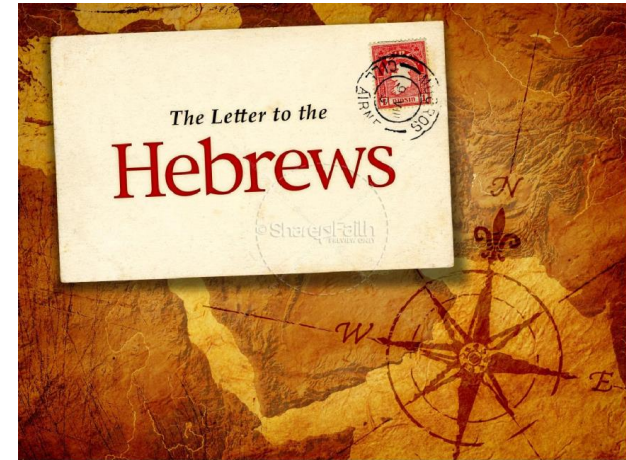


Daily Devotions  
*from the United Reformed Church*

The Letter to the Hebrews 3 & Philemon



Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November – Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November

[Introduction](#)

This anonymous letter was given the title “to the Hebrews” in the second century. It uses the Old Testament texts and Jewish patterns of interpretation to show that Christ’s sacrifice fulfils God’s promises and brings the faithful to perfection. It offers a rich theology Christ’s priesthood and of his dual human and divine nature which means he can identify with human suffering. The author is unknown but a reference in 13:24 implies it was written in Italy.

Philemon

This note is very short and is either seen as Paul’s admonition to Philemon to take back a slave who had run away, forgive him and free him or is seen as Paul thanking Philemon for the loan of Onesimus. Either way it’s troubling as the note has been used to justify slavery.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Sunday 22nd November Psalm 24.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Monday 23rd November Hebrews - The Danger of Apostasy .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Tuesday 24th November Hebrews - Motives for Perseverance .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Wednesday 25th November - Hebrews - The Faith of our Ancestors .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Thursday 26th November Hebrews - Jesus' Example .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Friday 27th November Hebrews - Unfaithfulness is Punished.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Saturday 28th November Hebrews - Final Words.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Sunday 29th November Psalm 25 .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Monday 30th November - Philemon .....</b>	<b>19</b>

### Sunday 22nd November Psalm 24

The Rev'd 'frin Lewis-Smith is a healthcare chaplain in Salford and a member of Tonge Moor URC

The earth is the Lord's (Men)	For His glory
And everything in it (Women)	The mountains are His
The earth is the Lord's (Men)	The seas and the islands
The work of His hands (Women)	The cities and towns
The earth is the Lord's (Men)	The houses and streets
And everything in it (Women)	Let rebels bow down
And all things were made (All)	And worship before Him
For His glory	For all things were made
	For His glory

(Last time)

And all things were made	Graham Kendrick
Yes, all things were made	Copyright © 1986 Thankyou
And all things were made	Music

## Reflection

In the church I grew up in we used to take turns to say verses of the Psalms. An imaginary line down the centre of the congregation determined who would speak the odd or even lines. As I look at our Psalm song, I see something that should seem similar. And yet those bracketed instructions to the (Men) and (Women) look so curious on the page.

Both the song and my memory of sharing out the psalm lines come from the mid-1980s. The same decade saw a growing conversation about who gets to speak, whose language is considered normal, and who gets to say what. I have never sung this hymn without noticing, and regretting, that only men get to sing of God's lordship, whilst women just sing in reply. The female voices never get to begin an idea, only to elaborate upon the point the men already made. Perhaps unconsciously, perhaps deliberately, this Psalm setting connects the Lordship of God to male authority. I find it hard to sing, which is a shame as Psalm 24 is such a powerful and beautiful poem.

The way we speak of God, and who we listen to as we talk of God, can limit our imagination. Psalm 24 points in the opposite direction – everything in this world belongs to God, and all have their part to play in worship. Who gets to speak, whose life experience is assumed to be normal, who is made to feel like a token presence, and who is encouraged to stay silent still matters. In each generation grows a new awareness of who has been kept quiet and what has previously been left unsaid. May we listen with the Holy Spirit to the chorus of God's created people. And may we notice how every voice needs to be honoured and brought out for us to begin to imagine the fullness of life which God promises.

