

HEBREWS

Jesus sustains creation (1:1-4)

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets, on many occasions and in a variety of ways. ²Now, however, He has spoken to us through His Son, whom He has made the heir of everything that has been created. For through Jesus, God created the entire universe, and He is the One who shines with God's own glory.

³When He became man He expressed God's nature perfectly. Not only is He the Word through whom everything was brought into being, but the whole of creation is sustained through Him.

The reason He became man was to provide the means by which we can be purified from all our sins. This He accomplished, and so He now sits in triumph at God's right hand, reigning in Majesty in heaven. ⁴When He returned to heaven He took His rightful place, far superior to that of the angels; for the name of Jesus is so much greater than the name of any created being in heaven or on earth.

Christ superior to the angels (1:5-14)

⁵Did God ever say to any of the angels: "You are My Son and I have now become Your Father"? Did He say to any of them: "I will be Your Father and You will be My Son"?

⁶However, when God sent His firstborn Son into the world He said: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." ⁷How does He regard the angels then? "He makes His angels as winds, servants who are as flames of fire." ⁸What He says about His Son is entirely different. He addresses Him as God and says:

"O God, Your throne will last for all eternity; and You will rule with authority in Your Kingdom because of Your righteousness. ⁹For You have loved what is right and hated what is evil. For this reason I, Your God, have set You above all others by anointing You with the oil of joy."

1:5 Psalm 2:7, 2 Samuel 7:14

1:7 Psalm 104:4

1:9 Psalm 45:6-7

¹⁰God also says of Him:

“O Lord, You created the earth at the very beginning, and even the heavens were made by You. ¹¹The earth and the heavens will come to an end, but You will outlive them. ¹²In due course of time they will cease; they will be as worn out clothes that need to be replaced. But You will not change and You will never die.”

¹³Did God ever say to an angel: “Sit at My right side until all Your enemies are crushed beneath Your feet”? ¹⁴Angels are spiritual beings sent by God to serve those who are chosen to inherit salvation!

Take seriously the message of salvation (2:1-4)

2 How important it is that we take seriously what we have heard, so we do not drift away from the truth. ²The messages God gave people through angels were considered to be binding on those who received them; any disobedience to the commands given would result in just punishment. Now that we have received a greater revelation of the great salvation made possible through faith in Jesus, it is surely even more important to realise that to ignore such truth will lead to even greater punishment!

³This salvation, by which we are made totally acceptable to God, was first revealed by the Lord Himself as has been confirmed by those who heard Him speak personally. ⁴God also verified this message of salvation through the signs, wonders and different miracles that Jesus performed. And it is proved beyond doubt by the gifts of the Holy Spirit He has given to His people, according to His purposes.

All authority given to Christ (2:5-9)

⁵We are not speaking only of this present world but of one that is to come. ⁶God has not put angels in charge of this, for it is written:

“How can man be so important to You that You think so highly of him? How can it be that You care for him as You do? ⁷You made him slightly inferior to the angels and yet have crowned him with glory and honour, and have put everything under his authority!”

1:12 *Psalm 102:25-27*

1:13 *Psalm 110:1*

2:7 *Psalm 8:4-6*

⁸Because God placed everything under his authority, all things are subject to man. This does not seem obvious at present, but we already see this in Jesus. ⁹When He became man He was in a slightly inferior position to the angels; but now He is crowned with glory and honour because He suffered death on behalf of all humanity. This is the measure of the grace and favour God has shown us.

He shared in our humanity (2:10-18)

¹⁰In this way, many sons are now able to inherit God's glory. Everything and everyone was created for His sake. Yet it was necessary that He should make Jesus the author of our salvation, the perfect sacrifice that would bring us back to God. ¹¹So we are now made holy in God's sight and this has been accomplished through Jesus, the only One who could make us holy. He is like our elder Brother, and we share in the same family and have the same inheritance. It is amazing that Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers. ¹²Long ago He said: "I will proclaim Your Name to My brothers; in the company of Your people I will sing Your praises."

¹³He also said: "I will put My trust in Him." And then He adds: "Here I am, together with the children God has given Me."

¹⁴Jesus shared in our humanity, having flesh and blood like us, so that through His death on the cross, He could utterly destroy the devil, the one who holds the power of death. ¹⁵Now all those who have spent their lives in bondage because of their fear of death and what lay beyond, are set free. ¹⁶These are the people of faith, the true descendants of Abraham. It is these He has raised to His glory, not angels.

¹⁷To accomplish this, Jesus had to be made like His brothers in every respect. He became our High Priest, the One who offered the perfect sacrifice of Himself to God; the merciful and faithful High Priest who was obedient in His service to God. In this way, He made the act of atonement, the act by which we are again made one with God because all our sins are forgiven. ¹⁸However, to be the One who would act on our behalf He had to be subjected to temptation, just as we are. And so now He is able to help us when we need to overcome temptation.

Moses the servant, Christ the Son (3:1-6)

3 ¹⁻²So we are holy brothers who share together in a heavenly calling; brothers of Christ set apart for God's glory. Fix your

2:12 *Psalms 22:22*

2:13 *Isaiah 8:17,18*

thoughts on Jesus, the One in whom you believe. He is your Apostle, who faithfully fulfilled the commission given Him by God. He is your High Priest, who offered the perfect sacrifice on your behalf.

