Greater In Every Way

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[0:00] You can take your Bibles and open with me to Hebrews chapter 12. Just got two chapters left in this great letter.! It's good to see that everyone survived the eclipse on Monday.

! I was a little concerned, but good to see you here tonight. As we've come now to Hebrews chapter 12, I would argue that this is really the climax of the sermon.
Chapter 13 includes some final exhortations, some final encouragements, but the culmination of the argument that he's been making, I think, comes to a head here in chapter 12.
If you remember, our main theme of Hebrews is Jesus over everything, or Jesus is greater than everything. And so just a brief review, in chapters 1 and 2, we saw that Jesus was greater than angels.
Chapter 3, that he was greater than Moses. Chapters 3 and 4, that he was greater than Joshua, giving a greater rest to the people of God. He's a greater high priest.
[1:07] Chapter 5, chapter 7, he's a greater high priest even than Melchizedek. He has a better covenant. Chapter 8, he has a better place of worship. He ministers in the heavenly tent.

Chapter 9, chapter 10, he's a greater sacrifice for sins, because he can actually forgive his people. Chapter 11, he is the one to whom the saints of old looked.
He's a greater object of faith. And now we come to chapter 12, and we see that Jesus is greater in every way. Jesus is greater in every way.
And what we have here in chapter 12 is the climax and culmination of the letter of Hebrews, which is really a sermon that was written down. And there are lots of commands in chapters 12 and 13. We must pay careful attention to these words. There have not been many commands given in the book of Hebrews. It's primarily been exalting Christ and showing us how grand and magnificent Christ is.
[2:13] And now in chapters 12 and 13, we get a high concentration of commands, things we must do, and so we do well to pay attention to them. Tonight, we'll cover chapter 12 in four points.

The first one is a greater example. A greater example. And we see that in verses 1 and 2. And here the author uses an athletic metaphor and compares our pursuit of Christ, our life in Christ, as a race.
As something we are competing in. Something we are running for. And this isn't just any race. This isn't a sprint. He's thinking long distance here.
This is a grueling test of endurance. This isn't just a leisurely jog, if anything like that exists. I have a friend by the name of Andrew Waller.
Some of you know him. One of you knows him well. And Zach Waller, his brother. Anyway, just for clarity. I was talking to him one time. He was a runner at Mustang. And I was talking to him and I said, Hey, did you run today?
[3:20] And he was like, Yeah. I went for a little jog. I said, How far did you run? He said, Six miles. It was fun. And I said, That's disgusting. So, whatever that is, running for fun, I don't know.

But this isn't that. This race he's describing is more like a marathon. It takes everything that you have. It costs everything that you can give just to get to the finish line.
So let me read verse 1 for us. It says, Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. Let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely.
And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.
And so coming off of chapter 11, where he has cataloged some of these great heroes of the faith who have gone before us in the Old Testament, who have been faithful to the Lord in good times and in bad, in successes and in loss of life.

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[4:28] The author of Hebrews is saying, We are surrounded by these witnesses. And so let us run in a manner similar to how they ran. We are running in a stadium full of Old Testament saints who have gone before us and told us that God is faithful to his promises.

And this cloud of witnesses, I just compared it to a stadium, but it's not exactly what we would think of. They're not here watching us, cheering us on. What does it mean that they're witnesses?
Each one of them is a testimony to God's goodness. Each of them is an example of how to live a life by faith. How to live a life faithful to God when we don't have all of the answers.
And so these men and women are like banners hanging in the rafters that are reminding us and encouraging us to keep going, to continue to run the race that is set before us with endurance.
And here's a command. Let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely. What runners intentionally run a race with extra weight on them?
[5:46] No, runners get rid of any weight they can before a race. Have you ever seen someone run a cross-country race in jeans? Besides the ultra-fundamentalist homeschool guy.

No, runners wear as little as acceptably possible. They want to be efficient. They don't want to be weighed down in their race.
And so the author says, lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely. We must, in our life for Christ, lay aside everything that might distract us or slow us down.
Now he mentions weight and sin. And so is there a difference between the two? I think there is. Weight does not necessarily mean it's evil in itself.
It might just prevent you from running well. Netflix. Video games. The gram. No one calls it that.
[6:52] YouTube. Are these things always inherently evil? No. But can these things weigh you down? Can these things prevent you from fully pleasing Christ with your time?

