

## Hebrews



**T**his book, written in the form of a letter, is a sermon about the superiority of Jesus Christ. He is shown to be superior to the angels, to the priesthood of Moses, and to the sacrifices that were made in the temple. Jesus is described as both the high priest and the sacrifice that takes away the sins of many. Written at a time when the church was being persecuted by Roman authorities, this letter encourages Christians to remain faithful to Christ and to learn from his example of self-sacrifice.

**1** Long ago in many ways and at many times God's prophets spoke his message to our ancestors. <sup>2</sup>But now at last, God sent his Son to bring his message to us. God created the universe by his Son, and everything will someday belong to the Son. <sup>3</sup>God's Son has all the brightness of God's own glory and is like him in every way. By his own mighty word, he holds the universe together.

After the Son had washed away our sins, he sat down at the right side of the glorious God in heaven. <sup>4</sup>He had become much greater than the angels, and the name he was given is far greater than any of theirs.

### God's Son Is Greater than Angels

<sup>5</sup> God has never said  
to any of the angels,  
"You are my Son, because today  
I have become your Father!"  
Neither has God said  
to any of them,  
"I will be his Father,  
and he will be my Son!"

<sup>6</sup>When God brings his first-born Son into the world, he commands all of his angels to worship him.

<sup>7</sup>And when God speaks about the angels, he says,

"I change my angels into wind  
and my servants  
into flaming fire."

<sup>8</sup>But God says about his Son,

"You are God,  
and you will rule  
as King forever!  
Your <sup>></sup> royal power  
brings about justice.

<sup>9</sup>You loved justice  
and hated evil,  
and so I, your God,  
have chosen you.

I appointed you  
and made you happier  
than any of your friends."

<sup>10</sup>The Scriptures also say,

"In the beginning, Lord,  
you were the one  
who laid the foundation  
of the earth  
and created the heavens.

<sup>11</sup>They will all disappear  
and wear out like clothes,  
but you will last forever.

<sup>12</sup>You will roll them up  
like a robe

and change them  
like a garment.  
But you are always the same,  
and you will live forever."

<sup>13</sup> God never said to any  
of the angels,  
"Sit at my right side  
until I make your enemies  
into a footstool for you!"

<sup>14</sup> Angels are merely spirits sent to serve people  
who are going to be saved.

### This Great Way of Being Saved

**2** We must give our full attention to what we  
were told, so that we won't drift away. <sup>2</sup> The  
message spoken by angels proved to be true,  
and all who disobeyed or rejected it were punished  
as they deserved. <sup>3</sup> So if we refuse this great way of  
being saved, how can we hope to escape? The Lord  
himself was the first to tell about it, and people who  
heard the message proved to us that it was true.  
<sup>4</sup> God himself showed that his message was true by  
working all kinds of powerful miracles and won-  
ders. He also gave his Holy Spirit to anyone he  
chose to.

### The One Who Leads Us To Be Saved

<sup>5</sup> We know that God did not put the future  
world under the power of angels. <sup>6</sup> Somewhere in  
the Scriptures someone says to God,

"What makes you care  
about us humans?  
Why are you concerned  
for weaklings such as we?"

<sup>7</sup> You made us lower  
than the angels  
for a while.

Yet you have crowned us  
with glory and honor.▷

<sup>8</sup> And you have put everything  
under our power!"

God has put everything under our power and  
has not left anything out of our power. But we still  
don't see it all under our power. <sup>9</sup> What we do see is  
Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the  
angels. Because of God's gift of undeserved grace,  
Jesus died for everyone. And now that Jesus has suf-  
fered and died, he is crowned with glory and honor!

<sup>10</sup> Everything belongs to God, and all things  
were created by his power. So God did the right

thing when he made Jesus perfect by suffering, as  
Jesus led many of God's children to be saved and  
to share in his glory. <sup>11</sup> Jesus and the people he  
makes holy all belong to the same family. That is  
why he isn't ashamed to call them his brothers and  
sisters. <sup>12</sup> He even said to God,

"I will tell them your name  
and sing your praises  
when they come together  
to worship."

<sup>13</sup> He also said,

"I will trust God."

Then he said,

"Here I am with the children  
God has given me."

<sup>14</sup> We are people of flesh and blood. That is why  
Jesus became one of us. He died to destroy the  
devil, who had power over death. <sup>15</sup> But he also  
died to rescue all of us who live each day in fear of  
dying. <sup>16</sup> Jesus clearly did not come to help angels,  
but he did come to help Abraham's descendants.  
<sup>17</sup> He had to be one of us, so that he could serve  
God as our merciful and faithful high priest and sac-  
rifice himself for the forgiveness of our sins. <sup>18</sup> And  
now that Jesus has suffered and was tempted, he  
can help anyone else who is tempted.