³⁻⁶Moses was faithful in fulfilling what God asked of Him as a member of His household. Jesus has proved worthy of much greater honour than Moses, for He is over the entire household. The one who builds the house has greater honour than the house itself. Someone may build a house, but God has created everything. Moses was a faithful servant in God's household, but He could only point the way forward to what God would do in the future. Christ is the faithful Son over the entire household, and we form that household as we continue to live as the people of courageous faith, who have a wonderful future of which we can rightly boast!

Do not harden your hearts towards God (3:7-19)

⁷⁻⁸So listen to what the Holy Spirit says:

"If you hear God speaking to you today, do not harden your heart against what He says. This is what you did in your days of rebellion against His authority, when you were subjected to a time of testing in the desert. ⁹Your forefathers continually tested Me and tried My patience, even though they saw the miracles I performed for them over forty years. ¹⁰You can understand My anger towards that generation and why I said, 'They have not walked in My ways because their hearts are turned against Me!' ¹¹This is why in My righteous anger I promised they shall never enter the place of eternal peace with Me!"

¹²For this reason, my brothers, make sure that none of you has a sinful and unbelieving heart that opposes the living God. ¹³Instead, encourage one another all the time, every day in fact; the deceitfulness of sin will only make your hearts hardened against God and His purposes.

¹⁴We already live in Christ and will continue to do so if we remain confident in the faith we had at the beginning of our relationship with Him, until we have reached the conclusion of His purposes.

¹⁵So let me remind you again: "If you hear God speaking to you today, do not harden your heart against what He says; this is what you used to do when you lived in rebellion against His authority."

3:11 *Psalm 95:7-11*

3:15 *Psalm 95:7-8*

¹⁶Who heard Him speak and rebelled? All those whom Moses led out of Egypt in that mighty act of deliverance. ¹⁷And with whom was God angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned and rebelled against Him in the desert where they died? ¹⁸To whom did He swear that they would never enter into their promised inheritance? It was to those who disobeyed Him, wasn't it? ¹⁹Their unbelief prevented them from entering into God's rest, as we can see clearly!

Enter God's rest (4:1-11)

4 However, the promise of entering into His inheritance still stands. So make sure that none of you fails to enter into what is promised. ²We have received the gospel through those who brought it to us; but our forefathers also received God's message. Yet it was of no value to them, for although they heard what was said, they did not respond with faith.

³We have believed what God said and so are able to enter into that inheritance and have peace with Him. Yet His Word still applies: "So I promised in My anger, 'They will never enter into my inheritance.'"

⁴God's work was finished when the creation of the world was complete. Then He spoke about the seventh day in these words: "And God rested from all His work on the seventh day." ⁵This is the same God who promised that the disobedient shall never enter into that inheritance, eternal rest with Him.

⁶It is true, therefore, that some will enter the rich inheritance of His rest, and some will not. Those who had God's words of deliverance preached to them did not enter because of their disbelief. ⁷Whenever you hear God's voice it is always 'today' that He wants you to respond. So, centuries after Moses, God spoke through David in these words I have quoted already: "If you hear God speaking to you today, do not harden your hearts against what He says."

⁸If they had entered into this rich inheritance of His rest under Joshua, God would not have needed to speak about another 'today' in David's time. ⁹⁻¹⁰There remains a kind of Sabbath rest for God's people today; for those who enter into the inheritance He has promised, have ceased to try and impress God with their own works. Just as God rested from His work, so they have rested from their works.

4:3 *Psalm 95:11*

4:4 *Genesis 2:2*

4:7 *Psalm 95:7-8*

¹¹All our effort is now channelled into entering that inheritance that God has given us, so that no one will fail by following their example of disobedience.

Nothing is hidden from God (4:12-13)

¹²God’s Word is always alive and will work actively in all who believe. His Word is sharper than any blade. It separates spirit and soul, showing us what is of God and what is of self. It demonstrates what is merely external and what is of the heart. It even shows us whether our thoughts and heart attitudes are right or not! ¹³There is nothing in the whole of creation that is hidden from God. He sees and knows everything that takes place. Yes, everything is exposed before His eyes; we are naked before Him and it is to Him that we will have to give account for what we have done with our lives.

Our High Priest (4:14-5:10)

¹⁴However, we can hold on firmly to the faith we have already. For Jesus, the Son of God, is our great High Priest who has ascended through the heavens. ¹⁵He is able to sympathise with our weaknesses because He was tempted in every way that we have experienced. Yet He was different from us in this respect: He never yielded to temptation, so He never sinned.

¹⁶Because of what He has done in going ahead of us, we are now able to come close to God’s throne of grace with confidence. And when we do so, we are able to receive mercy and discover God’s abundant grace that will help us, no matter what the nature of our needs.

5 When the high priest is normally selected, he is but a man chosen to represent all men before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for their sins. ²He can deal sensitively with the ignorant and those who have departed from God’s will because he, too, is subject to human weakness and failure. ³So when he offers the sacrifices, they are for his own sins as well as those of the people.

⁴No-one would dare to claim this privilege for himself. Just like Aaron, he must be called by God. ⁵In the same way, Christ did not claim this honour of being High Priest for Himself. God said to Him: “You are My Son and I have become Your Father.” ⁶He also spoke of Jesus when He said: “You are an eternal priest in the line of Melchizedek.”

5:5 *Psalm 2:7*

5:6 *Psalm 110:4*

⁷During His life on earth, Jesus prayed to His Father with loud cries and tears, for only He could save Him from death. And the Father heard Him because He prayed with such submission to His Father's will. ⁸Even though He was God's Son, He had to obey through everything He suffered. ⁹In this way He was perfect, not only in nature but also in action, and could be the One through whom all who are obedient to God could receive eternal salvation and be made one with Him forever. ¹⁰So it was God Himself that made Jesus High Priest in the line of Melchizedek.