Yes. And so these weights aren't necessarily evil things, but they are things that will distract you. Things that can break your stride as you run for Christ.
And sin, which clings so closely. These are things that are inherently bad. Sexual immorality. Lying. Gossiping. Slandering. Laziness. And the dangerous thing about the Christian life is that sin still clings to us.
Just because you are saved does not mean you are safe from sin. Just because you have been delivered doesn't mean you have fully gotten rid of sin in your life. And it clings closely to us.
[8:01] It entangles us. It trips us up. And so we must constantly be on the attack against sin. We must constantly be vigilant against it. If we are not watchful.

If we do not pay attention. We will not endure to the end. We will not make it across the finish line. Because all of this weight and all of this sin will trip us up and weigh us down.
And we will not run well for the Lord. Many of you know our church vehicles have a sordid past. A shady history.
But the church van has been faithful. Except when it hasn't been. But if you hop in the church van and drive down to Texas. You can make it there and maybe not even use half a tank.
The thing is doing well. It is cruising. If you throw the trailer on the back. It is going to get a whopping five and a half miles per gallon. And you are going to have to fill up on your way to Fort Worth.
[9:00] I know these things. Is the trailer inherently evil? No. Nate says yes. But the trailer slows the van down.

The trailer weighs it down and prevents it from running well. It prevents it from getting there quickly. It prevents it from getting there efficiently. And that is the picture of this weight and sin.
It just prevents you and distracts you from running in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. So we must kill our sin. We must get rid of our sin where it is exposed.
Maybe a friend talks to you. Maybe you are convicted by the Lord as you read His word. Kill sin. Repent of it. Get rid of it. It will weigh you down and prevent you from enduring the way that the Lord wants you to.
And we do these things so that we can also obey this next command and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.
[9:58] Can your Christian life be described as running? Could you be described as a runner for the Lord? Have you slowed to a walk?

Are you sitting down? What does your Christian life look like? What is pictured here is an agonizing run that takes everything you have got.

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And at times we need help. At times we need encouragement. At times we need to read a biography to be encouraged. At times we need to look back at these Old Testament saints to be encouraged, to be spurred on, but never stop running.
And how is it that we run? How do we accomplish this? Verse 2. By looking to Jesus. The founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
The way we endure is by looking to Jesus. Christ is the key example that we look to. Christ is our Savior. He's the one who started our faith.
[11:10] He's the one who will perfect our faith. And when runners run, they do not look down at their feet or around at their opponents or up in the stands. They look straight ahead. And if you noticed, in this long catalog of faithful believers that have gone before us in chapter 11, the author never commands us to look to them.

They're an example to us. They can encourage us and inspire us. But the one we look to is Jesus. Jesus is the one they were looking to and hoping in. The one who saves us is Jesus.
That's who the faithful believers were looking toward in the Old Testament, and we must look to Him as well. And this is instructive for us because Christianity is not a cult of hero worship.
We do not worship saints. We worship Jesus. We are not here today because of Abel or Noah or Abraham or Moses. Our religion is not called Abelanity.
We are not called Abrahamians, as cool as that would be. We are called Christians because we believe in Christ. We look to Jesus for salvation.
[12:20] We are Christians because Jesus died for our sins and rose again. And we look to Him. And so this great crowd of witnesses in chapter 11 encourages us and inspires us during the race.

But Jesus is the one who keeps us in the race. He's the one who keeps us in the fight. He's the one who sustains us and keeps us safe throughout the entirety of our lives.
And as we look to Him, we see the way that He endured. And how was it that He endured the cross? How did He survive through the losing of His life?
It was because of the joy that was set before Him. Jesus endured because of joy. Not the joy of the crucifixion.
Not the joy of bearing the weight of sin. Not the joy of bearing His Father's wrath. But the joy of what concludes verse 2. That He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
[13:21] And as chapter 2 mentioned, He knew that in His death He would bring many sons to glory. It's that joy that sustained Him. And that's exemplary for us. We have joy set before us too.

We have promises from God that we are waiting for. We need to let the joy of that future hope help us endure through the trials that we experience here and now in this life.
And Jesus is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Again, a reference to Psalm 110. So that's a greater example. Secondly, we see a greater pain. A greater pain.
In verses 3 through 17. Here's another command in verse 3. Consider him who endured from sinners. This is talking about considering Jesus.
Such hostility against Himself so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. Consider Him. Think about Him. Meditate on Him. So that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.
[14:24] The only way to endure is to consider Jesus. The only way to stay faithful to the end is by looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter or the author and finisher of our faith.