## Prayer

How does the sea worship you?

Through its ebbs and tides, and consistent action? Or its constant recreation of beaches and rain clouds?

How does a city worship you?

Through the buildings which point to the heavens? Or its openness to the stranger, protection of the vulnerable?

How do I worship you?

Through my prayer and reflection? Or in my speaking, listening, and action?

As all of creation seeks to worship you, may everything speak of your glory. Amen.

[Monday 23rd November Hebrews - The Danger of Apostasy](#)

The Rev'd Ruth Watson Bolton and Salford Missional Partnership Minister

Hebrews 10: 26 - 31

For if we wilfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgement, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Anyone who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy 'on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know the one who said, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Reflection

Did you ever stay out after curfew, or eat sweets before your dinner?

Did you then receive the punishment due for breaking the rules? As we

2. Courage is important. The letter to Philemon is a tremendous tribute to courage. Onesimus had no idea what his fate might be, but he went back anyway.

3. Persuasion is better than power. This beautiful letter to Philemon is a masterful example of the art of gentle persuasion, rather than brute force. It's a psychological masterpiece: Paul doesn't wish to flex his apostolic muscle, but he does intend to nudge Philemon in the right direction.

4. Take the long view. Paul isn't interested in today or tomorrow, but in the long term, Onesimus's long term welfare. We can so often find ourselves only seeing the short term, but God challenges us to look at the long term.

Those of us like Philemon might find ourselves challenged to make radical changes in our lives, while those of us like Onesimus might find ourselves challenged to go back and face our terrors, taking the risk that it might not turn out all right. There may be a bit of Philemon and Onesimus in most of us: it isn't easy to apologise or to forgive, nor to face our own fears; but God enabled a damaged relationship to be restored. Following is tough - just like crucifixion - but the rewards are eternal - just like resurrection.

Prayer

Good morning God.

Please give us strength:

strength to hold on,

and strength to let go. Amen.

indeed useful both to you and to me. I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for ever, no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow-workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

#### Reflection

If you're like me you might be struggling to remember much about the letter to Philemon. Paul pleads for Philemon to accept the runaway slave Onesimus as a brother in Christ. I offer four suggestions on why this letter has something to say to us today:

1. Christian ethics still matter. Both Paul and Onesimus were convinced that the right thing to do was for Onesimus to return. In their time and place this was the right way to do things, and it's a challenge to us now to make sure we try to do the right thing.

grow up, our parents teach us right from wrong, and teach us the rules we are to follow in life – whether laws of the land, or household instructions. And we follow them – mostly – and, usually as teenagers – see how many of them we can at least bend! But we know when we have bent or broken the rules, we will feel the disappointment or even wrath of our parents for our disobedience.

What we are warned in our reading is slightly more serious than whether we put our dirty clothes in the washing basket. When we accept Christ into our lives, it is not just a commitment to an hour a week on a Sunday. It is a complete change of life. It is a way of life that inspires us to do the right thing all the time, to put away our own desires and plans and to live for Christ. If we choose to stray from that path we are doomed to judgement. Of course, we are going to get it wrong sometimes, but this is more than that. It's a deliberate choice to turn our back on everything we believe and act as though we had never accepted Christ, making his sacrifice for nothing. Then we will feel the full force of God's judgement. We spend so much time focussing on the security and love and hope we have in Christ, that we often forget that there are consequences to our actions if we deliberately choose to reject him. Be warned.

#### Prayer

Lord God, we don't want to be scared about following you, but sometimes we rely too much on your forgiving love that we take advantage and stray too far. Remind us of your judgement that we might realise the consequences of our actions and so focus more on our commitment. May we use the love you have shown to us to motivate all our actions that we may follow your true path. Amen.

