



KINGDOM PEOPLE

Forty Daily Devotionals
from 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews
(Based on the NKJV)

Introduction

We will be reading through five books of the New Testament during this 40-day period of devotions. The first three books (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) are considered to be “pastoral letters” because they were written to young men who were assigned to pastor churches in the latter years of the Apostle Paul’s life and ministry. Much of what we know about church organization is based on these three important letters. The little book of Philemon is actually a “personal letter” that Paul wrote to a dear friend, and there is much to learn about Christian friendship from reading this very powerful communication. We will close out our reading time in the Book of Hebrews. This is a wonderful book that helps us to understand much of what the Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices represented and how that Jesus Christ fulfills all that those things foreshadowed.

Daily Reading Schedule

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
1	1 Timothy 1:1-11	8/16/20
2	1 Timothy 1:12-20	8/17/20
3	1 Timothy 2:1-15	8/18/20
4	1 Timothy 3:1-16	8/19/20
5	1 Timothy 4:1-16	8/20/20
6	1 Timothy 5:1-12	8/21/20
7	1 Timothy 5:13-25	8/22/20
8	1 Timothy 6:1-10	8/23/20
9	1 Timothy 6:11-21	8/24/20
10	2 Timothy 1:1-18	8/25/20
11	2 Timothy 2:1-13	8/26/20
12	2 Timothy 2:14-26	8/27/20
13	2 Timothy 3:1-17	8/28/20
14	2 Timothy 4:1-0	8/29/20
15	2 Timothy 4:11-22	8/30/20
16	Titus 1:1-16	8/31/20
17	Titus 2:1-15	9/1/20
18	Titus 3:1-15	9/2/20
19	Philemon 1:1-11	9/3/20
20	Philemon 1:12-25	9/4/20

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
21	Hebrews 1:1-14	9/5/20
22	Hebrews 2:1-18	9/6/20
23	Hebrews 3:1-19	9/7/20
24	Hebrews 4:1-16	9/8/20
25	Hebrews 5:1-14	9/9/20
26	Hebrews 6:1-20	9/10/20
27	Hebrews 7:1-12	9/11/20
28	Hebrews 7:13-28	9/12/20
29	Hebrews 8:1-13	9/13/20
30	Hebrews 9:1-15	9/14/20
31	Hebrews 9:16-28	9/15/20
32	Hebrews 10:1-10	9/16/20
33	Hebrews 10:11-25	9/17/20
34	Hebrews 10:26-39	9/18/20
35	Hebrews 11:1-22	9/19/20
36	Hebrews 11:23-40	9/20/20
37	Hebrews 12:1-11	9/21/20
38	Hebrews 12:12-29	9/22/20
39	Hebrews 13:1-14	9/23/20
40	Hebrews 13:15-25	9/24/20

Day 1: 1 Timothy 1:1-11

“To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Timothy 1:2)

“Mercy”

One of the people that we are going to be studying about in these devotionals is a young preacher named Timothy. After several years of serving with Paul as an assistant, Timothy became the pastor of the churches in Ephesus. It was during the time that he pastored what was probably his first church that Paul wrote letters to encourage and to educate young Timothy. If you were to look back at the introductions to all of Paul’s previous letters you will see that they were all to churches and that they all opened with his expressed desire that they experience God’s grace and peace. This expression of Paul’s desire that Christians experience God’s grace and peace comes earlier in the opening comments of some letters than others, but it is always there. However, when he began his letters to his two young pastor friends, Timothy and Titus, Paul also wished them “mercy” along with the traditional wish for grace and peace. When we get to Philemon, who was not a pastor, Paul returned to his customary wish that he be blessed with God’s grace and peace, but mercy is omitted. Probably one of the reasons that Timothy needed “mercy” was because he had to deal with some issues with false teachers within the church. Paul’s statement that he had “urged” Timothy to “remain in Ephesus” (v. 3) is a pretty good indicator that some of young Timothy’s early pastoral experiences were causing him to have second thoughts about being in the ministry.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People refuse to quit when the going gets tough! However, it is apparent that they may often need encouragement! **Pray** for Christians that may be experiencing discouragement today and **do something** to **encourage** them.

Day 2: 1 Timothy 1:12-20

“...I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief...However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.” (1 Timothy 1:13 & 16)

A Personal Testimony

Sometimes the best way to encourage someone is to let them know that you have been through the same type of trials that they are experiencing, and that you, through God’s grace and “mercy”, survived them! That is exactly what Paul does for Timothy in today’s Scripture. He begins his personal testimony by expressing his appreciation to Christ Jesus for enabling him and considering him faithful enough to put him into the ministry. No one was more aware of what Paul was before his conversion than Paul himself! As you read through his testimony regarding what kind of person he was before he met Christ, you will see that twice he stated, “I obtained mercy” (vs. 13, 16). A personal testimony should always include praise to God for what He has done for us. Paul did not close his testimony to Timothy without offering such praise for all God’s mercy (v. 17). After his personal testimony, Paul then spoke some affirming words to his young friend and associate. He reminded Timothy of all the good things (the “prophecies”) that God had led people to say about him and his calling to the ministry. He then encouraged his young friend to “wage the good warfare” with “faith and a good conscience” (vs. 18-19). He reminded Timothy that “some” had not done so, and as a result, they had “suffered shipwreck” (v. 19). Paul even mentioned, by name, a couple of those who had once begun a good journey for God only to run aground or see their ministries break up like a ship on the rocks.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People share their personal testimonies with others and always give God the honor, glory and praise for what is accomplished by His grace and mercy in their lives. **Share** your personal testimony with someone today. **Praise** God publicly for all that He has done for you.

Day 3: 1 Timothy 2:1-15

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,”
(1 Timothy 2:1)

First Things First!

It is no surprise that the first thing that Paul advised his young pastor friend to do was pray. He specifically mentions four avenues of prayer that include personal requests (supplications), general prayers, prayers for others (intercessions), and then prayers of thanksgiving. Paul stated that our prayers should be “for all men” and not just for our own personal needs or just for the needs of those within the church. As we pray for “kings and all who are in authority,” we should ask God to lead them to allow us to pursue our Christian walk and operate our ministries without fear of persecution (vs. 1-2). In these verses, we are urged to have the same attitude of love toward people that God has and to share God’s compassionate interest in their salvation. In verse eight, Paul expressed the desire that “men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” The word “everywhere” indicates that all meetings should be opened in prayer and that there is no place where prayer should be considered an inappropriate thing to do. If we find ourselves among people or in places that restrict or prohibit prayer, then we may be in the wrong places and with the wrong people!

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People pray and pray often! **Seek to conduct** your daily affairs in a manner that would allow you to lift up “holy hands” to God as you take your personal requests to Him. **Pray** often and about all things. **Pray** specifically for our national leadership today.

