

Hebrews 9-10 Sermon Illustrations

HEBREWS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS OUR DAILY BREAD, et. al.

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Hebrews 9:2 Knowing the Rules

May 15, 2013

Last week was not exactly the finest hour for several umpires in Major League Baseball. One game's outcome was wrongly determined because a home run was ruled to not be a home run—even after it was checked on video replay. Even worse, later in the week, one manager was able to effectively convince the umpires that the rules were what he said—not what the rulebook says. In that case, it didn't affect the outcome of the game, but in another sense it was worse. The men in blue, charged with administering the rules of the game, didn't know the rules of the game. That opens the door for chaos. It is absolutely vital that the game is played according to the rules, or else the results don't mean anything at all.

In the garden of Eden, our first parents were given what, on the face of it, would seem to be one simple rule. Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They knew the rules, that is, until our spiritual enemy convinced them that the rules were what he said and not what the Creator had established. The result? Chaos.

Our first parents broke that rule and plunged humanity into the mess we continue to find ourselves in today. But, because we could not rescue ourselves, God the Father sent His Son, Jesus. Jesus obeyed the rules perfectly, for the Bible tells us: "We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

"Yet without sin" is the beginning of the story of humanity's rescue. But it is not the ending. The One who perfectly played by the rules then took the punishment for all of us who have failed to keep the rules. He took our punishment and cleared the record of our wrongs by giving Himself on the cross for us: "He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:2).

Think of that—Jesus did not come to administer the rules but to keep them and put away the sin of our failures, faults, and wrongdoings. By accepting His sacrifice on our behalf and putting our trust in Him, we get a new start at life—and the rules have already been kept by the One who has rescued us.

Bill Crowder, Sports Spectrum Chaplain

Hebrews 9:11-12 There When You Need It

When I donated blood some time ago, a nurse gave me a card to read while a pint of the vital red fluid was flowing out of my vein. The card showed the percentages of people who have different blood types. Here are some of them:

O-Positive 37.4%

A-Positive 35.7%

A-Negative 6.3%

B-Negative 1.5%

The rarest, AB-Negative, is found in only 1 in 167 people, or 0.6% of the population. Then the card made this eye-catching statement: "The rarest blood type is the one that's not there when you need it."

There is another supply of blood that is one of a kind and always available to those who ask for it. First John 1:7 states, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

It was the death of Christ—the shedding of His blood— that satisfied the demand of a holy God as payment for our sins (Hebrews 9:12,22). So now, whenever a person cries out in faith to God, repenting of his sin and pleading for forgiveness, his prayer for salvation is answered.

I am deeply grateful that Jesus was willing to die on the cross, giving His blood for me, so that forgiveness was available when I needed it. Aren't you? —David C. Egner

Sufficient is the blood of Christ

To cleanse us from all sin,

But daily we must claim its power

To keep us pure within. —D. De Haan

Jesus takes our sin and gives us His salvation.

Hebrews 9:11 Just The Right Time

Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come. —Hebrews 9:11

Read: Hebrews 9:11-22 | Bible in a Year: Micah 4-5; Revelation 12

The conductor stood on the podium, his eyes scanning the choir and orchestra. The singers arranged the music in their folders, found a comfortable position for standing, and held the folder where they could see the conductor just over the top. Orchestra members positioned their music on the stand, found a comfortable position in their seats, and then sat still. The conductor waited and watched until everyone was ready. Then, with a downbeat of his baton, the sounds of Handel's "Overture to Messiah" filled the cathedral.

With the sound swirling around me, I felt I was immersed in Christmas—when God, at just the right moment, signaled the downbeat and set in motion an overture that started with the birth of the Messiah, the "High Priest of the good things to come" (Heb. 9:11).

Every Christmas, as we celebrate Christ's first coming with glorious music, I'm reminded that God's people, like choir and orchestra members, are getting ready for the next downbeat of the conductor when Christ will come again. On that day, we will participate with Him in the final movement of God's symphony of redemption—making all things new (Rev. 21:5). In anticipation, we need to keep our eyes on the conductor and make sure we are ready.

Sound the soul-inspiring anthem,

Angel hosts, your harps attune;

Earth's long night is almost over,

Christ is coming—coming soon! —Macomber

The advent of Christ celebrates His birth and anticipates His return.

Hebrews 9:11-28

"Blood Red"

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14).

Having trusted Christ as our Savior, we should never cease to glory in His sacrifice for us on the cross. The reality of being identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection should fill us with gratitude in the morning, give us refuge throughout the day, and be a pillow at night upon which to rest.

A small detachment of British troops, surprised by an overwhelming enemy force, fell back under heavy fire. Their wounded lay in a perilous position, facing certain death. They all realized they had to come immediately under the protection of a Red Cross flag if they wanted to survive. All they had was a piece of white cloth, but no red paint. So they used the blood from their wounds to make a large cross on that white cloth. Their attackers respected that grim flag as it was held aloft, and the British wounded were brought

to safety (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, The Great Boer War).

Our enemy not only must respect the blood of Christ shed on Calvary's cross, he also is helpless against it. Christ's blood represents the sacrifice of One whose death removed the guilt and condemnation of our sin and broke its hold over us. It is absolute protection against the accusation of Satan, the defeating remembrances of past sins, and the downpull of our Adamic nature. No wonder we glory in the cross.—D.J.D.

Calvary stands for Satan's fall.

Hebrews 9:12

"Tired Blood"

but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place - Hebrews 9:12

God requires a blood sacrifice. From the time sin entered the world this has been true. He Himself slew the innocent animal, shedding the blood to clothe the sinful pair in the garden of Eden. Abel was accepted because he brought the offering God required: the firstling of the flock, a blood sacrifice. All of these were but promissory notes anticipating the Lamb of God whose blood was to be shed, providing the "one sacrifice for sins forever." Only His blood could atone for sin.

A friend facetiously sent us a card reading, "The Blood Donors Association wishes to inform you that no donation will be necessary because you have tired blood." This is true of Adam's family; we have not only tired but tainted blood, for "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

An unblemished sacrifice was essential in paying the price of man's redemption. Only the spotless Lamb, God's well-beloved Son, could atone by shedding His blood. The poet expressed it so well: "Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away the stain. But Christ the Heavenly Lamb takes all our sins away; a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they." Not the "tired blood" of a sinful man or animal, but the precious blood of the Heaven-sent Sacrifice makes possible the removal of our sins.

Let us not forget it: "Without shedding of blood is no remission," and it is "the blood that maketh atonement for the soul." God is satisfied with His Son's offering. Nothing more is required.

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? — Hoffman

God spells salvation with five letters: B-L-O-O-D

Hebrews 9:14

Cleaning Out The Files

A certain businessman was notorious for saving almost everything that came across his desk—especially correspondence. Consequently, the files in his office were bulging. One day his secretary asked if she might dispose of all the old, useless material. The man was reluctant, but finally said, "Well, all right, but be sure you make a copy of everything before you throw it away."

That's the way some Christians handle their sins. They know that Jesus paid the penalty, but somehow they can't let go of the guilt. It's as if Christ's suffering were not enough, and they must contribute some of their own anguish by continually lamenting their failures. They want to keep copies of everything they've done. How foolish!

The apostle Paul wanted nothing of this. He accepted as an accomplished fact the removal of all his guilt before God because Christ's death had marked PAID IN FULL over his account. The memory of earlier days remained vivid, but it didn't weigh him down.

Everything that happens to us is retained in that remarkable filing system called "memory." A wise forgetfulness based on Christ's atoning sacrifice can keep all guilt feelings from cluttering up our life. —Dennis J. De Haan

The Lord forgives our sins because of Calvary,

And He Himself remembers them no more;

So let us not be burdened with their memory,

But look ahead to all He has in store. —Hess

Guilt is a burden God never intended His children to bear.

Hebrews 9:14

THE TIMELESS CROSS

WHAT IS the meaning of that great word eternal? Too often it is employed as though it were synonymous with everlasting. But the two words stand for two very different things. Everlasting conveys the idea of the duration of time; whereas eternal stands for the quality and character of the existence referred to, which is absolutely timeless. The eternal is that which is not measured by duration, which has no succession of years, which cannot be described as past or future. It is the dateless present, and can only be used, therefore, of God, the AIM, because He lives in the eternal now. He never was and never will be anything that He is not at this present moment, and only that which partakes of His Being can be termed eternal.

When, therefore, we are told that our Lord offered Himself to God through the Eternal Spirit, we must believe that in the Cross there was this element of Timelessness. Our Lord was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world (Rev13:8). The Cross of Christ has been contemporaneous with all the generations of mankind, and it is this attribute of Timelessness which gives the Cross its perennial power. There is a sense in which Christ is always being wounded by our transgressions, bruised by our iniquities, chastised for our peace, and bearing the stripes that procure our healing.

The Cross of Christ stands with open arms to welcome every sinful soul. The nails are not rusted or blunted by the years that have passed since they were driven into the flesh of Christ our Lord. And as we humble ourselves, and submit our proud and selfish soul-life to be nailed with Him to the Cross, in the power of the Eternal Spirit, out of suffering comes life to those to whom we minister, as we serve the Living God, and we can say with the Apostle: "Death worketh in us, but life in you." (2Co4:10-12).

PRAYER - We bless Thee, Lord Jesus, that Thou didst not withhold Thyself from the Cross. Enable us by the Eternal Spirit to surrender our life to Calvary, that Thy risen life may become manifest in our mortal flesh. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

Hebrews 9:15

A Good Will

Perhaps you know someone who didn't receive the inheritance intended by a parent because of a faulty will. In an article titled "Money & The Law," attorney Jim Flynn says that if you want your estate to go to your chosen recipients instead of to members of the legal profession, you should avoid do-it-yourself wills. Such documents are usually legal but they are often unclear and fail to make provisions for unforeseen situations. Flynn advises having a formal will to be sure your wishes are carried out.

Man-made wills can fail, but there is no ambiguous language about the inheritance God has in store for us. The apostle Peter affirmed that God "has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

No fluctuation in the economy can reduce this inheritance. It is not subject to review by the courts nor to debate by squabbling families. No amount of suffering or trials can diminish or change what God has in store for us. Our inheritance is certain and eternal (Hebrews 9:15). And as we live for Him, we are assured that His will for our lives today is "good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

—David C. McCasland

Why do we live like paupers,

When riches we possess?

We have become joint heirs with Christ

With blessings measureless. —Sper

The Christian's inheritance is guaranteed forever!

Hebrews 9:16

His Will Is Valid

A street evangelist in Edinburgh by the name of Robby Flockheart often spoke about Jesus as the Savior who died but who also lives. He would illustrate from personal experience the necessity of stressing both of these truths. He said that when he was called to serve in the army, he became friends with a man who was later condemned to die. The prisoner called for Robby and in his

presence made out his will, leaving him what little money ye had. But on the day of his scheduled execution, the man was pardoned. Recounting the circumstances, Robby said, "He lived, but I lost my legacy. A testament is not in force while the testator lives. Well, another time a person left me a small legacy, and I did not get it either, because some rogue of a lawyer came along and I never saw a penny of it. I used to say, "If the man who left the will had been alive, he would have made sure his old friend Robby got his money.' But being dead, he had no power to see his will carried out."

Jesus, the great testator of the new covenant, did die; there is no question about that. Therefore, the will, certified by His precious blood, is valid. He has secured eternal redemption for us through His atoning death. But the Savior did not remain in the grave. After 3 days He arose, and today He lives to make sure that His will is fully carried out. His life ensures that every blessing promised by the New Testament will be given to everyone who trusts the Savior.

Thank God, the will is valid and our priceless inheritance is guaranteed! - P.R.V.

Hebrews 9:16

No Lost Legacy

For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:16).

Robby Flockheart, a street evangelist in Edinburgh, often told two stories to stress the importance of two truths—that Jesus died but also lives. In the first story, Robby told about becoming friends with a man who was later condemned to die. The prisoner called for Robby and in his presence made out his will, leaving Robby what little money he had. But on the day of the man's scheduled execution, he was pardoned. Recounting the circumstances, Robby said,

"He lived, but I lost my legacy. A testament is not in force while the testator lives."

In the second story, Robby told of another person who left him a small legacy. But Robby never got any of that inheritance either because, as he told it,

"some rogue of a lawyer came along and I never saw a penny of it. I used to say, 'If the man who left the will had been alive, he would have made sure his old friend Robby got his money.' But being dead, he had no power to see his will carried out."

Jesus, the great testator of the new covenant, did die; there is no question about that. Therefore, the will, certified by His precious blood, is valid. He has secured eternal redemption for us through His atoning death. But the Savior did not remain in the grave. After three days He arose, and today He lives to make sure that His will is fully carried out. His life ensures that every blessing promised by the New Testament will be given to everyone who trusts the Savior.

Christ died, making His will valid; and He lives, guaranteeing our priceless inheritance. —P.R.V.

Only a living Savior could rescue a dying world.

Hebrews 9:20

Morning and evening : Daily readings (November 6 PM)

There is a strange power about the very name of blood, and the sight of it is always affecting. A kind heart cannot bear to see a sparrow bleed, and unless familiarized by use, turns away with horror at the slaughter of a beast. As to the blood of men, it is a consecrated thing: it is murder to shed it in wrath, it is a dreadful crime to squander it in war. Is this solemnity occasioned by the fact that the blood is the life, and the pouring of it forth the token of death? We think so. When we rise to contemplate the blood of the Son of God, our awe is yet more increased, and we shudder as we think of the guilt of sin, and the terrible penalty which the Sin-bearer endured. Blood, always precious, is priceless when it streams from Immanuel's side. The blood of Jesus seals the covenant of grace, and makes it for ever sure. Covenants of old were made by sacrifice, and the everlasting covenant was ratified in the same manner. Oh, the delight of being saved upon the sure foundation of divine engagements which cannot be dishonoured! Salvation by the works of the law is a frail and broken vessel whose shipwreck is sure; but the covenant vessel fears no storms, for the blood ensures the whole. The blood of Jesus made his testament valid. Wills are of no power unless the testators die. In this light the soldier's spear is a blessed aid to faith, since it proved our Lord to be really dead. Doubts upon that matter there can be none, and we may boldly appropriate the legacies which he has left for his people. Happy they who see their title to heavenly blessings assured to them by a dying Saviour. But has this blood no voice to us? Does it not bid us sanctify ourselves unto him by whom we have been redeemed? Does it not call us to newness of life, and incite us to entire consecration to the Lord? O that the power of the blood might be known, and felt in us this night! (Spurgeon, C. H.)

Hebrews 9:22

House Of Symbols

Our neighbor was startled when two young men walked into her home uninvited. She screamed, and they ran out. Yet no one would accuse her of failing to be hospitable. If you enter someone's house, you come in on that person's terms.

We sometimes forget that the same principle applies to our entering into the presence of God. This was made clear in the Old Testament "house of symbols" known as the tabernacle (Exodus 25–27). Its construction and the arrangement of the objects within it teach us that we come into God's presence only on His conditions.

Consider, for example, the bronze altar of sacrifice (27:1-8). Bronze in Scripture stands for divine judgment of sin. The slaughtering of sheep and goats on the altar symbolized the results of sin. An unmerciful death for innocent animals pointed forward to a coming substitute, the sinless "Lamb of God." When Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, His sacrifice was more than adequate to atone for the sin of all people (John 1:29). The only way to approach God is on His terms. We must receive the forgiveness He offers to us through Christ.

Have you accepted Jesus, the Lamb of God, as your Savior from sin? —Mart De Haan

Saved by the blood of the Crucified One!

Now ransomed from sin and a new work begun,

Sing praise to the Father and praise to the Son—

Saved by the blood of the Crucified One! —Henderson

Christ will receive you if you will believe Him.

Hebrews 9:22

Morning and evening, February 2

This is the voice of unalterable truth. In none of the Jewish ceremonies were sins, even typically, removed without blood-shedding. In no case, by no means can sin be pardoned without atonement. It is clear, then, that there is no hope for me out of Christ; for there is no other blood-shedding which is worth a thought as an atonement for sin. Am I, then, believing in him? Is the blood of his atonement truly applied to my soul? All men are on a level as to their need of him. If we be never so moral, generous, amiable, or patriotic, the rule will not be altered to make an exception for us. Sin will yield to nothing less potent than the blood of him whom God hath set forth as a propitiation. What a blessing that there is the one way of pardon! Why should we seek another?

Persons of merely formal religion cannot understand how we can rejoice that all our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake. Their works, and prayers, and ceremonies, give them very poor comfort; and well may they be uneasy, for they are neglecting the one great salvation, and endeavouring to get remission without blood. My soul, sit down, and behold the justice of God as bound to punish sin; see that punishment all executed upon thy Lord Jesus, and fall down in humble joy, and kiss the dear feet of him whose blood has made atonement for thee. It is in vain when conscience is aroused to fly to feelings and evidences for comfort: this is a habit which we learned in the Egypt of our legal bondage. The only restorative for a guilty conscience is a sight of Jesus suffering on the cross. "The blood is the life thereof," says the Levitical law, and let us rest assured that it is the life of faith and joy and every other holy grace. (Spurgeon, C. H.)

