

12:1 - "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

In light of the nature and the power of faith presented in chapter 11, the author exhorts the readers to apply the same principals of faith in their lives.

The Christian life is compared to an athletic event or more specifically to a race. The course that is to be run is marked out by the word of God as well as that great number of witnesses which preceded them. The author paints the picture of the course being lined with the faithful witnesses who have already finished the race, urging on the current participants to follow their example.

A runner lightens and streamlines himself as much as possible. The Christian must do the same by abandoning anything that will hold him back or hinder him in any way. Things of this life or the things of this world seem to be what the author had in mind. They would weigh the Christian down. Affection for worldly things holds him back, making his course more difficult.

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." II Tim. 2:4

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." I John 2:15-16

Sin is a weight which can more easily hinder the Christian, for it is internal. Sin also must be dealt with in order to run the race.

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Col. 3:8-10

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings." I Peter 2:1

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the grafted word, which is able to save your souls." James 1:21

Finally, the race must be run with patience and perseverance. As seen in the lives of those referred to here as witnesses, many obstacles will present themselves along the way. The temptation to quit will at times be great, but, when it is over we can say as Paul did:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."
II Tim. 4:7-8

12:2 - "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The great men of faith mentioned are useful as examples, but our eyes must be fixed upon Jesus Christ. He is our strength and our provider, as well as the supreme example. Jesus is far superior as an example of faith to anyone else. He stands alone. There is not a greater example of faith and never will be. He is the beginning and end, the author and finisher, the object and fulfillment of our faith.

We again see the general theme of this letter which is the superiority of Christ. Jesus Christ put aside his Godhead and became a man. He took on all the limitations of a man, and as a man completely depended upon the Father. He trusted in the Father for direction and deliverance. Everything Christ did, every word he uttered was in complete faith.

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."
John 5:30

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."
Luke 23:46

Those of the old testament looked to the promise and to a heavenly country, but the readers had something better. They could look to Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of the promise and the giver of eternal life. (Heb. 11:40)

Christ ran the course set before him by God, seeing the end of his faith and what it would accomplish. He endured the suffering and humiliation of a God being mocked and killed by his own creation. His humiliation is beyond human

comprehension. Ever before him, he saw the joy of his course. He knew that through his obedience man would be reconciled with God. He knew God's justice and mercy would be displayed giving God glory. He knew he would be exalted above all things and be the Mediator of an everlasting covenant between Creator and creature. Ever before him was each and every reconciled believer. The redeemed are his joy.

"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."
Phil. 4:1

Having run his course, he sits exalted in the highest place in the universe.
(Heb. 4:14-16)

12:3 - "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

The author emphasizes the example of Jesus Christ. He wants the reader to reflect and meditate on the example of Christ, thereby gaining strength in their own trials. Specifically the author wants them to call to mind the opposition which Christ waged. The leaders labeled Christ a sinner and ridiculed his claims. They constantly tried to trap him and even called his miracles the work of Satan. They plotted against him and did everything in their power to discredit and destroy him.

"The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!"
Luke 7:34

"And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor."
Luke 20:20

"But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."
Matt. 12:24

12:4 - "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

The true enemy is identified as sin. They were being tempted to compromise or abandon what they recognized as truth, on account of suffering and persecution. They were contemplating abandoning the course set before them. The example of Christ continues to stand before them. In the garden on the night before his death, Jesus experienced the temptation to abandon his

course. He was facing death and the wrath of God. His struggle with sin was so great that he sweat drops of blood. In his struggle against sin he ultimately gave his life. (Heb. 4:15, 5:7, 11:37)

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."
Luke 22:43-44

The trials of the readers could not begin to compare to those of Christ. They could not even compare to the trials of their ancestors who remained faithful, even though they did not enjoy the full revelation. To resist temptation to the shedding of blood is the Christians reasonable service.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Rom. 12: 1

12:5-6 - "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

The author returns to the scriptures to remind the readers of a characteristic of God which they had evidently forgotten. God, as our Father, corrects those whom he loves as children. It was not inconceivable to the author that the trials and persecutions being inflicted upon the readers was being used by God as a means of correction.

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

Prov. 3:11-12

Matthew Henry comments; "Men persecute them because they are religious; God chastises them because they are not more so: men persecute them because they will not give up their profession; God chastises them because they have not lived up to their profession."

From the letter we know that the readers were once strong under persecution. (Heb 10:32) We also know that something happened and their growth or progression in the faith was retarded. (Heb. 5:12) They had become lazy and in need of correction.

