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Hebrews

Chapter 1

¹In the past, God communicated to the Israelite ancestors through people who proclaimed his message. He did this throughout the time during which the ancestors lived, and he used many different means to do so. ²{However,} when this last time period {began}, God communicated to us through his own Son. God made the world together with him, and God has chosen him to receive everything. ³God's Son is {like} light that shines from how glorious God is. In fact, he perfectly shows what God is like. He sustains everything {that God has made} by speaking powerfully. After he purified his people from the wrong things that they did, he ascended into heaven and began to rule with God {his Father}.

⁴{That means that} he is much greater than the spiritual beings. In the same way, the name that God now calls him is greater than their {names}. ⁵{You can tell that God's Son is greater than the spiritual beings} because God did not at any time say these words to any spiritual being:

"On this day, I have declared to everyone that I am your father,
and you are my son!"

{He did not say these words about any spiritual being} either:

"I will be his father,

and he will be my son." {However, he did say these words to his own Son.}

⁶More than that, when God raised his Son into the heavenly world, he commanded:

"All the spiritual beings who serve God must honor and praise him."

⁷God says this about the spiritual beings:

"I have caused the spiritual beings who serve me to be {like} the wind and {like} burning fire."

⁸On the other hand, {God says this} about his Son:

"You who are God will rule forever,

and you will reign justly over your kingdom.

⁹You loved whatever is just, and you hated whatever breaks God's law.

Because of that, I, your God, have caused you to be more powerful and joyful than anyone else who is with you."

¹⁰And {God also says this about his Son:}

"You are the Lord who powerfully created everything that exists when it all began.

¹¹All those things will eventually fall apart,

but you keep on living forever.

They are like clothing that becomes old and wears out,

¹²and you will {remove them and} roll them up as if they were old clothes.

In the same way that a person changes clothes, you will change the things that you created.

In contrast, you are the one who stays the same and lives at all times!"

¹³God did not at any time say these words to any spiritual being:

"Rule with me

while I defeat all of your enemies!" {However, he did say these words to his own Son.}

¹⁴The spiritual beings are all powerful beings who serve God, and God has sent them to help those whom he will soon save.

Chapter 2

¹Because {God did say those things to his Son}, we need to focus most of all on {the good news} that we learned. That way, we do not stop believing it. ²{This is important} because, when the spiritual beings gave the law {to the people of Israel}, what they said was reliable. Further, God justly punished anyone who did not listen to this law or broke it. ³{Since that is true}, God will certainly punish any one of us who ignores the message about how God has powerfully saved us. It was the Lord {Jesus} who first spoke this message, and those who listened to him told us the same message reliably. ⁴God also has confirmed to us that this message is true by empowering believers to do powerful and amazing things. Further, he gave the Holy Spirit to believers, to each as God chose.

⁵Now God has not put the spiritual beings in charge of the heavenly world that he will bring to earth. It is that world which I am talking about. ⁶Someone confirmed {what I have said} when he wrote in the Scriptures,

"No humans are worthy enough for you to think about them{, God}!

No human beings are important enough for you to take care of them!

⁷{Despite that,} you created humans to be only slightly less powerful than the spiritual beings, and you have greatly honored and empowered them.

⁸You have put them in charge of everything {that you created}."

When he wrote, "put them in charge of everything," that means that there is nothing over which they are not in charge. However, at this present time, we do not observe that humans are in charge of everything. ⁹However, we do observe Jesus. He is the one who was less powerful than the spiritual beings for a short time, and God has {now} greatly honored and empowered him. God did this because Jesus died. In this way, God graciously had him die for all people {who believe in him}.

¹⁰{Working in that way} was appropriate for God, who created and directs everything {that exists}. When Jesus began to make glorious everyone who believes in him, who are {like} his own siblings, God used how Jesus suffered to make him able to save them. ¹¹Jesus, who sets his people apart for God, and those same people, whom he set apart for God, all come from God himself. So, Jesus does not hesitate to refer to them as his own siblings. ¹²{Jesus calls them his siblings} when he says,

"I will declare to my siblings what you are like{, God};

I will praise you when people gather together {to worship you}."

¹³{Jesus says} further:

"I will rely on him."

And {Jesus says} further,

"Look at me and God's children, whom he has entrusted to me."

¹⁴So, because God's children are human beings, Jesus also became a human being just like them. {He did that} so that he, by dying, could defeat Satan, who uses the fact that people die to control them. ¹⁵{When he did that,} he got rid of the way that dying makes us afraid while we live. ¹⁶{Jesus became a human being,} because he came to help those who belong to Abraham{, the ancestor of the Israelites}, not to help spiritual beings, as you know. ¹⁷Because that {is why he came}, Jesus needed to be exactly like us, who are his siblings. That way, he can be the leading priest who serves God in a compassionate and trustworthy way so that God forgives what his people did wrong. ¹⁸{Jesus can be that kind of priest,} because he endured painful things and experienced how doing what is wrong seems to be good. So, he can aid everyone who also experiences how doing what is wrong seems to be good.

Chapter 3

¹My fellow believers, God has set you apart for himself, and he has summoned us together from heaven. Since {I have told you what Jesus has done,} you should think about him. God sent him to us, and he is the leading priest in whom we say we believe. ²He faithfully served God, who made him {a leading priest}. {He is} like Moses, who also {faithfully served God} as part of God's people. ³⁻⁴Now each building has a builder who made it, and people rightly praise the builder more than {they praise} the building. Similarly, God is the builder who made everything. Therefore, people should praise Jesus{, who is God,} more than {they praise} Moses{, whom God made}. ⁵Moses faithfully served God as one who helped all God's people. In that way, he already proclaimed what God says now {about Jesus}. ⁶But the Messiah is God's Son who {faithfully} rules over God's people. As long as we persist in boldly and proudly expecting {what God will give us}, we belong to those same people.

⁷Since {we are God's people}, {we should do} what the Holy Spirit says:

"This day, when you hear God speak {to you}, ⁸do not stubbornly disobey him. {That is what your ancestors did} when they rebelled against God and provoked him while they lived in the wild places. ⁹{While they were} in those places, your ancestors provoked God to see what he would do. {They did that} even though they saw all the amazing things that he did ¹⁰during a period of 40 years.