"Oh! how sweet to view the flowing
Of my Saviour's precious blood;
With divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God."

Hebrews 9:23-28

Love Gives Value

Wayne and Red served in the same platoon when the Allied forces marched across Europe in World War II. Wayne volunteered to be "point man," leading the platoon into enemy territory. Red backed him up.

The two led their men through several battles until they reached the famed "Siegfried Line." They ran across no-man's land and jumped into the enemy trench. When a live grenade exploded in front of them, Wayne, who was in the lead, was wounded by the blast. Seeing his helplessness, Red stepped forward, grabbed Wayne, whirled around, and shielded him from gunfire. A few seconds later Red was hit by an enemy bullet and died instantly. Wayne, who survived, later wrote, "No one has ever valued me more."

In a sense, Jesus "took the bullet" that was intended for us. We were born in sin, and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Because of God's great love, the Son of God became man, lived without sinning, and took our penalty by dying on the cross (1 Peter 3:18). Because Jesus died, we can have eternal life.

Do you have that life? If not, put your faith in Christ today. Then you too will be able to say, "No one has ever valued me more." —DCE —David C. Egner

Christ died for me—what blessed words!

He bore my load of guilt one day;

No greater price has e'er been paid

Than when He took my sins away. —Egner

Jesus took my place on the cross to give me a place in heaven.

Hebrews 9:24-28 An Inevitable Appointment

It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment. —Hebrews 9:27

Use Left/Right Arrow keys to advance one second, Up/Down arrows to advance ten seconds.

Sarah Winchester's husband had acquired a fortune by manufacturing and selling rifles. After he died of influenza in 1918, she moved to San Jose, California.

Because of her grief and her long-time interest in spiritism, Sarah sought out a medium to contact her dead husband. The medium told her, "As long as you keep building your home, you will never face death."

Sarah believed the spiritist, so she bought an unfinished 17-room mansion and started to expand it. The project continued until she died at the age of 85. It cost 5 million dollars at a time when workmen earned 50 cents a day. The mansion had 150 rooms, 13 bathrooms, 2,000 doors, 47 fireplaces, and 10,000 windows. And Mrs. Winchester left enough materials so that they could have continued building for another 80 years.

Today that house stands as more than a tourist attraction. It is a silent witness to the dread of death that holds millions of people in bondage (Heb. 2:15).

Because Jesus died for us and rose from the grave, our fear of death can be changed to hope. That happens when we receive Him as our personal Savior. That's the best way to face our inevitable appointment with death.

Our life is often filled with pain,

And death looms just ahead;

But Jesus' cross can give us peace

And take away that dread. —DJD

When it's time to die, make sure that's all you have to do.

Hebrews 9:26 Sacrifice

March 29, 2013

This Sunday launches the start of the 2013 Major League Baseball season with a Sunday night game between the Texas Rangers and the Houston Astros at Minute Maid Field in Houston. If it's a typical baseball game, it will be marked by hits and walks, outs and errors, and all the trappings of the game. But it will also have something else—sacrifice. Two types of plays in baseball are marked by someone giving themselves up for someone else and for the team. In a sacrifice bunt, the batter gives himself up to advance the base-runners into scoring position. With a sacrifice fly, the batter makes a fly-ball out to the outfield in order to score a runner from third base. Either way, one of the most lovely elements about our national pastime is that it carefully includes the opportunity for someone to sacrifice themselves for others. In a culture nurtured on self-seeking and self-advancement, it is a stirring reminder of what is truly noble.

It is fitting to discuss sacrifice this weekend—not because of baseball but because it's Easter weekend. Easter is not about chocolate bunnies or colored eggs. It is utterly and completely about sacrifice—the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the new life and forgiveness He secured for us in His resurrection. Without the sacrifice of the cross, there is no Easter—and for us, there is no

hope. Notice:

Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma (Ephesians 5:2).

He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26).

But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:12).

Jesus said, "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). But what was revealed that first Easter weekend was that the cost of that rescue would be Christ giving Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. It is the greatest sacrifice in history, and it is the source of the greatest of all celebrations for the follower of Christ. It is also the sacrifice that is truly worthy of our faith and trust. If you do not know the Savior, I encourage you to trust Him today. His sacrifice is His gift of love for you.

Bill Crowder, Sports Spectrum Chaplain

Hebrews 9:24-28 Finished!

When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" —John 19:30

Read: Hebrews 9:24-28 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 89-90; Romans 14

Outside Madrid stands an ancient monastery where the kings of Spain have been buried. The architect designed an elongated arch so flat that the reigning monarch insisted it could not hold the structure above it.

Against the architect's protest, the king ordered that a column be placed underneath the arch as a safety precaution. After the king died, the architect revealed that he had deliberately made the column a quarter of an inch too short—and the arch had never sagged!

Nothing need be, or can be, added to the finished work of Christ on Calvary to sustain the weight of the world's salvation. Our Savior's cry from the cross, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30), is a translation of a single Greek word which more literally could be rendered as "Ended!" "Completed!" or "Accomplished!"

That one word tells of the greatest miracle our Lord performed, the work of redeeming a lost world. Because our redemption was perfectly finished, it is impossible for us to add even one submicroscopic work of our own to what was already done on the cross.

With utter assurance, then, we can rest our eternal hope on that one all-important word, "Finished!"

Once for all, O sinner, receive it!

Once for all, O brother, believe it!

Cling to the cross, the burden will fall.

Christ has redeemed us once for all. —Bliss

We are saved not by what we do but by what Christ has done.

Hebrews 9:27

On The Edge Of Eternity

During the dark days of World War II, Adolf Hitler was tyrannizing Europe and herding millions of people into concentration camps. No wonder there was a widespread belief that the end of history had arrived.

Sophie Scholl, a heroic resister of the Nazi regime, made this comment in a letter to a friend just before she was executed in 1943: "People believe that we live in the endtimes, and many terrible signs make such a belief all too credible. But isn't it irrelevant? Don't we all realize that, no matter when we live, God can call us at a moment's notice? How do I know if I'll even be alive tomorrow morning?"

We need to take those words to heart. All of us live on the edge of eternity. That's why Peter's words to first-century followers of Christ are so important for us today (1 Peter 4:7-19). We too must live as if "the end of all things is at hand" (v.7), realizing that we are accountable to God (vv.17-19) and that at any second, death may terminate our earthly existence.

Are you prepared for that event? Do you view that possibility with confident assurance, knowing that the end here will mean a new

and glorious beginning there? It will if your faith is in Christ, the death-conquering Savior. —VCG —Vernon C Grounds

If I gained the world but lost the Savior,

Were my life worth living for a day?

Could my yearning heart find rest and comfort

In the things that soon must pass away? —Olander

To make the most of each day, keep eternity in mind.

Hebrews 9:27

A Storm Is Coming!

We were in a small boat on the far side of the lake and the fish were biting when we heard a rumble of thunder in the distance. Looking up, we saw a mass of dark clouds in the west.

I ignored the suggestion of my fishing partner that it might be wise to start back to the cottage—I wanted to keep fishing. Then it happened! The storm was suddenly upon us. We tried to start the motor but it wouldn't go! My friend tried to row, but the rain came in sheets and the waves tossed our little aluminum boat. We survived, but I learned a lesson. Don't delay when a storm is brewing.

Another type of storm is coming—a day of judgment. It may seem far off, and you don't feel you have to hurry to prepare. You may be in good health and in the prime of life. But listen, the storm may come upon you unexpectedly.

Proverbs 1 says that disaster will strike the person who foolishly ignores all warnings (v.27). And the author of Hebrews warned, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (9:27).

To heed God's warnings is true wisdom. Have you sought shelter in Christ? If you haven't, it's time to stop "fishing" and seek safety before it's too late. Turn from your sin to Christ. Do so today.

—Mart De Haan

Oh, turn to Christ while still you may;

Too late, it soon will be—

A glorious life you then will have

Throughout eternity. —Anon.

Those who reject Christ as Savior will face Him as Judge

Hebrews 9:27 "Dead Is Dead"

O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? —1 Corinthians 15:55

Read: Hebrews 9:24-28 | Bible in a Year: 1 Samuel 17-18; Luke 11:1-28

Do you ever think about your inevitable death? Or are you like the influential theater tycoon Bernard Jacobs, who said, "Of all the things in the world I think least about, it's what happens after you die. Dead is dead."

Is that what happens when we exhale our last breath and our brain cells stop functioning? When our life has come to an end, are we totally extinguished like a flame of a candle plunged into water? That's a common belief. But it isn't what the Bible teaches. Hebrews 9:27 declares that it is appointed for us "to die once, but after this the judgment."

If we have received Jesus as Savior from our sins, we need not fear facing Him. We will enter into blessed fellowship with God for all eternity, for we will be "absent from the body and ... present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8).

Jesus taught His disciples, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Jesus' message in the Word of God gives hope when we face our own death or the death of someone we love. He promises that we will enter our heavenly home and be with Him forever. We can count on His word.

"I go to prepare a place for you ...

That where I am there you may be,”

Our death is not the end of life—

Beyond, with Christ, eternity! —Hess

Jesus’ resurrection spelled the death of Death.

Hebrews 9:27 A Sure Thing

March 3, 2014

Last Friday, the Los Angeles Angels played their opening game in the Cactus League exhibition season, defeating the Chicago Cubs 15-3. Superstar outfielder Mike Trout led the Halos’ attack with a grand slam and a total of 5 RBI, which should encourage Angels fans everywhere—especially considering the question marks surrounding the team’s upcoming season. With three young pitchers in the starting rotation and both Josh Hamilton and Albert Pujols coming back from injury-riddled seasons that were far below their expectations, there is plenty of good reason to wonder how the Angels will fare this year. But, with Trout there is certainly hope because, barring injury, he is as close to being a sure thing as you can currently find in the major leagues.

In the Bible there is an even more important sure thing to deal with. The writer to the Hebrews said:

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment... (Hebrews 9:27)

Death is the one appointment that none of us can ever avoid—meaning that death is one of life’s absolutely sure things. But something else is certain as well. Jesus said:

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)

The sure thing of death is overwhelmed by an even more sure thing—the promise of Christ. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has conquered death on our behalf and released us from its inevitable grasp. By trusting in Him and His victory on our behalf, we receive the surest of all things—new life here and eternal life with Him forever.

Bill Crowder, Sports Spectrum Chaplain

Hebrews 9:27 A Sure Thing

It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment. —Hebrews 9:27

Read: Genesis 2:8-17 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 120-122; 1 Corinthians 9

A man who was suffering from poor health decided to move to a warmer climate. Wanting to make sure he would choose the area best suited to his needs, he visited several locations. While in Arizona, he asked, “What’s the average temperature?” “What about the humidity?” “How many days of sunshine are there?” When he asked, “What’s the death rate?” he received this answer: “Same as where you come from, friend—one death for every birth.”

In spite of medical progress in prolonging life and improving its quality, the death rate remains unchanged. “It is appointed for men to die once” (Hebrews 9:27), because “all have sinned” (Romans 3:23) and “the wages of sin is death” (6:23).

It is therefore essential to live with the right perspective—that death follows life, and that after death comes the judgment. Everyone who trusts Christ for salvation will come forth from the grave “to the resurrection of life,” but everyone who rejects Him will “come forth ... to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:29). For unbelievers, death seals their doom. But for believers, death leads to glory.

Wise is the person who faces up to the certainty of death. And wiser still is the one who prepares for it.

As sure as setting of the sun

In evening’s western sky,

This life’s brief day will soon be done

And we will have to die. —D. De Haan

Dying is the last page of time and the first page of eternity.

Hebrews 9:27

Life's Final Deadline

We're all confronted with deadlines. Bills must be paid, licenses renewed, tax returns filed—the list goes on and on.

One deadline, though, is of supreme importance. It's one we all will face. The Bible says, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Except for believers who are living when Jesus returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), everyone will die. And all people from the beginning of history will stand before God in judgment. How foolish to neglect the preparation necessary for this inevitable accounting!

In Luke 12, Jesus told a parable of a rich man who planned to build bigger barns to store all his earthly goods so he could live out his days in pleasure and ease. But God unexpectedly announced, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you" (Luke 12:20). His ultimate deadline had arrived.

Are you ready to meet God? If you've never received Christ as your personal Savior, do so without delay. Believe that He shed His blood on the cross to forgive your sins, and that He conquered death by rising from the grave. Ask Him to save you. Then you can face life's final deadline with confidence. —Richard De Haan

If you believe that Jesus lives, you don't need to fear death

Hebrews 9:27

An Eternal Future

Some countries are very old. Their history stretches far into the distant past. Others are fairly new to the world map. Yet, while all nations are destined to disappear, every human soul is destined to live eternally.

This prompted C. S. Lewis to say, "If we had foolish unchristian hopes about human culture, they are now shattered. If we thought we were building up a heaven on earth, if we looked for something that would turn the present world from a place of pilgrimage into a permanent city satisfying the soul of man, we are disillusioned, and not a moment too soon."

Civilizations will fall, but the human soul will live on forever. And because every individual will one day stand and face God's judgment (Hebrews 9:27), the most important question is how each of us will spend the endless ages stretching before us. Will we be with God in indescribable glory and joy? Or will we be exiled from God, lost forever in a condition too horrible for language to describe?

What a responsibility rests on believers! We must tell people that the only way to spend eternity in God's presence is to accept His offer of forgiveness and reconciliation (John 5:24). By God's grace, we can begin rejoicing in eternal life with Him right now! —Vernon C Grounds

There is a place reserved in heaven

For all who have believed;

Eternal life is freely given

When humbly it's received. —Sper

When you open your heart to Jesus, heaven is open to you.

Hebrews 9:27

Consider The Landing

A page in the 365 Stupidest Things Ever Said calendar had this amazing quote: "If you bought our course, 'How To Fly In Six Easy Lessons,' we apologize for any inconvenience caused by our failure to include the last chapter, 'How To Land Your Plane Safely.' Send us your name and address and we will send you the last chapter posthaste. Requests by estates will be honored."

I really can't imagine a pilot taking off in a plane without knowing how to land it. But then, crazier things than that have happened in our world.

I can imagine, though, that some people are "flying" through life without thinking about where they're headed and what will happen

immediately after they die. They're like a college student who wrote, "I don't think about things until they happen. Death is still a long way away."

No matter what our age, we need to be thinking about the end of life now. Paul emphasized the urgency of this when he wrote, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

If you have never trusted in Christ, do it now! Then, when your flight through life is over, you can know that you'll land safely on heaven's shore. —David C. Egner

Now is God's appointed time,

Accept Him while you may;

Tomorrow is uncertain,

God's promise is today. --Bostrom

When it's time to die, make sure that's all you have to do.

Hebrews 9:27 Run To The Cross

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. —Hebrews 10:31

Read: Hebrews 10:28-39 | Bible in a Year: 2 Kings 7-10

Whenever a tsunami warning is given on the northern coastline of Maui, Hawaii, the people living in Hana rush up the side of a mountain to a high place of safety. Nearby is a tall wooden cross that was placed there many years ago. For their physical safety, people run to the area where the cross is located.

In a similar way, all of us need a place of spiritual safety. Why? Because the Lord gives us these warnings in His Word: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Hebrews 9:27 states: "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." We might not like to think about what the consequences of our sin will be as we face a holy God, but it's a serious thing "to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31).

The good news is that out of love for us, the Father has provided a place of safety! He sent His Son Jesus to die so we wouldn't have to be separated from Him forever (Rom. 5:8-10; Col. 1:19-22).

Because of Jesus Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, that place of safety is available. Have you run to the cross?

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,

The emblem of suffering and shame;

And I love that old cross where the dearest and best

For a world of lost sinners was slain. —Bennard

To escape sin's curse, run to the cross.

Hebrews 9:27 Final Appointment

It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment. —Hebrews 9:27

Use Left/Right Arrow keys to advance one second, Up/Down arrows to advance ten seconds.

Read: Luke 16:19-31 | Bible in a Year: Numbers 4-6; Mark 4:1-20

The driver of a hearse foolishly tried to warm himself on a rainy Saturday morning by drinking on the job. He didn't get warm (alcohol actually lowers body temperature), but he did get lost on the way to the cemetery. The funeral procession waited in vain at the grave for hours.

Later that evening, police found the driver asleep in the hearse by the side of the road. By then it was too late for burial, and the cemetery wouldn't accept the casket on Sunday.

On Monday, the newspaper reported that the body of the 62-year-old man "was finally laid to rest—2 days late for his final appointment."

Actually, his final appointment was kept right on time. His tardy burial in no way altered the fact that his conscious soul had passed into eternity precisely at God's appointed time.

Until Christ returns, this will be true for every one of us. For the child of God, death immediately lifts the spirit into the presence of the Savior (2 Cor. 5:8). But for the one who rejects Christ (Jn. 3:18), death instantly closes the door to heaven and opens another to a Christless eternity.

We all have an appointment with our Maker. Whether we're ready for it or not depends on what we do with Jesus now. Are you ready for your final appointment?