### Jesus Is Greater than Moses

**3** My friends, God has chosen you to be his holy  
people. So think about Jesus, the one we call  
our apostle and high priest! <sup>2</sup> Jesus was faithful  
to God, who appointed him, just as Moses was  
faithful in serving all of God's people. <sup>3</sup> But Jesus  
deserves more honor than Moses, just as the  
builder of a house deserves more honor than the  
house. <sup>4</sup> Of course, every house is built by some-  
one, and God is really the one who built every-  
thing.

<sup>5</sup> Moses was a faithful servant and told God's  
people what would be said in the future. <sup>6</sup> But  
Christ is the Son in charge of God's people. And we  
are those people, if we keep on being brave and  
don't lose hope.

### A Rest for God's People

<sup>7</sup> It is just as the Holy Spirit says,

"If you hear God's voice today,  
<sup>8</sup> don't be stubborn!

Don't rebel like those people  
who were tested  
in the desert.

\*9 For forty years your ancestors  
tested God and saw  
the things he did.

10 Then God got tired of them  
and said,

'You people never  
show good sense,  
and you don't understand  
what I want you to do.'

11 God became angry  
and told the people,

'You will never enter  
my place of rest!'

12 My friends, watch out! Don't let evil thoughts or doubts make any of you turn from the living God. 13 You must encourage one another each day. And you must keep on while there is still a time that can be called "today." If you don't, then sin may fool some of you and make you stubborn. 14 We were sure about Christ when we first became his people. So let's hold tightly to our faith until the end. 15 The Scriptures say,

"If you hear his voice today,  
don't be stubborn  
like those who rebelled."

16 Who were those people that heard God's voice and rebelled? Weren't they the same ones that came out of Egypt with Moses? 17 Who were the people that made God angry for 40 years? Weren't they the ones that sinned and died in the desert? 18 And who did God say would never enter his place of rest? Weren't they the ones that disobeyed him? 19 We see that those people did not enter the place of rest because they did not have faith.

**4** The promise to enter the place of rest is still good, and we must take care that none of you miss out. 2 We have heard the message, just as they did. But they failed to believe what they heard, and the message did not do them any good. 3 Only people who have faith will enter the place of rest. It is just as the Scriptures say,

"God became angry  
and told the people,  
'You will never enter  
my place of rest!'

God said this, even though everything has been ready from the time of creation. 4 In fact, somewhere the Scriptures say that by the seventh day, God had finished his work, and so he rested. 5 We also read that he later said, "You people will never enter my place of rest!" 6 This means that the promise to enter is still good, because those who first heard about it disobeyed and did not enter. 7 Much later God told David to make the promise again, just as I have already said,

"If you hear his voice today,  
don't be stubborn!"

8 If Joshua had really given the people rest, there would not be any need for God to talk about another day of rest. 9 But God has promised us a Sabbath when we will rest, even though it has not yet come. 10 On that day God's people will rest from their work, just as God rested from his work.

11 We should do our best to enter that place of rest, so that none of us will disobey and miss going there, as they did. 12 What God has said isn't only alive and active! It is sharper than any double-edged sword. His word can cut through our spirits and souls and through our joints and marrow, until it discovers the desires and thoughts of our hearts. 13 Nothing is hidden from God! He sees through everything, and we will have to tell him the truth.

### Jesus Is the Great High Priest

14 We have a great high priest, who has gone into heaven, and he is Jesus the Son of God. That is why we must hold on to what we have said about him. 15 Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because he was tempted in every way that we are. But he did not sin! 16 So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved grace, and we will find help.

**5** Every high priest is appointed to help others by offering gifts and sacrifices to God because of their sins. 2 A high priest has weaknesses of his own, and he feels sorry for foolish and sinful people. 3 That is why he must offer sacrifices for his own sins and for the sins of others. 4 But no one can have the honor of being a high priest simply by wanting to be one. Only God can choose a priest, and God is the one who chose Aaron.

5 That is how it was with Christ. He became a high priest, but not just because he wanted the honor of being one. It was God who told him,

"You are my Son, because today  
I have become your Father!"

<sup>6</sup>In another place, God says,

"You are a priest forever  
just like Melchizedek."

<sup>7</sup>God had the power to save Jesus from death. And while Jesus was on earth, he begged God with loud crying and tears to save him. He truly worshipped God, and God listened to his prayers. <sup>8</sup>Jesus is God's own Son, but still he had to suffer before he could learn what it really means to obey God. <sup>9</sup>Suffering made Jesus perfect, and now he can save forever all who obey him. <sup>10</sup>This is because God chose him to be a high priest like Melchizedek.

