

Hebrews 5-8 Sermon Illustrations

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Hebrews 5:7 Morning and evening : Daily readings (March 24 AM)

Did this fear arise from the infernal suggestion that he was utterly forsaken. There may be sterner trials than this, but surely it is one of the worst to be utterly forsaken? "See," said Satan, "thou hast a friend nowhere! Thy Father hath shut up the bowels of his compassion against thee. Not an angel in his courts will stretch out his hand to help thee. All heaven is alienated from thee; thou art left alone. See the companions with whom thou hast taken sweet counsel, what are they worth? Son of Mary, see there thy brother James, see there thy loved disciple John, and thy bold apostle Peter, how the cowards sleep when thou art in thy sufferings! Lo! Thou hast no friend left in heaven or earth. All hell is against thee. I have stirred up mine infernal den. I have sent my missives throughout all regions summoning every prince of darkness to set upon thee this night, and we will spare no arrows, we will use all our infernal might to overwhelm thee: and what wilt thou do, thou solitary one?" It may be, this was the temptation; we think it was, because the appearance of an angel unto him strengthening him removed that fear. He was heard in that he feared; he was no more alone, but heaven was with him. It may be that this is the reason of his coming three times to his disciples—as Hart puts it—

"Backwards and forwards thrice he ran,

As if he sought some help from man."

He would see for himself whether it were really true that all men had forsaken him; he found them all asleep; but perhaps he gained some faint comfort from the thought that they were sleeping, not from treachery, but from sorrow, the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak. At any rate, he was heard in that he feared. Jesus was heard in his deepest woe; my soul, thou shalt be heard also. (Spurgeon, C. H.)

Hebrews 5:8

Morning and evening : Daily readings (March 29 AM)

We are told that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, therefore we who are sinful, and who are far from being perfect, must not wonder if we are called to pass through suffering too. Shall the head be crowned with thorns, and shall the other members of the body be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Christ pass through seas of his own blood to win the crown, and are we to walk to heaven dryshod in silver slippers? No, our Master's experience teaches us that suffering is necessary, and the true-born child of God must not, would not, escape it if he might. But there is one very comforting thought in the fact of Christ's "being made perfect through suffering"—it is, that he can have complete sympathy with us. "He is not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." In this sympathy of Christ we find a sustaining power. One of the early martyrs said, "I can bear it all, for Jesus suffered, and he suffers in me now; he sympathizes with me, and this makes me strong." Believer, lay hold of this thought in all times of agony. Let the thought of Jesus strengthen you as you follow in his steps. Find a sweet support in his sympathy; and remember that, to suffer is an honourable thing—to suffer for Christ is glory. The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to do this. Just so far as the Lord shall give us grace to suffer for Christ, to suffer with Christ, just so far does he honour us. The jewels of a Christian are his afflictions. The regalia of the kings whom God hath anointed are their troubles, their sorrows, and their griefs. Let us not, therefore, shun being honoured. Let us not turn aside from being exalted. Griefs exalt us, and troubles lift us up. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (Spurgeon, C. H.)

Hebrews 5:8

The Upside Of Sorrow

Sorrow can be good for the soul. It can uncover hidden depths in ourselves and in God.

Sorrow causes us to think earnestly about ourselves. It makes us ponder our motives, our intentions, our interests. We get to know ourselves as never before.

Sorrow also helps us to see God as we've never seen Him. Job said, out of his terrible grief, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You" (Job 42:5).

Jesus, the perfect man, is described as "a man of sorrows," intimately acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3). It is hard to fathom, but even the incarnate Son of God learned and grew through the heartaches He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). As we think about His sorrow and His concern for our sorrow, we gain a better appreciation for what God is trying to accomplish in us through the grief we bear.

The author of Ecclesiastes wrote, "Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better" (7:3). Those who don't let sorrow do its work, who deny it, trivialize it, or try to explain it away, remain shallow and indifferent. They never understand themselves or others very well. In fact, I think that before God can use us very much, we must first learn to mourn. — David H. Roper

When God leads through valleys of trouble,

His omnipotent hand we can trace;

For the trials and sorrows He sends us

Are valuable lessons of grace. —Anon.

We can learn more from sorrow than from laughter.

Hebrews 5:8

Getting In Shape

A woman went to a diet center to lose weight. The director took her to a full-length mirror. On it he outlined a figure and told her, "This is what I want you to look like at the end of the program."

Days of intense dieting and exercise followed, and every week the woman would stand in front of the mirror, discouraged because her bulging outline didn't fit the director's ideal. But she kept at it, and finally one day she conformed to the image she longed for.

Putting ourselves next to Christ's perfect character reveals how "out of shape" we are. To be transformed into His image does not mean we attain sinless perfection; it means that we become complete and mature.

God often works through suffering to bring this about (James 1:2-4). Sometimes He uses the painful results of our sins. At other times, our difficulties may not be caused by a specific sin, yet we undergo the painful process of learning to obey our Father's will.