At the moment of death, we step into eternal delight or everlasting doom.

Hebrews 9:27

'Looking For Loopholes'

Comedian W. C. Fields (1880-1946) could make audiences roar with laughter, yet he himself was chronically unhappy. Religion apparently played no part in his life. But it's been said that as he faced the possibility of dying, he started to devote time to reading the Bible. When he was asked about his new interest in Scripture, Fields, always the comedian, replied, "I'm looking for loopholes, my friend. Looking for loopholes."

Fields may not have known Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment," yet he realized that he might soon be standing before God. And he may have been wondering what he would say if asked by the Lord why he should not be judged for his sins.

We will all stand before God someday, so it's imperative that we prepare to meet Him. But how? The only preparation we need to make is to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin. He died to take the punishment we deserve (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18). When we admit that we are sinners (Romans 3:23) and ask Him to forgive and save us (Acts 16:31; Romans 10:13), we are brought into a right relationship with God (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Are you prepared? There are no loopholes. —Vernon Grounds —Vernon C Grounds

How can you go another day?

Respond to Christ, do not delay;

Just trust in Him, His Word believe—

Eternal life you will receive. —Branon

Don't plan to repent at the 11th hour—you may die at 10:30.

Hebrews 9:27

Are You Ready?

My daughter Julie was home from college and working at her summer job at RBC Ministries. One day as she was cutting the lawn with a riding mower she noticed some movement in the grass. Hopping down, she discovered a couple of baby rabbits scampering away from her noisy machine. She shooed them out of the path of her tractor to what she thought was sure safety, then out of the sky swooped a hawk. In a second he had one of the bunnies in his talons and was gone.

Julie felt bad. While she was helping the little guys avoid one danger, she had made them vulnerable to another. Despite her efforts, that bunny met his demise. As she told me about it, she said, "It made me think of my own mortality."

That's not something college students think much about. But they should, and so should all of us. Many people do not want to admit that life tomorrow is not guaranteed. We don't know if we'll live until tomorrow, or for 50 more years.

So, why think about this? Simply because we must be prepared to meet the Lord. The Bible says, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). If you have never done so, today by faith receive Christ as your Savior. Make sure you are ready. —JDB —Dave Branon

Oh, why not turn while still you may;

Too late it soon will be—

A glorious life you can possess

Throughout eternity. —Anon.

Death could come at any time—so we must be ready all the time.

Hebrews 9:27

Taking Risks

Many accidental deaths result from taking risks. That's the conclusion of an organization in Canada that is seeking to decrease accidents between cars and trains. Roger Cyr, national director of Operation Lifesaver, puts most of the blame for fatalities on drivers who are risk-takers. "Studies have shown that when people hear a train whistle their minds tell them to accelerate their speed," says Cyr. About 43 percent of the accidents occur at crossings equipped with flashing lights and bells or gates. Cyr also said that many drivers "even have the audacity to drive around or under gates." They take the risk, thinking they can beat the train and somehow miss the collision—but with tragic consequences!

Hebrews 9:27

Never Wait for the Storm

We were out on the lake and the fish were biting. Suddenly we heard a rumble in the distance. Looking up, we saw a mass of dark clouds in the west. The sound of thunder warned of a coming storm. It was a long way off, I thought, so I didn't heed the suggestion of my fishing partner that we start back to the cottage. I hoped the bad weather would move to the north or south of us. But then it happened! A fresh breeze sprang up, and the clouds mounted quickly overhead. We tried starting the motor—but no response. I cranked while my partner rowed frantically. The waves became whitecaps; the rain came in sheets; and the gale tossed our aluminum boat like an autumn leaf. That experience taught me a valuable lesson. Never wait when a storm is brewing!

It also preached a powerful sermon. Judgment is coming! It may seem far off to those who are in good health, but our motor can "conk out" at any time. To heed the foreboding signals of death is true wisdom. Look in the mirror before you go to work and observe some of its warnings. Notice those gray hairs and wrinkles. Remember your stiffening joints, shortness of breath, that dizzy spell—it's all "thunder in the distance." Why not hasten to find shelter in Christ before it is too late? Don't depend on your motor or the oars of self-effort. You will have no excuse, for you have been warned! —M. R. De Haan, M.D.

We are not truly ready to live until we are prepared to die.

Hebrews 9:27

A Sure Thing

A man who was suffering from poor health decided to move to a warmer climate. Wanting to make sure he would choose the area best suited to his needs, he visited several locations. While in Arizona, he asked, "What's the average temperature?" "What about the humidity?" "How many days of sunshine are there?" When he asked, "What's the death rate?" he received this answer: "Same as where you come from, friend—one death for every birth."

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Wise is the person who faces up to the certainty of death. And wiser still is the one who prepares for it.

—Richard De Haan

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In evening's western sky,

This life's brief day will soon be done

And we will have to die. —D. De Haan

Dying is the last page of time and the first page of eternity.

Hebrews 9:27

For Whom The Bell Tolls

In 17th-century England, church bells tolled out the news of what was taking place in a parish. They announced not only religious services but also weddings and funerals.

So when John Donne, author and dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, lay desperately sick with the plague that was killing people in London by the thousands, he could hear the bells announce death after death. Writing down his thoughts in the devotional diary that became a classic, Donne urged his readers, "Never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee."

How true! The book of Hebrews teaches that we will all face death one day: "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (9:27).

But if we are believers in the gospel, news of death does not need to arouse dread. We know, as Paul joyfully assured us, that by His resurrection Jesus has broken the power of death and "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). Death has been "swallowed up in victory" by the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:54). Its sting is gone (v.55).

When the bell tolls for the Christian, it announces the good news of Jesus' victory over death. —Vernon C Grounds

Ring the bells, ring the bells;

Let the whole world know

Christ the Savior lives today

As He did so long ago. —Bollback

© 1958, Singspiration, Inc.

Christ's resurrection is cause for our celebration.

Hebrews 9:27

WHEN THE END IS A BEGINNING

Our faith in Jesus Christ ought to make a difference in the way we live -- and in the way we die.

God wants us to live with zest and happiness. Indeed, Jesus said He came to offer us abundant life (Jn. 10:10). Paul too affirmed that God "gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

Yet we can't escape the fact that our days on earth are numbered. So it is wise to think about our inevitable appointment with death (Heb. 9:27).

Is our attitude toward our departure from this world like that of famous scientist Marie Curie, who with her husband Pierre discovered radium? When he was accidentally killed, she lamented, "It is the end of everything, everything, everything!"

Our attitude should be radically different. Because of our trust in the death-conquering Savior, we can say as a young German theologian did the night before the Nazis hanged him in 1945, "For me, this is the beginning."

For the believer, death is the end of all pain, loneliness, and sorrow, the end of whatever has made this life less than abundant, and the beginning of unimaginable blessing (Rev. 21:1-6). That prospect enables us to exclaim, "O Death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55).-- Vernon C. Grounds

To Him I trust my soul, my dust,

When flesh and spirit sever;

The Christ we sing has plucked the sting

Away from death forever.-- Anon.

Christ is the difference between hope and hopelessness.

Hebrews 9:27

REFLECTING ON LIFE'S END

I visited with Dr. M. R. DeHaan often during the last few weeks of his life. He talked freely about dying as he looked back on his ministry and ahead to the time when he would stand at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). I recall vividly on one occasion that he pointed his finger at me and said in his gruff voice, "Young man, it will not be long before you face the end as I do now. Keep this in mind as you serve the Lord: We must all give an account!"

That was in 1965. The intervening years have sped by, and I have now reached the age Dr. DeHaan was when he went home to be with the Lord. I still enjoy good health, but I realize that I'm in the evening of my earthly life. Contemplating the judgment seat of Christ makes me keenly aware of my imperfections. But I find comfort in the many Scripture passages that assure me I am forgiven and accepted because I believe in Jesus Christ.

Unbelievers try to avoid thinking about judgment or death, but both are unavoidable (Heb. 9:27). But the good news for those of us who have trusted Christ is that His death, burial, and resurrection frees us from sin's condemnation and death's power. Now we can face the end of life with serenity and hope. Herbert Vander Lugt

For every vain and idle thought

And every word I say,

My soul a strict account must give

Before the Lord someday.- Anon.

Be sure you know Christ as Savior before you face Him as Judge.

Hebrews 9:27

Never Wait When A Storm is Brewing

We were out on the lake and the fish were biting. Suddenly we heard a rumble in the distance. Looking up, we saw a mass of dark clouds in the west. The sound of thunder warned of a coming storm. It was a long way off, I thought, so I didn't heed the suggestion of my fishing partner that we start back to the cottage. I hoped the bad weather would move to the north or south of us. But then it happened! A fresh breeze sprang up, and the clouds mounted quickly overhead. We tried starting the motor—but no response. I cranked while my partner rowed frantically. The waves became whitecaps; the rain came in sheets; and the gale tossed our aluminum boat like an autumn leaf. That experience taught me a valuable lesson. Never wait when a storm is brewing!

It also preached a powerful sermon. Judgment is coming! It may seem far off to those who are in good health, but our motor can "conk out" at any time. To heed the foreboding signals of death is true wisdom. Look in the mirror before you go to work and observe some of its warnings. Notice those gray hairs and wrinkles. Remember your stiffening joints, shortness of breath, that dizzy spell—it's all "thunder in the distance." Why not hasten to find shelter in Christ before it is too late? Don't depend on your motor or the oars of self-effort. You will have no excuse, for you have been warned! —M. R. De Haan, M.D.

We are not truly ready to live until we are prepared to die.

Hebrews 9:27

EXPECTED -- SOONER OR LATER

I heard a popular senator who was swept out of office after only one term. His defeat came as a complete surprise to opponents and supporters alike. In his concession speech, the losing candidate wryly commented that recent events reminded him of an epitaph he once saw on an old tombstone. It said:

I EXPECTED THIS -- BUT NOT SO SOON.

Death is certain for all! The Bible says, "It is appointed for me to die once" (Heb. 9:27).

For some of us that day is closer than we think. The sensible person faces up to the fact of death and makes provision for this final episode of his earthly life.

There's only one way to prepare for eternity -- trusting Christ as Savior. Those who come to God through Him will enter heaven when they have drawn their last breath. But for unbelievers, that fateful moment will seal their never-ending doom.

Are you ready for the inevitable? Jesus said, "He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall

not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (Jn. 5:24). If you've never done so, place your faith in Christ, acknowledging that He died for your sins and rose victorious from the grave. Then, whether the expected comes sooner or later, you'll be ready! -- Richard W. De Haan

Sooner or later, yes, sooner for some,
Darkness will all then be past;
Sooner or later our savior will come --
With Him will your lot be cast? -- Koch

Live each day as if it were your last - it could be!

Hebrews 9:27

A Life-And-Death Issue

By altering the gene that controls aging, scientists believe they can extend the average human lifespan to 100 by the end of this century. This would be well beyond the proverbial 70 years mentioned in Psalm 90:10. But even if people do live longer, life's final chapter will still read, "It is soon cut off" (v.10).

Moses, who wrote Psalm 90, lived to be 120. He saw death as inevitable in a world cursed by the effects of sin. Yet he didn't become pessimistic. He asked God to teach him to number his days so he could gain "a heart of wisdom" (v.12). He wanted to be satisfied with God's mercy so he could rejoice and be glad (v.14). He also asked God to show His glory to the next generation (v.16). That's how Moses faced the reality of death thousands of years ago.

Like all people since Adam and Eve, we suffer the effects of sin, and death is certain (Romans 6:23). Yet we can live with hope and joy, because God sent His Son to die for our sins. Jesus conquered death when He rose from the grave. And if we receive Him as our personal Savior and Lord, we too can experience God's forgiveness and look forward to being with Him in heaven forever. Have you faced and settled this life-and-death issue? —Dennis J. De Haan

THINKING IT OVER

If you were to die today, would you

be prepared to meet God?

To be ready, embrace Jesus' promise to

everyone who believes in Him (John 3:16; 11:25-26).

You're not ready to live until you're ready to die.

Hebrews 9:27-28

From Sunset To Sunrise

Kariel was riding home from a children's program at church with her neighbor friends. Admiring the sunset, she said to Gini, the driver, "That sunset is so beautiful it looks like heaven!" So Gini asked her, "Do you know how to get to heaven?" Kariel, who was only 5, answered confidently, "You have to have Jesus as your Savior—and I do!" Then she began to ask her friends in the van if they knew Jesus too.

That same evening, Kariel's 13-year-old sister Chantel was at another church, where someone asked her if she knew Jesus as her Savior. She told the person she did.

Early the next morning, fire swept through Kariel and Chantel's home, and tragically, they both died. They were in heaven with Jesus at sunrise.

No one has the promise of tomorrow. The crucial question is: Have we admitted our need for God's forgiveness of our sin and trusted Jesus as our Savior? (Romans 3:23; John 1:12). Our sin separates us from God and requires judgment, but Jesus gave His life in our place (Hebrews 9:27-28).

Make sure you have the same confidence that Chantel and Kariel had. Then, when your time comes to die, you'll be in heaven with Jesus at the next sunrise. —Anne Cetas

When I shall come to the end of my way,

When I shall rest at the close of life's day,

When "Welcome home" I shall hear Jesus say,

O that will be sunrise for me! —Poole

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Sunset in one land is sunrise in another

Hebrews 9:28

First Sight

When I was flying from Chicago to Tampa, I noticed a family on the plane. And from the excitement of the two children, I assumed they had never been to Florida. As we neared our destination, clouds blocked our view of the ground. Only when we began our descent did the plane finally break through the clouds.

At the first sight of the land below, the mother exclaimed to the two little ones beside her, "Look, that must be Florida!" After a few moments of silence, the young boy said, "But Mom, where are the palm trees? I can't see them!" His idea of Florida immediately brought to his mind those tropical trees, and he expected to see them first.

Christian, as you anticipate the day you will arrive in heaven, what do you want to see first? It will certainly be wonderful to greet our loved ones who have gone before. My, what a thrill to visit with the believers of the past, and how exciting to see the glorious sights of heaven! And yet, as delightful as all of this will be, our greatest joy will be to see the Lord Jesus Himself—for He is the One who made it possible for us to go there.

Yes, in the words of the old hymn, "I long to meet my Savior first of all." —Richard De Haan

I am living for the moment

When my Savior's face I see;

Oh, the thrill of that first meeting

When His glory shines on me. —Christiansen

To see Jesus will be heaven's greatest joy.

Hebrews 9:28

The Perfect Sacrifice

High atop the main pyramid of the temple of Tenochtitlan in Mexico, the ancient Aztecs performed their vile ritual of human sacrifice. According to their beliefs, the sun god needed the nourishment of human blood to drive back the darkness each dawn.

Human sacrifice is abhorrent to us--and even more so to God. That makes the sacrifice of Jesus Christ so amazing. Yet as we examine it, we see how different it was from those tragically misguided pagan rituals.

God's Word tells us that because of Adam's fall sin entered the human family. Because God is holy, something would have to be done to take away sin if man was to be restored to fellowship with Him. Jesus, who was God in the flesh, alone lived a perfect life and could open the way to God by paying the penalty for man's sin. And His sacrifice did that for us.

The Aztecs sacrificed human beings, hoping to appease the whims of the gods. The living and true God, however, sent His own Son to die in our place, thus satisfying both the demands of His holiness and the desires of His love. In God's righteous Son Jesus we have a perfect sacrifice. But just to know that truth is not enough. We must accept Him.

Have you put your trust in God's perfect sacrifice? --JDB

Here we rest in wonder, viewing

All our sins on Jesus laid,

And a full redemption flowing

From the sacrifice He made. --Shirley

Our Salvation is free because Christ paid the price.

Hebrews 9:28 Looking for Him

THIS is our hope. He to whom we have already looked as coming once to bear the sins of many will have another manifestation to the sons of men; this is a happy prospect in itself. But that second appearing has certain peculiar marks which glorify it exceedingly.

Our Lord will have ended the business of sin. He has so taken it away from His people, and so effectually borne its penalty, that He will have nothing to do with it at His second coming. He will present no sin-offering, for He will have utterly put sin away.

Our Lord will then complete the salvation of His people. They will be finally and perfectly saved and will in every respect enjoy the fullness of that salvation. He comes not to bear the result of our transgressions, but to bring the result of His obedience; not to remove our condemnation, but to perfect our salvation.

Our Lord thus appears only to those who look for Him. He will not be seen in this character by men whose eyes are blinded with self and sin. To them He will be a terrible Judge, and nothing more. We must first look to Him, and then look for Him; and in both cases our look shall be life. (Spurgeon, C. Faith's Checkbook)

Hebrews 9:28

I Will Come Back For You

In 1914 Ernest Shackleton led an expedition to sail to Antarctica, and then walk to the South Pole. The expedition went according to plan until ice trapped the ship and eventually crushed its hull. The men made their way by lifeboat to a small island. Promising to come back for them, Shackleton and a small rescue party set out across 800 miles of perilous seas to South Georgia Island.