Day 4: 1 Timothy 3:1-16

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;... Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.” (1 Timothy 3:2-3 and 8-9)

Leadership

The New Testament offers very little instruction as to how the church is to seek and install its officers. More care is given toward the character of those who are chosen to serve than the method by which they are chosen. Of extreme importance seems to be the “desire” that a candidate has to be of service to the church. Verse one specifically addresses the “desire” of the pastoral candidate, and the word “likewise” (v. 8) in reference to the deacon candidate indicates that both the pastoral and deacon candidate should be someone who has a passion for ministry and a desire to serve others through the work of the church. Since those in leadership in the church will have privileged information regarding the needs, faults, and weaknesses of the people who are within the church, the men chosen to fill these important offices should be men of high moral character who will not take advantage of those in need or in desperate situations. The men chosen to lead the church should be men with good hearts that first exhibit their ability to be a spiritual leader within their own home and among their own families. The wives of church leaders are also charged to be spiritually mature and morally sound. Paul explained to Timothy that he was writing these very personal instructions to his young pastor friend so that he might “know how (he) ought to conduct (himself) in the house of God” (v. 15). The message of the great God who was “manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, (and) received up in glory” (v. 16) should not be derailed by servants who are more interested in their own personal ambitions than the spiritual and physical needs of God’s church.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People live with kingdom purposes in mind! **Examine** your own personal desires and ambitions and carefully **evaluate** them to see if they are “God first” or “Me first.” **Find** a job that will involve you in the work of the church and then be faithful to **do** it.

Day 5: 1 Timothy 4:1-16

“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.” (1 Timothy 4:6-7)

“A Good Minister”

While some of what Paul has to say to Timothy is in regard to his life as a *minister*, there is a very important point that the elder preacher is trying to make to his young friend regarding his life as a *man*. As a minister, Timothy was charged to “instruct the brethren” in the disciplines associated with the Christian life and to “reject profane and old wives fables” because the pulpit is to be restricted to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. However, as a man, Timothy was reminded of his need to be “nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine.” The word that is here translated “nourish” is based on a word that means “to feed or nurture.” In all his studying to be an instructor of others, Timothy was not to forget that he, too, possessed a soul that needed to be fed and nurtured in the Word of God. A pastor’s first appointment of every day should be with God and His Word! He should be careful to make sure that his personal Bible reading and study time is first about his own *walk* with God before he ever begins to read and study for his *work* for God. If Timothy was to “command and teach” (v. 11) and to “be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith (and) in purity” (v. 12), then he was going to have to be a man who gave “attention to reading” (v. 13) and took time to “meditate” (v. 15) on the things that he read in God’s Word.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are people of the Word! **Make** your time with God and His Word a priority in your life. **Read** your Bible daily and then **meditate** on what you have read throughout your day. **Seek** ways to live God’s Word out in your daily walk.

Day 6: 1 Timothy 5:1-12

“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8)

A Family Man

After advising Timothy on some important things relative to his private devotional life, Paul then spoke to him about how to conduct his public life and ministry. A key to success in ministry is the ability to effectively relate to the individuals who make up the church. Since the church should be made up of members from all age groups, Timothy would need to know how to relate personally to all the people. An important tip that the younger preacher received from his mentor was to treat the people in his church like he would treat the members of his own family. The older men should be addressed with great respect, dignity and honor, just as one would speak to his father. As such, Timothy was advised to “exhort” them rather than to “rebuke” them (v. 1). The younger men should be treated with the same respect as a brother. The same rule was to apply to the women in the church. The older women were to be spoken to in the way that he would speak to his own mother and the younger women with the “purity” with which he would speak to his sister. The word that is translated “purity” in verse 2 is a word that Paul used only in this one letter to Timothy as he twice advised his younger associate about propriety in ministry (see 4:12). Timothy then received some very specific instructions on how to honor the widows within the church. Throughout the Bible, widows, aliens, and orphans were often used by God as object lessons on how we are to show mercy to others. In short, Paul advised Timothy to be a good family man!

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People seek to relate appropriately to all people in the church. **Avoid** making church a social event with just your closest friends. **Include** others in conversations and activities. **Seek** out those who are alone and **invite** them to join you and your friends or family.

Day 7: 1 Timothy 5:13-25

“And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.” (1 Timothy 5:13)

“Gossips and Busybodies”

Our focus verse contains a very interesting and curious word. I use the word curious here because the word that is translated “busybodies” in our text is found in only one other place in the New Testament. There it is translated “curious arts” in some translations (Acts 19:19). In many translations, you will read something like “magical arts” or “magic” while others will use terms as strong as “evil magic,” “occult practices,” and even “sorcery.” The reference was to magicians who, after turning to Christ, brought their books on magic and sorcery and burned them in the sight of the church and its leaders. As used to relate to these magicians, this term referred to their ability to use sleight of hand and illusion to make them seem to be something more than they were. Paul is now warning Timothy that there might be some in the church who would use *sleight of tongue* to do the same thing! As such, the younger widows, if they were supported by the congregation, might have too much time on their hands and become a little too busy with their tongues going from “house to house...saying things which they ought not.” As such, they would become “gossips.” This verse is the only time that this Greek word for “gossip” is found in the Bible. When it is pronounced, it sounds much like our English word “fluid,” which is quite appropriate since the meaning of the Greek word is “to bubble up” or “spring forth” like water from a well or spring.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People avoid conversations where gossip just “comes up” or “springs out” of their mouths! **Excuse yourself** from conversations that become critical of others or that are divulging personal information about others – whether the information is accurate or not!

Day 8: 1 Timothy 6:1-10

“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,” (1 Timothy 6:3)

Wholesome Words

The word that is translated “wholesome” here in the NKJV is translated “sound” or “true” in some other translations of the Bible. This word is found in only 12 places throughout the New Testament with only three of those being in the Gospels. (All three of those were by Dr. Luke as he spoke of those who were “healthy” or “sound”.) You will also find this word one time in the second verse of 3 John where it is translated “health” in almost every translation. Other than those few times, every other time that this word was used by the Holy Spirit as He led men to write out God’s Word, it was used as Paul used it to offer spiritual advice and instruction to the young preachers, Timothy and Titus. As such, Paul was advising these men that their preaching was to be “healthy” preaching that built up their people and nourished them in the Word of God. Two earmarks of healthy preaching are provided for Paul’s young understudies. First, wholesome words are “the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.” A preacher should never venture forth on a sermon text without first researching what Jesus might have said on the subject matter. Second, wholesome words are words that adhere “to the doctrine (teaching) which accords (is in agreement) with godliness.” As such, every Christian would be well advised to ask himself two questions before speaking. (1) “Does this agree with what the Lord Jesus would say at this time and to this person?” and (2) “Will what I am about to say build someone up or tear someone down?”

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People speak spiritually nourishing and healthy things to others! **Practice** using wholesome words in your conversations with people today by repeating something that Jesus said. **Remember**, you do not have to cite chapter and verse to use God’s Word in a conversational way.

Day 9: 1 Timothy 6:11-21

“But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:11-12)

Flee, Follow, and Fight

Referring to the “many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition” and “the love of money,” Paul urged Timothy to *flee* from such things (v. 9). The word that is translated “flee” in our first focus verse is a word that means to “flee to safety” or “to avoid by flight.” There are at least three instances in the Bible where this same word is translated “escape.” One of the places where this word is used is in Matthew 10:23 where Jesus told His disciples to “flee” to another city when they experienced persecution in the city where they were. As a young preacher, Timothy needed to be made aware that there are some situations from which he must immediately distance himself. Paul then provided Timothy with some things that he should *follow*. He was to “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience (and) gentleness.” Some translations use the words “follow after” in verse 11. The word means “to seek after eagerly” or “to earnestly seek to acquire.” Then Paul reminded Timothy that there were some things for which he should *fight* by stating that he should “fight the good fight of faith.” The first time that we see the word “fight” in verse 12, it is used as a verb while the second “fight” is definitely a noun. It was the word used to describe the assembly place where the Greek games were contested. One “fight” referred to *what* Timothy was to do while the other referred to *where* he was to do it.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People realize that life is a contest or struggle against a very powerful enemy! **Make** a list of the things that Timothy was warned to *flee* and to *follow* and then **refer** to that list throughout your day as you seek to “**fight** the good fight of faith.”