Importance of spiritual maturity (5:11-14)

¹¹There is much we could write about all this, but it is difficult to explain these truths to those who are not ready to learn. ¹²Really by now you should be teachers of the truth, yet still you need someone to teach you these basic truths of God's Word again and again. You are still like infants feeding on milk and not yet ready for solid food! ¹³Spiritual infants are not familiar with God's teaching about living in righteousness. ¹⁴No, it is only the spiritually mature who can take solid food, those who have learned for themselves to distinguish between what is good and what is evil in God's sight.

Remain steadfast in your faith (6:1-20)

6 It is time to move on from the basic teaching about Christ to a more mature understanding of God's purposes. We should not need to lay again for you the foundational truth that you need to turn away permanently from acts that lead to spiritual death. Nor should we have to keep reminding you to put your faith in God. ²And you should not need continual instruction about baptisms and the laying on of hands. By now you know about resurrection from the dead and the eternal judgment of all men that is to come. ³So by God's grace we will move you on in your understanding of His purposes.

⁴⁻⁶You must realise this: it is not possible for those who have received revelation of the truth, who have tasted the joy of heavenly salvation and have shared in the life of the Holy Spirit, who know that God's Word is good and true, who are aware of the power God will release in the age that is to come, to be brought back to unity with God if they deny all they have known and experienced. To deny what they know to be true is to be guilty of the equivalent of nailing God's Son to the cross again, subjecting Him to public disgrace and ridicule.

⁷The land that receives frequent rainfall and produces a good harvest for the farmer is truly blessed by God. ⁸On the other hand, the land that produces only thorns and thistles is useless and appears to be cursed. The only thing to do is to burn it!

⁹Dear friends, these are uncomfortable truths of which we speak. However, we are confident that you will not deny what you know to be the truth, but will remain steadfast in your faith and live in the good of your salvation.

¹⁰You cannot accuse God of being unjust. He will never forget your faithful work, nor the love for Him that you have shown by continuing to help His people. ¹¹We urge every one of you to continue in this faithfulness to the very end. Then you will not need to fear the outcome, but will be certain about your hope of eternal life with God. ¹²This is why we do not want you to become spiritually lazy, but rather to be like those who inherit what He has promised because they persevere patiently in their faith!

¹³God gave Abraham His solemn promise on His own honour, for there was no one greater by whom He could swear, that He would be faithful. ¹⁴He said: "Without doubt I will bless you and give you many descendants." ¹⁵After waiting patiently, Abraham saw the promise fulfilled.

¹⁶When men make solemn promises they swear by someone greater than themselves. By taking an oath they confirm that what they say is true and beyond any argument.

¹⁷Why should God make His promises on oath? Because He wanted to make absolutely clear that His purposes never change. It is clear to all His children that He is faithful in keeping His Word, because He confirmed His promises by taking an oath. ¹⁸He chose to do this for our sakes, so that we would know for certain that God would never lie and that His promises are utterly dependable. It is simply not possible for God to lie, because He is the Truth!

¹⁹⁻²⁰We have left behind the deceptiveness of the world and have taken hold of the sure and certain hope of what lies ahead; and this should cause us to be greatly encouraged. This hope of what awaits us in the future is a firm anchor for our souls. This truth keeps us secure and means that we have access directly into the Holy of holies, God's very presence. We can pass through the curtain that was torn apart when Jesus went before us through death and into the glory of resurrection. He did all this on our behalf as our High Priest, an eternal High Priest in the line of Melchizedek.

A priests in the order of Melchizedek (7:1-17)

7 ¹⁻²So who was this Melchizedek? He was both king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham after he had defeated the kings and blessed him: in response Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.

The name Melchizedek means first of all, 'King of Righteousness.' His title, 'King of Salem' means he is 'King of Peace.'³ He had no parents, no forbears; there was no point at which he began life, or a moment in time when his life ended. In other words, like God's Son, he remains an eternal priest.

⁴Abraham recognised his greatness by giving him a tenth of all the plunder he had taken. ⁵Under the law that was given later, Levi's descendants, the priestly tribe, were to collect a tenth from the people, their brethren from the other tribes, all of whom were descendants of Abraham. ⁶However, Melchizedek predated the tribe of Levi; he was not of natural priestly descent. And yet he was given a tenth by Abraham and then blessed Abraham as the one who had received God's promises.

⁷It is obvious the lesser person is blessed by the one who is greater. ⁸The descendants of Levi are men who will die, yet they receive the tenth allotted to them. Melchizedek is declared to be eternal and was the first to be given the tenth. ⁹⁻¹⁰You could even say that when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in his loins; and so in a sense even Levi honoured Melchizedek through Abraham, by giving him the tenth.

What do we learn from this? That the priesthood of Melchizedek was far superior to that of Levi. ¹¹If it was possible for the levitical priesthood to be perfect (and remember that the law given to the people recognised this priesthood had descended from Aaron), why was it necessary for another Priest to come, One not like Aaron, but in the lineage of Melchizedek? ¹²A change of priesthood implies there is to be a change of law.

¹³Melchizedek is of an altogether different priestly tribe from which no-one has ever served at the altar of the temple, as the Levites do. ¹⁴Jesus Christ, our Lord, was descended from the tribe of Judah, and Moses makes no mention of there being any priests from that tribe.