With only a sextant to guide them, they made it to the island. Shackleton then led his party over steep mountainous terrain to the whaling port on the other side. Once there, he acquired a ship to rescue his crew. Their leader had kept his word and returned for them. Not one man was left behind.

As Jesus was preparing to leave His disciples, He promised to return. He said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). After enduring the horrors of the cross, Jesus rose from the dead to provide eternal life to all who believe in Him as their Savior. He indwells us today by the Holy Spirit, but one day He will return and gather us into His presence (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). Jesus is true to His word.

If you are His, He will come back for you! —Dennis Fisher

Lift up your heads, pilgrims aweary!

See day's approach now crimson the sky;

Night shadows flee, and your Beloved,

Awaited with longing, at last draweth nigh. —Camp

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Christ's second coming is as certain as His first.

Hebrews 9:28

Thoughts Of Heaven

Cartoonists often depict those who have gone to heaven as white-robed, ghostly forms floating among the clouds or sitting on golden stairs playing harps. What a far cry from the picture we find in the Bible!

In 1 Corinthians 15, we read that our resurrection bodies, although not subject to death, will be real and tangible—not mere apparitions. And Revelation 21:1-5 tells us that God will bring about "a new heaven and a new earth." He will bring down "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22), and set it upon the new earth as the "New Jerusalem." It is described as having streets, walls, gates, and even a river and trees (Revelation 22:1-5).

Life in that city will be wonderful, free from all the debilitating effects of sin. There will be no more death, sorrow, mourning, and pain, for God will make "all things new." But best of all, He Himself will come to live among us, making possible a new level of intimacy with Him.

It's difficult to envision such an existence, but what an exciting prospect! It is all possible because of what Jesus did when He died for us on the cross. This should motivate us to worship Him, live godly lives, and tell others how they too can be assured of a glorious future. —Herbert Vander Lugt

The more we love Jesus the more we'll long for heaven.

Hebrews 9:28

Unto them that look for Him shall He appear.

There is an evident parallel intended between the first and second Advent, and especially in the manner of looking for it. At the first Advent there were many who were definitely looking for and hastening to that day. Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel; and Anna spoke of the infant Lord to those who were expecting redemption in Israel. To look for the consolation and to look for the redemption were the two articles in that early creed. And presently this quiet, patient waiting broke out into the rapturous song of the Nunc Dimittis.

But all Jews were not looking for that blessed Hope, the appearance of the Grace of God. When our Lord came, the leading teacher of Judaism was Philo, and he not only had no Messianic hopes of his own, but discouraged them in other people. He conceded that there might be a return of Jewish national life; but he had no expectation of it being under the leadership of the Christ.

It has been truly remarked that this eager looking for the Advent has always been the mark of the living Church. "Ye turned," said the apostle, "unto God from idols ... to wait for his Son from heaven." And again he said, "A crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give unto me in that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing."

As it was with the first Advent it shall be with the second. The Son of God will come at a time and in a manner for which men are not prepared; and only the elect, who may have been contemned and despised by the world at large, will discern Him, and go forth to meet Him in the air. (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

Hebrews 10:1-18 Completely Clean

It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. —Hebrews 10:4

Read: Hebrews 10:1-18 | Bible in a Year: Jeremiah 22-23; Titus 1

Happy birthday to me. Happy birthday to me. Happy birthday to me-ee. Happy birthday to me... Happy bir ...

After humming the "birthday song" a second time, I turned off the faucet's running water. It is said that singing the song through twice while washing your hands (about 20 seconds) is a good way to remove most bacteria. But it doesn't last. I need to repeat this process each time they are contaminated.

In the Old Testament, the people of God offered sacrifices over and over to cover their sins. But the blood of the animals didn't actually "take away sins" (Heb. 10:11). Only the precious sacrifice of Jesus could do that!

Animal sacrifices are no longer needed because Christ's sacrifice ...

- was once for all—unlike animal sacrifices, which had to be offered "continually year by year" (vv.1-3,10).
- cleanses us completely from all guilt and sin—unlike the blood of animals that was a reminder of sin's penalty and could never take away our sins (vv.3-6,11).

"By one offering [Christ] has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (v.14). Only through Jesus can we be declared completely clean.

Once for all, O sinner, receive it;

Once for all, O brother, believe it;

Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,

Christ hath redeemed us once for all. —Bliss

Christ's cleansing power can remove the most stubborn stain of sin.

Hebrews 10:4

Sacrifice

In the agony of Psalm 51, David seems to contradict himself. He exclaims, “You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering” (v.16). Then, two verses later, he says, “You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering” (v.19). Does God want our sacrifices or not?

Sacrifices resemble the flowers a husband gives to his wife after a heated argument. The wife doesn't need the flowers. They are valuable to her only if they accurately represent her husband's feelings. If she thinks they are merely a ritual and do not symbolize his regret, the flowers make the divide between them worse.

God didn't need the animals offered to Him in sacrifice. Hebrews says, “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (10:4). These sacrifices pointed to the once-for-all payment Jesus would make with His own blood when He died for our sins.

What mattered was the attitude of those making the sacrifices. If the offerings were without repentance, the ritual was a mockery. That's why David wrote, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). —Haddon W. Robinson

For Further Study

Learn more about David's sin and his return to God.

Read [David & Manasseh: Overcoming Failure](#)

Repentance is sorrow for the deed, not for getting caught

Hebrews 10:5-10 One Sacrifice

There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. —1 Timothy 2:5

Read: Hebrews 10:5-10 | Bible in a Year: Song of Solomon 6-8; Galatians 4

Journalist Jill Neimark wrote an article titled “Shaman in Chicago” about her very unconventional uncle.

A well-educated, prosperous commodities trader, he has become a high priest in the Ifa religion, which practices animal sacrifice as its highest act of worship. Formerly an atheist, he is now a convinced believer in a divine energy that he insists cannot be experienced in traditional religion.

Neimark thinks her uncle is an extreme example of those millions of questing Americans who crave a firsthand experience with dynamic supernaturalism. As one of Neimark's friends put it, “We want to dial God direct; we don't want to go through the operator.” Or as Neimark says, we're “beating our own path to God.”

We who know the truth, power, and joy of the gospel of Jesus Christ can be grateful for these truths: (1) There is no need for any further sacrifice, because Jesus offered Himself as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sin (Heb. 10:10). (2) There is no need for any other mediator between God and us, because Jesus, who is our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5), guarantees direct access to God. (3) There is no need to beat our own way to God, because Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6).

The cross of Christ is all we need

To take our sins away;

He is our perfect sacrifice—

The life, the truth, the way. —Sper

Salvation is achieved by Christ's atonement, not by our attainment.

Hebrews 10:5-10 Who's Winning?

I delight to do Your will, O my God. —Psalm 40:8

Read: Hebrews 10:5-10 | Bible in a Year: Proverbs 22-24; 2 Corinthians 8

I had a dog whose favorite game was to play tug-of-war with a rubber pull-toy. She would grip one end of the toy with her teeth, and I would grip the other end with my hand. Because she was a small dog, my effort to win sometimes lifted her off the ground. But she still gripped the toy stubbornly.

Sinful human nature, or what the Bible calls “the flesh,” is a lot like my dog, continually playing tug-of-war with God. From an early age, our words and actions say, “My will be done.” Or we modify our stubbornness and say, “God, Your will be changed.”

Jesus always wanted to do His Father’s will. When He was agonizing in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to His arrest and crucifixion, He prayed, “Take this cup away from Me.” But in the next breath, He let go of His own will and yielded to His Father, saying, “Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will” (Mk. 14:36).

A Bible teacher once pointed out that the words “No, Lord” are a contradiction in terms. Only as we say, “Yes, Lord”—and mean it—can we really call Him Lord.

Is there a “No, Lord” anywhere in your life? Don’t be like my dog who wouldn’t let go. Be like Jesus—let go of your will and yield to God’s.

Lord, help us to submit to You,

To follow and obey;

And give us strength to fight the urge

To do things our own way. —Sper

A strong will often conceals a strong "won't."

Hebrews 10:9

He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.

The meaning of this is clear. In the old covenant the stress was laid on the outward rite; but in the new covenant, for burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin are substituted first the entire devotion and consecration of the blessed Lord to his Father’s will; and next, ours in Him.

It is very noticeable that by the offering of the cross, in which the Savior’s yielded will culminated, we are said to have been sanctified, consecrated, or set apart once for all (Hebrews 10:10). The thought there is, evidently, that our Savior’s death has implicated us for evermore; and that his Church, whom He represented in that supreme act, is for ever pledged to be dead unto the world and sin.

But still later we learn that He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Hebrews 10:14). The change of tense surely indicates that what was accomplished for us in the purpose of God when Jesus died, must be accomplished in us by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Every time, therefore, our will is brought into more perfect union with that of God, a further step is taken towards that glorious elevation which Jesus made ours in the death of the cross.

And if you would have an incentive to this, remember how Jesus promised that all who would do the will of God should be reckoned members of the holy family (Matthew 12:46–50). Are you a member of that family? You may be, and sit only on the outer circle, for the constituent members are always altering their position towards the central Christ; now advancing towards the inner heart, now receding. Oh, see to it that you are not only within the holy circle of the will of God, but that you are near the golden centre where Jesus is seated. (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

Hebrews 10:11-22 How Healthy Is Your Heart?

Let us draw near ... , having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. —Hebrews 10:22

Read: Hebrews 10:11-22 | Bible in a Year: Genesis 43-45; Matthew 12:24-50

Has a doctor ever allowed you to use his stethoscope and listen to your own heart? It’s a rather strange experience to hear the steady rhythms of that organ which started to function even before you were born and will continue beating until you die.

When Sue Monk Kidd was a nurse in a hospital pediatric ward, she often let her young patients listen to their own hearts. One day as she carefully positioned the stethoscope for a 4-year-old named David, she said to him, “Listen. What do you suppose that is?” He tightened his eyebrows in deep thought and with a bright smile asked, “Is that Jesus knocking?”

Forget physiology and let David be your teacher. From the standpoint of spiritual health and eternal destiny, he was right. Jesus Christ, the crucified Savior and the risen Lord of glory, is indeed knocking at the door of every human heart. Our heart is the very core of our being, the controlling center of decision and choice (Rev. 3:20).

Have you gladly invited Him to become your personal Savior, forgiving your sins and cleansing your heart? (Jn. 3:1-16; Heb. 10:22).
Have you invited Him into your life to rule as Lord, guiding your decisions and actions?

He's knocking, waiting to come in.

Take me as I am, Lord,

And make me all Your own;

Make my heart Your palace

And Your royal throne. —Anon.

A healthy heart beats with love for Jesus.

Hebrews 10:12

A Unique Sacrifice

What do you think of when you hear the word sacrifice? We may use the term when we see parents who follow a strict budget and drive an old car so they can send their children to college. It certainly is a good word to describe the selfless action of a soldier who throws himself on a live grenade to take the full brunt of the explosion and save the lives of his companions.

Such noble sacrifices, however, pale when compared to what our Savior did for us on the cross. His sacrifice was unique. Jesus suffered and died "for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Because of His death and resurrection, all who accept His offer of salvation receive complete forgiveness and eternal life (John 3:16).

In Hebrews 10, the Bible speaks about the animal offerings of the Old Testament and compares them to the death of Jesus. Heb 10:4 states, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." Those sacrifices pointed to the need for Christ's death.

The substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ provides full salvation to all who have placed their trust in Him. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

—Herbert Vander Lugt

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,

In my place condemned He stood;

Sealed my pardon with His blood,

Hallelujah! What a Savior! —Bliss

Believing Christ died—that's history; believing He died for me—that's salvation!

Hebrews 10:14 Forever Perfect

By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. —Hebrews 10:14

Read: Hebrews 10:8-18 | Bible in a Year: Genesis 49-50; Matthew 13:31-58

When I first heard of Sara Lee cakes, the name-brand caught my attention because one of the most common Asian family names is "Lee." Being a Chinese Lee myself, I wondered if Sara was Chinese or Korean.

Then I learned that Charlie Lubin, an American bakery entrepreneur, had named his cheesecakes after his daughter Sara Lee. Sara said her father wanted this product to be "perfect because he was naming it after me."

Perfection is a standard that none of us could ever hope to attain. Yet we learn from Hebrews that Jesus, through His one supreme sacrifice for our sins, "has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (10:14).

The continual sacrifices made by the priests since the time of Moses could never change anyone's sinful standing before God (Heb. 10:1-4). But the one-time sacrifice of Christ on the cross—the sinless One dying for the sinful—perfected us forever in the eyes of God. Jesus' once-for-all payment for our sins was sufficient. The writer to the Hebrews paraphrased Jeremiah 31:34, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Heb. 10:17).

We are perfected forever to stand before God because of the perfect work accomplished by Jesus on the cross. This is the

assurance of our salvation.

We're far from perfection, yet perfect forever,

For Christ is our righteousness, Lord, and our Savior;

No justification for sin can we offer,

Yet sanctified fully, we're now His forever. —Lee

God is the perfect Judge, and He can declare the guilty perfect.

Hebrews 10:14 The Impartial Power of God (Oswald Chambers)

By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. —Hebrews 10:14

We trample the blood of the Son of God underfoot if we think we are forgiven because we are sorry for our sins. The only reason for the forgiveness of our sins by God, and the infinite depth of His promise to forget them, is the death of Jesus Christ. Our repentance is merely the result of our personal realization of the atonement by the Cross of Christ, which He has provided for us. "...Christ Jesus...became for us wisdom from God— and righteousness and sanctification and redemption..." (1 Corinthians 1:30). Once we realize that Christ has become all this for us, the limitless joy of God begins in us. And wherever the joy of God is not present, the death sentence is still in effect.

No matter who or what we are, God restores us to right standing with Himself only by means of the death of Jesus Christ. God does this, not because Jesus pleads with Him to do so but because He died. It cannot be earned, just accepted. All the pleading for salvation which deliberately ignores the Cross of Christ is useless. It is knocking at a door other than the one which Jesus has already opened. We protest by saying, "But I don't want to come that way. It is too humiliating to be received as a sinner." God's response, through Peter, is, "... there is no other name...by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). What at first appears to be heartlessness on God's part is actually the true expression of His heart. There is unlimited entrance His way. "In Him we have redemption through His blood..." (Ephesians 1:7). To identify with the death of Jesus Christ means that we must die to everything that was never a part of Him.

God is just in saving bad people only as He makes them good. Our Lord does not pretend we are all right when we are all wrong. The atonement by the Cross of Christ is the propitiation God uses to make unholy people holy.

Hebrews 10:14 Easter Every Day

He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. —Matthew 28:6

Read: Hebrews 10:11-18 | Bible in a Year: 2 Samuel 9-11; Luke 15:11-32

A friend of mine, who is a preschool teacher, overheard an animated conversation among her students. Little Maria threw out the question: "Who loves God?" All of them responded, "I do! I do! I do!" Billy said, "I love Jesus." Kelly protested, "But He died." Billy said, "Yeah, but every Easter He rises from the dead!"

Obviously, young Billy's understanding of the meaning of Easter is still developing. We know that Jesus died once for all (Rom. 6:10; Heb 10:12) and, of course, rose from the dead once. Three days after paying the penalty of our sins on the cross, the sinless Jesus conquered death by rising from the grave and breaking the power of sin. It was this final sacrifice of blood that opened the only way for us to have a relationship with God now and a home with Him forevermore.

"Christ died for our sins, ... He was buried, and ... He rose again the third day" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). He has promised that He is preparing a place for us (John 14:1-4), and He will someday return. One day we will be with our risen Savior.

That's why every year at Eastertime—in fact, every day of the year—we have reason to celebrate the resurrection of our Savior. "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. 34:1).

Christ's resurrection is cause for our celebration.

INSIGHT: In Hebrews 10:14 we see this remarkable statement: "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." How is this possible? Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth answers this question. Since being "good enough" through personal effort is futile (Rom. 7), only a transfer of account from a righteous person to a sinner could remedy the problem. "He made [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ's atoning death on the cross appeased the wrath of God (Rom. 3:24-26), and His righteousness was attributed to us that we might be declared justified before God.

Hebrews 10:17

A Past Long Gone

According to the English novelist Aldous Huxley, "There are no back moves on the chessboard of life." Yet we remain aware of things we have done and things we have left undone. Our sins worry us. They motivate us to wish fervently that somehow we could undo the past.

That's why those who put their faith in Jesus can be thankful for God's message in both the Old and New Testaments. When Paul preached in Antioch, he said, "By [Jesus], everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). The law condemned us (Romans 7:10-11), but Jesus offers deliverance and new life (8:1).

Are you worried about what you've done in the past? Rejoice! God has "cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). Are you still concerned about your sins? Rejoice! "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17). And "I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions" (Isaiah 44:22).

If you have put your faith in Jesus and asked Him to forgive you, the past is truly forgotten. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). Trust and rejoice!—Vernon C Grounds

My sin—O, the bliss of this glorious thought—

My sin, not in part but the whole,

Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more,

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul. —Spafford

God's forgiveness frees us from the chains of regret.

