a dead body. Of course, the heifer had to die. The question can be asked; “Why was it necessary for the blood of animals to be spilt?” This was all part of God’s plan to sanctify and redeem man—to bring man into a right relationship with Himself. God considers every sacrifice valuable. Our loving Lord considers blood, even the blood of animals, precious. If our Lord considers the blood of animals precious, how much more does He consider precious the blood of His one and only Son who was without blemish? For those who believe, the blood of Jesus Christ will “purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9). We have received purification for heavenly purposes, to “serve the living God!”

Clyde Dutton

**Prayer**

Thank You, our loving Lord, for providing the Spotless Lamb, the Lamb without blemish. Thank You for caring enough to send Your very best. May I be ready and willing to give of my best to the Master. It’s in His name I pray, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 9:27-28:**

*Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

**“It Ain’t Over ...”**

I love “Yogi-isms”—quotes from the great baseball player, Yogi Berra. He had a way with words that was unusual and profound. He said truths in a funny way. These are some of my favorites:

“Nobody goes there nowadays, it’s too crowded.”

“Baseball is 90% mental and the other half is physical.”

“You can observe a lot by just watching.”

“Never answer an anonymous letter.”

Perhaps his most famous quip is ... *“It ain’t over till it’s over.”* Never has the truth of *finality* been better explained. When Jesus was sacrificed just once, “... to take away the sins of many people,” He brought an end to the continual need of yearly atonement by the priests on behalf of the people. Jesus’ sacrifice was/is sufficient. Man’s final appointment with death cannot be changed. Each is appointed a time of finality (death), and no amount of virtue or works or wealth or church attendance or might or wisdom or education or anything can stop it. When death comes ... it is over, so nothing can keep a sinner from being condemned at the day of judgement, except the accepted atoning sacrifice of Christ.

James Culbreth

**Prayer**

Lord, thank You for Jesus’ once and for all time death for my sins. “He paid a debt He did not owe and I owe a debt I could not pay.” Thank you, Jesus!

**Read Hebrews 10:1-4:**

*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. Otherwise, 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. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

**A Better Way**

I have never liked pulling weeds. The dirt is fine, but it is the never-ending process of removing all the weeds. Until you begin pulling, you never realize how many weeds are actually there. By the time the weeds are gone, new ones are growing.

This endless repetition resembles the sacrificial system, for soon after an animal sacrifice was made, the sinner would be sinning again. The law exposed human sin and taught the need for atonement, but God never intended for it to be permanent. It couldn't be, because our ongoing sin made it ineffective. It regulated, but it did not redeem. Only a perfect human could accomplish the removal of sins.

If you could spray your lawn once and guarantee complete removal of weeds, then you would never consider pulling them again. Through the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God, believers experience the erasure of guilt and the removal of sins. Praise be to God for a better way!

Chris Jones

**Prayer**

Father, thank You for planning a permanent provision for my sin. Jesus, thank You for fulfilling the Father's plan for me. Holy Spirit, thank You for equipping me to live as one who is forgiven.

**Read Hebrews 10:11:**

*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.*

**Again and Again and Again**

Imagine the scene at the temple. As you approach the place where people go to worship God, you would likely first experience the smell—a stench of dead animals mixed together with the burning of a fire. Next, you would likely hear those animals being brought to be sacrificed as the snorts and coos of life drastically changed to the screams and pains of death. To approach this place would bring you immediately to understand the truth that sin is serious and that when someone sins something must die.

The role of the priest was to keep this system of sacrificial death in order to earn the forgiveness of God going on day after day after day. People continued to sin, animals continued to die, blood continued to be spilled, yet people's sin problem continued again and again and again. At its core the sacrificial system, as the author of Hebrews says, cannot take away sins.

Though the system reminded the people of their own failures to follow God and their repentance helped them to restore their fellowship with God again, they needed something more. The system itself was a longing for something greater. What could cover the sins of the people, satisfy the wrath of God, and allow sinful people to be in the presence of a holy God? What could show both the seriousness of sin and the amazing grace of atonement?

Ben Birdsong

**Prayer**

Jesus, please place a longing in my heart for You like the priests and people of Israel longed for the end of the incomplete system of sacrifices.

**Read Hebrews 10:12-13:**

*But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool.*

**One Greater Than All the Rest**

There needed to be One sacrifice greater than all the rest. The sacrificial system of again and again and again needed One who would both free them from the process of sacrifice and complete the need for forgiveness. In today's passage, the author of the Hebrews presents Jesus as the One who frees the people from the process of sacrifice.