¹⁵⁻¹⁶It is clear, then, that if another priest appears, One that is like Melchizedek, His Priesthood is not based on the regulations of the law, but on the fact that He ministers in the power of an eternal, indestructible life! ¹⁷This is why it is said: "You are an eternal Priest in the lineage of Melchizedek."

The new and better way (7:18-28)

¹⁸So the previous regulations of the law are put to one side because, by comparison, they are weak and useless. ¹⁹It is certain that nothing was ever made perfect by the law! Now something far better has replaced it, by which we have a much better hope for the future, and by which it has now been made possible for us to draw really close to God Himself.

²⁰And this new and better way was established by the promises He gave under solemn oath. No oath was sworn by God in establishing the levitical priesthood under the law. ²¹When God swears a promise on His own honour, His Word cannot be changed, and God said of His Son: "The Lord has taken an oath and will never change His mind; 'You are an eternal Priest!'" ²²He refers, of course, to the Priesthood of Jesus, who guarantees that we are part of a better covenant. We are able to enjoy a closer relationship with God than was possible under the law, the old covenant with its former human priesthood.

²³Over the centuries there were numerous priests because, of course, they had a natural life-span and could not continue to officiate once they had died! ²⁴⁻²⁵By contrast, because Jesus lives eternally, He has a permanent Priesthood by which He is able to save completely all those who come to God through faith in Him. He lives continually to intercede on their behalf through His blood shed for them.

²⁶Such a wonderful and eternal High Priest is able, therefore, to meet every need we could ever have. For He is holy, blameless, pure, totally different in nature from sinners, and is now exalted and reigning in heaven.

²⁷He does not have to keep offering sacrifices day after day for His own sins and those of the people, like those other priests. He was without sin and offered the one perfect sacrifice of Himself for the sins of all mankind; a sacrifice that needs never to be repeated.

²⁸The law could only appoint weak men as high priests; but by His solemn promise God appointed His own Son as High Priest, and He is eternally perfect. So the weakness of the law is now superseded by the perfection of Christ!

A new covenant and a new High Priest (8:1-13)

8 The reason we speak these things to you is simply this: We do have an eternal High Priest who has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty of God in heaven. ²He is the One who serves eternally

in the true sanctuary, the Holy of holies in heaven, created by God, not man.

³Every high priest has to be appointed before he has the right to offer both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of others. For Jesus to be our High Priest He also had to offer a gift, to provide a sacrifice. ⁴He could not be part of the earthly priesthood that was authorised to offer gifts according to the law. ⁵They serve in a sanctuary that is only an imitation or shadow of the one in heaven. It was for this reason that God warned Moses when He ordered him to build the tabernacle: “Be sure that you make everything according to the plans I showed you on the mountain.”

⁶Yet the priestly ministry Jesus has received is so far superior to that of this earthly priesthood, just as the new covenant He has established is far superior to the old covenant, for it has been founded on better promises given by God.

⁷If the first agreement God had made with His people had been perfect or complete, there would have been no need for a further agreement. ⁸However, God was well aware of the people’s failure to keep the old agreement with all its laws and said:

“A time is coming, proclaims the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. ⁹This will be different from the covenant I made with their forefathers when I led them by the hand out of the bondage of Egypt. For they did not remain faithful to that covenant, and so I turned away from them, says the Lord. ¹⁰This is the new agreement that I will make with my people Israel at the appointed time, proclaims the Lord. I will place My laws in their minds and write them on their hearts, rather than on tablets of stone. I will be their personal God and they shall be My own people. ¹¹A man will no longer need to teach his neighbour or his brother to know Me, because they will all know Me personally, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹²This will be possible because I will have forgiven them for their wickedness and decided that their sins will be blotted out, never to be remembered.”

¹³It is God who has called this His new covenant, and by doing so He has made the former covenant obsolete. So what is already obsolete will in due course disappear altogether.

8:5 *Exodus 25:40*

8:12 *Jeremiah 31:31-34*

Worship in the earthy sanctuary (9:1-10)

9 Under the former system, regulations were given for the ordering of worship and of the earthy sanctuary. ²A meeting place was set up. The first room was called the Holy Place, and the lampstand, table and consecrated bread were placed there. ³There was a second curtain behind which was the Holy of holies. ⁴There the golden incense altar was placed, together with the Ark of the Covenant that was covered with gold. In this Ark was the gold jar containing some of the manna God provided to feed His people in the desert, Aaron's staff that had budded and the stone tablets containing the law of the old covenant. ⁵The cherubim, glorious heavenly beings, were above the ark. However this is not the time to describe these things in detail.

⁶When everything had been arranged in the right way, the priests entered the outer room regularly to perform their duties. ⁷Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the inner room, the Holy of holies, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement. He had to carry an offering of blood to plead for forgiveness for himself and for the sins of the people, even those committed in ignorance of God's will.

⁸This was the Holy Spirit's way of showing that entrance into the Holy of holies for everyone had not yet been established, neither could it be while the former tabernacle was in operation. ⁹We can see now that the old system was not effective, for the gifts and sacrifices offered there were not able to cleanse the guilt out of the consciences of those who worshipped. ¹⁰The regulations concerning food and drink, the various ceremonial washings and the other external rules would only apply until God established the new order.