In verse 4, the author says, In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. So these believers, they've been persecuted.
They've been cast out of their society for all intents and purposes. But they have not yet given up their lives in following Jesus. Jesus did lose His life, obviously.
And so perhaps they've overestimated how bad their life has been. Perhaps they've overestimated how much suffering they've gone through. And this is something we are prone to do.
And so we must not feel sorry for ourselves in trials. We must not view our troubles around us as something worse than other believers have experienced. And Jesus suffered death.
[15:28] And He said, If this is how they treated the master of the household, how will they treat His servants? Jesus says, The world hated me. It will hate you as well. And perhaps these Hebrew Christians saw the first signs of difficulty and persecution.

And they became weary and faint-hearted. He's reminding them they have not yet lost their lives. And like I said, we can tend to feel sorry for ourselves. We can tend to view our troubles as worse

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than anyone else's.
Our daughter Amelia is four now, which is a beautiful thing. At one point, she was two, which is how life works. And two is interesting, having a toddler.
There's a lot of emotions. And she went through a phase where she had like, we got her this pack of necklaces. There were like 20 necklaces. And she wanted to wear all of them all the time.
At once. Just all around her neck. She could barely turn her head. But we started trying to break her of this because it just wasn't functional. And to leave anywhere, she had to put them on one at a time. And it just wasn't efficient. And so one time I told her, Millie, you can't wear all of your necklaces.
[16:39] And she was sobbing. Like big, big tears. Not logical at all, but big, big tears. And she said, you broke my heart. Which broke my heart.

But she overestimated how much suffering she was going through, right? She was viewing this as an affliction that could not be born.
And this is perhaps how the Hebrews are viewing their suffering. They're feeling sorry for themselves and what difficulty they're going through. And the author of Hebrews is saying, listen, they killed Jesus. He promised the same hatred from the world towards you.
And you still have your life. You haven't shed your blood yet. Keep enduring. Keep being faithful.
And it's shocking that thinking about persecution and suffering, he calls this a struggle against sin.
He's saying that the temptation to either hide from persecution and kind of step back from the faith so that you don't get persecuted, or the temptation to completely abandon faith in Christ and walk away from him ultimately is a fight against sin.
[17:50] And also notice in verse 4, he says, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. He's saying that day likely will come.

And you need to be faithful. And for us, we need to remember the comfort and ease we have today are not guaranteed to last forever. There could be a time coming when following Christ requires a far higher cost than it does today.
We must endure. We must keep running the race. And so I mentioned this point is the greater pain, and we see two types of pain in this passage.
Starting in verse 5, we see the pain of discipline. The pain of discipline. And discipline is a word that, it's a general word that means instruction or education, but it cannot be divorced from inflicting pain in order to teach or educate.
The father disciplining his son being the main focus of this verse. Discipline, even that physical discipline, is intended to teach and educate.
[18:59] And so through their suffering and through our suffering, the Lord is teaching us through that pain and through that difficulty. And so these believers cannot lose heart.

They cannot be discouraged by their difficulties because suffering and discipline are actually proof that they are sons and daughters of God. He's relating to them as a father.
The presence of the Lord's discipline in someone's life is a sign that they belong to the Lord. So he says in verse 5, And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?
And he quotes from Proverbs 3, 11 through 12, My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives.
It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?
[20:03] If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them.

Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits, that's God, and live? For they, referring to our earthly fathers, disciplined us for a short time, as it seemed best to them.
But he, God, disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. Discipline is a sign of sonship.
Discipline is an act of love. And this idea that's encapsulated here in these few verses seems backwards to our society today because parental discipline and spanking are viewed as taboo or off-limits.

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And certainly there are bad parents or abusive parents. But this logic is straightforward. A father who loves his son will discipline him.
[21:05] And Proverbs 13, 24 says, whoever spares the rod hates his son. Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

A lack of discipline is hatred. Discipline is an act of love. It's how loving fathers and mothers treat and teach and educate their children. And this is how God treats us as his children.
But discipline by nature is painful. It's physically painful for children. And it's emotionally stressful and painful for parents. So why do it?
Why does this take place? Because of the results it brings. Verse 11, For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. But later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
The results, the long-term results, are what we're after in our children and in our lives as believers. This is what God wants for us. And so Proverbs 22, 15 says, Folly is bound up in the heart of the child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.
[22:17] And this is true of us as believers too. So later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. If a father does not love his son, he lets him run wild.