Day 10: 2 Timothy 1:1-18

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,” (2 Timothy 1:1)

The Good Warfare

Paul begins 2 Timothy by stating that he was “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” In other words, Paul was reminding his young friend, and us, that his work was not based on his personal *aspiration* but on a powerful *inspiration* from God. So, the way that Paul “waged a good warfare” and “fought the fight of faith” was by using his spiritual gifts that he had received from God. The New Testament clearly teaches that every believer has at least one spiritual gift that has been chosen for them by the Holy Spirit. Every person in God’s church should be able to say that I am an usher or deacon or nursery worker or a Sunday School teacher or worker “by the will of God.” There is a place of service for every believer and each one of us should find and faithfully fulfill our assigned role in the church. Paul later reminded Timothy that God “has saved us and called us with a holy calling” (v. 9). A very important word in that phrase is the word “and.” God has “saved us *and* called us.” Many Christians can definitely say, “God has saved us” because they have responded to God’s call to *salvation*, while fewer can honestly say that they have responded to God’s call to *service*. The “good warfare” is fought not “according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which He has given us in Christ Jesus before time began” (v. 9). As Paul encouraged Timothy to “hold fast” to the faith, he sadly reminded him of some who had failed to do so and then proudly testified of his faithful friend, Onesiphorus, who “sought” and “found” Paul while he was in prison and “ministered” to him (vs. 13-18).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People find their role in God’s service and faithfully fill it! **Refuse** to be like those who turn away from a brother or sister in need and **choose** to be like those who faithfully minister to others.

Day 11: 2 Timothy 2:1-13

“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 2:1)

Be Strong!

It is important to note that the word translated “strong” in our focus verse is a verb. It literally means to “be strengthened” or “empowered.” As such, Paul was not writing to remind Timothy of something that he was supposed *to be* but to remind him of something that was supposed *to be happening* in his life. The only other place that you will find this word in this short letter is in 4:17 where Paul told Timothy, “The Lord stood with me and *strengthened* me.” So, Timothy was to be ever growing – becoming stronger and stronger – “in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” As the elder apostle drew nearer to death, he desired that Timothy identify “faithful men” within the church that he could train “to teach others” just as he had been taught by Paul (v. 2). As he neared the final words that he would ever pen for God, Paul urged Timothy to “be strengthened” in three ways. First, he was to be strong *like a soldier* who “endured hardship” and avoided becoming entangled “with the affairs of this life” (vs. 3-4). Everything that a soldier needed was provided by his commander so that he need not rely on his own provisions. Then he was to “be strengthened” *like an athlete* who competed in accordance with the rules of the game. Finally, he was to “be strengthened” *like a farmer* who finds his own strength and nourishment by partaking of the things that he grows to strengthen others. Paul closed this section by reminding Timothy of a “faithful saying” about the One who “remains faithful” (vs. 11-13).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People realize that God, and His grace, are their source of spiritual strength! **Believe** that God is faithful to keep His promises to us and *be strengthened* as you **spend time** with Him in daily Bible reading and prayer. **Share** something that you have read with someone you meet today.

Day 12: 2 Timothy 2:14-26

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

“Be Diligent!”

Having been raised on the KJV Bible (which I still love and appreciate) I memorized today’s focus verse to say, “*Study* to show thyself approved unto God.” As such, I first thought that Paul was telling Timothy that he could reach some level of knowledge or spiritual expertise that would gain God’s approval. Since then, I have learned that the word that is translated “study” here in the KJV actually means “to exert oneself,” “to endeavor,” or “to give diligence.” For that reason the majority of today’s available translations render this word “do your best,” “make every effort,” or “give diligence” to show yourself “approved of God” and “a worker who does not need to be ashamed.” The word that is translated “be diligent” here is a “Paul only” word in the New Testament. He only used it in eight places in his writings with half of those times being in his letters to young preachers. The word that is translated “approved” means “to be accepted.” It was a term used especially by money changers and bankers to refer to coins or money that was genuine and not counterfeit and therefore “acceptable.” James was the only other person to ever use this word in the New Testament writings. In James 1:12 he said, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has *been approved*, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” A few translations use the words “when he has been *tried*” there because that is exactly what the word means. We, and our works, will someday be “tried” or “tested” to see if they are genuine or counterfeit. Only what has been done for God, and His glory, will be “approved.”

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are genuine! **Live** a life that is the “real deal” in the eyes of God and your fellow man. **Do** all that you do with the realization that it is for God and His glory!

Day 13: 2 Timothy 3:1-17

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:” (2 Timothy 3:1)

Perilous Times

The word that is translated “perilous” in our focus verse is found in only two places in the New Testament. It means “hard to bear,” “troublesome,” or “dangerous.” Some translations use either “grievous,” “dangerous,” “difficult,” “terrible,” and even “violent” to translate this word. The first place where this word is used in the Bible is where it describes some demon-possessed men as being so “exceedingly fierce” that no one could even go through the area where they were dwelling (Matthew 8:28). Such are the times for which Paul would warn Timothy to prepare himself. The days ahead would find the younger pastor facing difficulties with people such as those described in verses 2-5, and verse 13 indicates that the problems associated with such evil people were only going to “grow worse and worse.” In verse 14, Paul urges Timothy to keep his eyes off *people* and to keep his eyes on the *path* that God had called him to walk. In the midst of these “perilous times” Paul said to Timothy, “continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them” (v. 14). From his childhood, Timothy had “known the Holy Scriptures,” and they had made him “wise for salvation” (v. 15). This same “Scripture” that was “given by inspiration” was to be the source of Timothy’s strength and the tool by which he would be “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (v. 17).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are prepared people! Trust God’s Word to be what it promises to be. **Believe** that the Bible *is* (not *was*) inspired by God. **Allow** God’s word to equip you for even the most perilous times of your life.

Day 14: 2 Timothy 4:1-10

“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”
(2 Timothy 4:5)

“Be Watchful!”

The idea of being “watchful” is to be “sober-minded,” “keeping control,” or keeping “a clear head” as you “endure afflictions” and “do the work” so that you might, like Timothy, “fulfill your ministry.” As you read through these verses, you might note that most of Timothy’s *pastoral* problems were *people* problems. In the face of those problems, Timothy was encouraged to “preach the Word!” because the Word of God alone could “convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching” (v. 2). We have often heard that “The Word of God will do the work of God” and Timothy was being reminded of it even in his day. It seems that in New Testament times, the greatest people-problems stemmed from their not *enduring* “sound doctrine” but *enjoying* only the kind of messages that pleased them and that they wanted to hear. Paul warned Timothy that such people would “turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned to fables” (v. 4). Even as Paul neared the end of his ministry on earth and as “the time of (his) departure” drew near (v. 6), he faced the disappointments that are associated with seeing others give up their work and leave the ministry. Paul encouraged Timothy to live with his eyes on the “there and then” (heaven) and not the “here and now” (this world). Verses seven and eight are pretty good indicators that Paul was doing exactly that. Demas, on the other hand, had caused Paul great and obvious disappointment when he had “forsaken” him because he “loved this present world” (v. 9).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People keep their eyes on the prize! **Keep** a clear head even when you see others doing things that are not kingdom-oriented or pleasing to God. **Focus** on doing what pleases God and live out the Bible before others. **Trust** God’s word to do God’s work!