So, he was angry with those people, and he said about them, 'They want to do what is wrong all the time. They do not understand how I want them to behave.'

¹¹So then, because he was angry with them, he solemnly declared, 'They will never participate in how I rest!'"

¹²Fellow believers, pay attention! Make sure that none of you think in evil and unbelieving ways that would lead you to become disloyal to the only real God. ¹³Rather, you should encourage each other {to be loyal to God} daily, during every day that we call "this day." That way, none of you sin and thus deceive yourselves, which will make you unable to obey God. ¹⁴{You should encourage each other,} because we share {in everything} with the Messiah. {That is true} as long as we persist in trusting him from when we began to do so until we die. ¹⁵{You should encourage each other} while the Holy Spirit says,

"This day, when you hear God speak {to you}, do not stubbornly disobey him. {That is what your ancestors did} when they rebelled against God."

¹⁶Now you know that it was all God's people, whom Moses led out of the land of Egypt, who listened to God speak and still rebelled against him. ¹⁷You know that it was God's people, who did what was wrong, with whom God was angry for a period of 40 years. They died in the wild places. ¹⁸You know that it was God's people, who did not obey him, to whom he solemnly declared that they would never participate in how he rests. ¹⁹So, we can tell that they could not participate {in how God rests} because they did not trust {in him}.

Chapter 4

¹So, {we can tell that} God still promises that his people will participate in how he rests. Because of that, we need to make sure that every one of you really receives {what God has promised}. ²{We need to make sure of this,} because we heard the good news just like they did. However, because they were not among those people who believed in what they heard, what they heard did not help them. ³{That is} because {only} we who believe {in the good news} participate in how God rests. {But those who do not believe do not participate in it}, as the Holy Spirit says, "So then, because he was angry with them, he solemnly declared, 'They will never participate in how I rest!'"

{God said this} even though he stopped working {and rested} after he created the world. ⁴{You know that God rested} because of what the Holy Spirit says elsewhere about the seventh {day of the week}. {He says,}

"Then, when {it was} the seventh day {of the week}, God finished working {to create everything}, and he rested."

⁵But {note} again {what God says about the Israelite ancestors} in the words that I already quoted:

"They will never participate in how I rest!"

⁶So then, the Israelite ancestors who heard the good news in the past did not obey God, and so they did not participate in how God rests. However, God still wants some people to participate in how he rests. ⁷{Because of that,} the Holy Spirit once more picked a time {when we can participate in how God rests}. {That time is} what we call "this day." {He did this} when he spoke through David a long time after {the Israelite ancestors disobeyed}. He said, as I have already quoted,

"This day, when you hear God speak {to you}, do not stubbornly disobey him."

⁸So, the Holy Spirit refers to a different day {when God's people can participate in how God rests} that comes after the day {when Joshua led the Israelite ancestors into the land that God had promised them}. This means that {when Joshua did that,} he did not help them participate in how God rests. ⁹So, as you can see, God's people can still participate in how God rests, {just as people rest on} the Jewish day of rest. ¹⁰In fact, the people who participate in how God rests also finish what they are doing and rest. {They do this} just like God finished {creating everything} and rested.

¹¹Because of all that, we should focus on participating in how God rests. That way, none {of us} disobeys {God} like the Israelite ancestors did. ¹²{You need to pay attention to these things,} because what God speaks {is like a person who} lives and does things, including discerning what people think and plan. {It does that as if it were} a sword with two very sharp edges that could cut apart people's bones from their tendons and that could divide up people's inner lives. ¹³God knows everything about every person and thing. Nothing that he created can stay secret when he wishes to examine it. He is the one about whom we are talking.

¹⁴So, a powerful leading priest works for us, one who ascended through the heavens. He is Jesus, God's Son. Because of that, we need to persist in believing what we say we believe. ¹⁵Now the leading priest who works for us can very well understand how weak we are. In fact, he experienced many times how doing what is wrong seems to be good, just like we do. However, he never sinned. ¹⁶So then, we should boldly go closer to God, who rules graciously. That way, he will act mercifully and kindly toward us when we need him to help us.

Chapter 5

¹When God appoints a person to be a leading priest, he selects that person from a group of people in order to serve God for that group. The leading priest then presents {to God} what people give or sacrifice to take away sins. ²{Every leading priest} is weak. Because of that, he can act patiently toward those who do not know much about God and toward those who believe and do what is wrong. ³Further, because {each leading priest is weak}, God requires him to present a sacrifice to take away his own sins, just like {he offers sacrifices} for the rest of the people

{of Israel}. ⁴Now people cannot decide to become honorable leading priests on their own. Rather, God chooses {each person who will be a leading priest}, just like {he chose} Aaron{, the first leading priest}. ⁵Similarly, the Messiah too did not decide to become a glorious leading priest on his own. Rather, God the Father {chose him to be a leading priest} when he said to him,

“On this day, I have declared to everyone that I am your father, and you are my son!”

⁶Similarly, {as you can read} in another Psalm, God the Father said {to the Messiah}:

“You will never stop being a priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest.”

⁷When the Messiah lived with us before he died and came back to life, he often prayed powerfully and sorrowfully to God. He did this because God could rescue him when he died. Because he honored God, God listened to him {and made him alive again}. ⁸Although he is God’s Son, he learned what it means to obey God when bad things happened to him. ⁹Then, when God finished making him able to do so, the Son became the one who saves forever every person who does what he requires. ¹⁰{He did that} after God appointed him to be a leading priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest.

¹¹We have many things to talk about with regard to Melchizedek. However, since you do not listen {and understand} well, these things will be difficult to explain {to you}. ¹²{You have believed in the Messiah} for long enough that you should be teaching others {about God}. Instead, though, someone still has to teach you simple things about what God says. You are like babies who have to drink milk rather than being like adults who eat food. ¹³All people who know very little about what is right {and what is wrong} are like people who drink only milk. In fact, they are like babies. ¹⁴On the other hand, people who know much about God are {like adults who eat} food. These people have consistently practiced how to recognize and then distinguish between what is right and what is wrong.