But if he wants his son to experience this righteousness, this peaceful fruit of righteousness, he disciplines him. And this is how our Father in heaven treats us as well.
He loves us enough to discipline us. And so difficulty that they're going through is discipline from the Lord. And now just because you're going through trials, just because you're going through difficulty does not mean that you've necessarily done something wrong.
It doesn't mean that God is trying to pay you back for disobedience that you've done. It's not necessarily because of wrongdoing, but in order to perfect you, in order to mature you and grow you up.
And so not all things are good in life. Not all things are pleasant in life, but all things work for our good as believers, like he promised in Romans 8, 28. And so God as a loving Father is constantly shaping us and sharpening us to be like his son.
[23:27] So during your dark trials, it's tempting to think that the Lord does not love you. It's tempting to think that the Lord does not care for you.

But we need to remember that his discipline is a sign of his love. His discipline is a sign that he wants something better for us. He wants us to leave our sin behind us.
He's treating us as his sons and daughters. So there's the pain of discipline, but we also see the pain of regret in verses 12 through 17. So he says, therefore, because of this discipline, lift your drooping hands, strengthen your weak knees.
As you run, your whole body gets tired. Make straight paths for your feet. Possibly another reference to Proverbs 3, where it says, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight the paths of your feet.
so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. In verse 14, we get another string of commands.
[24:30] Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Strive for peace with everyone. Now notice it doesn't say achieve peace with everyone.

Accomplish peace with everyone. Attain peace with everyone. Those all started with A's. I'm sorry. We are not in control of that. We cannot control how other people respond to us.
We cannot make someone be at peace with us. We can love them. We can be gentle towards them. We can speak kindly to them and about them, but we cannot make someone be at peace with us.
We can strive for it. As Romans 12, 18 says, so far as it depends on you, live at peace with all people. But there are people in our lives sometimes that refuse to have peace with us.
And we can't control that. We can love them and work for peace, but you cannot control all of your friends. You cannot control everyone around you. And so love them. Be wise around them.
[25:36] Be cautious around them. Be kind to them. But you cannot make them have peace with you. And we should strive for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

If you do not strive for holiness, this verse says, you will not see the Lord. This doesn't mean that we earn our way to heaven. This doesn't mean that we attain perfection in this life.

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But it does mean that the believer strives and fights against sin and pursues holiness with everything he has. If you do not strive for this holiness, you will not see the Lord because believers are the ones who strive after holiness.
Verse 15, see to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God. We have responsibility for each other to make sure we are running this race continually. That no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble and by it many become defiled.
Bitterness is a poison. And this poison can seep into the church and influence the entire church. And it can only start with just a few people.
[26:48] So be careful. Speak kindly. Guard your hearts. Proverbs 4.23 says, keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flow the springs of life.

And so be careful that bitterness doesn't rise up in your heart and defile many. And in verses 16 and 17, the author gives us a negative example of someone who did not endure.
It says that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau who sold his birthright for a single meal. I think the author is calling Esau both sexually immoral and holy.
We don't have a written record of any sexual immorality that he committed, but he did marry outside of Israel. He did marry these foreign women that the Lord told him not to, which would fall under the category of sexual immorality.
And it calls him unholy, which just means unclean. He was unconcerned about spiritual things. He was not concerned about the Lord. He didn't care about God's word. He didn't care about God's will.
[27:57] And so that's seen in the fact that he sold his birthright for a single meal. And so if you remember the story, Esau was the older brother. Jacob was the younger. And in that day and age, the older brother would have inherited basically everything from his father, at least most of the stuff that had value.

And Jacob was after that birthright. He was a trickster. Those younger brothers, you got to watch him. And Esau comes in from the field one day and he's like, I'm starving.
I could die. Give me something to eat. And Jacob's like, all right, bet. Give me your birthright. And Esau's like, fine, take it. And so he gave up his birthright, the promises that God had made him, for a single meal.
And so what we see in that story is that lunch was more important to Esau than the promises of God. He did not care about what God had promised him. He just wanted food right then and right there.
He was hangry. We can relate to the feeling. But he did not value the promises of God. And we can be guilty of the same kind of sin. The temporary pleasure of sin can seem more appealing than the eternal promises of our Savior.
[29:10] And we can lose focus and be short-sighted like Esau was. And we can get entangled and ensnared in sin.