Day 15: 2 Timothy 4:11-22

“At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.”
(2 Timothy 4:16)

Some Final Instructions

Lest Timothy become totally distrustful of all people, Paul mentions several believers who were loyal friends and faithful workers as he provided Timothy with some final instructions concerning ministry. He mentioned Luke who was *with* him and then Mark who was described as useful *to* him in his ministry. He then mentioned Tychicus who had gone to Ephesus *for* him. The closing verses include several names of individuals that were obviously Christian associates and fellow workers with Paul. In between, Paul mentions “Alexander the coppersmith” by name and warns Timothy to “beware of him” because he had “greatly resisted” Paul’s preaching and teaching and had done the aging apostle “much harm” (vs. 14-15). Of all the lessons that Timothy must have learned from the Apostle Paul, I think that the most important one may have been hidden in verse 16. There, after Paul discloses that even though “no one stood with” him and “all forsook” him, he took a moment to pray that “it not be charged against them.” Just as his Savior did before him, and just as Stephen did as Paul watched him being stoned to death for his faith, now Paul prays for the forgiveness of those who had wronged him and done him harm in the ministry. This example might have been the greatest training that Timothy ever received from his elder friend and mentor.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are forgiving people! **Claim** no man as your enemy and realize that our only true enemy is the devil himself. **Practice** forgiveness on a regular basis. **Search** your heart today to see if there is any ill will that you have toward anyone that needs to be forgiven.

Day 16: Titus 1:1-16

“To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.” (Titus 1:4)

“A True Son”

The letter to Titus was written about the same time as the first letter to Timothy and about four years before the final letter (2 Timothy) that Paul ever wrote. Titus might have been the second to last letter that was ever penned by the great apostle and faithful warrior of God. After a longer than usual introduction, Paul refers to Titus as “a true son” in the “common faith.” When the word that is translated “faith” in our focus verse was used in relation to *God*, it meant “to have and hold to the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and giver of eternal salvation through Christ.” Whenever this same word was used in reference to *Christ*, it represented “a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God.” Paul considered Titus to be “a true son” because he knew that Titus held to the same convictions about God and Christ as he, and he trusted him to pass that same faith on to others. Like Timothy, Titus was going to experience some people-problems, and he was going to have to be faithful to preach the Word of God in the face of opposition from within and without the church. As a “bishop” (pastor), Titus was to be “holding fast (to) the faithful word” that he “had been taught” and was to “exhort and convict” those who contradicted that word (vs. 7-9). While verses 5-8 speak of the characteristics of those who are qualified for special ministerial service, verse 16 speaks of those who are “disqualified for every good work.” We should all be careful to make sure that our names are on the right list!

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are qualified people! **Adopt** and carefully **adhere** to the kind of characteristics that provide evidence that you are a Christian. **Live** like “a true son” in the faith.

Day 17: Titus 2:1-15

“who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:14)

“His Own Special People”

Since today’s focus verse is the only place that the word translated “special” in the NKJV is found, we will have to look at the ways that other Bibles translate this word in order to better understand what Paul was saying to Titus. Some translations use the word “peculiar” to translate what God is trying to teach us about His people in this statement. Others, along with the NKJV, use the word “special.” However, some use the most literal translation of this Greek word and translate it to say that Christians are a people “of God’s own possession” or a people who “are His very own.” As God’s special people who have been chosen to be His very own, we should behave accordingly. As you read through Paul’s pastoral advice to Titus you will see that there are instructions as to how the different classes of people, including servants, were to behave in their relationships with others, whether in church or in the world. In “all things” (or to all of these people) Titus was to be “a pattern of good works” and his “doctrine” (teaching) was to be marked by “integrity, reverence, incorruptibility (and) sound speech” that could not “be condemned” (vs. 7-8). If Titus would heed these words of advice from Paul, then even those who were “an opponent” might be “ashamed, having nothing evil to say” about the young preacher (v. 8).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People live with integrity! **Seek** to be “a pattern of good works” to others.

Day 18: Titus 3:1-15

“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.” (Titus 3:1-2)

Some Important Reminders

As Paul began to close out this letter to his young pastor friend, he mentioned some things about which Titus should be faithful to remind his people. They were to be “subject to rulers and authorities,” they were to be obedient, and they were “to be ready for every good work.” There were also some things that they were to be reminded to avoid. They were to avoid speaking evil of others and encouraged to be “peaceable, gentle, (and) showing all humility to all men.” Since the last part of verse two was spoken in the context of how they were to “speak,” we assume that Paul was encouraging Titus to remind his people that they were to speak peaceably, gently, and humbly to one another. Verse 3 reminds us that we should speak as Paul recommended because we all have a past, and not one person can say that they have not done things about which they are ashamed or embarrassed. “But the kindness and the love of God...appeared” and we were “saved,” washed, and renewed (made new) by the Holy Spirit (v. 5). As such, we have been “justified by His grace” and we have been made “heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (v. 7). For that reason, Christians “should be careful to maintain good works” and “avoid foolish disputes, genealogies (thinking that they are Christians simply because they are Jews), contentions, and strivings about the law” (vs. 8-9). Such conversations were said to be “unprofitable and useless” (v. 9). It is obvious that the early church had a very low tolerance level for those who wanted to live in constant dispute and create contentions. Paul instructed that “a divisive man” was to be rejected after having been admonished on one or two occasions (v. 10).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are ever mindful of how they speak to others! **Guard** your words and be kind, gentle, and humble in your communications with others. **Avoid** getting involved in disputes and contentions whenever possible by politely excusing yourself from such conversations.

Day 19: Philemon 1:1-11

“Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer,”
(Philemon 1:1)

A Personal Letter

Even though the short letter to Philemon follows those to Timothy and Titus, it was actually written several years before those letters. This is a personal letter written by one Christian friend to another that includes no doctrinal teaching but speaks volumes on how Christians are to *communicate* and *cooperate* with one another. In this letter we get to see Paul, not as the preacher, evangelist, or theologian, but as Paul the person – the man who had been radically changed by his meeting with Christ many years before. Philemon was a “beloved friend and fellow laborer” who was known for the “love and faith” that he had “toward the Lord Jesus” and “all the saints.” He was also known for “sharing his faith” and for having “good” within him (vs. 4-6). The “hearts of the saints” had often been “refreshed” by this good “brother” (v. 7). This man had a runaway slave named Onesimus whom Paul had led to Christ and for whom the apostle was now interceding with Philemon, the man’s former master. We assume that Paul led Onesimus to Christ in prison while he was jailed for preaching the gospel, and the slave was imprisoned for stealing and running away from his master. Paul clearly states that he had “begotten” (led to a new birth experience) this young man “while in my chains” (v. 10). Verse 18 will later suggest that Onesimus might have “wronged” his master and now owed him whatever he might have taken from him. Paul will go on to explain that this young man who had once been a very unprofitable servant to his former master might now be a profitable servant to both Philemon and him.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People appreciate one another! **Observe** the complimentary way that Paul addressed this friend. **Avoid** being critical and condescending in the way that you speak to people. **Express** your genuine appreciation to a Christian friend today.