Christians can get used to the mercy of God to the point where they tend to take advantage of it. One of the signs is feeling sorry for yourself and exclaiming 'why me', as you mentally list the things you do which make you so undeserving of the trial you now face. The minute a Christian thinks he does not deserve a certain thing that has befallen him, is the minute that his very thought has made him deserving of it.

Because the trials are being used by God for his purpose and the readers welfare, they are not to be taken lightly (despised). The trials also are not to be a cause of dejection and despair (nor faint). The readers are also to look unto Jesus, endure patiently and be attentive to the chastening hand of God. Believers are not punished but disciplined. Every act of God has purpose in the believer's sanctification.

12:7-8 - "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

If one experiences the Lord's correction, he is being treated as a son. God is the perfect example of a father. His duties as a father include instruction, protection, and correction. He is perfect in carrying out these duties in the lives of his children. The correction administered by the Father is a display of his love and concern, as well as a mark of our sonship. The Christian can be confident that the Father's discipline is both necessary and vital in his sanctification. As God is the perfect father and is not able to neglect his fatherly duties, if the readers were never corrected, they would not be regarded as children. They would be illegitimate. They would not know their Father and he would not know them.

12:9 - "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

The wisdom of Proverbs 3:11 (Heb. 12:5) is not to take God's correction lightly and not to become discouraged by it. The author, continuing to support this wisdom, compares the correction administered by God with the correction received by an earthly father. An earthly father administers correction and discipline and yet commands the respect of his children. Respect of parents is a commandment of God.

"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Ex. 20:12

According to the law, children who refused correction and remained rebellious were put to death.

"And if a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not harken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear." Deut. 21:18-21

God is the creator and therefore the father of our body and soul. His relationship to us a father is an eternal relationship. How much more should we then heed the discipline and correction of God.

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good thing to them that ask him?" Matt. 7:11

In the scriptures, honoring parents is associated with life while rebellion against parents is associated with death. There are new testament examples where rebellion against God resulted in death.

"And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things." Acts 5:5

"Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband." Acts 5:10

"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." I Cor. 11:29-32

12:10 - "For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

The author contrasts the motivations, goals, and design of man's correction with that of God, showing the superiority of God's discipline. The discipline administered by earthly fathers is short term, subject to error, inconsistent, and benefits the interests of the giver as much as the receiver. The discipline of God is perfect. The discipline of God is of total benefit to the receiver. The goal is to make his children partakers of his holiness and all correction is designed by him to this end.

The believer is to pursue holiness, to be filled with the fullness of God, and to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Every aspect of the believer's life should be directed to his continued sanctification. The corrections of God are designed to point his children in the right direction.

"Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5:48

"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." I Peter 1:16

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Rom. 8:29

"And to know the life of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Eph. 3:19

12:11 - "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

The long term design of God's correction is illustrated, showing that the present affliction of God's chastening leads to future benefits. Any type of correction whether administered by God or man is not a pleasant experience, it is painful and trying. While the believer is experiencing the trial it seems to be anything but joyous, however, by God's design, out of the pain and trauma comes peace within our souls. This peace is born from a greater righteousness and holiness which God has worked within.

Remember faith? Faith is the means by which trials can be endured. It is the means by which an experience which does not presently seem joyous can be counted as such.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." James 1:2

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice. though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."
I Peter 1:6-7

The words used in this verse paint two pictures which help illustrate the author's message. The first is a tree which yields fruit. The second is the training (exercised) of an athlete. Both processes take patient labor and the enduring of many afflictions which eventually produce the desired result.

12:12 - "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;"

According to the insight just given concerning trials, the author exhorts them to exercise patience in their afflictions. Having forgotten God's word concerning correction, the readers grew faint amid their trials. The author paints a picture of exhaustion and despair. Being reminded of the purpose of God's correction and of their sonship, being reminded of their continuing sanctification and the fruit which these trials can produce, they should gain strength.

"Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you."
Is. 35:3-4

"Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees."
Job 4:3-4

12:13 - "And make straight the paths of your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

The readers are exhorted to stay on course. They are to run on the smooth and level ground. The reason is twofold, it is for their own personal welfare as well as the welfare of others. By staying on course and looking to Christ they would stay out of danger. (The sin and defects in their character would not be fed, but healed. A runner who takes a smooth course and looks ahead is less likely to twist an ankle).

