

May 18. Read Hebrews 10:19-39. What the apostates did and thereby called judgment on themselves, we must not do. What the apostates did not do, we must do. Let the former be a warning and the latter be our motivation. Take note of the four 'let us' in verses 22-25 and act on them regularly. The 'new and living way' is already opened to us. We are able to discern that we are now living in the 'last days' and we are given every knowledge of the things that we must do and the things that we must not do. The apostates rejected God's truth (vs 26-28); spurned God's Son (verse 29a) and despised God's Spirit (v 29b). We must take heed and be steadfast and joyful in suffering (vs 32b, 34). This is in line with God's will. As we continue in such a manner, we must always remind ourselves that the Lord is not slow in keeping His promises (v 37b, Peter 3:9). We also must realize that despite all the trials that befall us, it is primarily faith that pleases God (v 38b). We have believed and are saved. Now we obey because we have been saved. We are always in the hands of God. May we always discern the hands of God in our life knowing all the time that His mercy is great (2 Samuel 24:14).

May 19. Read Hebrews 11:1-22. Faith can be described as living the future in the present. It is God's word that makes the future as real as the present. Promises and rewards belong to the future. Obedience, sacrifice, endurance, conviction, certainty, assurance, hope and joy belong to the present. Let us consider those faithful ones and be encouraged. Abel's better sacrifice revealed his devotion. Enoch pleased God. Noah heeded God's word with holy fear and obedience. Abraham was the father of the faithful. Even Sarah was considered faithful though she had wavered at one time. Let us live as sojourners and aliens in this world and seek always to please God (v 6). We too are certain of what we do not yet see (v 1b). We are mere strangers on this earth in the same way as Abraham, who considered himself stranger (v 9). Let us fix our eyes constantly on our heavenly destination (v 16). By faith we know that it is a city with foundations whose architect and builder is God (v 10). Let us keep the faith till the end (v 13a) and imitate Paul who 'kept the faith till the end' (2 Timothy 4:7). Let us learn from Abraham's greatest test. While we know that heaven is real and God's promises are real, we know also that trials and testing will come our way. Abraham faced the greatest test of his life in the sacrifice of Isaac. How could God's command clash with His promise? Nevertheless, Abraham, as the father of faith, obeyed and was rewarded. When faced with the severest trial of your life, hold on tightly of God's promises.

May 20. Read Hebrews 11:23-40. By faith and through faith these heroes of faith conquered fear (v 23), sharpened their vision (v 27), recognized their dependence on God, overcame difficulties, endured and accepted suffering with trust and confidence. Yet they belonged to the 'imperfect' old order (v 28). On the other hand we, who have received the new order (vs 39-40), must make it a point to remember that they and we together belong to the same divine plan. Moses knew precisely what he wanted. He considered God's will and His eternal plan of greater value than the treasures of Egypt and was faithful till the end. Moses was sure of what he hoped for and looked ahead to his reward (v 26b; 11:1a). He saw the invisible and was certain of what he did not yet see (v 27b; 11:1b). Simeon, on the other hand, partially saw it (the arrival of the Messiah) and was exceedingly glad (Luke 2:30). We ought to bow before the Almighty God. His mighty deeds include judgment on the Egyptians, the parting of the Red Sea and the fall of Jericho (vs 28-30). Among the other heroic feats (vs 32-34) we also see fearlessness in facing death because they knew that they were going to a better place. To die is gain (v 35b; Philippians 1:21). The world was not worthy of them (v 38a). They looked to the eternal city. We do not only have everything accomplished for us, we also have the reality of the Holy Spirit in us. We who belong to the new order ought to all the more live by faith and through faith achieve even more (John 14:12).

May 21. Read Hebrews 12:1-17. Without discipline it is impossible to live a Christian life. We need discipline to run the race (v 1), to fix our eyes on Jesus in our struggle with temptations and weaknesses (vs 2, 4), to endure (v 7) and to submit (v 9). Rejoice and be exceedingly glad when you are being disciplined for it is from our Father in heaven and it is for good purposes (v 10). Our response to discipline must be one of contemplation and understanding, seriousness and submissiveness in enduring. Discipline is bound to cause pain but in order for us to endure, we must know that it is for our own good and part of our personal pursuit of holiness, righteousness and peace. We must obey and not resent or rebel. Jesus is our supreme example and therefore inspirer in that He learned obedience from what He suffered (5:8). We must be able to see in Jesus a devoted servant and a patient sufferer. While the Old Testament saints could also inspire us (v 1b) but it is Jesus alone who is able to help us. He always lives to intercede for us (v 7:25b). Let us then rid ourselves of all ensnaring sins (v 1b), be serious and wise (vs 5-6; Proverbs 3:11-12) in our Christian walk and daily make every effort obey the Lord. Let us never be childish, immature and irreligious like Esau. Christian discipline comes naturally out of a Father and son relationship and if we submit, we shall live a truly meaningful life.

May 22. Read Hebrews 12:18-28. We do not belong to Sinai. We belong to Zion. We fear not because we belong to the new order, which cannot be shaken. We look at Sinai and rejoice that we have witnessed its fulfillment in Zion. And we worship the Lord. Moses and the people of Israel met God at Mount Sinai (vs 18-21; Exodus 19-20). God's holiness (v 20) and majesty were displayed dramatically. Though these are unfamiliar to us we must always remember to come to God in a reverent manner. Zion was a fortress in Jerusalem, the city of David (2 Samuel 5:7) which was the earthly dwelling place of God during David's time. But we have with us the heavenly (or the spiritual) and not the earthly Jerusalem (v 22). We do not have the city of David but the city of the living God whose majesty is seen in the thousands of angels (v 22). The angels are ministering spirits (1:14) but then we will be worshiping God with them (v 22b). We come to Jesus, the judge and also the mediator of this new covenant. Abel's blood cries in protest while Jesus' blood cleanses all our sins and we are being presented clean and made holy. While the heavenly Jerusalem is in the future (v 26) we are always confident of receiving it (v 28). Our attitude should be one of gratitude and reverence. Let us lead a life of worship. Our destiny is clear and until then there is only one thing to do: worship God and obey Him.

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