In verse 17 it says, For you know that afterward when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. He regretted what he had done, but he did not repent.
He wanted the blessing, but he did not hate his sin. True repentance requires us to hate our sin and seek to do away with it.
And it says he did not repent. He found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. And what was it that he was seeking? I don't think he was seeking repentance. I think he was seeking the blessing.
And so he recognizes, this is a bad deal for me. This isn't going to work out for me financially. And so I regret that I did that, and I'm sorry for that, but he did not repent of his sin.
[30:12] And there are many people, and we can fall into this trap too, who are brokenhearted over the consequences of their sin. They can hate what their sin has brought them to, but they still love their sin.

They hate that it broke up their marriage. They hate that it cut their children off from them. They hate that they lost their money or their whatever, but they do not kill their sin. They do not hate their sin.
They just hate the consequences. And Esau is an example of that. Esau is serving the same function, though, that the saints in Hebrews 11 were serving.

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He is here to encourage us to persevere in the faith. But we are not to imitate him. He is a cautionary tale to us of what can happen if we do not take God's word seriously.
And when I was in high school, the athletic department had bought us these dry-fit shirts, all the athletes, and on the back, it said there are two types of pain.
[31:17] The pain of discipline and the pain of regret. And we see two types of pain here. There is the pain of discipline at the hands of the Lord, and there is the pain of regret of clinging to your sin and not trusting in God's promise.

And as believers in Christ, ours is the greater pain. Us repenting of our sin is painful and leads to some suffering, but it's suffering at the hands of a loving and all-good and all-wise Father.
We as children of God have the greater pain, the pain that leads us to glory. So we've seen a greater example. We've seen a greater pain. In verses 18 through 24, we see a greater mountain.
A greater mountain. And here we've come to the culmination of the argument of this entire book.
Again, chapter 13 gives us some closing thoughts and gives us a conclusion, but the body of the sermon crescendos here at the end of chapter 12.
And I would argue that here, in this latter half of chapter 12, all of the arguments that he's been making are tied in to this one passage. Everything he's mentioned so far appears here in verses 18 through 29.
[32:38] So we must endure through this discipline. We must look to Jesus. That's why, verse 18, 4, you've not come to what may be touched. And he's referring here to Mount Sinai and the giving of the law through Moses.

A blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest always can be found in Exodus 19 and 20.
And the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.
For they could not endure the order that was given if even a beast touches the mountain it shall be stoned. Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, I tremble with fear.
We have not come to Mount Sinai. We have not come to this place where God gave the law through Moses. We have come to a greater mountain. We have come to Mount Zion.
And Mount Sinai is the origin of the Mosaic law. And if you've been here for many of the weeks, the author is constantly referring to this law. Constantly referring to the priesthood. Constantly referring to the sacrifices that this law commanded.
[33:47] We as believers have not been saved back to this terrible and foreboding mountain. But, verse 22, but.

And this transition is like waking up from a bad dream. I have some recurring nightmares. Maybe you do too. One of my most common ones is I show up on Sunday and find out I have to preach.
And I have no notes and I can't find my Bible anywhere and so I'm really stressed out. I'm just like tearing down my office trying to find just something. Like talking to my kids like you got any good illustrations for it.
Like something. I'm looking for anything. And I just can't get anywhere so that's a recurring one.
Another one I have is I'm back in high school and I'm late and I cannot remember my locker combination.
And so I'm just sitting there spinning it getting so frustrated and I'm late for everything. Another one is like I lose teeth. I know I have problems but it's just awful and I don't want to smile and whatever.
[34:49] And I wake up and it's like okay. That was a horrible however long I was asleep. However long that dream was going on. Felt like an eternity. That was a horrible amount of time.

But now. But. That's not my reality. That's not what is truly happening in my life. It's a huge relief and that's kind of how this word is functioning.
But. We have not come to Mount Sinai with trembling and judgment and fear but you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God the heavenly Jerusalem.
This is heaven itself. This is heaven's court. This is not the literal Mount Zion but the heavenly realities. This was the city that Abraham looked to in chapter 11 verse 10. This is what they were hoping for.
This is the presence of God itself. And Zion is just the mountain that was at the center of the city of Jerusalem. And Israel identified themselves by what happened at Sinai.
[35:51] That was their constitution. That was their declaration of independence. That was what identified them as a nation. Yahweh speaking to them in the wilderness. But because of what Christ

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has done we as God's people no longer identify with the mountain where God's law was given Mount Sinai.