### Warning against Turning Away

<sup>11</sup>Much more could be said about this subject. But it is hard to explain, and all of you are slow to understand. <sup>12</sup>By now you should have been teachers, but once again you need to be taught the simplest things about what God has said. You need milk instead of solid food. <sup>13</sup>People who live on milk are like babies who don't really know what is right. <sup>14</sup>Solid food is for mature people who have been trained to know right from wrong.

**6** We must try to become mature and start thinking about more than just the basic things we were taught about Christ. We shouldn't need to keep talking about why we ought to turn from deeds that bring death and why we ought to have faith in God. <sup>2</sup> And we shouldn't need to keep teaching about baptisms<sup>></sup> or about the laying on of hands or about people being raised from death and the future judgment. <sup>3</sup> Let's grow up, if God is willing.

<sup>4-6</sup> But what about people who turn away after they have already seen the light and have received the gift from heaven and have shared in the Holy Spirit? What about those who turn away after they have received the good message of God and the powers of the future world? There is no way to bring them back. What they are doing is the same as nailing the Son of God to a cross and insulting him in public!

<sup>7</sup>A field is useful to farmers, if there is enough rain to make good crops grow. In fact, God will bless that field. <sup>8</sup> But land that produces only thornbushes is worthless. It is likely to fall under God's curse, and in the end it will be set on fire.

<sup>9</sup> My friends, we are talking this way. But we are sure that you are doing those really good things

that people do when they are being saved. <sup>10</sup> God is always fair. He will remember how you helped his people in the past and how you are still helping them. You belong to God, and he won't forget the love you have shown his people. <sup>11</sup> We wish that each of you would always be eager to show how strong and lasting your hope really is. <sup>12</sup> Then you would never be lazy. You would be following the example of those who had faith and were patient until God kept his promise to them.

### God's Promise Is Sure

<sup>13</sup> No one is greater than God. So he made a promise in his own name when he said to Abraham, <sup>14</sup> "I, the Lord, will bless you with many descendants!" <sup>15</sup> Then after Abraham had been very patient, he was given what God had promised. <sup>16</sup> When anyone wants to settle an argument, they make a vow by using the name of someone or something greater than themselves. <sup>17</sup> So when God wanted to prove for certain that his promise to his people could not be broken, he made a vow. <sup>18</sup> God cannot tell lies! And so his promises and vows are two things that can never be changed.

We have run to God for safety. Now his promises should greatly encourage us to take hold of the hope that is right in front of us. <sup>19</sup> This hope is like a firm and steady anchor for our souls. In fact, hope reaches behind the curtain and into the most holy place. <sup>20</sup> Jesus has gone there ahead of us, and he is our high priest forever, just like Melchizedek.

### The Priestly Family of Melchizedek

**7** Melchizedek was both king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He was the one who went out and gave Abraham his blessing, when Abraham returned from killing the kings. <sup>2</sup> Then Abraham gave him a tenth of everything he had.

The meaning of the name Melchizedek is "King of Justice." But since Salem means "peace," he is also "King of Peace."<sup>3</sup> We are not told that he had a father or mother or ancestors or beginning or end. He is like the Son of God and will be a priest forever.

<sup>4</sup> Notice how great Melchizedek is! Our famous ancestor Abraham gave him a tenth of what he had taken from his enemies. <sup>5</sup> The Law teaches that even Abraham's descendants must give a tenth of what they possess. And they are to give this to their own relatives, who are the descendants of Levi and are priests. <sup>6</sup> Although Melchizedek wasn't a descendant of Levi, Abraham gave him a tenth of what he had. Then Melchizedek blessed Abraham,

who had been given God's promise. <sup>7</sup> Everyone agrees that a person who gives a blessing is greater than the one who receives the blessing.

<sup>8</sup> Priests are given a tenth of what people earn. But all priests die, except Melchizedek, and the Scriptures teach that he is alive. <sup>9</sup> Levi's descendants are now the ones who receive a tenth from people. We could even say that when Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth, Levi also gave him a tenth. <sup>10</sup> This is because Levi was born later into the family of Abraham, who gave a tenth to Melchizedek.

<sup>11</sup> Even though the Law of Moses says that the priests must be descendants of Levi, those priests cannot make anyone perfect. So there needs to be a priest like Melchizedek, rather than one from the priestly family of Aaron. <sup>12</sup> And when the rules for selecting a priest are changed, the Law must also be changed.

<sup>13</sup> The person we are talking about is our Lord, who came from a tribe that had never had anyone to serve as a priest at the altar. <sup>14</sup> Everyone knows he came from the tribe of Judah, and Moses never said that priests would come from that tribe.