Chapter 6

¹Therefore, we need to learn more so that we become mature. We should not continue to focus on only the most basic things about the Messiah. {In other words,} we do not need to learn again about how to stop doing useless things or about how to trust in God. ²{We should not} learn {again} about different ways to baptize people, about putting our hands on others {to help them}, about how those who have died will live again, or about how God will finally decide whether people are guilty or innocent. ³At this time, as long as God wants {us to do so}, we will indeed {learn more so that we become mature}. ⁴{Let me tell you about something} that cannot happen. {Think about} people who learned about the good news at one time. They experienced what God gives {to his people} from heaven, and they received God’s Spirit. ⁵They experienced how good what God says is, and {they have already begun to experience} the powerful things that God will do when he renews the world. ⁶{Think about what would happen} were these people to stop believing the good news. {In this case,} they cannot repent and believe again. {That is because what they do} is like selfishly crucifying and humiliating God’s Son. ⁷{Here is an example:} God blesses any field where, once rain falls on it, crops grow that people use. ⁸However, when a field produces plants that are useless, it helps nobody, and God will soon curse it. In the end, someone will set fire to it {to burn up all the useless plants}.

⁹Even though I have warned you in this way, fellow believers whom I love, I am sure that you are believing more firmly {than I have implied}. {In fact, I am sure that} God has saved you. ¹⁰Indeed, since God always acts justly, he will not overlook how you act and how you love {others}. You have proved that you do these things to honor God, particularly when you have helped and continue to help God’s people. ¹¹I greatly desire that you all, until you die, continue to focus diligently on fully trusting {that God will give to you} what you confidently expect. ¹²That way, you will not be lazy. Instead, you will do what other believers have done: they have received what God promised them, because they trusted in him and waited patiently.

¹³When God said that he would do something for Abraham, he guaranteed it himself. {He did that} because every other person who could guarantee it is less powerful {than God}. ¹⁴{Here is what} he promised {to Abraham}: “I will definitely bless you, and I will definitely give you many descendants.” ¹⁵Because {God guaranteed what he promised}, and because Abraham persevered in expecting it, God gave him what he had promised: {a son}. ¹⁶Now, people have someone who is more powerful than they are guarantee {what they promise}. In fact, when someone guarantees what he or she promises in this way, it definitively concludes whatever people are arguing about. ¹⁷In a similar way, God wanted to demonstrate very clearly to those who would receive what he promised that he would not change what he intended to do. So, he guaranteed what he promised, {just like humans do}. ¹⁸So, God both promised and swore an oath, and he will not lie about or change either of these things. {He did that} for us, who have trusted in him to save us. In this way, he encourages us to persist in confidently expecting what he is ready to give us. ¹⁹When we confidently expect {what God will give us}, it is as if an anchor holds us very securely {so that we do not waver from trusting God}. Further, {when we confidently expect what God will give us}, it is as if we had gone into the inner part of the {heavenly} sanctuary, behind the cloth hanging{, and already received it}. ²⁰{That is the same place} where Jesus went {to serve God} for us and to open the way for us. {He went there} after he became a leading priest who will always {serve God}, in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest.

Chapter 7

¹{Now I will say more about} Melchizedek. He ruled {the city of} Salem, and he served the greatest God as a priest. When Abraham was going home after defeating some of his enemies, Melchizedek met up with him and blessed him. ²Then, Abraham gave to him one tenth of everything {that he took when he defeated his enemies}. {The name “Melchizedek”} means “just king” {in Hebrew}. {The title} “ruler of {the city of} Salem” means “peaceful ruler,” {since “Salem” sounds like the Hebrew word for “peaceful”}. ³{When Moses wrote about Melchizedek, he did not say anything about} his father, his mother, his other ancestors, when he was born, or when he died. So, {Moses} described him as if he were similar to God’s Son and as if he always served as a priest.

⁴You can tell how important Melchizedek was from how Abraham, the ancestor of all the Israelites, offered him one tenth of the most valuable things {that he took when he defeated his enemies}. ⁵In Moses’s law, {God spoke to} the men who are part of the clan of Levi and who serve as priests. He commanded them to receive one tenth of what the rest of the Israelites, who are their relatives, {earned or grew}. {God commanded this} despite the fact that all the Israelites are descendants of Abraham. ⁶Now Melchizedek is not part of the clan of Levi. Despite that, he received one tenth of what Abraham {took when he defeated his enemies}. Further, he blessed Abraham, the man to whom God had promised {that he would give him many descendants}. ⁷Now everyone agrees that more important people bless less important people. {So, because he blessed Abraham, Melchizedek is more important than Abraham.} ⁸In Moses’s law, we learn about how priests receive one tenth {of what the rest of the Israelites earn or grow}, but these priests all die. In the story about Melchizedek, we learn that he {also received one tenth of what Abraham took from his enemies}, but he continues to live. ⁹In fact, in a way, Levi {and the priests from his clan} gave one tenth {of what they had to Melchizedek} when Abraham {gave him one tenth}. {This is true even though} they are the ones who receive one tenth {from what the Israelites have}. ¹⁰{What I have said makes sense} because Levi {had not yet been born} and was{, in a way,} still inside Abraham, his great-grandfather, when he and Melchizedek met together.

¹¹Now God made the law that he gave to the Israelites depend on having the descendants of Levi serve as priests. So, suppose that people could become what God wanted them to be through what these priests did to serve God. {In that case,} God would never have appointed another priest to serve in the way that Melchizedek was a priest instead of in the way that Aaron was a priest. {However, God did appoint this kind of priest.} ¹²{You can tell that God made the law depend on having the descendants of Levi serve as priests,} because the law must change whenever the way that people serve as priests changes. ¹³{You can tell that God has changed how people serve as priests,} because Jesus, whom God has called {a priest}, is not one of the descendants of Levi but is a descendant of one of Levi’s brothers. No descendant of this man has served as a priest. ¹⁴In fact, we all know that our Lord {Jesus} is a descendant of {Levi’s brother} Judah, and Moses did not write down anything about descendants of Judah

serving as priests. ¹⁵Further, {you can tell} even more clearly {that God has changed how people serve as priests,} since God has appointed a different kind of priest{, Jesus,} who serves God like Melchizedek did. ¹⁶He serves as a priest because nothing can keep him from living, which makes him a powerful {priest}. {As this kind of priest,} he does not depend on what God commanded in Moses's law about how human priests {are descendants of Levi}. ¹⁷{You can tell that this is true about him}, because God the Father said {to him}:

"You will never stop being a priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest."