Are you hurting? Perhaps a shaping-up process is in progress. Jesus was perfect, yet He had to learn obedience through the things He suffered (Hebrews 5:8).

If you keep on trusting Jesus, you'll increasingly take on the image of His loveliness. —Dennis J. De Haan

God has a purpose in our heartache,

The Savior always knows what's best;

We learn so many precious lessons

In each sorrow, trial, and test. -Jarvis

The difficulties of life are to make us better-not bitter.

Hebrews 5:8-9

THE PERFECTING OF CHRIST

FOR THE long and steep ascent of life, our Father has given us a Companion, a Captain of the march, a Brother, even Jesus our Lord, who passed through the suffering of death, and is now crowned with glory and honour (Heb2:9-11). He has passed along our

pathway, and climbed our steep ascents, that He might become our merciful and faithful Friend and Helper. In this sense He was perfected, and became unto all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation.

As regards His Nature, it was impossible for Him to be otherwise than perfect. In Him all the fullness of the Divine Nature dwelt without let or hindrance. But since the children partook of flesh and blood, He also Himself partook of the same; it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren. To each of us He says: "I have trodden this path before Thee, and know every inch of the way." Christ is the Great-Heart, the Companion for all pilgrim souls.

But if we are to walk with Him, and realize His eternal salvation, we must learn to obey. This is the lesson taught to the scientist by Nature. He must be exact, minute, microscopic in his attention and obedience to details. If he should fail in one tiny point, his best-conceived plans and experiments must fail. Exact obedience is essential to the engineer. The slightest inadvertence will clog and stop the mightiest machine that human ingenuity ever invented. It is, however, in the spiritual sphere that disobedience brings the greatest and most momentous catastrophes. We must learn to obey, even in the dark! Not ours to make reply, or to question God's dealings. He withholds His reasons, but demands our obedience.

The strength to obey is God given. There appeared an angel from Heaven to strengthen Christ, and to each of us treading dark and hard paths, that angel comes still. But you never know the angel till you reach your Gethsemane. It is because our Lord learned these things by experience, that He is perfected to impart eternal salvation to every soul of man.

PRAYER - Eternal Saviour, who knowest each step of this difficult pathway of life, we come to Thee for Thy gracious help; enable us to obey Thy promptings, and in every hour of mortal weakness and fear stand beside us to be our very present help. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

Hebrews 5:9

Not Even Close!

A 33-year-old Frenchman was nailed to a cross in the patio of a plush hotel in the Dominican Republic as his "contribution to salvation and peace among mankind." He wanted to hang there for 3 days, but within 24 hours he was so weak that he was forced to give up his plan. Even before that, the cross had to be laid horizontally on the ground to alleviate his suffering. It was obvious to all that he couldn't continue to endure the terrible ordeal he had imposed on himself.

The failure of this man's "sacrifice" stands in striking contrast to the unique atoning work of the Lord Jesus, who truly became "the author of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9). The writer of Hebrews explained that Christ is our High Priest forever, interceding continually before God's throne on our behalf (7:25). As God in the flesh, He alone could become our substitute and offer Himself as a sacrifice for sins "once for all" (10:10). No other human being is able to take "this honor to himself" (5:4).

Throughout history, many have claimed to be the Messiah. But Jesus Christ is in a class by Himself—and He died on Calvary's cross for you. Have you trusted in the crucified and risen Savior? If not, do so today! —MRD II —Mart De Haan

Won't you accept this dear Savior?

For time is swift passing away;

There's no one to save you but Jesus,

There's no other way but His way. —Hunter

Only God's gift can erase man's guilt.

Hebrews 5:12

Spectator Risks

Even the weakest among us can participate in sports, but only the strongest can survive as spectators. According to a heart specialist, when you become a spectator rather than a participant, the wrong things go up and the wrong things come down. Body weight, blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol, and triglycerides go up. Vital capacity, oxygen consumption, flexibility, stamina, and strength go down.

Being an onlooker in the arena of Christian living is also risky. The wrong things go up, and the wrong things come down. Criticism, discouragement, disillusionment, and boredom go up. Sensitivity to sin and the needs of others, and receptivity to the Word of God go down. Sure, there's a certain amount of thrill and excitement in hearing someone's testimony about how God has worked. But it's nothing like knowing that joy yourself. There's no substitute for piling up your own experiences of faith, and using your own God-given abilities in behalf of others.

If we're to be maturing and growing stronger as followers of Jesus Christ, we need to venture out in faith—and that's risky. But remember, it's a far greater risk to be only a spectator.

—Mart De Haan

For Further Study

Read 2 Peter 1:5-7. What qualities should we be

developing? Also, read What Does It Take To Follow Christ?