Day 20: Philemon 1:12-25

“For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.”
(Philemon 1:15-16)

Paul’s Own “Romans 8:28” Experience!

As Paul was writing this letter to Philemon, it had already been about three or four years since he had written to the Christians at Rome and reminded them that, “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). He now was expressing to Philemon how this great principal was working in not only his own life, but in the lives of his friend and his runaway slave as well! Paul suggested to Philemon that “perhaps” (Onesimus) had “departed for a while for this purpose” – meaning that Onesimus might have run away as a slave so that he might meet Paul, be saved, and then ultimately return to his master as a Christian brother! As such, this young man would now be “more than a slave” because he was now “a beloved brother.” The apostle urged Philemon to receive his runaway slave as he would Paul himself and pledged to compensate his friend for any wrong or loss that Onesimus had caused him. Learning that Philemon had accepted and restored Onesimus to a place of service – both as a *slave* and a fellow *saint* – would cause Paul great “joy...in the Lord” and would “refresh” his heart (v. 20).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People stand with one another! Paul was willing to stand *for* and *with* this young man that he had met and led to Christ in prison. **Speak** up for others whenever the opportunity presents itself and **defend** those who are not there to defend themselves.

Day 21: Hebrews 1:1-14

“having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”
(Hebrews 1:4)

Much Better than the Angels

Since the Hebrews rejected Christ as the Messiah, they had to find some explanation for His miraculous life and ministry. As such, they referred to Him as being like one of the great prophets of the past. That rumor was already going around while Jesus was alive (see Matthew 16:13-14). Some simply explained Christ away by saying that He was a great angelic messenger – like Michael or Gabriel – who came as a forerunner of the Messiah. The writer of Hebrews launches immediately into his theme of the superiority of Christ over all things and begins to prove that case by first proving that Christ is “much better (superior or excellent) than the angels” (v. 4). Verses 5-14 then list the many evidences that brought the author to that conclusion. It is important to note that all the “evidence” that the author provides is based entirely on what is written in the Word of God! In these important verses, the writer will quote from seven places in the Old Testament. In the earliest days of the church, before they had the New Testament to read, all that the people believed about Christ was from what they had seen and heard in His public ministry and personal life, and how it so precisely matched to the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah. The opening remarks of this book refer to the “various times and various ways” that God “spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets” (v. 1). However, the writer goes on to say that God “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (v. 2).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People know how to use their Bible! **Learn** how to open the Scriptures and provide written evidence to others about who Jesus was and is! **Study** to find the answers to man’s greatest need (salvation) and **be ready** to introduce Christ as Savior at every opportunity.

Day 22: Hebrews 2:1-18

“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,” (Hebrews 2:1-3)

More Earnest Heed

After providing Scriptural evidence (chapter one) that Jesus was more than an angel, the writer continues by saying, “Therefore (because of this or for this reason) we must give more earnest heed to the things we have heard” and to what was “spoken by the Lord.” The word that is translated “earnest” in verse one is a word that is translated “more” or “more abundant” in most of the other places that it is found in the Bible. The writer is stating that, since Jesus was *more* than a prophet and even *more* than an angelic messenger, we should be careful to pay *more* attention to what He said. If we ever lose our faith in the fact that Jesus was God and that His Words are God’s Words, then there is a very great danger that we, like the people to whom this letter was first written, might “drift away.” The phrase regarding Christ being made “a little lower than the angels” refers to Christ’s coming to the earth in the form of a man while the statement that God has “crowned Him with glory and honor” (v. 7) refers to His return to Heaven after the resurrection. Heaven is where Christ now is and God has “put all things under His feet” (v. 8). However, before “all things” could be put under His feet, He had to “in all things...be made like His brethren” (v. 17) so that through His own suffering He might be able to “aid” us as we face our day-to-day struggles with life and its many temptations (v. 18).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People pay careful attention to the Words of Christ! **Find** a “red letter” version of the New Testament and **read** through the “red words” (the words spoken by Christ) on a regular basis. **Focus** on being obedient to what Jesus said as you walk through your daily life and circumstances.

Day 23: Hebrews 3:1-19

“For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.” (Hebrews 3:3)

Better than Moses

After dealing with the first argument that Christ was simply another prophet or an angelic messenger, our writer moved forward to say that Jesus was not only better than the angels but that He was better than Moses! This is a very important point in Hebrews. The Jews believed the Law of Moses to be a full, complete, and final revelation of the Word of God. That is one of the reasons that the Old Testament prophets suffered so much pain and persecution at the hands of God’s people. When the prophets said, “Thus saith the LORD”, the Jews were ready to stone them! In our focus verse, he goes on to say that Christ was Moses’ creator! That is exactly what is meant by the phrase, “He who built the house has more honor than the house.” Moses had been a great leader to the Jewish people, but Jesus had been there when Moses was created! Therefore, he was “worthy of more glory than Moses” (v. 3). Our writer then reminded the Hebrews that their ancestors had “hardened their hearts” (v. 8) and “tested” God in the wilderness (v. 9) by going “astray in their heart” (v. 10) and refusing to believe Moses. He then closed this important lesson by reminding his readers that those who refused to believe God’s Word through Moses were not allowed to “enter in because of unbelief” (v. 19). If Jesus truly was “worthy of more glory than Moses” then those who refused to believe in Him were subject to missing more than an earthly inheritance in the Promised Land!

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People glorify Christ! The word translated “glory” in verse three is the Greek word “doxa” from which we get our word “doxology,” which is an anthem of praise. **Sing** some praises to God today as you go about your daily responsibilities.

Day 24: Hebrews 4:1-16

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:14-15)

A Better High Priest

Our writer now begins the main theme of his message to the Hebrews, that being the priesthood of Christ. He mentioned the office of High Priest in 2:17 and again in 3:1, but now he is ready to move forward with the theme that Christ is better than the priestly system established in the Old Testament. As you read verse 14, highlight or underscore the phrase “we have a High Priest who has passed through the heavens.” Every Jewish reader fully understood what the writer was now saying. As the high priest entered through the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, the people believed that he entered into the presence of God. Our writer is now saying that Jesus did not merely disappear behind a veil, but that He now sat at the right hand of God in heaven (see 1:3). When Christ returned to heaven He forever bridged the gap that had for so long separated man from God! He was able to do this because He had been “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (v. 15). In 2:17, we read where Christ had been “made like his brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” Now we better understand why He submitted to be “made like” us. It was so that He could truly “sympathize with our weaknesses” (v. 15) as we “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (v. 16).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are still very much in need of God’s mercy and grace! **Thank Him** for the fact that He gives us more than we deserve (that is grace) and that, because of the death of Christ on the cross, He does not give us what we truly deserve (that is mercy). **Explain** the difference to someone today.

Day 25: Hebrews 5:1-14

“He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness...no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.” (Hebrews 5:2 & 4)

Two Qualifications of the High Priest

Two important qualifications for a high priest are mentioned in our two focus verses. First, a high priest had to be a person who could “have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray” (v. 2). It should be easy for an earthly high priest to have such compassion because “he himself is also subject to weakness” (v. 2). Note also in verse two that the high priest was to “have compassion on those” who sinned due to *ignorance* which is something far different from willful disobedience. Second, the high priest was to be a person divinely appointed by God. Our second focus verse states that, “No man takes this honor to himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was.” The point that our writer is making is that Christ’s High Priesthood was of a divine origin. He then quotes two Old Testament passages to support his position that Christ “did not glorify Himself” (v. 5), but was the divinely appointed High Priest of God (see Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4). He hammered the point home again when he said that Jesus was “called by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek” (v. 10), an individual to whom Abraham paid tithes even before the Law was established in writing through Moses.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People have a divinely appointed High Priest! **Praise** God for the fact that you do not have to confess your sins to anyone but God, and **thank** Him for the compassionate way that He deals with us.