¹⁸What this means is that God withdrew what he had first commanded {about priests}. {He did this because} that way of doing things was ineffective. ¹⁹{That way was ineffective,} because people could not become what God wanted them to be by doing what God previously commanded. Now what this also means is that God provided something better for us to confidently expect. When we confidently expect this, we go closer to God.

²⁰⁻²¹Now God did not guarantee what he said when he made some of the descendants of Levi priests. However, he did guarantee what he said {when he made} the Messiah {a priest}. Here is what God said to him:

"The Lord has guaranteed what he says,
and he will not do something else:

"You will never stop being a priest!" So, just as {Jesus serves as a greater priest because} God guaranteed what he said {when he made him a priest},

²²so also there is a better agreement, which Jesus guarantees.

²³Further, each one {of the descendants of Levi} died and so could not continue {to serve as a priest}. Because of that, there have been many {descendants of Levi} who have served as priests. ²⁴However, Jesus will never die. Because of that, he will always serve as a priest. ²⁵Because {he always serves as a priest}, he can also totally rescue anyone who goes closer to God because of what he has done. {He can do that because} he will never die and thus can always ask God to help them.

²⁶Jesus is exactly the kind of leading priest that we need. He honors God, he does not think about what is evil, and he does not do what would defile him. He is not one of the people who sin, and he now lives in the highest heaven. ²⁷Now each {descendant of Levi who serves as a} leading priest has to present sacrifices {to God} every day. First, he presents a sacrifice to take away his own sins, and after that he presents a sacrifice to take away the sins of the rest of the Israelites. However, Jesus {took away everyone's sins} when he presented himself {as a sacrifice} one time, so he does not need {to present many sacrifices}. ²⁸In the end, God commanded through Moses that some people should serve as priests, but these priests are weak {and die}. In contrast, when God guaranteed what he said, which he did after he had commanded {those things through Moses}, he enabled his Son {to serve} always as the most effective {priest}.

Chapter 8

¹Here is the main idea that I am writing about: a high priest like the one I have described is serving for us. He has gone to be with God {the Father} in the heavenly places, and he has begun to rule. ²He serves in the Most Holy Place and in the most real Dwelling. The Lord {God}, not any human, made {this sanctuary}.

³Now God makes people leading priests so that they can present sacrifices. Because {that is what leading priests do}, Jesus too needed to present a sacrifice. ⁴So, because the priests {who are descendants of Levi already} present sacrifices {on earth} as God commanded, Jesus would not be serving as a priest were he on earth {right now}.

⁵Those priests do what God requires {in a sanctuary that} models the heavenly {sanctuary}. {You can tell that this is true,} because God revealed it to Moses when Moses was going to have the Israelites construct the Dwelling. {At that time,} God spoke to him, "Make sure that everything {about the Dwelling} matches the original {sanctuary} that I revealed to you {when you were with me} on Mount Sinai!" ⁶But here is what is true {about Jesus}: he serves

in a much better way {than the descendants of Levi do}. In the same way, the agreement that God has made with his people through Jesus is greater {than the agreement that God made with the Israelites}. That is because God promised greater things when he made this new agreement.

⁷Now {you can tell that} the agreement that God made with the Israelites was not perfect, because God chose to make another agreement. ⁸{You can tell that the first agreement was not perfect,} because God declared that the Israelites did not perfectly keep that agreement when he said,

“Here is what I say to you: Pay attention! Soon

I will make a new agreement

with all my people from both the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah.

⁹{That agreement will} not be like the agreement

that I made with their ancestors

when I lovingly delivered them

from the land of Egypt.

Here is what I say:

{It will not be like that agreement,} because they did not keep it,

so I abandoned them.

¹⁰This is the kind of agreement

that I will make with my people, the Israelites,

very soon.

Here is what I say:

I will enable them to understand and obey my laws.

I will be the God whom they worship,

and they will be the people whom I care for.

¹¹No one will ever have to instruct another Israelite,

“Trust and worship the Lord God.”

{That is} because all my people will trust and worship me,

no matter how important or unimportant they are.

¹²{That will happen} because I will mercifully forgive them for the wrong things that they have done.

I will never again punish them for the sins that they have committed.”

¹³When God uses the word “new,” he means that the earlier {agreement with the Israelites} is now old. Further, what is old will soon cease to exist.

Chapter 9

¹As for the earlier {agreement that God made with Israel}, it required people to worship God in a specific way in a sanctuary on earth. ²The sanctuary that the Israelites set up was a Dwelling {that had two sections}. They called the outer section the Holy Place. In it, {they put} a stand for lamps and a table on which they laid out {special} bread. ³The inner section was on the other side of an inner cloth hanging. They called this {inner section} the Most Holy Place. ⁴In it, they put the altar for incense and the sacred chest, both of which they completely coated with gold. In the sacred chest, {they put} a gold container with manna inside{, the food that God gave the Israelites while they lived in the desert}. {They also put in it} Aaron's staff that God caused to produce leaves. {They also put in it} the stone slabs {on which Moses wrote the most important parts} of the agreement with God. ⁵On top of the sacred chest, {they put two statues of} glorious spiritual beings with wings. {These statues} cast shadows on the lid for the sacred chest. {However,} now is not the right time to discuss carefully each of these objects.