The blood of Christ (9:11-28)

¹¹This He did when Christ came as High Priest, initiating the good things that we believers are able to enjoy already. He passed through to the Holy of holies in a more perfect tabernacle, to the heavenly throne itself. This is not a man-made tent or building; it is not even part of this earthly creation. ¹²And when He entered into the eternal Holy of holies He did not carry with Him an offering of the blood of goats and calves. No, He entered into the Holy of holies only once, with the offering of His own blood. And by that blood He made it possible for us to be one with God eternally. He literally bought us with the price of His own blood!

¹³The only thing that could be accomplished by the continual offering of the blood of goats and bulls and by sprinkling the ashes

of a heifer on those considered to be ceremonially unclean, was to give them an external cleansing. People only had an outward holiness.

¹⁴The offering of Christ's blood accomplished so much more. In the power of God's eternal Spirit, He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice to God, making it possible for us to have an inner cleansing from all the sinful acts that lead to spiritual death. We can now have consciences clear of all guilt and we are able to serve God as a truly holy people!

¹⁵In this way, Christ established a new covenant. Those who were called to be part of this new relationship with God received the promise of an eternal inheritance. He literally gave His life as a ransom to set people free from all the sins committed under the former system.

¹⁶A will only comes into effect when the death of the one who made it has been proved. ¹⁷Until his death that will has no meaning, for it cannot be enforced while he is alive. ¹⁸In the same way, the original agreement could not come into effect without the shedding of blood, even though in that case it was only the death of animals that took place. ¹⁹⁻²⁰When Moses proclaimed to the people all the commandments of the law that God have given him, he took calf's blood, scarlet wool and hyssop branches and sprinkled the scroll and all the people with the blood saying: "This is the blood of the covenant that God has commanded you to keep." ²¹In similar fashion, he sprinkled with blood the tabernacle and all the articles used in the ceremonies that took place there. ²²Under the law nearly everything was cleansed and made holy with the use of blood. There could be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood.

²³Now if it was necessary for these copies of the heavenly things to be made holy with the sacrifices of animals, the heavenly things themselves would be established with much greater sacrifices. ²⁴You see, Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; He entered heaven itself and now stands in God's presence on our behalf. ²⁵In heaven He does not need to keep offering Himself again and again in sacrifice. The earthly high priest has to enter the Holy of holies every year and repeat the offering of the blood of animals. He never offers his own blood. ²⁶If Christ was like those high priests he would have to repeat the sacrifice of Himself over and over again. Instead, He has already entered heaven itself, victorious over sin through the one sacrifice of Himself that need never be repeated. The effects of this one sacrifice will last until the end of time.

²⁷Listen, you will only die once and then have to face the Judgment. ²⁸So Christ only had to die once, but His sacrifice has taken away our sins so we do not have to fear the Judgment. When He comes again, it will not be to sacrifice Himself again. No, He will bring eternal salvation to all those who eagerly await His return.

Accepted in Christ (10:1-10)

10 Under the law it is only possible to experience a shadow of the really good things that are to come. The endless repetition of the sacrifices of animals year after year could never make perfect those who draw near to God in worship. ²If such a sacrifice could have that effect, there would have been no need for it to be repeated! Those of every generation who worship would have been cleansed forever and would no longer experience any guilt for their sins. ³⁻⁴The fact that those animal sacrifices had to be repeated only served as a reminder of people's sins, for the blood of bulls and goats is powerless to take those sins away.

⁵So when Christ came into the world He said: "You did not want continual sacrifice and offerings, but You gave me a body to offer. ⁶You were not satisfied with burnt offerings and sin offerings. ⁷So then I said: 'I am here and have come to do Your will O God, as has been written about Me.'"

⁸First Christ said that God did not really want sacrifices and offerings, neither burnt offerings nor sin offerings, even though these were required under the law. ⁹Then He declared: "I am here and have come to do Your will." He thus sets aside the former things in order to establish something entirely new. ¹⁰So by God's divine will, we have already been made holy through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ's own body. Now we are set apart for God, made totally acceptable and pleasing to Him.

Jesus sacrificed once and for all (10:11-18)

¹¹This was never achieved by the priests performing their religious duties day after day. They could only keep offering the same sacrifices which could never take away our sins. ¹²But when this Priest, Jesus Christ, had offered the one sacrifice of Himself for our sins, a sacrifice that would never need to be repeated, He could sit down in triumph at God's right hand, for He had accomplished His purpose. ¹³Now He awaits the time when all His enemies are under His feet and are

made subject to Him. ¹⁴But understand what this one sacrifice has achieved: those who are being made holy, set apart for God, He has made perfect already!

¹⁵⁻¹⁶The Holy Spirit explains this to us, for He says: “This is the covenant I will make with them in due course, says the Lord. I will place My commands in their hearts and will write them on their minds.” ¹⁷He says also: “I will never remember their sins and their acts of rebellion against Me.”

¹⁸Once sins are forgiven, there is no need for any further sacrifice to take away our sins!

Access into the Holy of holies (10:19-23)

¹⁹Therefore, my dear brothers, since we believe in what He has accomplished for us through the shedding of His blood, we have confidence to enter boldly into the Holy of holies, the inner sanctuary of His heavenly presence. ²⁰He is the new living Way that enables us to pass through the curtain that prevented people from entering the Holy of holies. ²¹So He has become the great Priest over all who belong to God’s household.

²²Therefore, let us come near to God with true hearts and with great faith, because our hearts have been sprinkled with His blood to cleanse us from all guilt. We can now have clear consciences and be at peace with God. Our bodies are even made clean by receiving the pure living water of the Holy Spirit. ²³So let us not allow anything to distract us from the hope of what lies ahead of us in fulfilment of all He has promised us, for He is faithful in keeping His Word.