God calls us to get into the game, not to keep the score

Hebrews 5:12-14

Word Hunger

I had just completed a night of Bible conference ministry in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and was chatting with some of the people who had attended. At the end of the line was a young man in his twenties. He shared with me that he had been a Christ-follower for only about 4 months, and he was eager to learn more of the teachings of the Bible. I referred him to the RBC Web site with the Discovery Series topics as one possible resource for his personal study.

The next night the young man returned to the conference and shared that he had stayed up until 3:30 reading and processing the biblical truths he discovered in that online resource. With a big smile on his face, he declared that he just couldn't get enough of God's Word (1 Peter 2:2).

What spiritual hunger! That excited young man is a reminder to us of the wonder of the Bible and its heart-enriching truths. It's all too easy for us to ignore God's Book in a world filled with voices screaming for our attention. But only in the Bible can we find God's wisdom for our struggles, God's answers for our questions, and God's truths for our understanding. These truths are worth hungering for. —Bill Crowder

For Further Study

If you're interested in digging deeper into the Bible, review the Discovery Series at www.discoveryseries.org. You'll find more than 150 topics.

Study the Bible to be wise; believe it to be safe; practice it to be holy.

Hebrews 5:13

Babies Need Weaning

I find few things more delectable than three or four of my wife's freshly baked chocolate-chip cookies, hot from the oven but cool enough to pick up and introduce to my longing taste buds. What really makes this treat complete is a large glass of ice-cold milk. That milk and those cookies are made for each other.

Now, I'm not considered a baby because I still drink milk. But if that's all I took in for nourishment, you would ask, and rightly so, "What's wrong? Shouldn't you have been on solid foods long ago?"

Transfer this scenario to our Christian lives, as the writer did in today's Scripture. There comes a point in our experience when we must move on from the basic salvation truths (Heb. 5:12)--not that we should ever lose our taste for them. Milk is always good and nourishing. We must never lose our appreciation for God's forgiveness and our new life in Christ.

God wants us to learn the Word through study, prayer, meditation, obedience, and testing. We must know spiritual principles so that we can apply them, speak with confidence about our faith, and stand up under adversity.

The milk of the Word will always taste good, but the Bible's solid food makes us strong. How's your diet? --DJD

The Bible is a pantry

Where I can always find

The food I need from day to day

For heart and soul and mind. --Anon.

Spiritual growth requires the meat of God's Word.

Hebrews 5:12-14

Grow Up!

When my children were infants, my wife and I gave them milk. As they grew older, we fed them soft food. They looked as happy as the plump babies pictured on the baby-food jars.

Our children are adults now. When they come to visit, my wife fixes them food like steak and potatoes. They've grown up.

Milk and baby food are great for babies. As they mature, however, they should go on to solid food. The same is true about spiritual growth.

Maturing as a Christian can also be compared to becoming a concert pianist. In a sense, you are a pianist from the moment you play your first simple piece. Yet it takes years of practice to play the piano well. You'll never be a concert pianist if you don't advance beyond the easy compositions.

The writer to the Hebrews was concerned about the lack of spiritual growth among his readers. He wrote, "By this time you ought to be teachers." Then he observed, "You have come to need milk and not solid food" (5:12). He urged them to "go on to perfection" in their faith (6:1).

Christians should move on to spiritual maturity. We must feast on the meat of God's Word and put into practice the lessons we have learned. It's the only way to grow up. —Haddon W. Robinson

More about Jesus let me learn,

More of His holy will discern;

Spirit of God, my teacher be,

Showing the things of Christ to me. --Hewitt

The new birth takes but a moment; spiritual maturity takes a lifetime.

Hebrews 5:14

A Rusty Mind

Leonardo da Vinci's contributions to art, science, and engineering establish him as one of the great geniuses in history. Whether it be designing a flying machine or painting the Mona Lisa, his mind was alive, observant, and creative. He is credited with making this comment about maintaining mental sharpness: "Iron rusts from disuse; stagnant water loses its purity; ... even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind."

It is also possible to become stagnant in our Christian life. This is what happened to the recipients of the book of Hebrews. The inspired author saw the symptoms and knew the cure. "Solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

The word exercised is from the Greek gymnasium and relates to our idea of a disciplined workout. The Christian life is to be one of growing in knowledge so that we learn to choose the right path. And we do that by looking into the Word of God.

Take a fresh look at the Bible and ask God for new insights on how it affects your relationship with Him and with others. Work at staying spiritually fit. —Dennis Fisher

Search the Scripture's precious store—

As a miner digs for ore,

Search, and you will surely find

Treasures to enrich your mind. —Anon.

Spiritual growth requires the solid food of God's Word.

Hebrews 5:14

Senses exercised

It is difficult to exaggerate the value of the physical senses. Take, for instance, that of scent. It is the means of exquisite enjoyment, conveying to us the perfume of garden or field; and it secures us against serious perils that lie in wait for our unwary footsteps. By the order of God's providence, hurtful substances exhale noxious and forbidding odours, by reason of which we are warned from going into their close proximity.