⁶After they had set up all those things, the priests went into the outer section of the dwelling every day to serve God. ⁷On the other hand, on only one day a year does the {current} leading priest go into the inner section {of the dwelling}. He has to take blood {from an animal with him}, which he presents {to God} to take away his own {sins} and the sins that the rest of the Israelites committed by accident. ⁸The Holy Spirit shows {through what the priests do in the Dwelling} that God did not reveal how to enter the {heavenly} Most Holy Place during the time when he required people to use the first section of the {earthly} Dwelling. ⁹This {first section of the earthly dwelling} figuratively describes the time in which those Israelites lived. In that time, priests presented offerings that could not enable the people who brought the offerings to distinguish properly between what is right and what is wrong. ¹⁰They also followed rules that were only about bodily things, {including rules} about what to eat and drink and how to wash with water often. God gave them these rules to follow until he made a new agreement with his people.

¹¹In contrast, when the Messiah began to serve as a leading priest, {he gave us} the good things that we now have. He passed through the {heavenly} Dwelling that functions better {than the earthly one}. God, not humans, made this Dwelling, and it does not belong on the earth. ¹²Then, when he went into the {heavenly} Most Holy Place only one time, he did not present blood from animals that someone sacrificed{, like the priests who are descendants of Levi do}. Instead, he presented his own blood and freed {his people} from their sins forever. ¹³Now {those priests present} blood from animals that someone sacrificed, and they scatter ashes from a female cow, which they have burned, on unclean people. {When the priests do these things,} they really do cleanse the outside of a person. ¹⁴{Since that is true,} what the Messiah does with his blood cleanses people much more! He presented himself as a perfect sacrifice to God, and the Spirit who lives forever enabled him to do so. He cleanses the inside of you all, removing what you do that accomplishes nothing and enabling you to do what the only real God requires.

¹⁵Because {the Messiah cleanses the inside of people}, God has made a new agreement through him. That way, God gives to those whom he chose what he promised that they would receive forever. {That can happen because Jesus} died to free {his people} from what they did wrong when they disobeyed the agreement that God made with Israel. ¹⁶Now when someone sets up a will, {which is a type of agreement,} that person needs to die before the will becomes effective. ¹⁷In fact, every will is valid only because of a dead person. {That is} because a will is not effective while the person who set it up is alive. ¹⁸Much like that, God definitely required {the Israelites to use} blood when he made the agreement with them. ¹⁹Indeed, after Moses declared everything that God commanded in his law to the Israelites, he picked up {in a bowl} blood from animals that someone had sacrificed. Then, also using water, red cloth, and parts of a hyssop plant, he scattered the blood on the book {on which he wrote what God commanded} and on all the Israelites. ²⁰{When he scattered the blood,} he said to them, "This blood signifies {that} the agreement that God made with you {is now effective}." ²¹Moses likewise scattered blood on the dwelling and on every tool {that the priests used} to serve God. ²²Further, God commanded in Moses' law that the priests should use blood almost every time they cleansed {people or things}. In fact, God does not forgive anyone unless a priest presents blood {from an animal that someone has sacrificed}.

²³So then, the priests had to sacrifice animals to purify the {earthly} copy of the heavenly {Most Holy Place}. Much like that, {Jesus had to} present an even greater offering {to purify} the heavenly {Most Holy Place} itself. ²⁴{When he presented that offering,} the Messiah went into the highest heaven, where he reveals himself right now before God to help us. He did not go into a Most Holy Place that humans have made, which is a model of the most real Most Holy Place. ²⁵Further, he {went into the highest heaven} not to present himself as an offering more than once. That is what the {earthly} leading priests do. They go into the Most Holy Place every year {and present} blood from an animal {that someone has sacrificed}. ²⁶{If Jesus had actually needed to present himself as an offering more than once,} then he would have needed to die very often since the time when God created everything. But here is what is true {about Jesus}: during this final time period, he presented himself one time only as an offering to make sin powerless. ²⁷Humans will each die one time only, and then God will decide whether they are guilty or innocent. ²⁸Much like that, the Messiah presented himself one time only as an offering to take away many people's sins. Then, he will come again {to earth}, not {to take away} sins, but to rescue his people, who are persistently expecting him.

Chapter 10

¹The law {that God gave through Moses} is not itself one of the wonderful things that God will give to his people. Rather, it only points to those wonderful things. So, even though the people who go closer to God always present offerings year after year, doing so never enables them to be what God wants them to be. ²Suppose that {those offerings} actually purified the people who worship God. {In that case,} they would never feel guilty about their sins, and they would stop presenting offerings. ³But {here is what is true about those offerings}: they remind people year after year of their sins. ⁴{Those offerings can only do that,} because blood from animals that someone sacrificed cannot remove people's sins.

⁵That is why, when the Messiah came to earth, he spoke {to his Father},

"You did not want {people to present} offerings.

Instead, you made a human body ready for me.

⁶You did not enjoy

the sacrifices that people present to take away their sins.

⁷So, I spoke {these words}: 'Here I am!

Someone wrote about me in the Scriptures.

I will do what you want {me to do}, my God.'"

⁸Here is what the Messiah said {to God} first: "You did not want or enjoy the offerings {that people present} or the sacrifices that people present to take away their sins." Those offerings and sacrifices are the ones that the Israelites present {to God} as he required in the laws {that he gave through Moses}. ⁹Then, the Messiah said this second: "Here I am! I will do what you want {me to do}." He abolishes {what he spoke about} first to set up {what he spoke about} second. ¹⁰Here is what God wanted: Jesus the Messiah presented his body as an offering one time only, and by that {offering}, God set us apart for himself.

¹¹Now all {earthly} priests have to stand up day after day while they worship God and present many offerings of the same kind. These offerings cannot remove {people's} sins. ¹²In contrast, the Messiah presented a single offering that is always effective in taking away sins. Then, he went to be with God {the Father}, where he sits {on the throne} and rules. ¹³Right now, he remains {there} until God defeats all of his enemies. ¹⁴{The Messiah remains there,} because he presented a single offering, by which he always makes the people whom God is setting apart for himself what God wants them to be. ¹⁵God's Spirit too confirms to us {that this is true}. Here is what he said first {in the words that I have already quoted}:

¹⁶“This is the kind of agreement that I will make with them,
very soon. Here is what I say:

I will enable them to obey
and understand my laws.”

¹⁷Then{, God’s Spirit said this second in the words I have already quoted}:
“I will never again punish them
for the sinful and disobedient things that they have done.”