<sup>15</sup> All of this becomes clearer, when someone who is like Melchizedek is appointed to be a priest. <sup>16</sup> That person wasn't appointed because of his ancestors, but because his life can never end. <sup>17</sup> The Scriptures say about him,

"You are a priest forever,  
just like Melchizedek."

<sup>18</sup> In this way a weak and useless command was put aside, <sup>19</sup> because the Law cannot make anything perfect. At the same time, we are given a much better hope, and it can bring us close to God.

<sup>20-21</sup> God himself made a promise when this priest was appointed. But he did not make a promise like this when the other priests were appointed. The promise he made is,

"I, the Lord, promise that you  
will be a priest forever!  
And I will never  
change my mind!"

<sup>22</sup> This means that Jesus guarantees us a better agreement with God. <sup>23</sup> There have been a lot of other priests, and all of them have died. <sup>24</sup> But Jesus will never die, and so he will be a priest forever! <sup>25</sup> He is forever able to save the people he leads to God, because he always lives to speak to God for them.

<sup>26</sup> Jesus is the high priest we need. He is holy and innocent and faultless, and not at all like us sinners. Jesus is honored above all beings in heaven, <sup>27</sup> and he is better than any other high priest. Jesus doesn't need to offer sacrifices each day for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. He offered a sacrifice once for all, when he gave himself. <sup>28</sup> The Law appoints priests who have weaknesses. But God's promise, which came later than the Law, appoints his Son. And he is the perfect high priest forever.

### A Better Promise

**8** What I mean is that we have a high priest who sits at the right side of God's great throne in heaven. <sup>2</sup> He also serves as the priest in the most holy place inside the real tent there in heaven. This tent of worship was set up by the Lord, not by humans.

<sup>3</sup> Since all priests must offer gifts and sacrifices, Christ also needed to have something to offer. <sup>4</sup> If he were here on earth, he would not be a priest at all, because here the Law appoints other priests to offer sacrifices. <sup>5</sup> But the tent where they serve is just a copy and a shadow of the real one in heaven. Before Moses made the tent, he was told, "Be sure to make it exactly like the pattern you were shown on the mountain!" <sup>6</sup> Now Christ has been appointed to serve as a priest in a much better way, and he has given us much assurance of a better agreement.

<sup>7</sup> If the first agreement with God had been all right, there would not have been any need for another one. <sup>8</sup> But the Lord found fault with it and said,

"I tell you the time will come,  
when I will make  
a new agreement  
with the people of Israel  
and the people of Judah.

<sup>9</sup> It won't be like the agreement  
that I made  
with their ancestors,  
when I took them by the hand  
and led them out of Egypt.  
They broke their agreement  
with me,  
and I stopped caring  
about them!

<sup>10</sup> "But now I tell the people  
of Israel  
this is my new agreement:

<sup>1</sup> The time will come  
when I, the Lord,  
will write my laws  
on their minds and hearts.  
I will be their God,  
and they will be  
my people.

<sup>11</sup> Not one of them  
will have to teach another  
to know me, their Lord.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>12</sup> All of them will know me,  
no matter who they are.

<sup>12</sup> I will treat them with kindness,  
even though they are wicked.  
I will forget their sins.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>13</sup> When the Lord talks about a new agreement, he means that the first one is out of date. And anything that is old and useless will soon disappear.

### The Tent in Heaven

**S** The first promise that was made included rules for worship and a tent for worship here on earth. <sup>2</sup> The first part of the tent was called the holy place, and a lampstand, a table, and the sacred loaves of bread were kept there.

<sup>3</sup> Behind the curtain was the most holy place. <sup>4</sup> The gold altar that was used for burning incense was in this holy place. The gold-covered sacred chest was also there, and inside it were three things. First, there was a gold jar filled with manna. Then there was Aaron's walking stick that sprouted. Finally, there were the flat stones with the Ten Commandments written on them. <sup>5</sup> On top of the chest were the glorious creatures with wings opened out above the place of mercy.

Now isn't the time to go into detail about these things. <sup>6</sup> But this is how everything was when the priests went each day into the first part of the tent to do their duties. <sup>7</sup> However, only the high priest could go into the second part of the tent, and he went in only once a year. Each time he carried blood to offer for his sins and for any sins that the people had committed without meaning to.

<sup>8</sup> All of this is the Holy Spirit's way of saying that no one could enter the most holy place while the tent was still the place of worship. <sup>9</sup> This also has a meaning for today. It shows that we cannot make our consciences dear by offering gifts and sacrifices. <sup>10</sup> These rules are merely about such things as eating and drinking and ceremonies for washing ourselves. And rules about physical things will

last only until the time comes to change them for something better.