The soul also is endowed with senses. How important a part our spiritual senses may play in the regimen of the inner life! If we are quick to discern good and evil, we may welcome the one and avoid the other with ever-increasing readiness. We may receive the blessing of the one when still afar off, and avoid the curse of the other when only threatening us.

The army which is ill served by its scouts stands a much worse chance than if it were forewarned when an attack was advancing. The foremost ranks of the foe may be over the ramparts, and engaged in the heart of the fortress, before there has been time for preparation. Oh, to detect temptation, when still it is only a thought, a suggestion, a faint shadow on the sky!

We may sharpen our senses by use. When I was in the tea-trade, my sense of touch and taste and smell became acute to discern quite minute differences. We need a similar acuteness in discerning good and evil. May our hearts become most sensitive to all that might lead to temptation, so that we may deal with the tempter in the very earliest suggestions of evil. Lord, make us quick of scent in the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:3, r.v.). (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

Hebrews 5:14

No Fast Food In The Bible

I love the sight of cows lying in the field, chewing their cud. But what is cud? And why do they spend so much time chewing it?

Cows first fill their stomachs with grass and other food. Then they settle down for a good long chew. They bring the food back up from their stomachs and rework what they've already eaten, assimilating its goodness and transforming it into rich creamy milk. Time-consuming? Yes. A waste of time? Not if they want to give good milk.

The phrase "chewing the cud" is used to describe the process of meditation. The writer of Psalm 119 obviously did a lot of mental chewing as he read God's Word. No fast food for him! If we follow his example of careful and prayerful Scripture reading, we will:

Be strengthened against sin (v.11).

Find delight in learning more about God (vv.15-16).

Discover wonderful spiritual truths (v.18).

Find wise counsel for daily living (v.24).

Meditation is more than reading the Bible and believing it. It's applying Scripture to everyday life.

God's Word is not meant to be fast food. Take time for a good long chew. —Joanie Yoder

Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,

As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;

Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord;

My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word. —Lathbury

To be a healthy Christian, don't treat the Bible as snack food.

Hebrews 5:14

Are You Sensitive to the Little Things?

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

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

It's not always easy to know when God is speaking, because inner urgings may arise from fear, selfish desire, or Satan. Yet if we

learn biblical principles through reading the Word, and if we daily yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, we will gradually come to recognize His gentle prompting. The writer of Hebrews said that mature believers have had their senses "exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb 5:14). Whatever exalts Christ over self comes from God, and we can obey with confidence. But whatever is unkind, unloving, and self-seeking grieves the Spirit. When we do something like this, we must confess our disobedience to God at once to restore our fellowship with Him.

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

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

Hebrews 6:4

Trampling Underfoot

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

Hebrews 6:8

It is impossible to renew again to repentance, the while... (r.v., marg.)

The writer of this Epistle is eager to lead his readers from first principles to that strong ineat which was befitting for those of mature growth; and, as he proceeds to do so, it was as though he were arrested by a sudden thought of some who had recently fallen away from the faith.

In the awful stress of trial which accompanied the fall of Jerusalem, the Hebrew Christians, who were still dwelling in Palestine, were strongly tempted to apostatise. Some, indeed, had done so. But can we really consider that they ever were true Christians? They went out, because they had never been truly of. They had been enlightened as to the doctrines of Christianity; but the enlightenment had been of their head rather than of their heart. They had tasted of the heavenly hopes, anticipations, and joys of the Gospel message, without really belonging to the Household of Faith. But, notwithstanding all, they had gone back.

It is impossible to renew such to repentance, whilst they go on living as they do, crucifying the Son of God by their vicious and cowardly course of action, and putting Him to an open shame. Notice that whilst, suggested by Bishop Westcott, of the margin of the r.v. It is the solution of the great difficulty which has perplexed many timid souls. The impossibility of renewal is only for those who persist in their evil ways. Abandon your sins, and God will restore you to your old place.

It cannot be too clearly emphasized that this text does not say that backsliders cannot be restored to the favor and forgiveness of God; but that they cannot be restored so long as they cling to the things which had been the sources of their declension. (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

Hebrews 6:10

The Best Retirement Plan

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrews 6:12

Instant Nothing

In a lighthearted Time magazine essay, Sarah Vowell tells that she signed up for a 3-hour, \$39 course called "Instant Piano for Hopelessly Busy People." Regretting that she didn't stick with music lessons as a child, she made it her goal to learn to play one piece by memory. What she found was that even this seemingly simple task required hours of practice. There is no such thing as "instant" piano. But as she continued to practice, a recognizable melody began to emerge from her fingers.

Her experience is a good reminder that though we often desire immediate results in our walk of faith, this too is a matter of patient practice. The writer of Hebrews encouraged Christians to be spiritually diligent throughout their lives. He urged them not to become sluggish but to "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:12).

Our efforts do not make God's promises come true. But like Abraham, who patiently endured, we focus on the power and integrity of the living God, whose promises give us hope. "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul" (v.19).