¹⁸When God forgives people for the {sinful and disobedient} things that they have done, no one again presents sacrifices to take away sins.

¹⁹So then, fellow believers, we can be totally sure that there is a way into the heavenly Most Holy Place {for us}, because of Jesus’ blood. ²⁰Jesus established that new and effective way for us, which passes through the cloth hanging {into the Most Holy Place}. This {cloth hanging figuratively} represents Jesus {while he lived} on earth. ²¹Further, {the Messiah is} a leading priest {who} works for us, God’s people. ²²{Because those things are true,} we should go closer {to God}, completely serving him and fully believing in him now that he has purified us on the inside and on the outside so that we no longer feel guilty about evil things {that we have done}. ²³{God,} who promised {these things to us,} will do what he has said. So, we need to persist in fully believing what we say we confidently expect. ²⁴Further, we need to think about each other, particularly how to encourage each other to love others and to do what is right. ²⁵{We can do that by} always continuing to gather together {to worship God} and encouraging each other, even though some people often do not {do this}. Since we know that Jesus is coming back soon, we should be very eager to do those things.

²⁶{We should do all those things,} because whenever we intentionally and habitually sin once we have completely understood the true {message about Christ}, no one can present any offering that will take away our sins. ²⁷{If we did go on sinning}, all we could do is fearfully wait for God to declare us guilty and soon after forcefully punish us as his enemies, {which would be like} flames burning us up. ²⁸The Israelites would kill any person who completely stopped obeying the laws that God gave through Moses, as long as at least two or three people confirmed that the person had done that. They would not be merciful to that person. ²⁹But now consider people who shame God’s Son. They treat his blood as if it were ordinary, even though God used that blood to make his covenant and set them apart for himself. They make fun of God’s Spirit, who acts graciously. God will rightly punish those people more than {he punished anyone who completely stopped obeying the laws that God gave through Moses}. ³⁰{We know that is true,} because we have encountered God, who spoke, “I am the one who will punish people when they act against me. I will do so in a way that they deserve.” Further, {he} also {spoke}, “I, the Lord, will decide whether my people are guilty or innocent.” ³¹Those who deserve the only real God to punish them should be afraid!

³²On the other hand, I want you to think about what it was like when you first learned about the good news. During that time, you continued {to trust God} while you firmly withstood what you suffered. ³³In some cases, people publicly insulted and hurt you. In other cases, you helped other people who experienced those same things. ³⁴More specifically, you acted compassionately toward those in jail. Also, you rejoiced even when people took away what you owned. {You did that} because you recognized that God has something greater and more lasting for you. ³⁵Therefore, continue to be confident {that God will do what he has promised}. God greatly rewards those who are confident in this way. ³⁶As you can see, you need to continue {to trust God}. That way, once you have done what God desires, you will receive what he has promised {to give to you}. ³⁷Here is what a prophet wrote:

“Very soon, the person who is going to arrive will arrive.

He will not wait a long time.

³⁸Further, those who serve me righteously will trust {in me} while they are alive.

But, suppose they stop {trusting in me}.

Then, I will be displeased with them.”

³⁹However, we are not those who stop {trusting in God}, whom he will destroy. Rather, we are those who trust {in God}, so he saves us.

Chapter 11

¹When people trust God, it makes them sure that they will receive what they confidently expect. {When people trust God,} it makes them certain about things that they do not see. ²In fact, because the Israelite ancestors trusted God, he approved of them. ³Because we trust God, we recognize that God set up everything that exists by speaking. So then, the things we see did not come from other things we can see.

⁴Because he trusted God, Adam’s son Abel presented a more acceptable offering to God than his older brother Cain did. Because he trusted God, God approved of him for what he presented and declared that he did what was right. Although Abel died, we can still learn from how he trusted God.

⁵Because Enoch trusted God, God took him {to heaven}, and so he never died. As {Moses wrote,} “No one could find him. That is because God took him {to heaven}.” Now before God took {Enoch to heaven}, he declared that Enoch pleased him. ⁶In fact, people can only please God when they trust him. {That is} because people who go closer to God have to believe that he is real and that he will reward people who want to serve and worship him.

⁷Because he trusted God, Noah honored God {by believing him} when God revealed to him what he could not yet experience. So, Noah built the ark to rescue his family {from the flood that God would send}. Since Noah trusted God {in this way}, he proved that everyone else was guilty. Further, Noah became a person whom God made right with himself, because Noah trusted him.

⁸Because he trusted God, Abraham did what God said when God spoke to him. He left {his home} to travel to a location that God would soon make his new home. When he left {his home}, he did not even know exactly where {this new home would be}. ⁹Because he trusted God, Abraham stayed in the country that God had promised {to give him}, but it was not yet his country. He lived with Isaac his son and Jacob his grandson in temporary shelters, {even though} God promised to all three of them {that he would give them this country}. ¹⁰{Abraham lived like that,} because he was looking forward to {living in} the secure and permanent {heavenly} city that God created.

¹¹Because he believed, Abraham was able to have a son with {his wife} Sarah, even though he was old enough that he could not normally have a child. {That happened} because he reckoned that God would certainly do what he said. ¹²So then, even though he was very old, Abraham had many descendants, {the Israelites}. {Just as God promised,} there are as many {Israelites} as there are many stars in the sky and as there are many grains of sand on a beach by the ocean.

¹³All those people trusted God until they died. They did not experience what God had promised {to give them}, but they knew that God would soon do what he had promised. They showed everyone that they did not really belong in this world. ¹⁴Indeed, all people who speak what they spoke {about not belonging in this world} show clearly that they desire {to live in} their own country. ¹⁵But suppose they considered the country they had left {to be their own country}. In that case, they could have gone back there{, but they did not}. ¹⁶But here is what is true {about them}: they longed for a greater country that is in heaven. Because of that, it honors God when other people describe him as the God of these people {who trusted him}. {You can tell that this is true,} because God has made a city for them {to live in}.