The passage begins with the greater priest, Jesus. As opposed to the priest who offered the sacrifice of an animal, Jesus stands as the One who is both the One offering the sacrifice and the sacrifice being offered. Jesus willingly laid down His life on the altar to be the once and for all greatest sacrifice. He broke the system of again and again by giving Himself once and for all as the perfect sacrifice. There were no blemishes in Jesus because He had no sin. Therefore, He could be the perfect sacrifice.

After Jesus gives Himself as the perfect sacrifice, Jesus sat down at God's right hand. Jesus is returning to His rightful place as the Lord of the universe. Yet, Jesus is waiting to finally crush His enemies. Jesus sits in heaven as the Victor over evil. He defeated evil at the cross and is waiting till the day when the fullness of His great victory will be seen. Jesus truly is the victorious sacrifice who is greater than all the rest.

Ben Birdsong

**Prayer**

Jesus, thank You for coming to be the perfect sacrifice. Help me to live with hope as I await the spoils of Your victory.

**Read Hebrews 10:14:**

*For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*

**The One Who Makes Us Holy**

Today, we will see that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice in that He completes our need for forgiveness that the sacrificial system was pointing to. The sacrificial system had many rules and specifications for the sacrifice that was going to be offered to God. It had to not have blemishes, be sickly, or be hurt. It had to be perfect. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice because He never sinned. He lived the human life without falling into temptation and sin. Throughout all of human history, Jesus was the only perfect person. Therefore, He is the only One who could make the perfect sacrifice.

At the cross, we experience what Martin Luther referred to as “the great exchange.” Jesus takes our sin, failure, and brokenness for us on the cross and trades it for His sinless and perfect record. Because of this amazing truth, when God looks at us, He doesn’t see our sins, failures, and mistakes, but He sees Jesus’ righteousness in our place. We have been made holy in the site of God because Jesus took our place and makes us holy.

This holiness is something that we have been graciously given by Jesus, yet it is something that we are practically growing into. As the Holy Spirit works in our lives through our own surrender, He begins to bring out the holiness of our status before God into our daily lives. Are we surrendering to His work? Are we beginning to walk in holiness?

Ben Birdsong

**Prayer**

Jesus, thank You for making me holy at the cross. Help me to live a life displaying the holiness that You bought for me at the cross.

**Read Hebrews 10:19-22:**

*Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

**It's Right There Waiting for You**

An intimate relationship with God. The opportunity is right there waiting for us! It's no longer like it was in Old Testament days when God could only be approached by certain people, at certain times, in specific ways. The curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom when Jesus gave up His life for us on the cross (Mk. 15:37-38). The direction of the curtain's tearing reminds us that this opportunity for intimacy with our Heavenly Father originated with Him, not us. And the writer of Hebrews reminds us that the torn curtain itself is a symbol of Jesus' torn body—a powerful reminder that the only way—a “new and living way”—to the Father is through the Son.

Because of the blood of Jesus, there is no longer anything in our way. Because of our “great priest,” we can approach His throne boldly, with confidence—we can “draw near,” as verse 22 invites us to do. Come to God with a sincere heart, trusting and following Christ without hesitation. Enjoy freedom from guilt, based on the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. As an old hymn reminds us, “Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.” Draw near to God today. What are you waiting for? The opportunity is right there in front of you.

David Eanes

**Prayer**

Father, thank You for giving Your Son so that I can have peace with, and an intimate relationship with You. Help me to draw near to You today and every day.

**Read Hebrews 10:23:**

*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*

**Let Us**

Hebrews 10:23 is the second of the five “Let us” statements in this section of Scripture.

Verse 22 “Let us draw near to God...”

Verse 23 “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess ...”

Verse 24 ”Let us consider how we may spur each other on ...”

Verse 25 “Let us not give up meeting together ...”

Verse 25 “... let us encourage one another ...”

In my Bible this section is titled, *A Call to Persevere*. I cannot help but think of the early believers and the challenges they faced as they grew in their faith walk. This section provides a beautiful set of actions for the early church. These actions are in service to each other in such a way to inspire love and good works and hope.

Hope is defined as a “desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment.” For believers, hope is everything. It is not hope as in in *maybe* ... it is hope as in *belief in fulfillment!* It is our faith in One higher and greater. Our hope moves us to action. If we are to “hold unswervingly to the hope,” we must do it together! Therefore, let us ...!