Don’t sin deliberately (10:24-31)

²⁴What is more, we can encourage one another to walk in love, blessing one another in practical ways. ²⁵We certainly must not give up meeting together, as some have mistakenly done. No, we need the encouragement of being together as one Body, and even more so as we eagerly await the Day when the Lord will return.

²⁶⁻²⁷But of what value is this great sacrifice that Christ has made for us, if we deliberately continue to sin against Him, even though we have received the knowledge of the truth? It is as if we do not care about that sacrifice. There is no further sacrifice for sins, only a terrible expectation of judgment and being condemned to the fire that will burn up God’s enemies.

10:16 *Jeremiah 31:33*

10:17 *Jeremiah 31:34*

²⁸After all, anyone who rejected the law God gave through Moses, died without being shown any mercy. Only two or three were needed to testify against him. ²⁹If that was the punishment under the old order, how much greater the punishment that a person will deserve if he has trampled underfoot God's own Son, treating the sacrifice of His blood as of no account, even though it was this that had made him holy before God! Such a person has insulted the Holy Spirit and thrown God's grace back in His face!

³⁰We know that God has said: "It is in My power to avenge; I will repay." He also said: "The Lord will judge His people." ³¹What a dreadful thing it would be to fall into God's hands when He judges the ungodly!

Persevere in faith (10:32-39)

³²When you first believed, because you received the light of God's truth into the spiritual darkness of your life you stood firm in your faith no matter what the opposition or what you had to suffer.

³³Sometimes you were insulted publicly and were persecuted. At other times you supported those who were treated in this way, standing shoulder to shoulder with them. ³⁴You could identify with those in prison for their faith and even accepted the confiscation of your property with joy, because you knew that you now had acquired greater possessions that would last eternally.

³⁵So do not throw away now the confidence you had then. Your continuing faith will be richly rewarded! ³⁶⁻³⁷You must persevere in faith so that, having done God's will, you will receive the promised inheritance. You will not have to wait long for, "The One who is coming will not delay His coming." ³⁸But he who is at one with God will live by faith. If he shrinks away from the truth because of fear, I will not be pleased with him."

³⁹However, we do not belong to those who shrink away and are destroyed. We are counted among those who believe and are saved!

People of faith (11:1-7)

11 True faith is being sure of the hope we have and being certain that we shall see what has been promised, even though we do not see these things at present. ²This is the kind of faith for which God commended former believers.

10:30 Deuteronomy 32:35, Deuteronomy 32:36

10:38 Habakkuk 2:3-4

³We can only understand that the entire universe was created by God's command as a matter of faith. For it is by faith that what is naturally invisible becomes visible!

⁴Abel demonstrated true faith in God by giving his best to Him, unlike his brother Cain. Because of his faith, God regarded him as righteous and spoke well of his offerings. And faith has an ageless dimension, for even though Abel died centuries ago, we still speak of his faith today.

⁵This eternal dimension of faith is seen in Enoch, for he did not experience death. He was nowhere to be found, for God had simply taken him to Himself because he was someone who pleased the Lord.

⁶By now you can see that it is impossible to please God without faith. In our relationship with Him, we have to believe that He not only exists, but actually wants to answer us when we pray. He longs to give us what we need when we seek Him with sincere and earnest faith.

⁷Noah was another man of faith. He showed that he lived in holy awe and reverence for God by building the ark to save his family, because he believed the warning God had given him. His faith made him an heir of those in right standing with God; he could inherit all that God had prepared for them. But such faith also condemned the world for its unbelief, for those who laughed at Noah perished in the flood.

The faith of Abraham (11:8-19)

⁸Abraham was another man of great faith. When God told him to go to a place that would later become his inheritance, he believed what was said, obeyed and went, even though he had no idea of his destination. He simply trusted God to lead him to the fulfilment of what He had promised. ⁹So it was by faith that he entered into the promised land to make his home, even though he was a stranger entering a foreign country. He lived as a nomad, as did his descendants Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise that God had given Abraham.

¹⁰He was happy to live in tents because his future hope was set on a heavenly city with no natural foundations, the city only God Himself could design and build!

¹¹Abraham also demonstrated his faith by becoming a father when a hundred years old and his wife, Sarah, was long past the age of child-bearing. And she had never been able to have children

naturally anyway! Abraham became a father because he believed that God always proved faithful to whatever He promised.

¹²What was the result? From this one very old man was descended a people as numerous as the stars in the sky. Like the grains of sand on the seashore, you could never count them all!

¹³All these heroes of faith continued to trust God right up to the time of their deaths. This does not mean that they saw in their own lifetime the fulfilment of everything promised them. Some things would only be accomplished fully a long time in the future; yet by faith they saw them as fulfilled. They were certain that what God had said would surely happen, even though they may not live to see it all, for they regarded themselves as only temporary residents here on earth. ¹⁴They knew their true home lay with God. ¹⁵They were not holding onto territory they had left behind, longing to return to a place they could call their own. ¹⁶No, they were longing for something better than this world could offer, a heavenly home. God was delighted to tell them He was their God, personal to them, and that He had prepared a heavenly city for them.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸Abraham also had to go through another severe test of his faith in God when the Lord told him to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice. Imagine, this was his one and only son that God had promised him and through whom God's promise would be fulfilled, "Through Isaac all your descendants will be numbered." You can see Abraham's faith in the way he thought. He reckoned that God must raise Isaac from the dead in order to fulfil His promises. ¹⁹In a manner of speaking this is really what happened, for Abraham was fully prepared to kill Isaac in obedience. So he received Isaac back from being as good as dead!