¹⁷Because he trusted God, when God tested him, Abraham would have presented {his son} Isaac {as an offering}. Indeed, the man to whom God promised {many descendants} was about to present {as an offering} the only child

{he and his wife Sarah had}. ¹⁸{In fact,} God {had already} said to Abraham, "The many descendants {that I promised to give you} will come from {your son} Isaac." ¹⁹{Abraham acted in this way because} he reckoned that God could make dead people alive again. In fact, in a manner of speaking, Abraham did get Isaac back after he had died.

²⁰Because he trusted God, Isaac blessed {his sons} Jacob and Esau regarding what was going to happen.

²¹Because he trusted God, when he was about to die, Jacob blessed both sons of {his son} Joseph. He praised God while he leaned on his walking stick. ²²Because he trusted God, when he was about to die, Joseph spoke about how the Israelites would leave {the land of Egypt}. Also, he commanded {them to take} his bones {with them when they left}.

²³Because they trusted God, Moses' father and mother kept Moses hidden for 13 weeks after he was born. They bravely disobeyed what the king {of Egypt} commanded {about killing the sons of the Israelites}. {They did that} because they could tell that Moses was a good child. ²⁴Because he trusted God, when he grew up, Moses rejected how he was living as the {adopted} son of one {of the daughters} of the king of Egypt. ²⁵He decided to experience how people mistreated God's people rather than to enjoy sinning for a little while. ²⁶He reckoned that people insulting him because of the Messiah was more valuable than all the valuable things in {the land of} Egypt. {He thought in this way,} because he focused on how God would reward him. ²⁷Because he trusted God, Moses departed from {the land of} Egypt. He was not afraid of {what} the king {would do} while he was angry. {He acted in that way,} because he continued {to trust God as completely} as if he could see him, who is invisible. ²⁸Because he trusted God, Moses led the Israelites in celebrating the {first} Passover festival and spreading blood {from lambs on their doors}. {They did that} so that the spiritual being who killed the eldest children {of the Egyptians} would not kill their {eldest children}.

²⁹Because they trusted God, the Israelites walked across the Sea of Reeds like {they were walking on} hard ground {when God made a path for them}. Then, when the Egyptians tried to follow, they drowned in the water {when God covered the path}.

³⁰Because the Israelites trusted God, he broke down the walls {around the city} of Jericho after the Israelites {repeatedly} marched around the city during one week.

³¹Because she trusted God, Rahab, who was a prostitute, kept the spies {whom Joshua had sent} safe. {Because she did that,} the Israelites did not kill her when they killed {everyone else who lived in Jericho}, everyone who did not obey {God}.

³²I do not know what more I should say about others who trusted in God. It would take too much time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the other prophets. ³³Because they trusted God, some of them did great deeds for him. Some conquered lands ruled by powerful men. Some ruled Israel and justly treated men and nations. Some received from God the things that he promised to give them. Some forced lions to keep their mouths shut. ³⁴Some escaped from burning up in fire. Some escaped from others who tried to kill them with swords. Some became well again after being sick. Some became powerful when they fought wars. Some caused armies that came from foreign lands to run away from them. ³⁵Some women who trusted God received their relatives back again when God made them live again after they had died. But others who trusted God were tortured until they died. They were tortured because they refused to agree when their enemies said, "We will release you if you deny that you believe in God." They refused to do that, because they wanted to live with God forever, which is better than continuing to live on earth. ³⁶Other people who trusted God were mocked. Some had their backs cut open by being struck with whips. Some were chained and put in prison. ³⁷Some of those believers were stoned to death. Others were sawn completely in two. Others were killed with swords. Others of these people who trusted God wandered around the land wearing garments made only of skins from sheep and goats. They did not have any money. People constantly oppressed them and harmed them. ³⁸The people on earth who caused those who trusted in God to suffer like this were so bad that they did not deserve to live with people like those who trusted God. Some who trusted God wandered in deserts and mountains. Some lived in caves and in other large holes in the ground.

³⁹Although God approved of all these people because they trusted him, he did not give them what he had promised them. ⁴⁰God knew ahead of time that what he would give us and them later would be better than giving them immediately what he promised. What God intends is that only when they and we are together will we have all that God intends us to have.

Chapter 12

¹We know about many people like these who proved that they trusted in God. Let us put off everything that weighs us down and so we put away the sin that clings to us. Then let us run our race patiently and do everything God gives us to do until we make it to the finish line. ²And let us keep thinking about Jesus and give him all our attention. He is the one who leads us and he makes our faith complete. He is the one who endured the terrible suffering on the cross and he paid no attention to the people who tried to shame him. He did this because he knew how joyful God would make him later. He now sits at the place of highest honor in the throne where God rules in heaven.

³Jesus patiently endured it when sinful people hatefully acted against him. Strengthen your hearts and minds with Jesus' example so that you will not give up trusting God or become discouraged. ⁴While you have struggled against being tempted to sin, you have not yet bled and died because of resisting evil, as Jesus did. ⁵Do not forget these words that Solomon spoke to his son, which are the same with which God encourages you as his children:

"My son, pay attention when the Lord is disciplining you,
and do not be discouraged when the Lord punishes you,

⁶because everyone the Lord loves he also disciplines,
and he severely corrects everyone he calls his own."

⁷God may discipline you by requiring you to endure difficult things that happen to you. When God disciplines you, he is treating you as a father treats his children. All fathers discipline their children. ⁸So if you have not experienced God disciplining you like he disciplines all his children, you are not true children of God. You are like illegitimate children who have no father to correct them. ⁹Furthermore, our natural fathers disciplined us when we were young, and we respected them for doing that. So we should certainly more readily accept God our spiritual Father disciplining us so we will live eternally! ¹⁰Our natural fathers disciplined us for a short time as they considered right, but God always disciplines us to help us share in his holy nature. ¹¹During the time God is disciplining us, it does not seem to be anything about which we can rejoice. Instead, it pains us. But later it causes those who have learned from it to live righteously, which produces peace in us.