Since there are no instant results, let's keep practicing the Lord's instructions as we walk patiently by faith toward the fulfillment of all He has promised. —DCM —David C. McCasland

We run with patience day by day,

By drawing strength from Christ our Lord;

And if we falter by the way,

He will renew us through His Word. —D. De Haan

We conquer by continuing.

Hebrews 6:13-20

ABSOLUTELY TRUSTWORTHY

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

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

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

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

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

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,

When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,

By the living Word of God I shall prevail,

Standing on the promises of God.--Carter

Trusting God's faithfulness dispels our fearfulness.

Hebrews 6:12

The Treasure Chest

When I was a young girl, my mother often let me rummage through her button box as I recovered from an illness. It always cheered

me to come across old, familiar buttons and remember the garments they once adorned. I especially liked it when she picked out an old, overlooked button and used it again.

Similarly, I often leaf through my Bible during distressing times and recall familiar promises that have strengthened me. But I'm always encouraged to find help from promises I've never noticed before.

I remember one dark morning during my husband's terminal illness when I was looking for a word from God to sustain me in our painful circumstances. In Hebrews 11, I noted that God had rescued His suffering people in some very dramatic ways. Yet I couldn't always identify with their particular situations. Then I read about some who "out of weakness were made strong" (v.34). God used that phrase to assure me that I too could be made strong in my weakness. At that very moment I began sensing His strength, and my faith was renewed.

Are you being tested today? Remember, there are many promises in the Bible, God's treasure chest. Generations have proven them true, and so can you. —Joanie Yoder

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,

When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,

By the living word of God I shall prevail,

Standing on the promises of God. —Carter

God's promises are treasures waiting to be discovered

Hebrews 6:18

Laying Hold of the Hope

An example of "hope set before" a believer -- in 1934, when twenty-eight-year-old John Stam, missionary to China, was being led away to execution by the communists with his wife Betty, someone on the road asked, "Where are you going?" John laid hold on the hope set before him and said, "We are going to heaven."

Hebrews 6:18-19

THE GOD OF HOPE

WE ALL need to abound in Hope. Hope is the artist of the soul.

Faith fills us with joy and peace, which brim over in Hope. When Faith brings from God's Word the Materials of anticipation and expectation, Hope transfers the fair colours to her palette, and with a few deft dashes of her brush delineates the soul's immortal and unfading hope. Faith thus excites Hope to do her fairest work, until presently the walls of our soul become radiant with frescoes. Our faith rests on God's Word, and hope rests on faith, and such hope cannot be ashamed. It is the anchor of the soul, which enters that which is within the veil, and links us to the shores of eternity (Hebrews 6:18-19).

Faith rests on the promises of God. She does not calculate on feeling, is indifferent to emotion, but with both hands clings to some word of promise, and looking into God's face, says; "Thou canst not be unfaithful." When God has promised aught to thee, it is as certain as if thou hadst it in hand. Faith not only takes the Word of God, and rests her weight on it, but often when hard-pressed goes beyond the Bible back to God Himself, and argues that God is faithful and cannot deny Himself. Because God is God, He must ever act worthily of Himself.

It was thus that Moses argued, when he was with Him in the Holy Mount into do thus, would not be worthy of Thyself! (Num14:13-20). We may be assailed with a hundred questions of doubt in the day, but must no more notice them than a barking cur. A business man once said that when he is convinced of the rightness of a certain course, he is sometimes assailed by doubts which arise like the cloud-mist of the valley, or the marsh gas from the swamp; but when thus tempted, he turns to the promises of God, often reading three or four chapters of the Old Testament. This brings him in touch with the eternal world, filling him with joy and peace and abounding hope in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghost. They shall not be ashamed that hope in Him!

PRAYER - Make me, O Lord, to know the Hope of Thy calling, the riches of the glory of Thine inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of Thy power towards them that believe. Above all, grant me the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Thyself AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

Hebrews 6:19

Such A Hope

Two women. One a former co-worker I had known for 20 years. The other, the wife of a former student from my days as a school teacher. Both dedicated moms of two young children. Both missionaries. Both incredibly in love with Jesus Christ.

Then suddenly, within the space of a month—both were dead. The first, Sharon Fasick, died in a car accident, attracting little attention though deeply affecting family and friends. The second, Roni Bowers, died with her daughter Charity when their plane was shot down over the jungles of Peru—a situation that thrust her story into the international spotlight.

Their deaths filled many people with inexpressible sorrow. But there was something else—hope. Both women's husbands had the confident expectation that they would see their wives again in heaven. What happened after they died demonstrates that the Christian faith works. Both men, Jeff Fasick and Jim Bowers, have spoken about the peace God has given them. They have testified that this kind of hope has allowed them to continue on in the midst of the unspeakable pain.