Walk in faith not fear (11:20-29)

²⁰Isaac showed his faith in the way he blessed Jacob and Esau, speaking of what would happen to them in the future. ²¹Likewise, Jacob was a man of faith and, when dying, he blessed each of Joseph's sons, worshipping God for His faithfulness.

²²By faith, when near death, Joseph prophesied about the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and even gave instructions about what was to happen to his bones.

²³Moses' parents showed their faith by hiding him for three months after his birth. They knew that he was no ordinary child and

they were not afraid of Pharaoh's edict that all male Hebrew children were to be killed at birth.

²⁴Even though he enjoyed the privileges of Pharaoh's court, Moses refused as an adult to become known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵He identified with his own people instead, choosing to be mistreated along with them rather than enjoy the transitory pleasures of the sinful flesh. ²⁶Disgrace for Christ's sake meant more to him than the wealth of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward faith brings. ²⁷So he left Egypt by faith, unafraid of Pharaoh's anger. Like a man of true faith he persevered, reaching out for what was not yet visible.

²⁸Later, by faith he observed the Passover. The destroyer of the first-born could not touch any of the first-born of Israel because the doorposts and lintels of their homes were sprinkled with blood!

²⁹The people passed through the Red Sea as if it was dry land because of the miracle God did in response to Moses' obedient faith. When the Egyptians tried to follow them, they were drowned.

Faith overcomes (11:30-40)

³⁰This obedient faith was also exhibited at Jericho when the walls came crashing down, after the people had obeyed God by marching around the city for seven days.

³¹Even Rahab, a prostitute, is commended for her faith. She was bold enough to welcome those sent to spy out the land and so was not killed along with those who were disobedient to God's purposes.

³²I could go on and on, but there is no time now to tell you the exploits of faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. ³³Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice and were able to receive what God had promised them. ³⁴Such heroes of faith shut the mouths of lions, overcame the scorching heat of fire, escaped when others wanted to kill them. Their weaknesses became their strength because they trusted in God. So they were powerful in battle, overcoming foreign armies. ³⁵Women even received back their dead who had been raised to life again.

Others chose torture rather than deny the Lord. They did not choose the easier option of being released because their hearts were set on the resurrection that lay ahead of them. ³⁶Yes, some faced ridicule and were flogged; others were put in chains and in prison. ³⁷Others were stoned to death or beheaded.

They suffered all manner of deprivation; they were sometimes destitute, often persecuted and mistreated. ³⁸They rose above the

standards of this world, which was not worthy of such people. They were exiled, fleeing to desert or mountainous areas. Some had to live in caves and to hide in secret places.

³⁹Yet all these people were commended by God for their faith, even though none of them was able to receive what He had promised, those things that we are now able to enjoy. ⁴⁰However, now that Christ has died and risen again, they are able to share with us in the rich inheritance that is the result of being made perfect in God's sight.

Fix your eyes on Jesus (12:1-3)

12 All these heroes of faith are like a great crowd of witnesses that surround us and encourage us to keep faith with God. So let us shrug off everything that comes against us and refuse every temptation to sin, with which the devil wants to entangle us. Let us persevere in running the race in which God has entered us, with our eyes fixed on Jesus who is always ahead of us. Without Him we could not have faith, nor could we grow in faith. He gave us faith and He will perfect our faith.

²Look at the way He ran the race. He always aimed for the eternal joy that lay ahead of Him, even though along the way He had to suffer to the point of death on the cross, regardless of the shame that was attached to such a death. He finished the race and is now seated in heaven at God's right hand.

³Yes, think of Him who put up with continual opposition from sinful people. Then you will not grow tired of the opposition you have to face and become discouraged.

He disciplines those He loves (12:4-13)

⁴You struggle against sin. Yet you have not had to resist the temptation to deny Christ by dying for Him! Do not forget the encouraging words that God spoke when addressing you as His sons: "My son, do not think lightly about the way the Lord disciplines you. ⁵Do not be discouraged when He corrects you. ⁶For He disciplines those He loves and punishes when necessary everyone who He has accepted as His son."

⁷So you can regard the various hardships you have to face in a positive way, as discipline. God is dealing with you as His true sons! After all, every good father disciplines his children. ⁸If God

did not discipline you, then you would not be His true son or daughter; you would be spiritually illegitimate instead.

⁹We all know what it is like to have human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them as a result. How much more important it must be that we should gladly submit to whatever discipline we need to receive from our spiritual Father, and so live to please Him!

¹⁰Our human fathers disciplined us in our early years in ways they thought were right. But God knows how to discipline us for our eternal good, so that we might share in His holy life.

¹¹None of us likes to be disciplined; it can sometimes be painful. Later we are grateful, though, because it has had positive results, enabling us to live righteous lives that please God and to be at peace with Him. In fact, without discipline we could not become trained disciples!

¹²So be encouraged when you feel weak and feeble, even if sometimes you feel like giving up because the way before you seems so difficult. ¹³God wants to make level paths for you to walk on, so that instead of limping through life you walk steadily with Him, as those healed and set free from whatever would hinder their walk.

Holiness (12:14-17)

¹⁴So do all you can to ensure that you live at peace with others. And be holy; live as one whom God has set apart for Himself. For without holiness no-one will see the Lord and belong to Him eternally.