Hebrews 10:17 Absolutely No Remembrance

ACCORDING to this gracious covenant, the Lord treats His people as if they had never sinned. Practically, He forgets all their trespasses. Sins of all kinds He treats as if they had never been, as if they were quite erased from His memory. O miracle of grace! God here doth that which in certain aspects is impossible to Him. His mercy worketh miracles which far transcend all other miracles.

Our God ignores our sin now that the sacrifice of Jesus has ratified the covenant. We may rejoice in Him without fear that He will be provoked to anger against us because of our iniquities. See! He puts us among the children; He accepts us as righteous; He takes delight in us as if we were perfectly holy. He even puts us into places of trust and makes us guardians of His honor, trustees of the crown jewels, stewards of the gospel. He counts us worthy and gives us a ministry; this is the highest and most special proof that He does not remember our sins. Even when we forgive an enemy, we are very slow to trust him; we judge it to be imprudent so to do. But the Lord forgets our sins and treats us as if we had never erred. O my soul, what a promise is this! Believe it and be happy. (Spurgeon, C. Faith's Checkbook)

Hebrews 10:19 Vicarious Intercession (OC)

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. — Hebrews 10:19

Beware of imagining that intercession means bringing our personal sympathies into the presence of God and demanding that He does what we ask. Our approach to God is due entirely to the vicarious identification of our Lord with sin. We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

Spiritual stubbornness is the most effectual hindrance to intercession, because it is based on sympathy with that in ourselves and in others that we do not think needs atoning for. We have the notion that there are certain right and virtuous things in us which do not need to be based on the Atonement, and just in the domain of "stodge" that is produced by this idea we cannot intercede. We do not identify ourselves with God's interests in others, we get petulant with God; we are always ready with our own ideas, and intercession becomes the glorification of our own natural sympathies. We have to realize that the identification of Jesus with sin means the radical alteration of all our sympathies. Vicarious intercession means that we deliberately substitute God's interests in others for our natural sympathy with them.

Am I stubborn or substituted? Petted or perfect in my relationship to God? Sulky or spiritual? Determined to have my own way or determined to be identified with Him?

Hebrews 10:19-25 We Need One Another

If recent polls can be trusted, an upsurge of Lone Ranger spirituality is occurring in the United States. Church attendance is down. Biblical beliefs are being abandoned. More and more of our fellow citizens are looking inward, online, and out-of-doors for the uplift they once sought in church sanctuaries.

How different from Jesus! He made it His practice to join in synagogue services regularly (Luke 4:16). But today, people no longer take Him as an example. They settle for what is loosely called "spirituality" and try to nurture their souls without the timeless traditions of congregational praise, prayer, biblical instruction, and edifying fellowship.

To gather regularly with other worshipers is an uplifting source of comfort, inspiration, and emotional strength. The Bible urges us not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25).

We should, of course, have regular devotional times by ourselves. Just as surely, we need the blessing of uniting with other believers for worship and fellowship. We need to spend time together "in order to stir up love and good works" (v.24). We need to make it our habit to worship with others. We need one another.—Vernon C Grounds

We each can have sweet fellowship with Jesus

As through the Word we learn to trust Him more;

But we must also meet with one another

As in His name we worship and adore. —Hess

Christians are like coals of fire—together, they glow; apart, they grow cold.

Hebrews 10:19-25

Wait for the Promises

Suppose a wealthy man were to give you a note saying, "Sometime in the future, a time I've decided upon, you will receive fifty thousand dollars that I have set aside for you." Although you might become impatient as you wait for the money, you would confidently expect to get it. But if that same man were to say, "If everything works out, I might give you fifty thousand dollars" you'd expect the money only if he didn't go bankrupt, change his mind, forget his promise, or die. The first situation carries the greatest certainty.

That's the way it is in God's economy. His promises are dated in heaven. And since we know only "in part" (1 Cor. 13:12), we don't always know when they will be fulfilled. But that doesn't matter, for we do have the confidence that God will keep them. Nor does this diminish the value of God's promises, for He backs them all with the infinite riches of His character. He never changes. He never forgets His Word. He never dies. God may seem to delay the fulfillment of a promise, but we can be encouraged that every promise is as good as His word.

Most of us have come to the end of our resources. And there we have discovered that God, at the right time and in the right way, imparted His strength. He was neither slow nor tardy. So we need not be discouraged. We can keep on claiming the promises. God is the faithful promiser. —P.R.V.

Our prospects are as bright as the promises of God.

Hebrews 10:19-25

Stopping At Nothing

As we rounded a curve, the beams from my headlights suddenly shone on a woman desperately waving her arms. I did not want to stop. It was late and very cold. My wife and I were exhausted from ministering all day in a small church where I was student pastor, our small son was asleep on the back seat, and I had to be in class at 8:30 the next morning. "Somebody else will come along," I said to my wife, rationalizing to myself that the woman might be trying to lure us into a trap. But my conscience made me stop. And it's a good thing we did. In the woman's car we found four unconscious children, overcome by fumes from a faulty muffler. Quickly we loaded them into our car and headed for a nearby hospital, where they soon recovered after prompt treatment.

I don't advocate stopping along the highway for just anyone. Yet so many pressing needs go unmet. For instance, an elderly couple, no longer able to drive, haven't been to church for several months because no one has offered to take them. And a widow with multiple sclerosis wishes that somebody would take her grocery shopping and help her get to church on Sunday. "Why isn't somebody meeting these needs?" I wondered. Then I remembered my own initial response that night along the highway: Somebody else will come along.

Hebrews 10:24 holds the solution to this problem. As Christians, we can stir up fellow believers to love and good deeds by setting a good example. We can be that "somebody else." —H.V.L.

When it comes to doing things for others, some people stop at nothing.

Hebrews 10:19-25 WHY GO TO CHURCH

William Willimon, chaplain at Duke University, was invited to preach in an inner-city church. The service, with its long preliminaries, lasted 2 1/2 hours. When it was finally over, Willimon was exhausted and asked the pastor, "Why do these people stay in church so long?"

His friend replied,

"Unemployment runs nearly 50 percent here. This means that when our people go about during the week, everything they see, everything they hear tells them: 'You are a failure. You are nothing because you do not have a good job, you do not have a nice car, you have no money.' So I must get their eyes focused on Christ. Through the hymns, the prayers, the preaching I say to them, 'That is a lie! You are royalty! You are citizens of the kingdom of God!' It takes me a long time to get them straight because the world perverts them so terribly."

The world is constantly pressuring Christians to conform to its values. We need to read God's Word and encourage one another so that we will be able to keep alive a strong sense of who we are in Christ.

Why go to church? Because God uses the exhortation and love of fellow believers to reassure us that the world's message is a lie and that God's good news is true. - DJD

The world will try to pressure us

To fit into its godless mold;

That's why we need encouragement

To keep our hearts from growing cold. -Sper

Seven days without church makes one weak.

Hebrews 10:19-25 Why Go To Church?

In a letter to the editor of a British newspaper, a man complained that he saw no sense in going to church every Sunday. "I have been attending services quite regularly for the past 30 years," he wrote, "and during that time... I have listened to no less than 3,000 sermons. But, to my consternation, I discover I cannot remember a single one of them. I wonder if a minister's time might be more profitably spent on something else."

That letter sparked many responses. One, however, was the clincher: "I have been married for 30 years. During that time I have eaten 32,850 meals -- mostly of my wife's cooking. Suddenly I have discovered that I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet, I received nourishment from every one of them. I have the distinct impression that without them I would have starved to death long ago."

The Bible assumes the importance of going to church, and the only admonition to do so appears in the context of the danger of forsaking the practice (Hebrews 10:25). We need help to keep our faith and hope from wavering (v.23), and to love and do good works (v.24). Just as physical food keeps us alive and strong, so also the spiritual nourishment of teaching and fellowship are necessary for our survival. -- Dennis De Haan

I love to worship with others,

To read the Bible and pray.

To sing the songs about Jesus,

And learn to walk in His way. -- Hess

To keep growing in Christ, keep going to church.

Hebrews 10:19-25 Lookin' Good!

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. —Hebrews 10:24

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 18-19; Acts 20:17-38

After trying on my new sunglasses in the car one day, my daughter handed them back and said, “These are not sunglasses, Mom. They’re just fashion lenses. Let me guess,” she teased, “you bought them because you look cute in them.”

Okay, I have to admit—my daughter knows me. I hadn’t given a passing thought to UV rays or even whether those glasses would actually block the sun. I just really liked the way they looked on me.

Most of us like to look good. We want to appear that we “have it all together”—with no struggles or fears or temptations or heartaches.

Trying to maintain a façade of perfection on our spiritual journey doesn’t help us or our fellow travelers. But sharing our lives with others in the body of Christ benefits us as well as others. When we are a bit more transparent, we may find people who are struggling in a similar situation. And as we enjoy a growing fellowship with God and become more aware of our own brokenness and inadequacy, God is able to use us more fully to help others.

Let’s allow God to strip away any pretense and “let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:24 niv).

Wearing a mask that shows everything’s fine

Says that life’s struggles are not God’s design;

But when we’re open, transparent, and true,

People will trust God to meet their needs too. —Sper

Believers stand strong when they don’t stand alone.

INSIGHT: One of the great ongoing debates among Bible scholars involves the authorship of the letter to the Hebrews. In the early days of the church, it was generally regarded to have been written by the apostle Paul, but scholars disagree about its authorship today. Along with stylistic elements of the content that these scholars say does not match the writings of Paul, one often-cited argument against Pauline authorship is that Hebrews is anonymous, and Paul declared that he always signed his letters (2 Thess. 3:17). Some of the names offered as the possible human author of this inspired letter include Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, and Priscilla.

Hebrews 10:19-25 Bolt On Blake

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. —Hebrews 10:24

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 | Bible in a Year: Numbers 4-6; Mark 4:1-20

Usain Bolt and Yohan Blake of Jamaica made history when they finished first and second respectively in both the men’s 100-meter and 200-meter race in the 2012 London Olympics. Despite their rivalry on the track, Bolt paid tribute to Blake as a training partner: “Over the years, Yohan has made me a better athlete. He really pushed me and kept me on my toes.” It’s clear that the two spurred each other on to greatness on the track.

As believers in Christ, we have the privilege and responsibility of encouraging one another in our faith. The writer of Hebrews said, “Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Heb. 10:24).

The church is not just an institution or a mere social club. It is where we, who have been brought near to God and washed from sin, can help one another grow in Christlikeness. The purpose of meeting together as a corporate body is to exhort and encourage one another (vv.19-25).

No believer can function alone. To live as our Lord Jesus wants us to, we need the community of believers. As you meet with other believers, think of who you can come alongside and encourage by your words and actions to be more like the Christ we love and serve.

Before our Father’s throne

We pour our ardent prayers;

Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,

Our comforts and our cares. —Fawcett

A healthy church is the best witness to a hurting world.

INSIGHT: In the early church, Jewish Christians (possibly in Rome) were being pressured to abandon Christianity and revert to Judaism. The unnamed writer of Hebrews wrote to encourage his readers to endure and persevere in the faith by affirming the superiority and sufficiency of Christ through His person and position (Heb. 1–4) and His work of propitiation (atoning sacrifice; chs. 5–10). He also warned them against abandoning Christ (Heb 2:1-3; 3:7-15; 6:4-6; 10:26-29). In today's passage, he affirms the completed work of Christ on the cross (Heb 10:19-21) and calls for three commitments based on three confidences: "Let us draw near"—the confidence to come into God's presence (Heb 10:22); "Let us hold fast"—the confidence in God's promises (Heb 10:23); and "Let us consider one another"—the comfort and encouragement of God's people (Heb 10:24-25).

Hebrews 10:19-25 Be A Spark

Churchgoing has fallen on difficult times lately. For some Christians it is a weak substitute for a picnic on a rainy Sunday. Excuses are as plentiful as quarters in the collection plate. The fact is, many professing Christians don't think church is all that important. They think they can be perfectly good Christians without being part of a local congregation.

The author of Hebrews disagreed! For one thing, our own spiritual welfare is not to be our only concern. We go to church not just to get but to give—to spur on other Christians to "love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). If we stay away, we may give them an excuse to be careless.

On the other hand, if we attend with enthusiasm, we encourage other believers in their ambition to draw near to Christ. If we are faithful in meeting together with them, we will honor the Lord, grow in our faith, and give a strong witness to the world.

The Christian faith allows no room for rugged individualists. To have a fire, you need more than one coal. You also need a spark and a draft of air. One humble, open, involved individual—perhaps you—set on fire by Christ, can be the spark. And the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, may blow on that spark and set a congregation ablaze. —Haddon Robinson —Haddon W. Robinson

If we are honest, we must say

Our hearts are sometimes cold;

But fellowship can kindle warmth

And make our witness bold. —Hess

Fellowship builds us up and binds us together.

Hebrews 10:19-25 A Churchless Christian

Nowhere in the Bible does it say we must have our names on a church membership roll to be saved. That doesn't mean, however, that joining with other believers in a local church is not vital to our spiritual growth. Gathering regularly for worship and instruction encourages love for others, good works, and mutual accountability (Hebrews 10:24-25).

I read an interesting article some time ago that compared a Christian without a church to...

a student who won't go to school

a soldier without an army

a citizen who won't vote

a sailor without a ship

a child without a family

a drummer without a band

a ballplayer without a team

a honeybee without a hive

a scientist who does not share his findings with his colleagues

If you have been neglecting one of God's greatest provisions for your spiritual growth, find a church that believes and teaches God's Word and start attending faithfully. Take time to get to know others and let them get to know you. Ask God to help you find ways to serve others.

Don't be a churchless Christian. -- Richard De Haan

I love Thy church, O God!

I prize her heavenly ways --

Her sweet communion, solemn vows,

Her hymns of love and praise. -- Dwight

Seven days without church makes one weak.

Hebrews 10:19-25 Don't Go It Alone

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. —Hebrews 10:24

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 | Bible in a Year: Proverbs 6-7; 2 Corinthians 2

In New Testament times, believers banded together in prayer groups and house churches. This enabled them to go further and rise higher in their Christian growth than if they had tried to go it alone.

I too have experienced the encouragement and support that comes from being actively involved in a group. I had been gradually getting out of shape physically. I knew I needed regular exercise to keep my mind clear and my body healthy, but each time I tried a new exercise program, I would soon quit. My resolutions fell apart until a co-worker suggested that several of us men begin running during lunch break. We agreed to try it, and it worked! If I had run alone, I would have given up a hundred times for a hundred different reasons. Instead, I was able to cover hundreds of miles because we encouraged each other as we ran together.

On a more important level, that's what should be happening in the church. The writer of Hebrews said, "Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" (10:24). Banding together can provide the stimulus that will help believers grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Don't go it alone! There's great encouragement in a shared commitment!

Thinking It Over

Do you faithfully attend a good Bible-believing church? What is your motive for going or not going?

How do you encourage your fellow believers in Christ?

Christians are like coals of fire—together, they glow; apart, they grow cold.

Hebrews 10:24 Cheering Each Other On

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. —Hebrews 10:24

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 | Bible in a Year: 1 Samuel 22-24; Luke 12:1-31

A mile from the finish line of the London Marathon, thousands of onlookers holding signs lined the route. When spectators spotted a family member or friend coming into view, they shouted the person's name, waved, and yelled encouragement: "Just a little farther! Keep going! You're almost there." After running 25 miles, many competitors were barely walking and ready to quit. It was amazing to watch exhausted runners brighten and pick up the pace when they saw someone they knew or heard their name called out.

Encouragement! We all need it, especially in our walk of faith. The book of Hebrews tells us to keep urging each other on. "Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, ... but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (10:24-25).

The New Testament is filled with the certainty that Christ will return soon. "The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5). "The coming of the Lord is at hand" (James 5:8). "Behold, I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:12).

As we "see the Day approaching," let's keep cheering each other on in the faith. "Keep going! You're almost there! The finish line is in sight."

Help me, Lord, to reassure and strengthen

Others by the words I speak today;

I would always try to be affirming,

As our pathways cross along life's way. —Hess

Even if you have nothing else to give, you can give encouragement.

Hebrews 10:21-25 The Lonely Life

Statistically speaking, it should be impossible to be lonely on planet earth. After all, there are more than 6 billion of us roaming around on this big rock.

But many people in our world are lonely. One woman told me she has outlived every close relative or friend in her life. In her loneliness, she wonders why God allows her to remain.

If you're lonely, perhaps we can offer some encouragement. Using God's Word, discover how the following three actions can help to ease your loneliness:

Learn contentment. Read Philippians 4:10-13, then ask God to help you to depend on Him each day and to learn to be content in any situation.

Do good for someone. Read Hebrews 13:1-3, then look for someone in need of help. You'll get rid of loneliness for both of you.

Worship with God's people. Hebrews 10:21-25 emphasizes the value of worshiping with other believers. Find someone with whom you can praise God.