<sup>11</sup> Christ came as the high priest of the good things that are now here.<sup>12</sup> He also went into a much better tent that wasn't made by humans and that doesn't belong to this world. <sup>12</sup> Then Christ went once for all into the most holy place and freed us from sin forever. He did this by offering his own blood instead of the blood of goats and bulls.

<sup>13</sup> According to the Law of Moses, those people who become unclean are not fit to worship God. Yet they will be considered clean, if they are sprinkled with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a sacrificed calf. <sup>14</sup> But Christ was sinless, and he offered himself as an eternal and spiritual sacrifice to God. That's why his blood is much more powerful and makes our<sup>15</sup> consciences dear. Now we can serve the living God and no longer do things that lead to death.

<sup>15</sup> Christ died to rescue those who had sinned and broken the old agreement. Now he brings his chosen ones a new agreement with its guarantee of God's eternal blessings! <sup>16</sup> In fact, making an agreement of this kind is like writing a will. This is because the one who makes the will must die before it is of any use. <sup>17</sup> In other words, a will doesn't go into effect as long as the one who made it is still alive.

<sup>18</sup> Blood was also used<sup>19</sup> to put the first agreement into effect. <sup>19</sup> Moses told the people all that the Law said they must do. Then he used red wool and a hyssop plant to sprinkle the people and the book of the Law with the blood of bulls and goats<sup>20</sup> and with water. <sup>20</sup> He told the people, "With this blood God makes his agreement with you."<sup>21</sup> Moses also sprinkled blood on the tent and on everything else that was used in worship. <sup>22</sup> The Law says that almost everything must be sprinkled with blood, and no sins can be forgiven unless blood is offered.

### Christ's Great Sacrifice

<sup>23</sup> These things are only copies of what is in heaven, and so they had to be made holy by these ceremonies. But the real things in heaven must be made holy by something better. <sup>24</sup> This is why Christ did not go into a tent that had been made by humans and was only a copy of the real one. Instead, he went into heaven and is now there with God to help us.

<sup>25</sup> Christ did not have to offer himself many times. He wasn't like a high priest who goes into the most holy place each year to offer the blood of an

animal. <sup>26</sup>If he had offered himself every year, he would have suffered many times since the creation of the world. But instead, near the end of time he offered himself once and for all, so that he could be a sacrifice that does away with sin.

<sup>27</sup>We die only once, and then we are judged.

<sup>28</sup>So Christ died only once to take away the sins of many people. But when he comes again, it will not be to take away sin. He will come to save everyone who is waiting for him.

**10** The Law of Moses is like a shadow of the good things to come. This shadow isn't the good things themselves, because it cannot free people from sin by the sacrifices that are offered year after year. <sup>2</sup>If there were worshipers who already have their sins washed away and their consciences made clear, there would not be any need to go on offering sacrifices. <sup>3-4</sup>But the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins. It only reminds people of their sins from one year to the next.

<sup>5</sup>When Christ came into the world, he said to God,

"Sacrifices and offerings  
are not what you want,  
but you have given me  
my body.

<sup>6</sup>No, you are not pleased  
with animal sacrifices  
and offerings for sin."

<sup>7</sup>Then Christ said,

"And so, my God,  
I have come to do  
what you want,  
as the Scriptures say."

<sup>8</sup>The Law teaches that offerings and sacrifices must be made because of sin. But why did Christ mention these things and say that God did not want them? <sup>9</sup>Well, it was to do away with offerings and sacrifices and to replace them. That is what he meant by saying to God, <sup>1</sup>I have come to do what you want." <sup>10</sup>So we are made holy because Christ obeyed God and offered himself once for all.

<sup>11</sup>The priests do their work each day, and they keep on offering sacrifices that can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But Christ offered himself as a sacrifice that is good forever. Now he is sitting at God's right side, <sup>13</sup>and he will stay there until his enemies are put under his power. <sup>14</sup>By his one sacrifice he has forever set free from sin the people he brings to God.

<sup>15</sup>The Holy Spirit also speaks of this by telling us that the Lord said,

<sup>16</sup>"When the time comes,  
I will make an agreement  
with them.

I will write my laws  
on their minds and hearts.

<sup>17</sup>Then I will forget  
about their sins  
and no longer remember  
their evil deeds."

<sup>18</sup>When sins are forgiven, there is no more need to offer sacrifices.

### Encouragement and Warning

<sup>19</sup>My friends, the blood of Jesus gives us courage to enter the most holy place <sup>20</sup>by a new way that leads to life! And this way takes us through the curtain that is Christ himself.

<sup>21</sup>We have a great high priest who is in charge of God's house. <sup>22</sup>So let's come near God with pure hearts and a confidence that comes from having faith. Let's keep our hearts pure, our consciences free from evil, and our bodies washed with clean water. <sup>23</sup>We must hold tightly to the hope that we say is ours. After all, we can trust the one who made the agreement with us. <sup>24</sup>We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful and to do helpful things. <sup>25</sup>Some people have given up the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer.