Day 26: Hebrews 6:1-20

“But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.” (Hebrews 6:9)

“Things that Accompany Salvation”

In the final verses of yesterday’s Scripture, we read about those who “ought to be teachers” who still needed “someone to teach” them the “first (foundational) principles of the oracles (words) of God” (5:12). Today, in verse 1, we read about the importance of growing beyond “elementary principles of Christ” and growing “to perfection” (spiritual maturity). Since his readers were Christians, the writer of this important letter was “confident of better things concerning” them and expressed his desire that the “things that accompany salvation” would be evident in their lives. Some of those important “things” are then mentioned in the following verses. First, he mentions “work,” “labor of love,” and “ministry” in verse 10. In verse 11, he adds “diligence,” “hope,” and “assurance” to this list. Spiritual energy is implied in the exhortation to not be “sluggish,” and “faith and patience” are also mentioned in verse 12. The word “promise” is found four times in verses 12-17 and then verses 17-18 tell us that God’s promises are based on two “immutable” (unchangeable) things: His “counsel” and His “oath” (Word). These two things provide the “anchor of the soul” that is said to be both “sure and steadfast” (v. 19). The Greek word that is translated “sure” here is a word that means “certain” or “fixed.” We have seen the word that is translated “steadfast” three times before in Hebrews. First, it was used to describe the word of angels as being “steadfast” in 2:2 and then it was used to describe how we are to “hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of (our) hope *firm* to the end” in 3:6. Finally, it was previously used to explain how a believer could maintain his spiritual “confidence steadfast to the end” (3:14).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are confident in the security of Christ! **Exhibit** the “things that accompany salvation” in your daily walk. **Believe** that God’s promises are “sure and steadfast.”

Day 27: Hebrews 7:1-12

“For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.” (Hebrews 7:12)

Change

It has not been only in recent years that the church has had to deal with the dreaded word “change.” Our focus verse uses the word first in verb form by saying, “For the priesthood being *changed*” and then in noun form when it reports that, “there is also a *change* in the law.” The first “change” described the process while the second described the result. The *verb* that is translated “changed” is found only five times in the New Testament with two of those times being in Hebrews. The second time that you find the verb translated “changed” in Hebrews is in 11:5 where we are told that, “By faith Enoch was *taken away* so that he might not see death.” Some translations state that Enoch was “translated” which is another word for “transferred.” The *noun* that is translated “change” is found only in Hebrews. What is the “change” that is referred to in this verse? It is the change from the order of the Old Testament priesthood under Aaron to the royal priesthood under the new Melchizedek, Jesus Christ. I find it interesting to note that a promised priest who was to come “after” or “according to” the “order” or “likeness of Melchizedek” is found exactly eight times in the Bible (Psalm 11:4, Hebrews 5:6 & 10, 6:20, and 7:11, 15, 17 & 21). Since the number eight is closely associated with “new beginning” in the Bible, it is clear that Christ and His Priesthood brought a new beginning to the way that men worship and approach God. It is because He is our new High Priest that we can “come boldly to the throne of grace” (4:16) and “boldly say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not fear’” (13:6).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are changed people who approach and worship God in a changed way! **Rejoice** in the knowledge that you serve under a High Priest who is also your dearest friend. **Allow** the presence of Christ to empower you to live without fear and doubt in this present world.

Day 28: Hebrews 7:13-28

“For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.” (Hebrews 7:13)

Another Tribe & A Better Covenant

I have often mentioned that there are two Greek words that are translated “another” in the New Testament. One means “another of the *same* kind” and the other means “another of a *different* kind.” The word that is used here, and then again in verse 15, is the one that means “another of a different kind.” There were some striking similarities in the priesthood of Jesus and Melchizedek, and that is why we are told that Jesus came in his “likeness” in verse 15. However, the striking difference that made Christ’s Priesthood such a “change” is found in the fact that He came from “another tribe from which no man has officiated at the altar” (v. 13). Aaron was of the lineage of Levi while Jesus was of the lineage of Judah. Until Christ, all priests were from the tribe and lineage of Levi. The law had proclaimed that it was to be that way and that was the way it had always been. Now a “change” is being made that not only changes the priesthood, but it also requires that men change the way that they looked at the law of the priesthood. The change was made because the first priesthood was described as having “weakness” and being “unprofitable” because it made “nothing perfect” (vs. 18 & 19). The writer goes on to say that, “On the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God” through a “better covenant” (vs. 19 & 22).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People operate under a new and better covenant and under a new and better High Priest! **Express** your appreciation for your ability to “draw near to God” under the new covenant. **Thank God** for the *high price* that He paid for us to have such an amazing *High Priest*!

Day 29: Hebrews 8:1-13

“Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” (Hebrews 8:1)

“The Main Point”

The Greek word that is translated “main point” in the NKJV is translated in several different ways in other available translations. Some use the words “the chief point” and at least one translation uses the words “the whole point” to convey the message that the writer is trying to send. One translation says that these opening words to chapter eight provide “a summary of the things of which we are speaking.” Several other translations use the word “sum” to get the writer’s point across. Basically, they are saying, “It all adds up to this!” However, you might say that the writer is also trying to say, “It just doesn’t get any better than this!” I believe that his “main point” of reference is found back in 7:26 where we are told that our new High Priest is “fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens.” Our new High Priest is “seated” in heaven “at the right hand of the throne.” The fact that He is “seated” implies that His work is finished – and because of that, our sin is finished and Satan is finished! The New High Priest ministers in “the sanctuary of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, not man.” His ultimate sacrifice for the sins of all mankind now allows the writer to explain to us the “more excellent (better) ministry” (v. 6) that our new High Priest performs for us.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People should focus on the main point! **Realize** that life is not perfect in this world – including life within the church! **Admit it** and **get past it** so that you can **serve** the ideal High Priest who ministers for us in the ideal sanctuary.

Day 30: Hebrews 9:1-15

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” (Hebrews 9:12)

More “Bettors”

Our writer has already taught us that we now have a better High Priest who serves in a better Tabernacle. Now he continues his theme by reminding us that Christ also made a better sacrifice for our sins – one that need not be repeated on an annual basis – one that will never need to be offered again! This chapter begins with a *description* of the layout for the furnishings of the earthly Tabernacle. At God’s direction, the furnishings of the Tabernacle were laid out in the shape of a cross, and should you overlay an image of Jesus on the cross above the furnishings, you would have our Lord’s head resting on the Mercy Seat (literally in the very lap of His Heavenly Father) and His feet would be at the Brazen Altar where the blood sacrifices were made. At His right hand would be the Lamp Stand – just as it was in the Revelation to John on the isle of Patmos! The chapter continues by describing the *defects* of the offerings of the earthly priests in the earthly Tabernacle. We are reminded that those offerings were “symbolic” and “for the present time” and that they could not “make him who performed the service perfect” (v. 9). Verse 12 reminds us that “the blood of goats and calves” was not sufficient for the offering that He was to make so He entered “the Most Holy Place” “with His own blood” so that He could “once for all” obtain “eternal redemption” for those who believe on His name! This section of Scripture closes by reminding us that it was by the *death* of Christ Jesus that we have been saved! “He is the Mediator of the new covenant, *by means of death*, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (v. 15).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People have an eternal inheritance! **Refuse** to become attached to “things” and “this world.” **Avoid** the distractions that “things” can create in your life. **Focus** on eternal “things” today!