If you're feeling lonely, lean on Jesus for contentment. Help someone else. And worship God with other believers. These actions will redirect your thinking and remind you that when you know God you're never alone. —JDB —Dave Branon

If you are feeling all alone,

Reach out to someone who's bereaved;

You both will find encouragement

And loneliness will be relieved. —Sper

Many people are lonely because they build walls instead of bridges.

Hebrews 10:22 Bad Idea?

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. —Hebrews 10:22

Read: Hebrews 10:22-39 | Bible in a Year: Zechariah 13-14; Revelation 21

The former athlete had neglected his body for too long, so he began an exercise routine. The first day, he did several push-ups and went for a light jog. The next day, more push-ups, a few sit-ups, and a longer run. Day 3: exercises and a mile-and-a-half run. On Day 4, our ex-athlete in re-training woke up with a sore throat.

Then he did one more exercise: He jumped to the conclusion that exercising was a bad idea. If all he got out of his huffing and puffing was sickness, it wasn't for him.

Let's examine another scenario. A Christian, realizing he has neglected his relationship with God, begins a new spiritual routine of Bible-reading and prayer. But after just a few days, some problems arise in his life. What does he conclude? Like the ex-athlete, should he decide that his spiritual quest was a bad idea and that it didn't do any good? Certainly not.

We don't pray and read the Bible to get a perfect, trouble-free life. Pursuing God is not cause and effect. We do it because it draws us closer in our relationship with the One who is perfect. The pursuit of godliness will not exempt us from trouble (2 Tim. 3:12). But a life dedicated to loving and pursuing God (Heb. 10:22) is always a good idea—no matter what happens.

The time we spend with God each day

Through prayer and reading of His Word

Will help us face what comes our way

And draw us closer to the Lord. —Sper

The roots of stability come from being grounded in God's Word and prayer.

Hebrews 10:22 Instant Access

Pastor Rich McCarrell explained to his young son how his secretary screened his phone calls at the church office. He said, "If your mom calls me and I'm busy, the church secretary will tell her what I'm doing, and then Mom will decide if I should be interrupted or if she should leave a message."

Then he said to his son, "If you call me, you'll be put right through. I want you to know that you can call me anytime, because you're my son."

A few days later, the church secretary put a call through to the pastor from his son. He said hello and asked what he could do for his son. He replied, "Nothing, Dad. I just wanted to make sure I could actually get through to you that easily."

We too always have instant access to our Father in heaven. There's no secretary to screen His calls. No need for a decision on whether or not we should bother Him. No need to leave a message so that He can get back to us later. The psalmist reminds us, "The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry" (Ps. 34:15).

Because Jesus has provided the way by His death and resurrection, you can have boldness and confidence as you draw near to your Father (Heb. 4:16). —Anne Cetas

Dear Father, thank You that we can talk with You

at any time for any reason. We are grateful for that

privilege, which was made possible by Your Son Jesus

through His death and resurrection.

Through prayer, we have instant access to our Father.

Hebrews 10:22

Are You Washed?

While visiting in an Egyptian home, Bradford Abernethy saw a servant give a pitcher of water and a rug to a boy who lived there. Three times, the lad washed his hands, feet, face, neck, ears, and arms. Then he kneeled on the rug, bowed his head to the floor, and began to pray.

The Scriptures teach that a right relationship to God comes from being "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 6:11). The outward washing of the body referred to in the Old Testament was a symbolic act to remind God's people that when they entered the Lord's presence their hearts were to be free from unconfessed sin. David declared,

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Ps. 66:18).

And in another psalm he wrote,

"He who has clean hands and a pure heart ... shall receive blessing from the LORD" (Ps. 24:4-5).

It is foolish for those living in sin to expect the Lord to hear and answer their prayers. It's the prayer of a "righteous man" that is effective (James 5:16).

The Word of God assures us,

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

A clean heart is necessary if we expect God to hear our prayers. —R.W.D.

The words of our prayers are not as important as the condition of our hearts.

Hebrews 10:22 THE RECEPTIVITY OF FAITH

FAITH IS our power of appropriation. The pity is that we are so slow to make use of our Lord's resources! He does not force Himself upon us. Though He brings with Him gold tried in the fire that we may be enriched, and white raiment for our clothing, and eye-salve for our blindness; and though He knows how urgently we need these things, He will not force them on our acceptance. Rather, He stands and knocks, as a travelling merchant knocks at the door, who has wares to dispose of, and we need to open the door and receive the gifts which are offered, without money and without price (Rev3:18-20; Isa55:1-2).

Faith is our reception of the spiritual to make good the lack of the physical. It is a drawing on the Eternal for the deficiencies of our earthly pilgrimage. Probably when we look back on our present life, we shall find that our deficiencies were permitted, and even assigned, that we might be driven to avail ourselves of the fullness of the Lord Jesus (John1:16; Eph3:19). We were allowed to wander in the sultry heat, that we might know Him as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land; we were exposed to wild tempests and storms, that we might make for alcoves and harbours in Him that we should otherwise have missed.

It has been truly observed that Job's rebellious moods arose when he thought that God was afar off, but there was a difference when he realised that God was suffering with him. Remember that you are not divided from God by a deep chasm. He knows your sorrows. In all your afflictions He is afflicted. We have not a High Priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. When Jesus saw the sisters weeping, He not only succoured them, but entered into their distress, and wept with them.

Are you weary with burdens that are crushing you? Is your lot cast with them that hate peace? Is your heart oppressed with loneliness? Take Jesus into account. Don't face your difficulties alone, but meet them in the fellowship of your Saviour. Have faith, i.e., reckon on God. Let the Lord Christ dwell in your heart, and He will be responsible for all, as you reckon on Him for all.

PRAYER - O Lord, I open my nature, and since my capacity is small, I pray that by love and faith, by patience and suffering, Thou wilt enlarge my heart, that it may be filled with all the fullness of God. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

Hebrews 10:22 A Good Conscience

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, ... having a good conscience. —1 Peter 3:15-16

Read: 1 Peter 3:8-17 | Bible in a Year: 1 Chronicles 16-18; John 7:28-53

What does it take to have a good conscience? Well, if we could go through life without ever breaking any of God's laws, we would have nothing to feel guilty about. But I don't know anyone with that kind of record. Only Jesus Christ could confidently ask, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" and have no fear of being accused (Jn. 8:46).

Yet the apostle Peter told his readers to commit their hearts to the Lord God, "having a good conscience" (1 Pet. 3:15-16). And Paul encouraged Timothy to wage a good warfare, "having faith and a good conscience" (1 Tim. 1:19). On one occasion, when brought before some religious leaders who didn't like what he was saying, Paul even asserted, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1).

How is it possible for you to have a good conscience? The New Testament book of Hebrews presents Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death as your only hope of achieving it. Through faith in Him your heart can be "sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb. 10:22). And His blood can "cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (9:14).

Do you know the joy of a good conscience?

There is a treasure you can own

That's greater than a crown or throne;

This treasure is a conscience clear

That brings the sweetest peace and cheer. —Isenhour

A good conscience is one of the best friends you'll ever have.

Hebrews 10:22 A Cleansed Conscience

I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. —Acts 24:16

Read: Romans 2:12-16 | Bible in a Year: Deuteronomy 28-29; Mark 14:54-72

The much-loved children's story Pinocchio is about a wooden puppet whose nose grows long when he tells a lie. His friend Jiminy Cricket chirps, "Let your conscience be your guide." Pinocchio follows his advice, repents, and returns to Geppetto his creator, where he is given a heart of flesh and is freed from his strings.

There's a principle in this story for God's children. If we don't listen to that voice deep down inside that tells us what we should and should not do, we live in bondage. But a cleansed conscience brings freedom.

Some people have no strong basis for making godly decisions. Their conscience is weak, and they can be easily swayed by the behavior of others. Then there are those whose conscience is defiled. The standard by which they measure good and evil is

corrupted, polluted, and impure (Titus 1:15). But saddest of all are those who have a “seared” conscience (1 Timothy 4:2). They have resisted that inner voice for so long that they no longer hear what it has to say.

But you ask, “How can we have a cleansed conscience?” We must repent of our sin and return to our Creator. We must ask Him to conform our desires and behavior to His Word and then be careful to obey it.

There is a treasure you can own

That's greater than a crown or throne;

This treasure is a conscience clear

That brings the sweetest peace and cheer. —Isenhour

Conscience is a trustworthy compass when God's Word is your true north.

Hebrews 10:23 Hope Is For ...

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. —Hebrews 10:23

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 | Bible in a Year: Joshua 13-15; Luke 1:57-80

Although I try not to be shocked by the things I see these days, I was caught off-balance by the message on the woman's T-shirt as she walked past me in the mall. The bold letters declared: “Hope Is For Suckers.” Certainly, being naïve or gullible can be foolish and dangerous. Disappointment and heartache can be the tragic offspring of unfounded optimism. But not allowing oneself to have hope is a sad and cynical way to view life.

Biblical hope is unique; it's a confident trust in God and what He is doing in the world and in our lives. That's something everyone needs! The writer to the Hebrews clearly stated the importance of hope when he wrote, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:23).

Having biblical hope is not foolish, because it has a strong foundation. We hold fast to the hope we have received in Christ because our God is faithful. He can be trusted with anything and everything we will ever face—both for today and forever. Our hope is grounded in the trustworthy character of the God who loves us with an everlasting love. So, the T-shirt had it wrong. Hope is not for suckers; it's for you and for me!

My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest frame,

But wholly lean on Jesus' name. —Mote

Hope that has its foundation in God will not crumble under the pressures of life.

Hebrews 10:23 ABSOLUTELY TRUSTWORTHY

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 10:23

He is faithful

There was once a young boy whose dad left him on a downtown corner one morning and told him to wait there until he returned in about half an hour. But the father's car broke down and he could not get to a phone. Five hours went by before the father managed to get back, and he was worried that his son would be in a state of panic. But when the father got there, the boy was standing in front of the dime store, looking in the window and rocking back and forth on his heels. When the father saw him, he ran up to him and threw his arms around him and hugged and kissed him. The father apologized and said, "Weren't you worried? Did you think I was never coming back?" The boy looked up and replied, "No, Dad. I knew you were coming. You said you would."

Hebrews 10:23 PROMISE KEEPERS

He who promised is faithful.- Hebrews 10:23

Joe was a behind-the-scenes kind of person - quiet, unassuming, often unnoticed. To see him, you wouldn't think he had been carrying a heavy burden for more than 11 years. But Joe carried it well.

Every so often I would think about Joe. I hardly knew him, but just knowing what he had to live with encouraged my faith in God. Joe was being faithful to his wife, who for 11 years lay in the hospital following brain surgery. With the exception of just 2 or 3 days, Joe visited her in the hospital every day until she died.

Such unflinching fidelity is the stuff God-fearing men and women are made of. It's the fruit of the Spirit rooted in the hearts of people who hold firm to God's love through life's trials. And when you talk with these people, they take no credit for their fidelity but give God all the credit. One Sunday at church before Joe's wife died, I told him what an inspiration he was to me. He said humbly, "It's all by God's grace."

As we appropriate God's grace in Jesus Christ and persevere in faith, He gives us what we need to keep the promises we make according to His will. And when one day He says to us, "Well done," we will respond, "It's all because You were faithful in keeping Your promises to us." Dennis J. DeHaan

In scenes exalted or depressed,

Thou art our joy and Thou our rest;

Thy goodness all our hopes shall raise,

Adored through all our changing days.- Doddridge

Because God is faithful to us, we can be faithful to our promises.

Hebrews 10:23 As Good As His Word

Insurance agent Ken Specht had called on Medicus Robertson at the TV store where he worked. Robertson agreed to purchase a \$5,000 life insurance policy, which would double in value in case of his accidental death. Mr. Specht said that his company would cover the client until the formal policy application could be issued.

Just then an irate customer burst through the door and shot Robertson, killing him instantly. The insurance company later paid the widow \$10,000, minus the \$10.50 premium Robinson had not paid. Instead of seeking a legal loophole, the agent kept his word.

We who have put our trust in Jesus Christ for our salvation can be sure that God will keep His word. Because "He who promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:23), the author of Hebrews encouraged believers to boldly "draw near" to God, confident that He has accepted us and our sins have been forgiven (v.22). And we are to encourage one another to be faithful to Him because we know that He will one day return for us (vv.24-25).

We have a hope that is based on the trustworthy promises of God. Our future is secure. God has always proven Himself to be as good as His word. --DCE

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

To trust in God is not a gamble, it's a sure thing.

Hebrews 10:23 God's Promises are Dated

It has been said that God's promises are dated in heaven. And since we know only "in part," as the Bible says (I Cor. 13:12), we don't always know when they will be fulfilled. But that shouldn't matter, for we do have the confidence that God will keep them.

Suppose a wealthy man were to give you a note saying, "Sometime in the future, a time I've decided upon, you will receive \$50,000 that I have set aside for you." Although you might become impatient as you wait for the money, you confidently expect to get it. But if that same man were to say, "If everything works out, I might give you \$50,000," you'd expect the money only if he didn't go bankrupt, change his mind, forget his promise, or die. Of course, the first situation carries the greatest certainty. And that's the way it is in God's economy. He dates, as it were, many of His promises according to His sovereign will and in keeping with His perfect knowledge of what is best for us. This in no way diminishes the value of God's promises, for He backs them all with the infinite riches of His character. He never changes His mind. He never forgets His word. He never dies. God may seem to delay the fulfillment of a promise, but we can be encouraged that every promise is as good as His word.

Most of us have come to the end of our resources and then have discovered that at the right time and in the right way God imparted His strength. He was neither slow nor tardy. So don't be discouraged, Christian. Keep on claiming the promises. God is the faithful promiser. - P.R.V.

Hebrews 10:23 Absolutely Trustworthy

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. - VCG

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 10:24 Getting Fit

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. —Hebrews 10:24

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 81-83; Romans 11:19-36

You wouldn't think that Lou Joline needed any encouragement to keep running. At the age of 65, he has completed 61 marathons in 31 states and has been named one of the nation's top five "fittest over 50." But Joline can't do it alone. He relies on the support of three running clubs he belongs to. His advice to people who want to get more exercise is to make it a social event. "Get in with a group," he says. "If your friends are doing it, you're going to do it."

Although we may embrace that approach to physical fitness, many of us think we can make it on our own spiritually. Yet, if we're

going to be fit in our faith, we need each other. In Hebrews we read, “Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (10:24-25).

Are you involved in a local church congregation? Do you attend a small group for Bible study? Do you have a friend with whom you can bare your soul and pray? Do you need to broaden your opportunities for fellowship?

If we’re going to be spiritually fit, we need all the encouragement and support we can get.

Christian fellowship provides us

With encouragement and love;

It will help us in our journey,

Till we reach our home above. —Sper

Spiritual fitness should be a team effort.

Hebrews 10:24 Setting An Example

All my life, I have heard the top-tier of Major League Baseball players referred to as “five-tool players” because they excel in all aspects of the game. The five tools, of course, are hitting for average, hitting for power, running, fielding, and throwing.

On one MLB broadcast, however, the announcers referred to Albert Pujols, a future Hall-of-Fame inductee, as even more—they called him a “six-tool player.” In addition to the other five tools, they added attitude—a passion for the game that breeds a determination to win at all costs. It is this attitude that, in superior players like Pujols, enables them to elevate the play of their teammates. The spirit with which they play the game causes everyone around them to try harder and to give more of themselves. The 6-tool player is more than an athlete—he is a catalyst for excellence of effort in a game that is rooted in taking it easy because of the demands of a 162-game schedule. Pujols goes all out, and his teammates respond.

In a sense, as followers of Christ, we are called upon to bring that sixth tool to the body of Christ. As players like Pujols can stimulate their teammates to do more and do better, our times of fellowship can have a similar spiritual influence on our brothers and sisters in Christ. Hebrews 10:24 tells us:

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds...”

We can be a force for encouragement and challenge that can help others in the church to be committed to serving Christ and serving one another in ways they might have never attempted, had someone not shown the way. By God’s grace and strength, we can be that someone for fellow believers in our own circle of spiritual influence. Who knows whose game might be challenged and strengthened if they see us go all out for the kingdom.

Bill Crowder, Sports Spectrum Chaplain

Hebrews 10:24 Johnny’s Race

Comfort each other and edify one another. —1 Thessalonians 5:11

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 | Bible in a Year: Daniel 5-7; 2 John

When 19-year-old Johnny Agar finished the 5k race, he had a lot of people behind him—family members and friends who were celebrating his accomplishment.

Johnny has cerebral palsy, which makes physical activity difficult. But he and his dad, Jeff, have teamed up to compete in many races—Dad pushing and Johnny riding. But one day, Johnny wanted to finish by himself. Halfway through the race, his dad took him out of his cart, helped him to his walker, and assisted Johnny as he completed the race on his own two feet. That led to a major celebration as friends and family cheered his accomplishment. “It made it easier for me to do it with them behind me,” Johnny told a reporter. “The encouragement is what drove me.”