¹⁵Be sure also that you never lose sight of God's grace which is always available to you. Let no bitterness be allowed to tarnish your relationships with others, for that only causes trouble and has ruined many lives.

¹⁶Certainly no believer should be involved in sexual immorality of any kind. Nor should he be like Esau, who valued his rights of inheritance as the oldest son so little that he sold them. Such behaviour is ungodly. ¹⁷Later he was rejected when he wanted his inheritance back. There was no way in which he could change God's mind on the matter, even though he sought the blessing with tears.

Approach God with confidence (12:18-29)

¹⁸Things are different now from the old order, for you do not approach a mountain you are forbidden to touch that erupts with fire. You do not belong to the darkness, to despair or to God's anger.

¹⁹You are not dependent on someone blowing a trumpet to tell you He is about to speak to you. Neither do you hear words of such

terrible judgment from God that you beg Him to stop speaking to you. ²⁰You do not have to worry about such commands: "If even an animal touches this mountain, it must be stoned to death." ²¹Nor is the presence of God so terrifying to you as it was to Moses when he said: "I tremble with fear."

²²No, you are able to approach Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city where God has His throne. You can join with thousands upon thousands of joyful angels as they worship the Lord. ²³You belong to the church of the first-born of the Son of God, whose names are written in His Book in heaven. You are able to approach God Himself, even though He is the Judge of all men. And you can do so with confidence because you have been made righteous in His sight and in your spirit you are made perfect. ²⁴You belong to Jesus, who has made you part of the new covenant He has established. You have been 'sprinkled' with His blood, which is far more powerful than Abel's blood.

²⁵Be sure, then, that you do not reject anything the Lord says to you. Under the old order, those who did that could not escape the disasters about which God warned them. They simply did not listen to Him. If this was the case for them, how shall we escape if we turn away from God's words when He warns us directly from heaven?

²⁶In the past His voice shook the earth, but listen to what He has promised now, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but the heavens as well." ²⁷In saying 'once more', God is implying that whatever can be shaken will be removed so that whatever remains cannot be shaken. Earthly things will pass away, but we belong to what is eternal and unshakable.

²⁸So we have received His unshakable Kingdom, as a gift from God. We can be thankful, therefore, and worship Him as He deserves, with reverence and in awe of who He is. For our God is a fire that consumes His enemies.

Final exhortations (13:1-25)

13 Continue to love one another as true brothers in Christ. ²Always be ready to entertain strangers, for some have unknowingly entertained angels by doing this. ³Remember those of the faith who are in prison as if you are there with them, and those who are being persecuted as if we are suffering along with them.

12:20 *Exodus 19:12-13*

12:21 *Deuteronomy 9:19*

12:26 *Haggai 2:6*

⁴Let every one of you honour marriage, for this is God's purpose. Keep the marriage bed pure, for God will judge those guilty of adultery and sexual immorality. ⁵Be content with what you have materially, for you want to live free from the love of money. God will care for you, for He has promised: "I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you."

⁶We can respond to this with confidence by quoting another scripture: "The Lord is my Helper; so I will not be afraid. What can man do to me, if God is for me?"

⁷Remember to honour your leaders and to pray for them. They have spoken God's Word to you. You can see from their example that they live their message and that they demonstrate how to walk by faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same today as He has been in the past, and He will always remain the same for all eternity.

⁹Do not be seduced by the different forms of strange teachings that circulate at times. Your hearts will be strengthened by depending on God's grace, and this is good! Eating ceremonial foods is of no account at all. ¹⁰We have consecrated food to eat that those who keep to the old order have no right to share.

¹¹Under that order the high priest enters the Holy of holies with the blood of animals as an offering for the sins of the people. However, the bodies of the animals are burned outside the camp. ¹²So Jesus was crucified outside the city gate, sacrificing His blood to make the people holy.

¹³We do not want to stay within the safe confines of our own walls, then, but are ready to be His witnesses, even if this means bearing the same kind of disgrace He suffered. ¹⁴For we do not have an eternal city here on earth, but we are looking forward to the heavenly city that is to come.

¹⁵We, too, have a sacrifice to make, a continual offering of praise to God for all He has done for us through Jesus. We have lips that keep expressing faith in His Name, in all that He is.

¹⁶Do not neglect giving to others and seeking to do them good, for God is also pleased with such sacrifices of love.

¹⁷It is important to obey your leaders and to submit to the authority God has given them over you, for they are to care for you as those who will be held accountable to the Lord. By being obedient to them, they will enjoy fulfilling this responsibility; it will not be a tiresome burden to them. Certainly you will gain no advantage from making life difficult for them.

13:5 *Deuteronomy 31:6*

13:6 *Psalms 118:6-7*

¹⁸Pray for them and for us. Our consciences are clear and we want to live in ways that always honour God. ¹⁹Please pray especially that I may be able to return to you soon.

²⁰May the God of peace equip you in every way necessary to enable you to do His will. He raised our Lord Jesus from the dead once He had established the new covenant and ratified it with His blood. He is our great Shepherd and we His sheep.

²¹May He equip you through Jesus Christ with everything you need so that you can please Him in the way you live. Let Him be glorified for ever and ever. Amen! It shall be so!

²²My brothers, I ask you to take seriously my words of exhortation, even though I cannot say much in a short letter. I am happy to tell you that our brother ²³Timothy has now been released. If he joins me soon, we will come together to see you.

²⁴Give my greetings to all your leaders and all God's people. The believers here in Italy send you their greetings.

²⁵May God impart His grace to you all!