Tuesday 24th November Hebrews - Motives for Perseverance

Heather Pencavel, retired Minister (Workplace Chaplain), member of Thornbury URC

Hebrews 10: 32 - 39

But recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and persecution, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion for those who were in prison, and you cheerfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possessed something better and more lasting. Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet

‘in a very little while,

the one who is coming will come and will not delay;  
but my righteous one will live by faith.

My soul takes no pleasure in anyone who shrinks back.’

But we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved.

Reflection

Remembering the bad old days – or were they good old days? It rather depends what exactly we dwell on when we remember. My father had lifelong memories of his ten years in the Army (1910 – 1920) when, having been badly wounded in 1916, he spent several years in a POW camp in dire conditions, and suffered for the rest of his life. World War 1 had been a terrible experience, yet one he would not have missed. He told its stories and sang its songs with humour and a sense of gratitude that he had survived, and was glad to be able to work and keep his family.

our lives? But we need to remember that God is active in our lives now, we just don't always recognise such intervention as coming from God. There is much we can learn from the Psalmist and so we pray...

Prayer

Lord of life we put our trust in you.

When life is hard, you are there to support us.

When life is good, you share our joy.

As we enter this Advent season,

help us to recognise and give thanks for your presence in our lives. Amen

Monday 30th November - Philemon

The Revd Michael Hopkins, Minister of a group of Methodist and United Reformed Churches based around Farnham, Surrey, and Clerk of the URC General Assembly.

Philemon

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith towards the Lord Jesus. I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is

2 Good and upright our gracious  
God,  
showing the way,  
guiding the humble to justice.

3 Steadfast and kind your ways, O  
God;  
all who revere your covenant  
know your friendship.

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## Refecation

I started writing this reflection in a week when lockdown measures were beginning to ease, but in Wales I am still not allowed to travel further than five miles. I haven't seen my sister for 14 weeks and it looks like it'll be another 2 before I can.

It feels like forever and when the First Minister announced that extra time I could've cried. I didn't so much want to lift up my soul but shout some rather choice words.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who's emotions have been all over the place over the last few months when all of life, including our spiritual life, has changed drastically. I'm also conscious that you will be reading this on Advent Sunday, a time when we reflect on the past and look to the future with anticipation and hope.

Over the last few months, we have had to learn to adapt and rely on others more. For some it has not been easy, after all we live in a society which promotes self-sufficiency and instant gratification. Yet our Psalmist prays that instead of living for self, and depending on our personal resources, we should depend on God. Finding our hope and trust and security in God. Having confidence, not in ourselves, but in God.

This is a characteristic Psalm of petition seeking the Lord's intervention at a particular time of need. It can be easy to dismiss the Psalms as irrelevant, how can something written so long ago have any bearing on

As I read this passage, my first thought was that the "bad old days" lived by the Hebrew Christians were not so different from my father's experience. Nor indeed were they unlike the continuing experience of people today who suffer "public abuse and persecution" (and sometimes prosecution) because of the colour of their skin or their faith or their sexual orientation – or because of their determination to convince governments of the reality of climate change – or who campaign for prison reform, for safe working conditions, for a fair Benefits system or affordable housing ... All these are long-term projects, part of the ongoing Christian commitment to the kingly rule of Christ. They need people of compassion and generosity, confidence and endurance ... and, most of all, people of faith and hope and love. So that all will be able to say with the writer of Hebrews,

We are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved.

## Prayer

God of Love and Justice and Hope  
give us clear vision to see the needs around us;  
make us quick to hear the weeping of the world  
and ready to offer your healing and comfort.  
Let us never shrink back from your call to Love,  
but keep us ever faithful to know and to share your salvation. Amen

[Wednesday 25th November - Hebrews - The Faith of our Ancestors](#)  
Pat Stannard is an Elder at Muswell Hill URC

## Hebrews 11

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and 'he was not found, because God had taken him.' For it was attested before he was taken away that 'he had pleased God.' And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going...

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac... By faith Isaac invoked blessings for the future on Jacob and Esau. By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph...

By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting

Leaders may promise to live holy lives, but shouldn't all people of faith promise the same? But it doesn't mean we will be sinless all the time.