"Let thine eyes look right on, an let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil."
Prov. 4:25-27

12:14 - Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:"

Within the context of the letter, this verse suggests that the readers had a spirit of hatred and revenge toward their persecutors. This is a common worldly response but is a definite obstacle in the course of a Christian. Unchristian behavior could not be justified even if directed toward their persecutors. In connection with verse 13, this type of attitude would increase their 'lameness' and leave obstacles in the path of others. The exhortation is to pursue peace and holiness which is in accordance with the supreme example of Jesus Christ.

"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:"

I Peter 2:20-23

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear; having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accused your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"

I Peter 3:12-18

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

I Peter 4:15-16

An attitude of hatred and revenge is foreign to the spirit of Christ which dwells in the Christian. A desire for peace and holiness is the fruit of salvation. The pursuit of righteousness and holiness is the mark of a Christian.

"And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Rev. 21:27

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 13:41-42

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, by ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." I Cor. 6:9-11

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." II Tim. 2:19

12:15 - "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

In light of the readers lack of growth, failing under persecution, and unchristian attitudes, the author challenges them to watch carefully both themselves as well as others within the church. They were to inquire diligently within themselves as to their spiritual condition. Had they truly entered into the grace of God? Paul made the same challenge to the Corinthians.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." I Cor. 13:5

They were to carefully watch for anyone in the church who were living and promoting a life not in accordance with the example of Jesus Christ. Such a person could be a great obstacle leading many astray.

"Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;" Deut. 29:18

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also to wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." II Tim. 2:20-21

12:16 - "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."

The author specifically instructs the readers to watch for fornicators and those who have a general attitude of godlessness. Because of the nature of the sin, a fornicator has the potential to defile many within a fellowship. The sin has and continues to destroy fellowships some 2,000 years later. Those who take lightly the hope of salvation indulging in temporary worldly pleasures, represent another dangerous group within the fellowship. They may claim salvation, but their life dishonors God. They are profane. Esau is the example used to illustrate a profane person. He took lightly the promises given to Abraham and Isaac, and gave up his birthright for the temporary pleasure of a meal.

By this time there may have been many second generation Christians in the church being addressed. Like Esau, they may have been taking the beliefs of their fathers lightly. They may have been rebelling against the lifestyle to their fathers, trading the hope of the gospel for worldly pleasures.

12:17 - "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Esau took the promises lightly, sold his birthright, and yet came before the father to inherit the blessing. Esau sought the blessing with tears but was rejected. Once pronounced, the blessing could not be reversed.

The purpose of this verse is to show that God's decrees have been pronounced. All those who believe will partake of the inheritance. God cannot change his mind or change the truth which has been declared. Those who take God's word lightly will be rejected.

12:18 - "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness and tempest,"

Another source of encouragement in the midst of their trials was the superiority of the new covenant of which believers are a part. Those who turn back must face the prospects of Mt. Sinai which is representative of the old covenant, while those who look to Christ are of Mt. Sion which is representative of the new covenant. The old covenant was instituted by God on Mt. Sinai. It was the actual place which represented the physical nature of the covenant (mount that might be touched). God demonstrated his holiness at Mt. Sinai,

showing his awesome power, his hatred of sin, and the prospect of judgment to those who disobeyed.

"And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives. And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."
Ex. 19:14-18

"And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone."
Deut. 4:11-13

The author had already warned the readers earlier that in rejecting the new covenant, they would face the fearful judgment of God. (Heb. 10:31) The blackness and darkness of that day is also representative of the old covenant. It was a covenant of types and shadows not able to be clearly seen.

12:19-20 - " And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:"

The people present on the day described, who stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai, heard the voice of God and were filled with fear. It was by God's design that this be a fearful experience. The fact that no living thing was allowed to touch the mountain demonstrated that man did not have total and free access to God. His holiness was unapproachable. (Does the fact that animals which touched the mountain had to be killed show that ignorance is no excuse?)

"And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up unto the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:"
Ex. 19:12

"And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God has come to prove you, that this his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not." Ex. 20:18-20

The things which were spoken terrified the people more than the physical display of God's power. "They could not endure the things commanded." They did not want to hear anymore. The people saw God's holiness, heard God's standard, and became aware of their total sinfulness in the presence of God. We can see a similarity of the behavior of the people who will be in God's presence at the end of the world.

"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who so shall be able to stand?" Rev. 6:15-17

This was the purpose of the old covenant of the law, to show man his sinfulness and the unapproachableness of God. To drive man to God out of despair.