Paul said that our present sufferings "are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed" (Romans 8:18). Such a hope comes only from Christ. —Dave Branon

When peace like a river attendeth my way,

When sorrows like sea billows roll;

Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,

"It is well, it is well with my soul." —Spafford

The hope of heaven is God's solution for sorrow

Hebrews 6:19

The president of Gordon College, R. Judson Carlberg, was driving along the ocean near his home in Massachusetts when he saw two stately 17th-century sailing ships. They were replicas that were built for a movie being filmed nearby.

"The breeze was stiff," Carlberg reported, "straining the rigging and the crews. Yet each ship stayed the course and didn't capsize." He explained the secret of their stability. "Beneath the waterline each had a deep, heavy keel—a part you don't see." The keel was essential for keeping the vessel steady in rough weather. What is it that holds us steady when fierce winds are blowing across life's sea? What keeps us from capsizing when we are under stress and tension? What enables us to sail on, despite the strain? It's the stabilizing keel of faith in our sovereign God. It's our unseen relationship with Christ. As He commanded the wind and the waves on the Sea of Galilee, He also controls the storms and squalls of life that threaten to sink us or drive us off course. Our faith in Christ is an "anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:19) that can keep us from ultimate shipwreck. Do you have that unseen keel of faith? --VCG

We have an anchor that keeps the soul

Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,

Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,

Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love. --Owens

Faith in Christ will keep us steady in the stormy sea of change.

Hebrews 6:19

The Son Will Shine Again

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

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

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

a "living hope," founded on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3).

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

It is always darkest just before dawn.

Hebrews 6:19-20

A Fortified House

According to an article in The Wall Street Journal, some people in the US are building houses stronger than ever before.

Hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes have caused billions of dollars in property damage in states across the nation. So, at the urging of businesses, government, and hard-pressed insurance companies, some builders are constructing fortress-like homes with windows that can withstand 130 mile-per-hour winds, roof nails so strong they can only be cut off, and framing material that can weather the tremendous forces faced by a supersonic jet. In Bolingbrook, Illinois, a community damaged by a tornado in the 1990s, a company is constructing such a "fortified" house in hopes that the idea will catch on.

We who know the Lord Jesus realize that when it comes to building our spiritual foundation, it must be strong and secure. In today's Scripture, Christ made it clear what that foundation must be when He referred to "these sayings of Mine" (Matt. 7:24), which included His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7).

When we receive by faith Christ's words and His work on our behalf, our spiritual lives are "founded on the Rock," Christ Jesus. —David C. Egner

I do not stand on shifting sand

And fear the storm that rages;

But calm and sure, I stand secure

Upon the Rock of Ages. —Anon.

To survive the storms of life, be anchored to the Rock of Ages

Hebrews 6:19-20

THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

At the southern tip of Africa, a cape jutting out into the ocean once caused sailors great anxiety. Many who attempted to sail around it were lost in the swirling seas. Because adverse weather conditions so often prevailed there, the region was named

the Cape of Storms. A Portuguese captain determined to find a safe route through those treacherous waters so his countrymen could reach Cathay and the riches of the East Indies in safety. He succeeded, and the area was renamed the Cape of Good Hope.

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

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

Think of just crossing a river,

Stepping out safe on that shore,

Sadness and suffering over,

Dwelling with Christ evermore! Anon

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

Hebrews 7:16

After the power of an indissoluble life

This chapter is a veritable Psalm of Life. It overflows with the message of the Easter morning. Throughout its verses it is witnessed that He liveth; that He ever liveth; that He liveth after the power of an indissoluble life.

Remember all that was done to dissolve and loose it. Satan spoke to his chief captains, Sepulcher and Corruption, and bade them hold his Prisoner fast. The Sanhedrim affixed their seal, set the watch, and made the grave as secure as possible. But it was all in vain. His body could not see corruption. His life defied death. All through the Greek mythology there is the wail of infinite sorrow. Laocoon and his sons strangled by the folds of the mighty serpent: day always mastered by night: the year with its wealth of life descending to the abyss. Strive as man might, he would be mastered at last, and primeval night reign once more. But all this is altered in Jesus. He is Priest after the power of an indissoluble life.

And, what is more, that life may be communicated to us by the Holy Spirit. It is not only true that He ever liveth; but also that because He lives, and as He lives, we shall live also. In the first creation God breathed into Adam the breath of his life, and he became a living soul; but in the second creation Christ breathes into us the spirit of his life, and our spirit is filled with a property which it had not previously, and in which the sons of men have no share. "The first man Adam became a living soul, The last Adam became a life giving spirit." "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." See to it that you deny your own life, so that his life may become evermore regnant within you. (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily).

Hebrews 7:25

Christ's Unfinished Work

We often hear of the salvation Christ provided at Calvary when He died for our sins. But little is said of His continuing ministry of prayer for our spiritual growth. Just as Jesus prayed for Peter in a time of severe temptation (Luke 22:31-32), so also He intercedes before the Father's throne on our behalf. This vital work of the Savior will go on as long as we are in need of His help, comfort, and blessing.