Isn’t that what Christ-followers are meant to do? Hebrews 10:24 reminds us, “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (niv). As we model the love of our Savior (John 13:34-35), imagine the difference it could make if we all set out to encourage each other—if we always knew that behind us we had a group of friends cheering us on. If we took the words “comfort each other and edify one another” (1 Thess. 5:11) seriously, the race would be easier for all of us.

Help us, Lord, not to think that we can go through

life without others. Cure us of our independent
spirit. Use us to bless others and humble
us to accept encouragement.

A word of encouragement can make the difference between giving up or going on.

INSIGHT: The "Holiest" (Heb. 10:19) was a reference to the Holy of Holies in ancient Israel's tabernacle and temple. It was viewed as the dwelling place of God among His people and could only be entered once a year, and then only by the high priest. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would take the blood of the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies to atone for the people's sins for another year. However, the work of our High Priest, Jesus, is so complete that we now have the freedom to enter into God's presence at any time. In fact, we can enter boldly because as a result of Christ's sacrifice we are welcomed into the Father's presence. This intimate relationship we have with our Father causes us to want to share His grace with others.

Hebrews 10:24 Grasshopper Sense

One grasshopper seems insignificant as it leaps across a field. But when it joins forces with other grasshoppers, the resulting swarm can soon devour all the vegetation in its path.

Grasshoppers demonstrate the power of working together for a common cause. What they cannot do individually, they are able to accomplish together. In the Old Testament book of Proverbs, the wise man Agur observed, "The locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks" (30:27).

We can learn a lesson from these little creatures. Followers of Christ can make far greater advances for Him when they act and pray together than they could ever make alone. When Christians are united in serving the Lord, they can become a mighty force for God in fulfilling His purposes for the church.

Although the New Testament urges us to possess a personal faith in Jesus Christ, it says nothing at all about a private faith. We need other believers, and other believers need us (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Let's enjoy and contribute to the strength and fellowship of the unified body of Christ. An effective church will demonstrate the good sense of the grasshopper by our cooperation and unity in the Holy Spirit. —Haddon W. Robinson

We Christians have a kinship with

All others who believe,

And from that bond of faith and love

A mutual strength receive. —Hess

We can accomplish more together than we can alone.

Hebrews 10:24-25 More Than Socializing

Church can be a great place to get caught up on the latest football games, golf scores, family news, health concerns, or just to visit with friends. A cup of coffee together, a warm handshake, a friendly pat on the back are all part of the social interaction we need as human beings.

All of this is good, but New Testament fellowship goes much deeper than merely socializing when we get together at church. It takes place when we consider how we can lift up, build up, and brighten up our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Bible clearly says that we are to "serve one another" (Galatians 5:13), forgive as we are forgiven (Ephesians 4:32), and "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2). From the first century, believers have gathered in Jesus' name to "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" and to exhort one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Christian fellowship takes place when we offer encouragement to our friends, pray for them, and confess our sins and weaknesses to one another. These are the elements that make fellowship genuine.

What about your church? Are you merely socializing? Or are you practicing true Christian fellowship?

—David C. Egner

We Christians have a kinship with

All others who believe,

And from that bond of faith and love

A mutual strength receive. —Hess

Christian fellowship builds us up and binds us together.

Hebrews 10:24-25 Why Go?

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. —Hebrews 10:24-25

Read: Psalm 122:1-9 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 20-22; Acts 21:1-17

It's Sunday morning, and our neighborhood is alive with activities. One neighbor is backing his boat out of the driveway as his family prepares for a day on the lake. Another sits comfortably on his front porch reading the newspaper. My daughter's friend calls and asks her to go to a basketball game. At the same time, our family is racing to find a missing pair of shoes so we can get to church on time.

Has that ever happened around your house? If so, you may feel as if you're swimming upstream against a current of apathy. It might even be easy to give in and give up going to church. Before you do that, think about what you'll miss.

* The joy of gathering with others who love to praise God for His greatness (Ps. 122:1).

* The encouragement, care, and unity that occurs when believers meet together (1 Cor. 12:25).

* Obedience to God's command to meet together regularly (Heb. 10:25-26).

* The instruction, edification, and challenge that come from the teaching of God's Word (2 Tim. 4:2).

No other Sunday activity can replace what you'll get by meeting with fellow believers. See you there!

Our week's not complete till we make it our goal

To honor the Lord's Day and nourish our soul;

The help that we need for the tasks that we face

Will come as we worship and draw on God's grace. —DJD

Christians are like coals of fire—together they glow; apart they grow cold.

Hebrews 10:24-25 When You Feel Alone

Cornerback may be the toughest position in all of professional football. It is not merely a matter of the skills needed or the challenges faced—it is because cornerbacks are so utterly exposed. Most of the time, NFL corners are asked to match up against the opposition's best receivers, and to do so one-on-one. Sure, there are times when defenses will go into zone coverages, cover-two defenses, double-teams, and the like. But the cornerback is usually on his own. To be a corner in the NFL is to spend most of your time on an island, where every failure is magnified because it takes place out in the open for everyone to see. It is the kind of isolation that can be hard for some players to deal with. It's tough to feel like you are fighting the battle alone.

Sometimes, as followers of Christ, we can also feel like we are fighting the battles of life alone. We can feel exposed and even abandoned—as if the entire outcome depends on us, and we don't have any help.

If you are feeling alone and isolated today, I would encourage you to remember two things. First, Christ is still there. He has promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrew 13:5 NKJV). His promise to never abandon us is a huge thing—and something we should not quickly forget.

Second, the body of Christ is there. As fellow Christ followers, we need one another and need to be willing to turn to one another in those times when we feel cut off and alone. The writer of Hebrews helps us here as well, when he writes, "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25 NASB).

We are to embrace a sense of responsibility for one another, to help and encourage one another—so that none of us feels abandoned or alone. We were not created for isolation, but for community. So when we are hurting, we need to reach out to Christ

and to His people. And when others are hurting, we should seek to help. None of us should have to be alone on an island. We all share the need for community.

Bill Crowder, Sports Spectrum Chaplain

Hebrews 10:24-25 Silent Sermon

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another. —Colossians 3:16

Read: Colossians 3:12-17; Hebrews 10:24-25 | Bible in a Year: Ecclesiastes 10-12; Galatians 1

How important is our fellowship in the local church? Let me answer that question by telling a story.

A minister was concerned about the absence of a man who had normally attended services. After a few weeks, he decided to visit him. When the pastor arrived at the man's home, he found him all alone, sitting in front of a fireplace. The minister pulled up a chair and sat next to him. But after his initial greeting he said nothing more.

The two sat in silence for a few minutes while the minister stared at the flames in the fireplace. Then he took the tongs and carefully picked up one burning ember from the flames and placed it on the hearth. He sat back in his chair, still silent. His host watched in quiet reflection as the ember flickered and faded. Before long it was cold and dead.

The minister glanced at his watch and said he had to leave, but first he picked up the cold ember and placed it back in the fire. Immediately it began to glow again with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the minister rose to leave, his host stood with him and shook his hand. Then, with a smile on his face, the man said, "Thanks for the sermon, pastor. I'll see you in church on Sunday."

Lord, help us see how much we need each other

As we walk along the Christian way;

In fellowship with sister and with brother,

You will keep us growing day by day. —Hess

The warm fellowship of the church will keep your heart from growing cold.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Power of Encouragement

It wasn't like Scott Kregel to give up. He was a battler, a dedicated athlete who spent hour after hour perfecting his three throw and jump shot during the hot summer months of 1987. But just before fall practice everything changed. A serious car accident left Scott in a coma for several days. When he awoke, a long rehabilitation process lay ahead. Like most patients with closed head injuries, Scott balked at doing the slow, tedious work that was required to get him back to normal—things such as stringing beads. What high school junior would enjoy that?

Tom Martin, Scott's basketball coach at the Christian school he attended, had an idea. Coach Martin told Scott that he would reserve a spot on the varsity for him—if he would cooperate with his therapist and show progress in the tasks he was asked to do. And Tom's wife Cindy spent many hours with Scott, encouraging him to keep going. Within 2 months, Scott was riding off the basketball court on his teammates' shoulders. He had made nine straight free throws to clinch a triple-overtime league victory. It was a remarkable testimony of the power of encouragement.

Hebrews 10:24-25 The Right Place

People stay away from church for many reasons. Maybe the weather is bad, or it's a busy day, or they don't like guest speakers.

It's especially sad when people stay away from church because they are troubled or hurting. When their hearts ache, they need to be in fellowship with God's people. If they've received devastating news about their health, finances, or a family member, what better place is there to be?

One Friday, a pastor's wife went to a medical office for an ultrasound of her unborn baby. The technician suddenly became silent and then called for her doctor. He confirmed what was suspected—the baby was dead. The next day she underwent a procedure that removed the baby from her womb.

By Sunday morning she felt okay physically but wondered if she should stay home from church. She later wrote, "In the end, I

decided to go... Somewhere in the midst of the beloved hymns and familiar choruses, a feeling of peace washed over me. Yes, I was in the right place... We celebrated communion, and I was fully enveloped in my Father's presence, my soul anchored in the shelter of God's sanctuary."

Church—it's the right place to be. —DCE —David C. Egner

Our week's not complete till we make it our goal

To honor the Lord's Day and nourish our soul;

The help that we need for the trials we face

Will come as we worship and draw on God's grace. —D. De Haan

We all need Christian fellowship to build us up and hold us up

Hebrews 10:24-25 Grouped For Strength

Several years ago, former American prisoners of war were interviewed to determine what methods used by the enemy had been most effective in breaking their spirit. Researchers learned that the prisoners didn't break down from physical deprivation and torture as quickly as they did from solitary confinement or from being frequently moved around and separated from friends. It was further learned that the soldiers drew their greatest strength from the close attachments they had formed to the small military units to which they belonged.

These observations give us insight into why Christians need the group experience of fellowship with other believers to help them remain loyal to the Lord. Our own personal relationship to God, vital as that is, is not sufficient to produce spiritual maturity and endurance. Relationships within a unified, Spirit-filled body of believers are essential for growth and for maintaining our individual faithfulness to the Savior (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Sometimes we would rather not be involved in church life, thinking it's easier just to go it alone. But Christians who do that miss out on all the benefits. Let's remember that God in His wisdom has grouped us for strength. —MRD II —Mart De Haan

Fellowship with other Christians

Strengthens us when we are weak,

Comforts us when we are hurting,

Helps us when God's will we seek. —Sper

Believers stand strong when they don't stand alone.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Church Attendance

Some people don't need much of an excuse to stay home from church. If it even looks like it might rain, they don't want to risk getting a little wet.

The hymn writer Frances Havergal gave several reasons for attending church—especially on rainy days.

1. God has blessed the Lord's Day, making no exceptions for stormy days.
2. I expect my minister to be there. I would be surprised if he stayed at home because of the weather.
3. I might lose out on the prayers and the sermon that would have done me great good.
4. For important business, rain doesn't keep me home; and church is, in God's sight, very important.
5. Bad weather will prove how much I love Christ. True love rarely fails to keep an appointment.
6. Those who stay home from church because it's rainy frequently miss on fair Sundays, too. I mustn't take one step in that direction.
7. Christ said that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).
8. I don't know how many more Sundays God may give me. It would be poor preparation for my first Sunday in heaven to have

slighted my last one on earth.

Enough said! P.R.V.

Hebrews 10:24-25 Why Bother With Church?

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. —Hebrews 10:24-25

Read: Ephesians 4:1-16 | Bible in a Year: Job 32-33; Acts 14

Winston Churchill once said that he related to the church rather like a flying buttress: He supported it from the outside. (A flying buttress is an external support that reinforces the walls of old cathedrals.) I tried that strategy for a while, after coming to believe Christian doctrine sincerely and committing myself to God.

I am not alone. Fewer people attend church on Sunday than claim to follow Christ. Some feel burned by a former experience. Others simply “get nothing out of church.” Why bother?

Today, I could hardly imagine life without church. Church has filled a need for me that can't be met in any other way. An early-church leader wrote, “The virtuous soul that is alone ... is like the burning coal that is alone. It will grow colder rather than hotter.”

Christianity is not a purely intellectual, internal faith. It can be lived only in community. At a deep level, I sense that church contains something I desperately need. Whenever I abandoned church for a time, I found that I was the one who suffered. My faith faded, and the crusty shell of lovelessness grew over me again. I grew colder rather than hotter.

And so, my journeys away from church have always circled back to the church.

We join our hearts and hands together,

Faithful to the Lord's command;

We hold each other to God's standards—

All that truth and love demand. —D. De Haan

The church is not a select circle for a few but a spiritual center open to all.

Hebrews 10:24-25 Encouraging Words

Let us consider one another, ... exhorting one another. —Hebrews 10:24-25

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 26-28; Acts 22

Amy had just about had it with her lively 2-year-old. The week had been difficult as she tried to stay ahead of her little tornado. Over and over again Amy had to say no or give patient reminders about correct behavior. It required vast amounts of emotional energy.

Then came the Sunday evening service. There was no junior church, and her little girl was at her wiggly, loud-whisper, constant-motion best. At one point all that could be seen was her feet sticking straight up in the air as she lay on the pew. Amy was frustrated and embarrassed. What must the older couple sitting right behind her be thinking?

As she came into the church the next week, she ran into the older gentleman. “Uh-oh,” she said to herself, “Here it comes.” She was surprised by what he said. “What a great little girl you have. She's a special gift from God to you.” It was just the kind of understanding and encouragement she needed to make the task of mothering her active little girl easier.

We go to church for a lot of reasons—worship, giving, learning. According to Hebrews 10:24-25, we are also there to encourage one another. Perhaps today you can offer the kind of encouraging word that lifted Amy.

Thinking It Over

How have you been encouraged by someone recently?

How can you become more responsive to people

who need an encouraging word?

A few kind words can make the difference between giving up and going on.

Hebrews 10:25

The Man Who Refused to Attend Church

A book in my library includes a humorous tale about a man who refused to attend church. When a pastor asked him why, he answered, "I don't go to church because every time I do they throw something at me." "What do you mean?" the preacher inquired. The man went on to explain. "When I was just a baby and my parents took me to church, the minister threw water on me. When I got married, the wedding ceremony took place in a church, and they threw rice at me."

Hearing this the pastor quickly responded, "And if you don't start going to church soon, the next time you do I'm afraid they'll throw DIRT on you!"

Sadly, this describes the situation for many people. As far as church attendance is concerned, it's "three times and out." They go to church to be baptized, married, and buried—and that's about all. For an obedient child of God, however, that will never do. He does not forsake "the assembling together commanded in Hebrews 10:25. Rather, thanking God for the church, the dedicated believer takes advantage of the opportunities his local assembly offers for fellowship, for the ministry of God's Word, for the observance of the ordinances, and for service. The church is a special blessing that God Himself has provided for believers. - R.W.D.

Hebrews 10:25 June Freeze

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some. —Hebrews 10:25

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 | Bible in a Year: 2 Samuel 23-24; Luke 19:1-27

An infant requires at least four things: food, fresh air, exercise, and the help of others. This is also true in the spiritual realm. We need food (Bible study), fresh air (praying), exercise (service and witnessing), and help from others (fellowship in a good church). A follower of Christ who neglects any of these four practices cannot expect to be well-rounded and growing in his spiritual life.

This reminds me of a story about a man named Bill. He had never gone to church in his life. No matter how much he was coaxed, he couldn't be persuaded to attend even on a special day such as Christmas or Easter. "When it freezes in June," he would say, "then I will go to church."

One year there was an unusually cold spring, and it stayed that way into June. The first part of the month the temperature dipped to freezing for several nights. Everyone thought about Bill and what he had said. Perhaps this spell of cold weather would finally get him to attend church.

It did! One Sunday, Bill made his first appearance in the church building—while the organ played softly. Six men carried him in! Bill finally made it, but he was lying in a casket instead of sitting in a pew.

Don't be like old Bill!

I love to be with God's people,

To read the Bible and pray,

To sing the songs of salvation,

So I'll go to church today. —Hess

Those who think they don't need church don't think much of the one who founded it.

Hebrews 10:25 Going Down

January 23 | Tom Felten | Emphasis: accountability

"Let us not give up meeting together." Hebrews 10:25

I knew I was going down. My ankle had caved as I came down awkwardly on my opponent's foot. As I hit the gym floor, that familiar, unforgettable pain (I've sprained my ankles several times) radiated up my leg.

As I sat on the floor holding my quivering ankle up in the air, some of my fellow hoopsters tried to console me. Then, two of them placed my arms on their shoulders and helped me hop off the court to the locker room.

A couple of players rushed to get ice. Another filled a bucket with water for the ice. One guy ran for some Ibuprofen.

Later, more guys came in and offered encouraging words and heart-lifting banter. I felt blessed. In pain, but blessed.

Where do you go when the bottom drops out of your life? A "roached" ankle is one thing, but the pain can be unbearable when the very foundation of your life gives way. Marriage problems, child crises, job loss, moral failure—many things can drop us to the floor.

One reason God gave us the church, the body of Christ, is to provide strength and support. I had to reach for the guys who helped me get up off the gym floor. I had to open my hand and receive the care and medication being offered me.