Day 31: Hebrews 9:16-28

“Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” (Hebrews 9:23)

The “Better Sacrifice”

The whole Bible is one continuous story about the “better sacrifice” that Jesus Christ would eventually make for all mankind. It was better than the sacrifice that God made so that Adam and Eve could be clothed in the garden, and it proved better than the sacrifices that men made within the Tabernacle. Through the Bible story, we understand that the cross was on God’s mind even as He formed the world and its inhabitants. Verse 22 of today’s reading provides the answer to the question, “Why did Jesus have to die?” He had to die so that we could be “purified (cleansed) with blood” because “without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (forgiveness).” In Revelation 13:8 Christ is described as, “The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” If Moses built the earthly Tabernacle according to the pattern that God showed him, then we must understand that the earthly Tabernacle was merely a copy of something that already existed in Heaven! As such, the sacrifices that were made in the earthly Tabernacle were copies of what God had already done for mankind when He first decided to erase the penalty of sin by shedding the blood of the ultimate, innocent Sacrifice.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People possess eternal salvation! **Believe** that there is nothing that Satan can do to separate you from God or cause you to lose your salvation! **Refuse** to allow him, through his devilish schemes, to rob you of the opportunity to serve!

Day 32: Hebrews 10:1-10

“...we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10:10)

Once for All

Today’s verses discuss two very important points. The first is the *futility* of the Old Testament sacrificial system and the second is the *finality* of the “once for all” sacrifice of our new High Priest. The law was merely “a shadow of the good things to come and not the very image” of those things (v. 1). A shadow is best defined as “an image cast by an object and representing the form of that object.” To cast a shadow an object must be backed by light. From the very beginning, there was a “light” behind the Law and its sacrifices. Like John the Baptist in the New Testament, the Law and its sacrifices did not come as *the light* but only to bear witness of the *Light*. As such, the Law and its prescribed sacrifices were very *profitable* – but they, nor their effects, were never meant to be *permanent*. Their purpose was to point us toward the one, true, permanent Sacrifice that God would make through the sending of His only begotten Son to die on the cross for our sins. The writer presents a strong argument for the futility of the early blood sacrifices by stating that, “The Law...can *never* with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect” (v. 1). He then asked a very important question, “For then would they not have ceased to be offered?” His rationale was that, if those “worshippers” had truly been “purified” then they would not have had any “more consciousness of sins” (v. 2). However, the truth was that those sacrifices were never meant to be a *remedy* but only a *reminder* that man, on his own, could not do enough to appease the wrath of God! Then, the ultimate sacrifice was offered and mankind was “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (v. 10).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are free from the constant consciousness of sin! **Believe** that your personal sin debt has been stamped “Paid in Full” and refuse to allow Satan to harass you over a bill that is no longer due! **Help** someone today by sharing that good news with them.

Day 33: Hebrews 10:11-25

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,” then He adds, ‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’” (Hebrews 10:16-17)

A Fulfilled Prophecy

The Law and its sacrifices were not the only tools that God used to point mankind toward the ultimate Sacrifice that He would provide. He also sent the prophets to instruct people that this wonderful gift was coming. One of those prophets was Jeremiah, and he is quoted in today’s focus verses. As you read these two verses, note the four “I will” statements made by Almighty God and realize that God was speaking then of a pending event – something that He had already made up His mind to do at a set time and for a set purpose. God said, “I will” make a new covenant with My people. This was not something that man could do by his own power or volition. God then said, “I will put My laws into their hearts.” As such, God was saying that His Laws would no longer be enforced from *without*, but from *within* His people. He now uses the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to fulfill this blessed promise. He continued by adding, “I will” write my laws “in their mind.” There are only four places in the Bible where any “writing” that occurred was described by this Greek word. The first was the writing that was on the sign that was posted above the head of Christ on the cross (Mark 15:26). The second was the “writing” on the altar to the “unknown god” of Acts 17:23. Then there is this “writing” that God does on the hearts of men that was mentioned earlier in Hebrews 8:10 and now again in 10:16. Finally, this word is used to describe the “writing” that lists the names of the twelve tribes of Israel that are written on the gates of Heaven (Revelation 21:12). God then made His fourth “I will” promise by stating, “Their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are completely forgiven! **Believe** that God is no longer “mindful” of your sin and **learn to see yourself** from God’s perspective. **Accept** His full pardon and **live out** the new life that He has given you in Christ Jesus.

Day 34: Hebrews 10:26-39

“for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.” (Hebrews 10:34)

“A Better...Possession”

The word that is translated “possession” by the NKJV and many other translations is translated “substance” or “property” in some versions and even “treasure” in another. The fact that the human soul is far more valuable than any earthly possession is clearly stated in Luke’s story of the man who would build bigger barns to house his goods only to find that the value of his soul was greater than all of the things contained in the whole world (Luke 12:20). If you credit Luke with the writing of Hebrews, then he is the only person who ever used this word to describe the gift of the living soul that God has placed within us. The Hebrew Christians had, like all other believers in the New Testament, suffered at the hands of those who persecuted the early church and sought to destroy it. The writer acknowledged that they had been “made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations,” and sometimes they suffered only because they were “companions” of other Christians (v. 33). However, the thought of what it might cost someone to be a Christian was overshadowed and outweighed by what new life in Christ introduced into the lives of those who believed. Living within them was an eternal soul that would someday live forever in Heaven with Christ. As such, their persecutions and “the plundering of their goods” were to be “joyfully accepted” (v. 34). This attitude of faith will allow all believers to serve in “confidence” (v. 35).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are rich people! **Thank** God for your assured future in Heaven and **live** in such a way that you will be rewarded upon your arrival there! **Mention** Heaven to someone today!

Day 35: Hebrews 11:1-22

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

Faith

After presenting the case for Christ being the “better” High Priest who offered the “better” Sacrifice in the “better” Tabernacle, our writer moves forward to teach us about “faith” and will ultimately direct us to place our faith in the “better” things that he described for us. He gives what is, in my opinion, the best definition of “faith” that you will find in the Bible when he states that, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The word that is translated “substance” here is translated “confident” or “confidence” more often than any other way in the Bible. The word that is translated “evidence” is a very rarely used word that means “to convict.” The writer is stating that, even though he has shared some wonderful things about Christ, why He came, where He is now, and what He is doing for the saints, it will take “faith” to provide the “confidence” that will allow us to preach and teach these things with “conviction.” He then begins to list some Bible characters that had this kind of faith and the “confidence” and “conviction” that it brought into their lives. As you read about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and many of the patriarchs, note that those people had the kind of “confident conviction” that led and allowed them to do great things for God.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People are people of faith! **Serve** God with “confident conviction” today. **Ask** Him to give you the kind of faith that will give you the “substance” and “evidence” you need to **boldly speak** of Him to those whose paths you might cross today.