¹²So, instead of acting as though you were spiritually tired out, trust God's discipline to renew you. ¹³Go straight forward following the Messiah so that believers who are weak in trusting the Messiah will gain strength from you and not become crippled. Instead, they will be spiritually restored as an injured and useless limb becomes well again. ¹⁴Try to live peacefully with all people. Do your best to be holy, since no one will see the Lord if he is not holy. ¹⁵Make sure that everyone among you experiences the kind things that God does for us. Kind things that we do not deserve. Be on guard so that none of you act in an evil way toward others, because that will grow like a root grows into a big plant, leading many believers to sin. ¹⁶Do not let anyone be immoral or disobey God like Esau. He exchanged the rights he had as a firstborn son for only one meal. ¹⁷For you know that Esau later wanted to get back his birth rights and all that his father Isaac's blessing would give him. But Isaac refused to do what Esau requested. For Esau found no way to change what he had done, even though he sought it tearfully.

¹⁸In coming to God, you have not experienced things like what the Israelite people experienced at Mount Sinai. They approached a mountain that God commanded them not to touch because he himself had come down to that mountain. They approached a blazing fire, and it was gloomy and dark, with a violent storm. ¹⁹They heard a trumpet sound, and they heard God speak a message. It was so powerful that they pleaded for him not to speak to

them like that again. ²⁰For God had commanded them, "If a person or even an animal touches this mountain, you must kill him." The people were terrified. ²¹Truly, because Moses was terrified after seeing what happened on the mountain, he said, "I am trembling because I am very afraid!" ²²Instead, you have come to the presence of God who truly lives in heaven, to the "New Jerusalem." That is like what your ancestors did when they came to worship God on Mount Zion in Israel, upon which the earthly Jerusalem was built. You have come to where there are countless angels who are rejoicing as they have gathered together. ²³You have joined the assembly of all the believers who have privileges as firstborn sons, whose names God has written down in heaven. You have come to God, who will judge everyone. You have come to where the spirits of God's people are, people who lived righteously before they died, and whom God has now made perfect in heaven. ²⁴You have come to Jesus, who arranged a new covenant between us and God by the blood that flowed when he died on the cross. Jesus' blood made it possible for God to forgive us, and his blood confirms better promises for us than Abel's blood.

²⁵Beware that you do not refuse to listen to God who is speaking to you. The Israelite people did not escape God punishing them when they rejected his warning to them here on earth. For we shall surely not escape God punishing us if we reject what he says when he warns us from heaven! ²⁶When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: "Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also." ²⁷The words "again, one more time" indicate that God will remove those things on earth that he will shake, everything that he has created. He will do this in order that the things in heaven that cannot shake may remain forever. ²⁸So let us thank God that we are becoming members of a kingdom that nothing can shake. And in this kingdom we please God by worshiping him and by showing him great honor and respect. ²⁹Remember that the God we worship is like a fire that burns up everything that is impure!

Chapter 13

¹Continue to love your fellow believers. ²Do not forget to be hospitable to needy travelers. By caring for strangers, some people have welcomed angels into their home without knowing it. ³Remember to help those who are in prison because they are believers, as though you were in prison with them and were suffering physically as they are suffering physically.

⁴Men and women who are married to each other must respect each other in every way, and they must be faithful to each other. God will surely condemn those who act immorally or adulterously. ⁵Live without constantly wanting money, and be happy no matter how much or little you own in your present circumstances. Remember what Moses wrote that God said:

"I will never leave you;

I will never stop providing for you."

⁶So we can say confidently as the psalmist said,

"Since the Lord is the one who helps me, I will not be afraid! People can do nothing to me that will keep God from helping me."

⁷Your spiritual leaders have told you the message of God about the Messiah. Remember how they have conducted their lives and imitate how they have trusted in the Messiah. ⁸Jesus the Messiah is the same now as he always has been, and he will be the same forever. ⁹So do not let other people mislead you to believe other things about God, strange things that you have not learned from us. For our true strength comes from God's acts of kindness towards us, rather than following various rules about what to eat and not to eat.

¹⁰Those who serve in the sacred tent have no right to eat at the sacred altar where we worship the Messiah. ¹¹After the high priest brings into the very holy place the blood of animals that they have sacrificed to atone for sins, other people burn the bodies of those animals outside the camp. ¹²Similarly, Jesus suffered and died outside the gates of

Jerusalem in order that he might make us, his people, special for God. He did this by offering his own blood as a sacrifice for our sins.

¹³So we must go to Jesus to be saved. We must leave behind other rules and rituals and allow others to insult us just like people insulted him. ¹⁴Here on earth, we believers do not have a city such as Jerusalem. Instead, we are waiting for the heavenly city that will last forever.

¹⁵Because Jesus has died for us, we must continually praise God no matter what happens. That will be something we can sacrifice to him instead of animals. We must be ready to openly say to others that we trust in the Messiah.

¹⁶Always be doing good deeds for others and sharing the things you have, because doing things like that will be as though you are offering sacrifices that will please God.

¹⁷Obey your leaders and do what they tell you, since they are the ones who are guarding your welfare. Some day they will have to stand before God so that he can say if he approves of what they have done. Obey them in order that they can do the work of guarding you joyfully and not have to do it sadly, because if you cause them to do it sadly, that will certainly not help you at all.

¹⁸Pray for me and those with me. I am certain that I have not done anything that displeases God. I have tried to act well toward you in every way. ¹⁹I urge you earnestly to pray that God will quickly remove the things that stop my coming to you.

²⁰Jesus provides for us, protects us, and guides us as a great shepherd does for his sheep. And God, who gives us inner peace, raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. By doing that God confirmed his eternal covenant with us by the blood that flowed from the Messiah when he died on the cross. ²¹So I pray that God may equip you with everything good that you may do what he desires. May he accomplish in us what pleases him, as he watches us follow Jesus, who offered up himself for us. May all people praise Jesus the Messiah forever. Amen!

²²My fellow believers, since this is a short letter that I have written to you, I ask you that you patiently consider what I have just written to encourage you.

²³I want you to know that our fellow believer Timothy has gone free from prison. If he comes here soon, he will accompany me when I go to see you.

²⁴Tell all your spiritual leaders and all your other fellow believers who belong to God in your city that I greet them. The believers in this area who have come from Italy greet you also.

²⁵May God continue to love you and protect you by his kindness.

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