Robert Murray McCheyne, the beloved Scottish minister of the 19th century, wrote, "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet the distance makes no difference. He is praying for me!"

During a deep personal crisis, I realized the truth of Hebrews 7 in a new and wonderful way. Satan seemed to be attacking me on every side. So I asked the Lord to plead for me. The next day the problem was solved, and I knew it was the Lord's special intervention. Never before had I been so conscious of the Savior's high-priestly ministry (Heb 8:1).

If you are having great difficulty, tell Jesus about it. He will present your needs to the Father. Through His intercessory work, you'll experience the remarkable results that only His prayers can accomplish.—Henry G. Bosch

In the hour of trial, Jesus, plead for me,

Lest, by base denial, I depart from Thee;

When Thou seest me waver, with a look recall;

Nor for fear or favor suffer me to fall. —Montgomery

Satan is powerless against the power of Christ's prayer

Hebrews 7:25

UTTERMOST SALVATION

THE ATTRACTION of the Divine Nature. We draw near because we are drawn. As the sun is ever exerting a drawing power on each planet and each particle of stardust in the solar system, so God is ever attracting us to Himself. To all eternity we shall be ever drawing nearer to Him, though there will be ever an infinite distance to traverse. When Jesus was lifted up on the Cross He began to draw all men unto Himself, and that magnetic attraction has continued through the centuries.

There is no reason for us to be afraid of God. He is Love! He is a consuming fire to our sin, but His Nature is essentially lovely. Moses exceedingly feared when he ascended Sinai, amid the trembling of the mountain and the heavy clouds that enclosed the Divine Light. But, as we learn from the 12th chapter of this Epistle, when we approach to God, we encounter three circles. The innumerable Hosts of Angels, including the Cherubim and SeraPhim, with their burning love and purity! The Church of the First-born, the purest and noblest of elect spirits! The Spirits of the Just made perfect, inclusive of our own beloved ones that have passed over. Surely where these are, we may venture without fear. The God in whom they live and move and have their being

cannot be other than infinitely beautiful to know and love. Lord, Thou hast been the dwelling-place of all generations, and Thy secret place shall be our home for ever. "Draw us, and we will run after Thee!"

Our fears are met by the Risen and Living Saviour. First, He will ever live to make intercession for us; but next He will go on sanctifying us lower down, even to the uttermost. To the depths of our nature, He will carry His gracious work. Salvation has three stages. It begins with deliverance from the penalty of the past. Our sins are blotted out. The penalty is remitted or turned to benediction. Then we are saved lower down. The process of purification goes deeper and deeper into our nature. Finally, our body is renewed through the resurrection-grace of Christ. And surely there is a sense in which the grace of Christ will ever sink deeper, giving us a profounder realisation and participation in the things that will open before us in the eternal progress. Here we see in a glass darkly, there face to face. Here we know in part, there we shall develop in the knowledge and love of God. Salvation to the uttermost!

PRAYER - I draw near to Thee, Almighty and Ever-living God, in the Name of Jesus Christ, my High Priest and Mediator, who hath passed into the heavens, where He ever liveth to make intercession for sinners. Forgive and accept me for His sake. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

Hebrews 7:25

Robert Murray McCheyne (1813–1843), pioneer missionary to America, testified,

"If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me!"

Hebrews 7:25

OUR FULLTIME INTERCESSOR

It was dawn, and I was painfully aware of being only a few weeks into widowhood. After another restless night, I felt too weary to pray for myself. "Lord," I sighed, "I need someone to pray for me right now."

Almost instantly God's Spirit comforted my distraught mind with the words of today's text, reminding me that Jesus was praying for me that very moment. With a wave of relief, I acknowledged Him as my lifelong intercessor. I will never forget how that bleak

morning became gold-tinged with hope. Since then, I have drawn courage and strength countless times from my faithful High Priest.

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

We too can draw courage and strength from Jesus. He is our priestly representative before God the Father.

Are difficult circumstances creating fear in your heart? By all means, ask others to pray for you. But don't forget to count on the prayers of Jesus Himself. By faith, hear Him praying around the clock for you, as if He were in the next room.-- Joanie E. Yoder

I have an Advocate above,

And though I cannot see

His face, I know His heart is love

And that He pleads for me.-- Tydeman

Earth has no sorrow that Heaven does not feel

Hebrews 8:1-6; 9:11-15

A Better Way

We are always looking for better ways to do things. We have faster computers, more efficient cars, and better-sounding compact disc players--vast improvements over the abacus, the Model-T, and the Victrola.

God is the originator of the better way. The author of Hebrews said that animal sacrifices were only a "shadow of the heavenly things" of which Christ and His death on the cross are the reality (8:5; 9:11-15).

Before Jesus came, people waited for the annual Day of Atonement, when the high priest entered the Most Holy Place. The Jews call this special day Yom Kippur. In that awe-inspiring place where the ark of the covenant was located, the High Priest offered the blood of animals on behalf of himself and the Israelites.