Day 36: Hebrews 11:23-40

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.” (Hebrews 11:23)

The “Faith” of Moses

Although Abraham got a fair amount of ink in this section on faith, the writer had more to say about the “faith” of Moses than any other person mentioned. There is a very good reason for this. That reason *is not* that Moses was the perfect example! No man showed more *humility* and *humanity* than this reluctant leader. I have come to believe the reason Moses becomes the prime example for what faith can do in a person’s life is because he is one of the few people whose entire life – from birth to death – is recorded in the pages of the Bible. We see faith in action in his infancy, childhood, and adult years. We see him as he exhibits faith when he is living in *plenty* (Egypt) and in *poverty* (Midian). We are allowed to witness his fearful flight *from* Egypt and Pharaoh as well as his faithful stand *before* him. While there are some who struggle with finding *faith* in Moses *fleeing* from Egypt, we can clearly see that the motive for doing so was not because he feared “the wrath of the king,” but because he had caught a glimpse of “Him who is invisible” (v. 27). If you recall, back in day nine of this devotional guide, we saw where Paul taught Timothy that there were some times when it was best to “flee,” and there were some times when it was best to “fight” (1 Timothy 6:11-12). Joseph certainly benefitted from the wisdom of flight when he wisely “fled and ran outside” after the advances of Potiphar’s wife (Genesis 39:12). And, just like there was not enough time and paper for John to write of the “many other things that Jesus did” (John 21:25), our writer has to but briefly mention the great confidence and conviction that faith brought into the lives of several others who did mighty and amazing things “by” and “through” faith (vs. 32-40).

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People live by faith! **Teach** your children the value of faith by what you *say* and by what they *see* in your own life. **Share** something that God has done for you with your children today.

Day 37: Hebrews 12:1-11

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,” (Hebrews 12:1)

“The Race”

After reviewing the faith of many who had lived before, the writer now urges his readers to “run” their own personal “race” to which God has called them. Our focus verse is easily outlined as first, the *plea*: “Therefore.” As I have mentioned before, this word could just as easily have been translated, “because of this” or “for this reason.” As such, it becomes the basis for his plea that his readers become participants in this great race. Next, we see the *people* to whom he is speaking. The “we” includes every believer who has or ever will read these important words. Then we see some specific *perils* that those who choose to run might face. They are described as “weights” and “sins” that entangle or ensnare us. Then we see the *plan* for those who will overcome such obstacles in the words, “lay aside.” This is the same word that Paul used when he urged the Ephesian believers to “put off” the old nature and to be “putting away” the sins that accompanied it (Ephesians 4:22, 25). The word that is translated “beset,” “ensnare,” or “entangle” is best translated “close fitting” or “clinging.” Serious running required the shedding of long, flowing robes that inhibited movement. It was only after these preparatory steps had been taken that the writer explained the *purpose* for these actions: “That we may run.” Next, the writer spoke of the *patience* of those who run and finally the *path* that they were to take. God has a plan and path for all people, and we are all encouraged to run it to the best of our ability.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People discover God’s plan for their lives and diligently seek to fulfill it! **Ask** God to reveal His divine plan and purpose to you and then “**lay aside**” anything that might hinder you from serving Him faithfully.

Day 38: Hebrews 12:12-29

“to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:24)

A “Better” Message

The words “better things” are used to describe the message that God is speaking to people today and to state that it is a better message than any that can be found in any spiritual effort that man has ever made. The writer reaches as far back as Abel, who was the first man of whom it was ever recorded that brought a sacrifice to God. The word that is translated “speaks” in 12:24 is the same word that was translated “speaks” back in 11:4 when Abel was first discussed. While Abel’s sacrifice “still speaks” – still provides evidence of his faith and righteousness – our Lord’s sacrifice speaks even more clearly and powerfully to us of our own faith and righteousness that was purchased by the substitution of His own life for ours. If you go back to the story of Abel you will read where God spoke to Cain and said that, “The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10). However, it is clear from that story that Abel’s blood cried out for justice while the blood of Jesus cries out for forgiveness and reconciliation. Luke recorded Jesus speaking about “the blood of the prophets” and then began that lists of “prophets” with the name of “Abel” (Luke 11:50-51). So, Abel’s blood “spoke” while “the blood” that Jesus shed for us “speaks better things.” The contrasting demands for justice and forgiveness are exhibited in the difference between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion! The first mountain speaks of judgment while the second speaks of peace.

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom People have a wonderful story of love and forgiveness to share with the world! **Begin** your own evangelism campaign as you prayerfully **share** your faith with someone today. **Believe** that you have some “better things” to share than what they might be hearing elsewhere.

Day 39: Hebrews 13:1-14

“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”
(Hebrews 13:2)

Hospitality

The New Testament has much to say about Christian hospitality, both to our fellow church members (v. 1), and to those who are not members of the church. The Greek word translated “hospitality” literally means “love of strangers.” Hospitality is a virtue that is both *commanded* and *commended* in the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, we find God saying things like, “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. *Love him as yourself*, for you were aliens in Egypt” (Leviticus 19:33-34). We are often reminded that Jesus, during His public ministry, depended entirely on the hospitality of others as He ministered from town to town. It is also clear that He taught His disciples to rely on that same kind of hospitality in the fulfillment of their ministry (Luke 10:4-7). It is apparent that this custom of helpful hospitality remained a good habit of the early church throughout the Book of Acts (Acts 2:44-45; 28:7). Without this kind of hospitality, travel would have been almost impossible for the average citizen, especially those in the ministry. Traveling was a much more dangerous proposition then, and there were few lodging places for people to stay. The writer of Hebrews reminds us not to forget to “entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels” (v. 2). Abraham could say “Amen!” to that (see Genesis 18:1-8).

Prayer Emphasis: **Kingdom People** are generous people! **Look** for ways that you can show hospitality to those who visit or attend our church services. **Invite** them to have lunch with your family or to attend your Sunday School class. **Include** them in our family circle and **be a friend** to them.

Day 40: Hebrews 13:15-25

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” (Hebrews 13:15)

“The Sacrifice of Praise”

The term “sacrifice” might not seem that compatible with “praise” today, because the idea of sacrifice is usually associated with the offering of something of cost or value. “Praise” is probably more closely associated with receiving today than it is with giving. However, our writer here encourages us to “offer the sacrifice of praise” and to do so “continually.” The praise that we offer to God is not based on His job performance but on our appreciation for His faithful love and provision. When we praise God, we are not offering Him a *reward* for what He has done but *reverence* for who He is! Yesterday, we read that our Lord “is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (v. 8). Because of this, our love, commitment, and surrender to His cause should never waiver – no matter the circumstances that come into our lives. Real praise continues regardless of circumstances. It flows continually from the believer’s heart in good times and bad. When we offer this “continual...sacrifice of praise to God,” we are choosing to honor Him on an *in spite of* and not a *because of* basis. How sad it is that many Christians only feel generous toward God when they perceive that He has been generous to them! They sing, worship and give only on a *because of* basis. When we praise God in our darkest hours, then we have learned to praise Him “continually.” When we praise Him in times of sorrow and loss, then we have truly learned how to offer Him our “*sacrifice of praise.*”

Prayer Emphasis: Thank you for walking through these important New Testament books with us. Our prayer is that you have been blessed through the reading of God’s Word. Please contact me at gary@seminolebc.com to learn how you can join the ranks of God’s **Kingdom People**!