The great pearl in this chapter, for me, is the reminder that Jesus is unchanging, and we are strengthened by Grace. Surely, that is the bit we need to go out and share, the bit that is our Good News! Jesus is unchanging and offers us Life through Grace! And the best bit is it doesn't have to be words, it simply needs to be through non-judgemental openness and kindness. Practicing the spirit of the law, rather than the letter of it.

So I dare you today to greet every person; friend, stranger, by-passer on the street with non-judgemental openness...give it a go. When you notice yourself thinking something judgemental, unkind, or holding your bag, phone etc tighter, remember that those are the people Jesus would have been hanging with, those are the folks that Jesus was trying to get us to see as God's children too.

Prayer

Unchanging God, help us to live by the Spirit of the law, not the letter of it. Enable us to hear your voice pricking our conscience when we judge others by rules we don't hold ourselves to. Breathe your loving kindness into and through us to others daily. Amen.

[Sunday 29th November Psalm 25](#)

The Rev'd Branwen Rees, East Wales Regional Minister

To you, O God, I lift up my soul;  
lift up my spirit to my Lord.  
To you I lift up my soul. (Rpt 1st  
time)

1 Make me to know your ways, O  
God;  
teach me your paths, guide me.  
You are my Saviour.



pleasing to God.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing—for that would be harmful to you.

Pray for us; we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honourably in all things. I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you very soon.

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been set free; and if he comes in time, he will be with me when I see you. Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy send you greetings. Grace be with all of you.

#### Reflection

The beginning of this chapter uses known stories as a reminder to people to live in and with love for others. Reminders of Abraham and Sarah, reminders of Jesus teaching the disciples and I, like many of you, have hosted strangers and walked with those who are in prison, both actual prison buildings and imprisonment by substance issues, health, disability, abuse, homelessness etc.

I get stuck when we are asked to remember our leaders and imitate their faith (I paraphrase). I get stuck because it feels like we ask more of our leaders than we do of ourselves, we hold them in a way that doesn't allow for mistakes. Faith leaders are no less sinful than everyone else.

pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king's anger; for he persevered as though he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land... By faith the walls of Jericho fell...By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient...

And what more should I say?... Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, without us, be made perfect.

#### Reflection

In September 2019, we moved back into our main church, beautifully remodelled to meet the needs of the 21st century and our wider community. We welcomed new faces, embarked on new ventures, provided a home for other groups to flourish, planned further development, then...coronavirus arrived and the doors shut.

It is said that the way to make God laugh is to tell him our plans! All our previous plans are on hold (in July), but the learning has not stopped. As in congregations across the country, we have found new ways to share our worship, support each other and deliver our message beyond the church walls.

When the doors re-open, there will be no familiar "normal" for the foreseeable future. We will have to adopt new practices and give extra thought to helping those who have lost so much this year.

What we might have lost – and gained – casts a light on this chapter of the letter to the Hebrews. Most of those Jews who had responded to the

good news about Jesus still clung to the old ways, steeped in the rigid laws as prescribed by the Pharisees and Sadducees. Paul's encouragement to spread the gospel to "unclean" Gentiles was just one of many ways in which they felt embattled.

The letter-writer reminded them that their ancestors had one thing in common, and one vital gift to offer – the importance of holding high their faith in God.

Little did they know that in a few years their embryonic church would disappear from Jerusalem after the Roman siege, but that many who escaped would become torchbearers for the gospel to non-Jewish communities they barely knew of before.

We too need to hold on to our faith and promote it with all the tools in our armoury, becoming the torchbearers for Jesus in our time.

#### Prayer

When we face change and challenge, Lord,  
help us to learn valuable lessons from the past;  
live with confidence and courage in the present,  
and plan as best we can for the future,  
knowing you will guide and support us. Amen

#### [Thursday 26th November Hebrews - Jesus' Example](#)

The Rev'd Martha McInnes, Minister, Cardiff and Penarth Churches

#### Hebrews 12: 1 - 13

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken

#### [Saturday 28th November Hebrews - Final Words](#)

Kirsty-Ann Mabbott, Church Related Community Worker, St Columba's & Ansty Road URC's Coventry

#### Hebrews 13

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Let marriage be held in honour by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.' So we can say with confidence,

'The Lord is my helper;

I will not be afraid.

