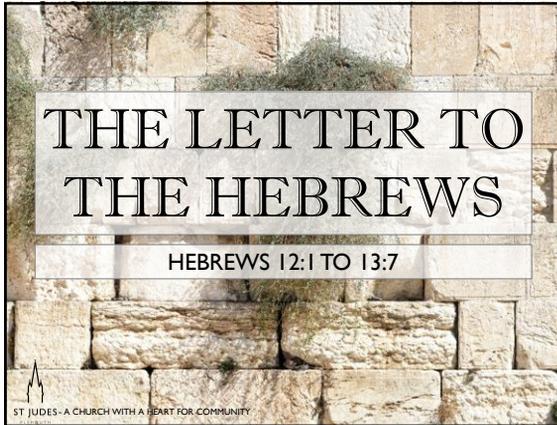


Mark out a straight path



Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ²We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honour beside God's throne.

³ Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. ⁴ After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.

⁵ And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."

⁷ As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? ⁸ If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. ⁹ Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

¹⁰ For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening - it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. ¹² So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. ¹³ Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

¹⁴ Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. ¹⁵ Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many. ¹⁶ Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau, who traded his birthright as the firstborn son for a single meal. ¹⁷ You know that afterward, when he wanted his father's blessing, he was rejected.

Mark out a straight path

It was too late for repentance, even though he begged with bitter tears.

¹⁸You have not come to a physical mountain, to a place of flaming fire, darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai.¹⁹ For they heard an awesome trumpet blast and a voice so terrible that they begged God to stop speaking. ²⁰They staggered back under God's command: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death."

²¹ Moses himself was so frightened at the sight that he said, "I am terrified and trembling."

²² No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering. ²³ You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things.

You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect. ²⁴ You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel.

²⁵ Be careful that you do not refuse to listen to the One who is speaking. For if the people of Israel did not escape when they refused to listen to Moses, the earthly messenger, we will certainly not escape if we reject the One who speaks to us from heaven!

²⁶ When 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." ²⁷ This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed, so that only unshakable things will remain.

²⁸ Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe.²⁹ For our God is a devouring fire.

13 Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. ² Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! ³ Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies. ⁴ Give honour to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.

⁵ Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you.

I will never abandon you." ⁶ So we can say with confidence,

"The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear.

What can mere people do to me?"

⁷ Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.