James Culbreth

**Prayer**

May I be found faithful in my service to other believers. May I hold “unswervingly to the hope we profess,” so that I may encourage others to do likewise. Thank You for the body of believers You have given me to serve.

**Read Hebrews 10:24-25:**

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

**I Need You and You Need Me**

It's a question that sometimes perplexes kids when I ask them: "Can I worship God Sunday morning on the golf course?" I look at their faces and sense they are wrestling with what they've been taught—that we can worship our Heavenly Father anywhere—and where they know they should be on a Sunday morning—with their church family. In these past discussions, we've collectively come to the determination that we can, in fact, worship God anywhere, but that we shouldn't let that excuse us from regularly gathering with our fellow followers of Christ.

A rather unfortunate habit by some—forsaking this assembling together with other believers—must have crept into the faith life of the first century church. There may have been a variety of reasons for this, including persecution. The writer of Hebrews must have seen this dangerous pattern and wanted to warn his readers of such behavior. He knew, as we do, if we are honest with ourselves and heed the Word of God, we need each other more and more as we anticipate Jesus' return. We are encouraged and equipped to love and serve God and others better every time we gather for worship, learning, and fellowship.

David Eanes

**Prayer**

Father, remind me there are no "Lone Rangers" when it comes to the Christian walk. Help me never to take lightly the encouragement I both give and receive when I gather with my church family. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 12:1:**

*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,*

**On Your Mark, Get Set, Go!**

I love to run. When possible, I love for what I wear and carry when I run to be very minimal. As you can imagine, running wearing a heavy winter coat or carrying a CD boombox with large headphones would present a significant obstacle to my pace and endurance in a run. However, even little things like coins or car keys in my shorts pocket can be a tiny distraction that prevents me from achieving the desired results of a run.

The path you make in your daily walk following Jesus will not always be a smooth one. However, in this verse, the writer of Hebrews reminds you that there's certainly a part you can play in making sure you persevere in the spiritual race you run. Maybe there's an obvious sin entangling and weighing you down. Maybe something that's good is hindering you from striving for something even better. Ask for forgiveness and turn to God. Ask Him for wisdom with your priorities. He's marked out the race for you. Run it with perseverance. In addition to His help, you also have a "great cloud of witnesses" who've already run the race cheering you on. So, don't give up!

David Eanes

**Prayer**

God, help me identify the big and little things that keep me from following You with perseverance. Please forgive me and help me realign my priorities with Yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 12:2:**

*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

**Amazing Love**

It has been said that the most brutal execution is that of crucifixion. It includes the physical pain of large nails piercing the skin, ligaments, and bone. It includes asphyxiation as the body is unable to support itself and breathing becomes impossible. It also includes shame, since it was performed naked and in public. In crucifixion, there is no human decency left.

Jesus Christ was crucified in your place. Amazingly, He took your punishment of God's wrath upon Himself with the perspective of joy, knowing that through His death we could have peace with God, satisfying our debt. Because of Christ's suffering on our behalf, we must always look to Him. As the unblemished sacrifice, He has made our stance before God Almighty completely blameless and pure. "Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!" (Charles Wesley, 1739).

David Vaughan

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank You for suffering and dying for me. Thank You for taking my due penalty upon Yourself and making me right before God. Help me live daily in light of Your sacrifice on my behalf. May I walk humbly and joyful because of what You have done for me. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray, Amen.

**Read Hebrews 12:3:**

*Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

**Gazing upon Christ**

Runners look to the finish line. Quarterbacks picture the end zone. Salespersons contemplate the bonus. And Christians gaze upon Christ. He is the example, and He is the prize.

The author of Hebrews operates on the assumption that Christians have a tendency to lose heart. Satan deceives. Sin abounds. Creation suffers. Christ expects His people to be in the world but not of the world (Jn. 17:15-16). We watch, wait, and witness, until our victorious Savior comes again.

Jesus humbly came, providing purification for sins, but until He comes again to consummate His eternal kingdom, we remain in a sin-saturated world in need of faithful gospel witnesses. A world that opposed Jesus will oppose His people (Jn. 15:20). Thus, we gaze upon our Savior who endured sin, scorn, and shame for our sake, compelling us to live here for Him.

Chris Jones

**Prayer**

Jesus, You endured incomprehensible suffering for my sake. You endured ridicule and wrath to redeem me. You were faithful unto death, yet triumphant over death. Lead me to follow and praise You all the days of my life, that You might claim me as a faithful servant and witness of the gospel. Amen.