What can anyone do to me?'

Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food, which have not benefited those who observe them. We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are

brought to the practice of long held Jewish customs and rituals; the knowing that Christ is Saviour, but the not knowing of what comes next.

These issues are played out in this letter, and at the risk of sounding flippant, I can't help but draw parallels with our midst-covid world. Thrown from a situation of relative certainty, where the Church simply 'was' and has always been; a physical place of sanctuary; a mark on the landscape; a familiarity and a comforting presence in our lives, we find ourselves nervous and exhausted, knee deep in risk assessments, faces covered, advising long standing members not to come to worship, for their own benefit. In this scary new world, it's so easy to look back, to long for that old certainty of rhythm and ritual, the confidence of our forebears in God's purpose for us, and to get back to how it was.

This section of the letter to the Hebrews, reminding them that Jesus, to put it crudely, 'trumps all' has much to say to us. Just as the Hebrews were forced to consider their own culture from a new Jesus shaped perspective, we too have an opportunity to re-assess, to re-centre Jesus, to remember that the church can be shaken, but the Kingdom cannot. With or without us, the Kingdom will continue to grow, as it always has. Jesus is 'out there', beyond the boundaries of our church walls, with the oppressed, the hurting, the maligned and the broken. Isn't it about time that we got out there and joined him?

Prayer

Oh God, sometimes you feel far away.  
The past looks rosier than the future. It used to all make sense.

I seek you out, Jesus, first born of God, made flesh,  
now sat at the right hand of the Father, yet, right here with me.

Send your Spirit, to whisper new ways,  
infuse in me faith, hurry me on and into the world,  
Where I might join in the dance of your Heavenly Kingdom. Amen

his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children—

'My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
or lose heart when you are punished by him;  
for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves,  
and chastises every child whom he accepts.'

Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness. Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Reflection

Many times I have heard people say, "I'll be glad to see the back of that year." What promise a new year brings to those who are struggling, but what really is different with the turn of the calendar? I never really understood. Life is sometimes tough, and a new year offers hope. As we approach the end of this year, I do understand. This year I look forward to the promise of next year.

I'm not particularly athletic, but I, along with you and everyone else, have been running this year. We have run to keep up with legislation, with technology, with the needs of our communities. We have run to find appropriate ways to support each other while distancing. We have been running for months. Many of us are tired.

We have managed to keep running because we have that cloud of witnesses around us. Our friends have encouraged us, have offered ideas, have laughed and cried with us. Still it has been a tough race. Our hands may be drooping. Our knees may be weak, and we keep running. People need us. They need us to fight for justice, to work for the planet, to offer a caring presence. In the midst of brokenness, they need us to create a community of healing.

In the midst of struggle the author of Hebrews wants us to remember who is our guide and why we are still running. So whatever today holds Christ continues to guide us. We are called to run—even the least athletic among us. Listen to voices of encouragement and keep moving so that what is lame, broken in our world, may be healed.

#### Prayer

God, thank you for the witness who encourage us, who guide us. Give us courage to keep running. Help us create communities of peace and justice. Give us the gift of love in the face of pain. God, grant us strength to be your people on the race for your kingdom. Amen.

[Friday 27th November Hebrews - Unfaithfulness is Punished](#)

Liz Kam CRCW Levenshulme Inspire

Hebrews 12: 14 - 29

Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many

become defiled. See to it that no one becomes like Esau, an immoral and godless person, who sold his birthright for a single meal. You know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, even though he sought the blessing with tears.

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. (For they could not endure the order that was given, 'If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death.' Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, 'I tremble with fear.') But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.' This phrase 'Yet once more' indicates the removal of what is shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

#### Reflection

How did the Jews who followed Christ as saviour navigate the implications of this new life? The persecution from Synagogue and State; the amalgamation of Gentiles in their ranks, and the challenges this