<sup>26</sup>No sacrifices can be made for people who decide to sin after they find out about the truth. <sup>27</sup>They are God's enemies, and all they can look forward to is a terrible judgment and a furious fire. <sup>28</sup>If two or more witnesses accused someone of breaking the Law of Moses, that person could be put to death. <sup>29</sup>But it is much worse to dishonor God's Son and to disgrace the blood of the promise that made us holy. And it is just as bad to insult the Holy Spirit, who shows us mercy. <sup>30</sup>We know that God has said he will punish and take revenge. We also know that the Scriptures say the Lord will judge his people. <sup>31</sup>It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

<sup>32</sup>Don't forget all the hard times you went through when you first received the light. <sup>33</sup>Sometimes you were abused and mistreated in public, and at other times you shared in the sufferings of

others. <sup>34</sup> You were kind to people in jail. And you gladly let your possessions be taken away, because you knew you had something better, something that would last forever.

<sup>35</sup> Keep on being brave! It will bring you great rewards. <sup>36</sup> Learn to be patient, so that you will please God and be given what he has promised.

<sup>37</sup> As the Scriptures say,

“God is coming soon!

It won’t be very long.

<sup>38</sup> The people God accepts  
will live because  
of their faith.▷

But he isn’t pleased  
with anyone  
who turns back.”

<sup>39</sup> We are not like those people who turn back and get destroyed. We will keep on having faith until we are saved.

### The Great Faith of God’s People

**1** Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see. <sup>2</sup> It was their faith that made our ancestors pleasing to God.

<sup>3</sup> Because of our faith, we know that the world was made at God’s command. We also know that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen.

<sup>4</sup> Because Abel had faith, he offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. God was pleased with him and his gift, and even though Abel is now dead, his faith still speaks for him.

<sup>5</sup> Enoch had faith and did not die. He pleased God, and God took him up to heaven. That’s why his body was never found. <sup>6</sup> But without faith no one can please God. We must believe that God is real and that he rewards everyone who searches for him.

<sup>7</sup> Because Noah had faith, he was warned about something that had not yet happened. He obeyed and built a boat that saved him and his family. In this way the people of the world were judged, and Noah was given the blessings that come to everyone who pleases God.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham had faith and obeyed God. He was told to go to the land that God had said would be his, and he left for a country he had never seen. <sup>9</sup> Because Abraham had faith, he lived as a stranger in the promised land. He lived there in a tent, and so did Isaac and Jacob, who were later given the

same promise. <sup>10</sup> Abraham did this, because he was waiting for the eternal city that God had planned and built.

<sup>11</sup> Even when Sarah was too old to have children, she had faith that God would do what he had promised, and she had a son. <sup>12</sup> Her husband Abraham was almost dead, but he became the ancestor of many people. In fact, there are as many of them as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand along the beach.

<sup>13</sup> Every one of those people died. But they still had faith, even though they had not received what they had been promised. They were glad just to see these things from far away, and they agreed that they were only strangers and foreigners on this earth. <sup>14</sup> When people talk this way, it is clear that they are looking for a place to call their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had been talking about the land where they had once lived, they could have gone back at any time. <sup>16</sup> But they were looking forward to a better home in heaven. That’s why God wasn’t ashamed for them to call him their God. He even built a city for them.

<sup>17-18</sup> Abraham had been promised that Isaac, his only son, would continue his family. But when Abraham was tested, he had faith and was willing to sacrifice Isaac, <sup>19</sup> because he was sure that God could raise people to life. This was just like getting Isaac back from death.

<sup>20</sup> Isaac had faith, and he promised blessings to Jacob and Esau. <sup>21</sup> Later, when Jacob was about to die, he leaned on his walking stick and worshiped. Then because of his faith he blessed each of Joseph’s sons. <sup>22</sup> And right before Joseph died, he had faith that God would lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. So he told them to take his bones with them.

<sup>23</sup> Because Moses’ parents had faith, they kept him hidden until he was three months old. They saw that he was a beautiful child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king’s orders. <sup>24</sup> Then after Moses grew up, his faith made him refuse to be called the king’s grandson. <sup>25</sup> He chose to be mistreated with God’s people instead of having the good time that sin could bring for a little while. <sup>26</sup> Moses knew that the treasures of Egypt were not as wonderful as what he would receive from suffering for the Messiah,▷ and he looked forward to his reward.

<sup>27</sup> Because of his faith, Moses left Egypt. Moses had seen the invisible God and wasn’t afraid of the king’s anger. <sup>28</sup> His faith also made him celebrate

Passover. He sprinkled the blood of animals on the doorposts, so that the first-born sons of the people of Israel would not be killed by the destroying angel.