We identify ourselves with the place where God's law was fulfilled. Where God's law was accomplished. Mount Zion. Jerusalem where Christ died and rose again.
And he says you have come to this place. In one sense we've already come to this mountain. In another sense we've not yet experienced this ourselves. And there at this feast are innumerable angels in festal gathering.
Remember chapters 1 and 2. These Hebrews were struggling with the worship of angels. We do not worship angels but we will worship with them in the presence of God. And to the assembly of the firstborn who enrolled in heaven.
Christ is the firstborn of creation. The firstborn from the dead. And we are on his list as believers along with all these Old Testament saints we've read about in chapter 11.
[37:07] And to God the judge of all. And to the spirits of the righteous made perfect. That's all the saints of all time. And to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant.

And to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. The sprinkled blood. That's the foundation of this heavenly city.
It's fitting that it's mentioned last because it's given a spot of preeminence. And the blood of Jesus that's covered our sins speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.
And if you remember back to last week in chapter 11 Abel though he died through his faith still speaks. If you go back to Genesis chapter 4 when Cain his brother kills him God tracks down Cain and says your brother's blood is crying out to me from the earth.
What was it crying for? Justice. Vengeance. Wrath. What is it that the blood of Jesus speaks that's better than the blood of Abel?
[38:17] The blood of Jesus cries out it is finished. Forgiveness. It is paid in full. And there's a beautiful song called The blood of Jesus speaks for me built out of this verse and the chorus is there is no vengeance in his cry while it is finished fills the sky.

Forgiveness is the final plea. The blood of Jesus speaks for me. And the word that it speaks is better than the blood of Abel.
God does not call us to a mountain that cannot be touched even by animals. He calls us and brings us to a savior who told Thomas to place his hand in his side and see his hands.
His blood brings us to Zion and into the glorious presence of our great God and king. And lastly, we see a greater kingdom in verses 25 through 29.
If you remember back to chapter 1, the idea of God speaking to his people began this letter. Long ago, at many times, in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son.
[39:30] And now we conclude the argument with God speaking once again. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. God's word is what formed the universe and it's what marks his people.

See to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, this is the Israelites at Mount Sinai, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.
And if you remember chapter 2, verses 1-4, it says, if the message through angels proved to be reliable and they did not escape and every sin was punished, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation, and here the letter ends in the same way.
If the Israelites did not escape when God spoke through Moses on earth, how can anyone expect to escape if we ignore God while he speaks through his son who is in heaven?
If you ignore God's word, you will not escape. He sees you. He knows who you are.
[40:36] You will not escape in any sense. of God. In verse 26, it says, at that time when he gave the law, his voice shook the earth. The mountain was trembling, but now he's promised, here's a quote from Haggai 2-6, yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens.

He will shake the entire universe. And he unpacks it in verse 27, this phrase, yet once more, indicates the removal of things that are shaken, that is things that have been made, in order that things that cannot be shaken may remain. Everything will be destroyed. Do not put your hope in this world, it will burn up. Set your hope on the king of the kingdom that cannot be shaken.
Verse 28, Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

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When God judges the world, his kingdom will still stand. If you remember Matthew 18, Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ and Jesus says, on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. God's kingdom is forever. So we should be thankful for that. We've been brought into this kingdom that will not be touched by anything and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe. This is humility and holy fear, not arrogance or carelessness. And here's why, verse 29, for our God is a consuming fire.
There are severe and eternal consequences for disobeying him. And these Christians, like the Israelites of old, are on the cusp of entering what God has promised. Will they be faithful or will God swear against them in his wrath because they turned back in unbelief?
[42:42] Our God is a consuming fire. This should lead to fear. If you're an unbeliever, this should make you want to crawl under a rock and hide from God. This is the wrath of God on you for your sin for all eternity. You will not escape. And if you're a believer, this should make you fall on your face and worship him.

For our God is wrathful. But he is our God. Our God is a consuming fire. He is our God because Jesus has absorbed this fiery wrath. Jesus has borne our sins on his shoulders when he died and rose again.
What is not an option for anyone in the presence of God is casualness or carelessness. There was an eclipse on Monday. You might have heard about it. In the sermon even.
And we can't look at even an eclipsed sun for more than two seconds. And yet we think that we can waltz into the presence of the God who made the sun and be fine.
Our God is a consuming fire. He is not safe to you in your sin. He is not safe unless we are in Christ.
[44:14] Father, we thank you for sending your son Jesus, who is your final word to us. He's the perfect manifestation of your glory.

And I pray as we continue out this letter next week in chapter 13, as we look at some practical instruction that the author of Hebrews concludes his sermon with, that we would be encouraged and exhorted to continue to endure in this race. Help us to be faithful, Lord. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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