When Jesus Christ came to earth, something better was revealed. He Himself became our High Priest by sacrificing His life and shedding His blood to atone for our sins. Now, when we accept His gift of forgiveness, we can rejoice that the penalty of our sins has been paid and our guilt removed.

Salvation through Messiah Jesus is the only way we can be forgiven and have fellowship with God. Have you found this better way?
--JDB

Oh, precious is the flow

That makes me white as snow;

No other fount I know,

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. --Lowry

Christ's sacrifice is exactly what God desired and our sin required.

Hebrews 8:6

JESUS, THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT

THIS IS called the Better Covenant. There are no ifs; no injunctions of "observe to do"; no conditions of obedience to be fulfilled. From first to last it consists of the I Wills of the Most High.

I will put my laws into their minds, refers to the intellectual faculty, which thinks, remembers, and reasons.

I will write them upon their hearts, the seat of the emotional life and affections. What a man loves, he is pretty certain to follow and obey. "A little lower," said the dying veteran, as they probed for the bullet, "and you will find the Emperor." So with the Christian who has been taken into the Covenant with God, the law is inscribed on the deepest affections of his being. He obeys because he loves.

I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people. This last clause is even better than the first, because it implies the keeping power of God. If we are to be a people for His peculiar possession, it can only result from the operation of His gracious Spirit, who keeps us, as the sun restrains the planets from becoming wandering stars.

All shall know Me. Oh, wonder of wonders. Can it be? To know God! To know Him as Abraham did, to whom He told His secrets; as Moses did, who conversed with Him face to face; or as the Apostle John did when he beheld Him in the visions of the Apocalypse. And that this privilege should be within the reach of the least!

I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more. As a score is forgotten when blotted from a slate, so shall sin be obliterated from the memory of God. It will be forgotten as a debt paid years ago.

Do you ask how God can call this a covenant, in which there is no second covenanting party? The answer is easy: Jesus Christ has stood in our stead, and has not only negotiated this covenant, but has fulfilled in our name, and on our behalf, all the conditions which were necessary and fight. He has become our Sponsor and Surety, so God is able to enter into these liberal terms with us, if we will identify ourselves with Him by a living faith. This is the new and better covenant.

PRAYER - Holy Father! I claim from Thee the fulfilment of Thy Covenant Promise, that Thou shouldst write Thy law upon my heart, and remember my sins and iniquities no more. May I hear Thee say: "Thy faith hath saved thee; Go, and sin no more!" AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

Hebrews 8:12

Does God Forget?

God longs to forgive sinners! But in the minds of many people, this thought seems too good to be true. Countless sermons have been preached to convince guilt-ridden individuals that it is true. Many of these sermons emphasize that God not only forgives the sinner but also forgets the sin. I've often said it myself, never doubting its soundness.

Then one Sunday I heard a sermon that revolutionized my thinking. The speaker caught my attention when he said, "The idea that God forgets my sins isn't very reassuring to me. After all, what if He suddenly remembered? In any case, only imperfection can forget, and God is perfect."

As I was questioning the biblical basis for such statements, the pastor read Hebrews 8:12, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Then he said, "God doesn't say He'll forget our sins—He says He'll remember them no more! His promise not

to remember them ever again is stronger than saying He'll forget them. Now that reassures me!"

Do you worry that there are certain sins you'll be punished for someday? Because Christ died for all our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), God promises to forgive us and never bring up our sin again (Ps. 103:12). —Joanie Yoder

God, whose every way is perfect,

Said in justice and in grace

That our sins He'll not remember,

And our fears He will erase. —Hess

To enjoy the future, accept God's forgiveness for the past

Hebrews 8:13

In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old.

There had been a manifest decay and vanishing away of the first Tabernacle or Temple with its rites and services. At the time when these words were written there were evident symptoms of the approaching collapse of the whole system of which pious Jews had been wont to boast. But the Holy Spirit reassures their failing hearts.

It is well, He seems to say, that these should vanish from the earth; that men may be certified that the old covenant, of which they were the sign and seal, has also gone — gone never to be recalled. Thereupon, the very natural inquiry was suggested If the old covenant has decayed and vanished away, what is the agreement or arrangement under which we are living now? To this inquiry the present chapter is an answer.

Those who believe in Christ are still in covenant relationship with God. A new covenant has been set up, which indeed is as old as the everlasting hills. It is the covenant of love; the covenant which says very little of what man does, and much of the I wills of Jehovah; a covenant which was entered into between God and his Son, standing as Mediator; a covenant which has been sealed with priceless blood.

The provisions of that covenant are enumerated in the foregoing verses: that God will engrave his law on mind and heart, and take us to be his people and be our God, and remember our sins no more. As the decay of the symbols of the Old Testament indicated that it was vanishing, so the ever-fresh beauty of the supper of our Lord, as it was practised in the first Church, witnessed to the permanence of the New Testament. (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)