<sup>29</sup> Because of their faith, the people walked through the Red Sea on dry land. But when the Egyptians tried to do it, they were drowned.

<sup>30</sup> God's people had faith, and when they had walked around the city of Jericho for seven days, its walls fell down.

<sup>31</sup> Rahab had been a prostitute, but she had faith and welcomed the spies. So she wasn't killed with the people who disobeyed.

<sup>32</sup> What else can I say? There isn't enough time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. <sup>33</sup> Their faith helped them conquer kingdoms, and because they did right, God made promises to them. They closed the jaws of lions <sup>34</sup> and put out raging fires and escaped from the swords of their enemies. Although they were weak, they were given the strength and power to chase foreign armies away.

<sup>35</sup> Some women received their loved ones back from death. Many of these people were tortured, but they refused to be released. They were sure that they would get a better reward when the dead are raised to life. <sup>36</sup> Others were made fun of and beaten with whips, and some were chained in jail. <sup>37</sup> Still others were stoned to death or sawed in two<sup>></sup> or killed with swords. Some had nothing but sheep skins or goat skins to wear. They were poor, mistreated, and tortured. <sup>38</sup> The world did not deserve these good people, who had to wander in deserts and on mountains and had to live in caves and holes in the ground.

<sup>39</sup> All of them pleased God because of their faith! But still they died without being given what had been promised. <sup>40</sup> This was because God had something better in store for us. And he did not want them to reach the goal of their faith without us.

### A Large Crowd of Witnesses

**12** Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won't let go. And we must be determined to run the race that is ahead of us. <sup>2</sup> We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete. He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because he knew that later on he would be glad he did. Now he is seated at the right side of God's throne! <sup>3</sup> So keep your mind on Jesus, who

put up with many insults from sinners. Then you won't get discouraged and give up.

<sup>4</sup> None of you have yet been hurt<sup>></sup> in your battle against sin. <sup>5</sup> But you have forgotten that the Scriptures say to God's children,

"When the Lord punishes you,  
don't make light of it,  
and when he corrects you,  
don't be discouraged.

<sup>6</sup> The Lord corrects the people  
he loves  
and disciplines those  
he calls his own."

<sup>7</sup> Be patient when you are being corrected! This is how God treats his children. Don't all parents correct their children? <sup>8</sup> God corrects all of his children, and if he doesn't correct you, then you don't really belong to him. <sup>9</sup> Our earthly fathers correct us, and we still respect them. Isn't it even better to be given true life by letting our spiritual Father correct us?

<sup>10</sup> Our human fathers correct us for a short time, and they do it as they think best. But God corrects us for our own good, because he wants us to be holy, as he is. <sup>11</sup> It is never fun to be corrected. In fact, at the time it is always painful. But if we learn to obey by being corrected, we will do right and live at peace.

<sup>12</sup> Now stand up straight! Stop your knees from shaking <sup>13</sup> and walk a straight path. Then lame people will be healed, instead of getting worse.

### Warning against Turning from God

<sup>14</sup> Try to live at peace with everyone! Live a clean life. If you don't, you will never see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> Make sure that no one misses out on God's undeserved grace. Don't let anyone become bitter and cause trouble for the rest of you. <sup>16</sup> Watch out for immoral and ungodly people like Esau, who sold his future blessing for only one meal. <sup>17</sup> You know how he later wanted it back. But there was nothing he could do to change things, even though he begged his father and cried.

<sup>18</sup> You have not come to a place like Mount Sinai<sup>></sup> that can be seen and touched. There is no flaming fire or dark cloud or storm <sup>19</sup> or trumpet sound. The people of Israel heard a voice speak. But they begged it to stop, <sup>20</sup> because they could not obey its commands. They were even told to kill any animal that touched the mountain. <sup>21</sup> The sight was so frightening that Moses said he shook with fear.

<sup>22</sup> You have now come to Mount Zion and to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is the city of the living God, where thousands and thousands of angels have come to celebrate. <sup>23</sup> Here you will find all of God's dearest children,<sup>></sup> whose names are written in heaven. And you will find God himself, who judges everyone. Here also are the spirits of those good people who have been made perfect. <sup>24</sup> And Jesus is here! He is the one who makes God's new agreement with us, and his sprinkled blood says much better things than the blood of Abel.

<sup>25</sup> Make sure that you obey the one who speaks to you. The people did not escape, when they refused to obey the one who spoke to them at Mount Sinai. Do you think you can possibly escape, if you refuse to obey the one who speaks to you from heaven? <sup>26</sup> When God spoke the first time, his voice shook only the earth. This time he has promised to shake the earth once again, and heaven too.