"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Gal. 3:23-24

Over the centuries the Jews had lost sight of the meaning of Mt. Sinai. They could not endure what was spoken there and tried to hid from the truth that the law revealed through their own traditions and beliefs. The author reminds them of the true meaning of Mt. Sinai and the fear and judgment it represents. (Paul refers to the old covenant as "the ministration of death".

"But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:" II Cor. 3:7

12:21 - "And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)"

Moses spoke with God at the burning bush. He also was God's agent used to defeat the most powerful army on earth, however at Mt. Sinai Moses was to

filled with fear. Moses trembled along with the people when he came to understand the holiness of God and the law's demands. Paul is a new testament example who knew the law and even taught it without ever understanding it. It wasn't until Jesus Christ that he came to an understanding of the law.

"And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." Rom. 7:10-11

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. 3:10

Only when one sees the holiness of God and the demands of the law, does he come to know his need for a savior. The purpose of the law is to drive men to Christ, a purpose which is still accomplished in the lives of those who come to believe.

12:22 - "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."

The believer has come to Mt. Sion. it is not a mount which can be seen or touched, but a mount that is approachable. The literal Mt. Sion was the highest point of the city of Jerusalem, but in the scriptures it is the name used to represent the permanent dwelling place of God.

"For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." Psalm 132:13-14

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Rev. 21:2

Mt. Sion is a mount of grace as opposed to law. It is a mount of life as opposed to judgment and death. The believer is already an inhabitant of this glorious mount.

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:" Col. 1:13

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:" Phil. 3:20

In the early part of this letter we saw the importance given to angels by the

Jews. To say that they came into the company of angels was a statement of great importance.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."
 Rev. 5:11-12

12:23 - "To the general assembly and the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,"

The believer has come into the body of Christ, which is described here as an assembly of the firstborn which make up the church. Firstborn is a title of position. The firstborn receive the inheritance being heirs of God along with Christ.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."
 Rom. 8:16-17

The believer has the assurance of a permanent dwelling, for his name is already written in heaven and their inheritance is kept by God.

"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."
 Luke 10:20

"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."
 I Peter 1:4

The believer comes into the presence of God and lives. He comes before a merciful judge when he comes unto Sion. Those of the old covenant that died trusting in and looking to Sion are also a part of this assembly. They together with the new covenant believer are one assembly and one body. (Heb. 11:40)

"And I say unto you, That many of you shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."
 Matt. 8:11

12:24 - "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Able."

The means by which they have come unto the things of Sion is Jesus Christ. He is the mediator, the fulfillment of the law, and the instrument of God's grace. The reasons for the differences between Sinai and Sion is Jesus Christ. The believer through Christ, comes unto the 'blood of sprinkling' gaining complete access to God. (Heb. 9:11-15) The blood of Able calls out for revenge and judgment, while the blood of Christ calls out for the peace and reconciliation.

"And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." Gen. 4:10

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long? O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rev. 6:9-10

12:25-"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

Having finished contrasting the old and new covenant, the author exhorts the readers to accept the word spoken by God. God had spoken by his blood, revealing the total plan of salvation. Christ having ascended speaks from the throne of God through the Holy Spirit and his witnesses. (Heb. 1:1-3, 2:3-4)

How much more accountable are those who refuse the fullness of revelation than those who refuse the shadows of Sinai?

12:26-27 - "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

When the old covenant was established the voice of God shook the earth at Sinai. The author quotes the prophet Haggai, who said the voice of God would one day shake heaven and earth.

"For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;"
Hag. 2:6

The death of Christ shook the heavens and the earth. Satan was defeated, men were reconciled with God, and the church was established. The temple, the holy of holies, the priesthood, and all these man-made things used in the worship of God were shaken and removed. (Heb. 7:12, 8:13)

All physical things will one day be destroyed and God will make a new heaven and a new earth, but in the context of this chapter, the author is speaking of the old system and the eternality of the new. (Haggai 2:6 was considered a Messianic verse by the Jews)

12:28-29 - "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire."

The Christian is of Mt. Sion, which is the church and the kingdom of God, and which cannot be moved. (Heb. 12:22-23) Only by coming to Sion, being saved by God's grace, can one's worship be accepted by God. Only by coming to Christ can one come face to face with the law of Mt. Sinai and the holiness of God, and so come to serve God with reverence and godly fear. God remains a God of supreme justice. He is still the God of Mt. Sinai. If one does not accept Jesus Christ the instrument of God's mercy, then he must deal with God's wrath.