Take the words, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:25) to heart. Grow in your accountability and fellowship with strong believers in Christ.

You never know when you may go down.

From the playbook: Read Hebrews 10:19–25.

Hebrews 10:25 DON'T MISS IT!

At the time these words were written, Jewish believers were experiencing great persecution. They were being watched, beaten, and some were even killed. Any defection from their profession of faith was a source of great satisfaction to the enemies of Christ. One way which demonstrated to the world that they were holding "fast the profession of ... [their] faith" (Heb 10:23) was their assembling together. Matthew Henry wrote, "Forced absence from God's ordinances and forced presence with wicked 'people are great afflictions; but when the force ceases and such a situation is continued of choice, then it becomes a great sin." Some are unavoidably detained from meeting with other believers. Pro-longed illness, an unalterable work schedule, residence in a re-mote area — these could be legitimate reasons why one could not gather with other Christians, for fellowship and instruction. To such comes the encouragement of His Word, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

Every Christian should desire to be with God's people when they assemble. The church service is where the power of the Word is brought to bear upon the hearts and lives of those who profess to be children of God. I remember well the little widow in our home church who with her eight children walked nearly two miles summer and winter in order to meet with other Christians. She has seen the influence of that training multiplied in the lives of her son and daughters.

Christ's promise to be "in the midst" should be sufficient incentive for every believer to be present.

I love Thy church, O God!

I prize her heavenly ways;

Her sweet communion, solemn vows,

Her hymns of love and praise. — Dwight

CH __ CH means nothing unless UR in it!

Hebrews 10:25

Should You Be "Court Martialed?"

A minister once asked a G.I. to give a few words of testimony. The congregation had just sung, "Like a mighty army moves the Church of God," so when the young soldier arose he said, "You might have been able to sing that hymn some years ago without anyone challenging you, but now millions of men know exactly how an army does move. And it doesn't operate the way a lot of you do. Suppose the military accepted the lame excuses you present as an alibi for not attending services. Imagine this if you can. Reveille sounds, and the squads form on parade ground. The Sergeant barks out, 'Count off! One, two, three ... say, number four is missing. Where's Private Smith?' 'Oh,' says a chap nearby, 'Mr. Smith was too sleepy to get up this morning. He was out late last night and needed the rest. He said to tell you he would be with you in spirit.' 'That's fine,' says the sergeant, 'remember me to him. But where is Brown?' 'Oh, he's playing golf. He gets only one day a week for recreation, and you know how important that is.' 'Sure, sure,' says the sergeant cheerfully, 'I hope he has a good game. Where's Robinson?' 'Robinson,' explains the buddy, 'is sorry not to greet you in per-son but he is entertaining guests today. Besides, he was at drill last week.' 'Thank you,' says the sergeant smiling. 'Tell him he is welcome any time he finds it convenient to drop in for drill.' Honestly, folks, did a conversation like that ever happen in any army? Why, if any G.I. tried to pull that stuff, he would get twenty days in the brig! Yet you hear things like that every week in church. 'Like a mighty army!' Why, if this church really moved like a mighty army, a lot of folks would be court-martialed within the hour!"

Christian, read Hebrews 10:25 again and then ask yourself, "Should I be court-martialed?"

Suppose you had to "run" for church membership each year on the basis of what you had done for Christ during that period, would you be "re-elected"?

Hebrews 10:26

Willful, Determined Renunciation

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 10:29

Half-Baked Christians

The prophet Hosea used the tribe of Ephraim as a poetic representation of the northern kingdom of Israel. In a colorful admonition, he wrote that Ephraim had become "a cake unturned" (Hosea 7:8).

In today's terminology, the prophet might have said that Ephraim was "half-baked." The people were like a pancake burned on one side but raw on the other. Although they took advantage of the Lord's goodness, they did not seek Him with their heart. When they needed help, they turned to other sources (vv.10-11,14-16). They had become tasteless and useless to God, so He was forced to judge them.

Jesus echoed the words of the prophet. Although He had gentle words for penitent sinners, He gave a scathing rebuke to the haughty and self-righteous who wanted to live as they pleased. He was furious at two-faced religious leaders who talked a good talk but turned around and exploited their followers (Matthew 23:13-30).

God is never soft on sin. He sent His only Son to redeem us from sin's penalty (John 3:16). Let's not be half-baked Christians, claiming God's forgiveness but still living as we please. The only fitting response to God's mercy and grace is to serve Him in humility and love.—Haddon W. Robinson

Thinking It Through

What is the basis of our salvation? (Ephesians 2:8-9).

How are we to respond to God's grace? (v.10).

How does God correct His children? (Hebrews 12:5-11).

God's grace is not license to live as we please—it's liberty to please God.

Hebrews 10:31

Those who do not obey the gospel ... shall be punished with everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

During the Franco-German War of 1870-71, a homeowner found two unexploded shells near his house. He cleaned them up and put them on display near his fireplace. A few weeks later he showed them to a visitor. His friend, an expert in munitions, had a horrible thought. "What if they're still loaded?" After examining the shells, he ex-claimed, "Get them away from the fire immediately! They're as deadly as the day they were made!" Without realizing it, the homeowner had been living in peril.

Likewise, many people unknowingly live in constant jeopardy of something far worse—a Christ-less eternity in hell. Failing to recognize the consequences of unbelief, they risk sealing their doom at any moment. We cannot exaggerate the danger of rejecting Christ and living in unbelief, for what we do with Him and His offer of salvation determines where we will spend eternity.

The words of our text are among the most chilling found in the Bible. They emphasize the truth of Hebrews 10:31 : that it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Our Lord describes hell as a terrible place of outer darkness (Matt. 22:13) and eternal hopelessness (Matt. 18:8-9) . —H.G.B.

When it comes to salvation, he who hesitates may be lost!

Hebrews 10:31 The Ultimate Tragedy

It was an immense tragedy. More than two million pilgrims had gathered outside Mecca to take part in an annual religious event

when something caused a stampede. After the dust had settled, nearly 200 people lay dead, trampled in the mad rush.

Imagine the irony! These worshipers were attempting to get closer to God. When they died, however, they found out sooner than they ever imagined whether their devotion had brought them nearer to God or not.

The real tragedy of the situation was not in the deaths themselves, as heart-wrenching as that is. Death spares no one, though its icy grip ensnares some before others. It's not death that is the ultimate tragedy but death without Jesus Christ. For any person who does not know Jesus Christ as Savior, the tragedy of death is compounded by eternal separation from God (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Hebrews 10:31).

Acts of religious devotion do not gain for us access into God's eternal presence. Entrance to heaven is a free gift, received by faith in Christ—believing that He lived, died, and rose from the grave to rescue us from the penalty of sin.

If you're not depending on Jesus, you'll suffer the ultimate tragedy. Don't let it happen to you. —JDB —Dave Branon

Salvation is a gift of God,

Not something earned or won;

He freely gives eternal life

To all who trust His Son. —Sper

You can have tons of religion without an ounce of salvation.

Hebrews 10:32 A Word For The Struggler

August 21, 2014

Do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. —Hebrews 10:35

Read: Hebrews 10:32-39 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 107-109; 1 Corinthians 4

There is an old adage that says, "Don't bite off more than you can chew." It's wise not to take on more responsibilities than we can handle. At some time, however, we will likely feel overwhelmed by the size and difficulty of a task we have agreed to do.

This can happen even in our walk of faith in Christ when our commitment to God seems too much to bear. But the Lord has an encouraging word for us when our confidence wavers.

The writer of Hebrews urged his readers to recall the courage they demonstrated during the early days of their faith (10:32-33). Despite public insults and persecution, they aided believers in prison, and they joyfully accepted the confiscation of their own property (vv.33-34). With that in mind, he says, "Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (vv.35-36).

Our confidence is not in ourselves but in Jesus and His promise to return at just the right time (v.37).

It is God's power that enables us to continue in our journey of faith. Recalling the Lord's faithfulness in days past stirs our confidence in Him today.

When life becomes a heavy load,

An upward climb, a winding road,

In daily tasks, Lord, let me see

That with me You will always be. —D. DeHaan

Trusting God's faithfulness stirs up our confidence.

INSIGHT: Severely opposed and persecuted, Jewish Christians were pressured to abandon Christianity and to revert to Judaism. The unnamed writer of Hebrews encouraged them to continue in the faith by affirming the preeminence, superiority, and sufficiency of Christ through His person and position (Heb. 1–4) and His work of propitiation (Hebrews 5–10). He also warned them against rejecting Christ (Heb 2:1-3; 3:7-15; 6:4-6). Here, in his final exhortation, he reminded them of their exemplary faithfulness in enduring the mistreatments thus far (Heb 10:32-34) and of the great reward that would be theirs if they persevered (Heb 10:35-36). He was confident that they would succeed (Heb 10:39).

Hebrews 10:32-39

Trudging the Trail

On a warm summer afternoon, three young people and I decided to hike along a five-mile stretch of the picturesque Tahquamenon River in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. We started out with energy and vigor, taking the first few hundred yards with ease. But then the path began to twist and turn as it followed the river's course. We trudged through low, muddy areas and scrambled up steep ridges. Fallen trees blocked the path, and we had to climb over or crawl under. To cross some of the creeks that flowed into the river, we either jumped or walked gingerly along narrow logs. We weren't sure how far we had to go or what lay ahead. Yet we knew our friends would be waiting at the end of the trail, so we had to keep going.

When we did stop for a brief rest, we talked about some parallels between our obstacle-ridden walk and the Christian life. We usually begin our Christian walk with great vigor, excited about our salvation. But it isn't long before we come upon the twists and turns of temptations and trials. We can get mired in the mud of mediocrity or plunge from the peaks of pride. All sorts of dangers and difficulties block our path. We aren't sure what's ahead, and we get weary and discouraged. But we know what awaits us in eternity, so we "run with endurance" the path that is set before us.

All of us get discouraged and tired at times. How pleasant it would be to stay where we are. When that temptation hovers, we must take a deep breath of the Spirit and keep moving on. For rich rewards await us at the end of the trail. —D.C.E.

Falling drops at last will wear the stone.—Lucretius

Hugh Latimer, the great English Reformer.

On one notable occasion Latimer preached before Henry VIII and offended Henry with his boldness. So Latimer was commanded to preach the following weekend and make an apology. On that following Sunday, after reading the text, he addressed himself as he began to preach:

Hugh Latimer, dost thou know before whom thou art this day to speak? To the high and mighty monarch, the king's most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life if thou offendest; therefore, take heed that thou speakest not a word that may displease; but then consider well, Hugh, dost thou not know from whence thou comest; upon whose message thou art sent? Even by the great and mighty God! who is all-present, and who beholdeth all thy ways, and who is able to cast thy soul into hell! Therefore, take care that thou deliverest thy message faithfully.

He then gave Henry the same sermon he had preached the week before—only with more energy!

Hebrews 10:34

Real Estate in Heaven

THIS is well. Our substance here is very unsubstantial; there is no substance in it. But God has given us a promise of real estate in the glory-land, and that promise comes to our hearts with such full assurance of its certainty that we know in ourselves that we have an enduring substance there. Yes, "we have" it even now. They say, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," but we have our bird in the bush and in the hand too. Heaven is even now our own. We have the title deed of it, we have the earnest of it, we have the first fruits of it. We have heaven in price, in promise, and in principle: this we know not only by the hearing of the ear, but "in ourselves."

Should not the thought of the better substance on the other side of Jordan reconcile us to present losses? Our spending money we may lose, but our treasure is safe. We have lost the shadows, but the substance remains; for our Savior lives, and the place which He has prepared for us abides. There is a better land, a better substance, a better promise; and all this comes to us by a better covenant. Wherefore, let us be in better spirits, and say unto the Lord, "Every day will I bless thee; and praise thy name for ever and ever." (Spurgeon, C: Faith's Checkbook)

Hebrews 10:36 A Timely Letter

Young William Wilberforce was discouraged one night in the early 1790s after another defeat in his 10 year battle against the slave trade in England. Tired and frustrated, he opened his Bible and began to leaf through it. A small piece of paper fell out and fluttered to the floor. It was a letter written by John Wesley shortly before his death. Wilberforce read it again: "Unless the divine power has raised you up... I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that (abominable practice of slavery), which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh,

be not weary of well-doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might."

Hebrews 10:36 Hold On!

"You need to persevere." Hebrews 10:36

Imagine what it would be like to be an Olympian, proudly representing your country at the Opening Ceremonies—smiling and waving to more than 100,000 people as they cheer for you.

Perhaps you would even finish in the Top Three and receive a gold, silver, or bronze medal.

Picturing yourself as a famous Olympic athlete can be fun, and if you're an athlete it can motivate you to work hard. No matter how lofty your goal, though, things come up that cause you to feel like quitting.

But even the excitement of the goal is not always enough to keep you going. LaVonna Floreal, 1992 100-meter hurdles Olympic silver medalist, remembers what it was like to pursue Olympic dreams when she felt like giving up. To block distractions, she would focus on a target and work everything else around that mark. In her words, "it's like having a circle with a point in the middle that you can always see unless you turn your back away from it."

Endurance is perseverance. It is pressing on when you want to stop because of obstacles, trials, or ridicule. LaVonna learned how to endure hardships as an athlete in order to reach her goal. Still today, she applies the disciplines she learned as an athlete to her Christian walk and her goal of glorifying God.

Each day we face temptations and obstacles that can cause us to sin or falter in our walk of faith. Yet as a successful athlete continues to persevere, so should we. "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess," the author of Hebrews says (10:23). When we do that, nothing can stop us from doing what God wants us to do.

Hebrews 10:36 How Many Times Have Your been Thrown?

The story is told that Andrew Jackson's boyhood friends just couldn't understand how he became a famous general and then the President of the United States. They knew of other men who had greater talent but who never succeeded. One of Jackson's friends said, "Why, Jim Brown, who lived right down the pike from Jackson, was not only smarter but he could throw Andy three times out of four in a wrestling match. But look where Andy is now." Another friend responded, "How did there happen to be a fourth time? Didn't they usually say three times and out?" "Sure, they were supposed to, but not Andy. He would never admit he was beat -- he would never stay 'thrown.' Jim Brown would get tired, and on the fourth try Andrew Jackson would throw him and be the winner." Picking up on that idea, someone has said, "The thing that counts is not how many times you are 'thrown,' but whether you are willing to stay 'thrown.'" We may face setbacks, but we must take courage and go forward in faith. Then, through the Holy Spirit's power we can be the eventual victor over sin and the world. The battle is the Lord's, so there is no excuse for us to stay "thrown"!

Hebrews 10:36 Let's Keep Digging

Scottish physician A. J. Cronin (1896-1981) was forced by illness to take a leave of absence from his medical practice. He then decided to write a novel. But when half done, he became disheartened and threw his manuscript into a garbage can.

Totally discouraged, Cronin was walking the Scottish Highlands and saw a man digging in a bog, trying to drain it for use as a pasture. As Cronin talked with him, the man said, "My father dug at this bog and never made a pasture. But my father knew and I know that it's only by digging you can make a pasture. So I keep on digging."

Rebuked and remotivated, Cronin went home, picked his manuscript out of the garbage can, and finished it. That novel, *Hatter's Castle*, sold three million copies. Cronin left his medical practice and became a world-famous writer.

At times, you and I may feel trapped by circumstances that demand patience and persistence. Are we willing to keep digging away at whatever "bog" God has assigned to us?

The book of Hebrews tells us that we have "need of endurance" (10:36), and that we must "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (12:1). How? By "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (v.2). With Christ as our example, let's keep on digging! —Vernon C Grounds

Whatever you're doing for Jesus today,

Be sure to keep at it—don't stop or delay;

If you are discouraged, don't give up your place,

For God will sustain you by His matchless grace. —Hess

In serving the Lord, it's always too soon to quit.

Hebrews 10:37 Contained But Not Extinguished

For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. —Hebrews 10:37

Read: Hebrews 10:19-39 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 94-96; Romans 15:14-33

In June 2012, the Waldo Canyon fire destroyed 346 homes in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and burned more than 18,000 acres of mountain forest. The fire was declared 100-percent contained when perimeter lines had been built around the entire area of the blaze. It had been confined to a defined area until it could be fully extinguished. A fire information official warned residents that they might continue to see smoke in the burn area because even though the fire was fully contained it “is not controlled and it is not out.”

When our world is rocked by tragic events and evil acts, we long for the day when evil will finally be destroyed and God will bring history to a close and fully establish His kingdom. Until that time, however, the Lord gives us His grace to live purposeful lives of faith as we await His coming. In Hebrews 10, we are urged to draw near to God with sincere hearts (v.22); hold fast to the hope we profess (v.23); spur each other on to love and good works (v.24); and continue meeting together for encouragement “and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (v.25).

Until the time God extinguishes the fires of evil forever, He gives us His grace and strength to endure the trials of life as we look forward to His return.

Dear Lord, thank You for the grace You give us to live

each day for Your glory. We look forward to the day

when You return, all evil will be extinguished, and

we will live with You in perfect harmony forever.

Jesus is coming—perhaps today!