<sup>27</sup> The words "once again" mean that these created things will someday be shaken and removed. Then what cannot be shaken will last. <sup>28</sup> We should be grateful that we were given a kingdom that cannot be shaken. And in this kingdom we please God by worshiping him and by showing him great honor and respect. <sup>29</sup> Our God is like a destructive fire!

### Service That Pleases God

**13** Keep being concerned about each other as the Lord's followers should.

<sup>2</sup> Be sure to welcome strangers into your home. By doing this, some people have welcomed angels as guests, without even knowing it.

<sup>3</sup> Remember the Lord's people who are in jail and be concerned for them. Don't forget those who are suffering, but imagine that you are there with them.

<sup>4</sup> Have respect for marriage. Always be faithful to your partner, because God will punish anyone who is immoral or unfaithful in marriage.

<sup>5</sup> Don't fall in love with money. Be satisfied with what you have. The Lord has promised that he will not leave us or desert us. <sup>6</sup> That should make you feel like saying,

"The Lord helps me!  
Why should I be afraid  
of what people  
can do to me?"

<sup>7</sup> Don't forget about your leaders who taught you God's message. Remember what kind of lives they lived and try to have faith like theirs.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ never changes! He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. <sup>9</sup> Don't be fooled by any kind of strange teachings. It is better to receive strength from God's gift of undeserved grace than to depend on certain foods. After all, these foods don't really help the people who eat them. <sup>10</sup> But we have an altar where even the priests who serve in the place of worship have no right to eat.

<sup>11</sup> After the high priest offers the blood of animals as a sin offering, the bodies of those animals are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup> Jesus himself suffered outside the city gate, so that his blood would make people holy. <sup>13</sup> That's why we should go outside the camp to Jesus and share in his disgrace. <sup>14</sup> On this earth we don't have a city that lasts forever, but we are waiting for such a city.

<sup>15</sup> Our sacrifice is to keep offering praise to God in the name of Jesus. <sup>16</sup> But don't forget to help others and to share your possessions with them. This too is like offering a sacrifice that pleases God.

<sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders and do what they say. They are watching over you, and they must answer to God. So don't make them sad as they do their work. Make them happy. Otherwise, they won't be able to help you at all.

<sup>18</sup> Pray for us. Our consciences are clear, and we always try to live right. <sup>19</sup> I especially want you to pray that I can visit you again soon.

### Final Prayers and Greetings

<sup>20</sup> God gives peace, and he raised our Lord Jesus Christ from death. Now Jesus is like a Great Shepherd whose blood was used to make God's eternal agreement with his flock. <sup>21</sup> I pray that God will make you ready to obey him and that you will always be eager to do right. May Jesus help you do what pleases God. To Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever! Amen.

<sup>22</sup> My friends, I have written only a short letter to encourage you, and I beg you to pay close attention to what I have said.

<sup>23</sup> By now you surely must know that our friend Timothy is out of jail. If he gets here in time, I will bring him with me when I come to visit you.

<sup>24</sup> Please give my greetings to your leaders and to the rest of the Lord's people.

His followers from Italy send you their greetings.

<sup>25</sup> I pray that God will be kind to all of you!>

**Notes**

\*An asterisk preceding a verse number in a poetic passage of this book indicates that the contents of two or more verses have been joined together and rearranged beginning with the verse so marked.

- ▷ **1.8** *Your*: Some manuscripts have "His."
- ▷ **2.7** *and honor*: Some manuscripts add "and you have placed us in charge of all you created."
- ▷ **3.2** *all of*: Some manuscripts do not have these words.
- ▷ **6.2** *baptisms*: Or "ceremonies of washing."
- ▷ **7.25** *forever able to save*: Or "able to save forever."
- ▷ **9.11** *that are now here*: Some manuscripts have "that were coming."
- ▷ **9.14** *our*: Some manuscripts have "your," and others have "their."
- ▷ **9.18** *Blood was also used*: Or "There also had to be a death."
- ▷ **9.19** *blood of bulls and goats*: Some manuscripts do not have "and goats."
- ▷ **10.38** *The people God accepts will live because of their faith*: Or "The people God accepts because of their faith will live."
- ▷ **11.26** *the Messiah*: Or "Christ."
- ▷ **11.37** *sawed in two*: Some manuscripts have "tested" or "tempted."
- ▷ **12.4** *hurt*: Or "killed."
- ▷ **12.18** *a place like Mount Sinai*: The Greek text has "a place."
- ▷ **12.23** *all of God's dearest children*: The Greek text has "the gathering of the first-born children."
- ▷ **13.25** *to all of you*: Some manuscripts add "Amen."