Hebrews 12

2020

### Prayers

† Blessed is our God always, as it is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. ... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Devoted Spirit. Amen. Through the prayers of our devoted Ancestors, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen. Glory to You, our God, glory to You.

† Εὐλογημένη ἡ Βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, νῦν καὶ ἀεί, καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.

† Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Devoted Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, You are everywhere and fill all things, Treasury of blessings, and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

† Devoted God, Devoted Mighty, Devoted Immortal, have mercy on us (three times).

† Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Devoted Spirit, as it is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

“εἰ οὖν ὑμεῖς πονηροὶ ὑπάρχοντες οἴδατε δόματα ἀγαθὰ διδόναι τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν, πόσῳ μᾶλλον Ὁ Πατὴρ Ὁ ἐξ Οὐρανοῦ δώσει Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον τοῖς αἰτοῦσιν Αὐτόν.” — Luke 11:13[[1]](#footnote-1)

“Ὁ θεός, ἱλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ.” — Luke 18:13[[2]](#footnote-2)

“Ἰησοῦ, μνήσθητί μου ὅταν ἔλθῃς ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου.” — Luke 23:42[[3]](#footnote-3)

“David ascended in the Ascent of Olives, ascending and weeping, with head covered, he went barefoot; and each person with him covered his head, so they went up, ascending and weeping.” — 2 Samuel 15:30 LXX

“The sowers will reap in joy. The ones going, went and wept, casting their seeds; yet, the ones coming, will come in exultation, carrying their sheaves.” — Psalm 125:5-6 LXX [126:5-6][[4]](#footnote-4)

“Send away your bread on the surface of the water: because, in a multitude of days you will find it.” — Ecclesiastes 11:1 LXX

“Indisputably great is the good-worship mystery: Who was clearly displayed in [the] flesh; Who defended righteousness in [the] Spirit; Who was witnessed by messengers; Who was proclaimed internationally; Who was believed cosmically; Who was taken up in Glory.” — 1 Timothy 3:16

“…: for, when prophecy came, not by human will: but, being carried by [the] Devoted Spirit, humans, spoke from God.” — 2 Peter 1:21

“These [Bereans] were better-begotten than the [people] in Thessaloníki; who welcomed the Word with all enthusiasm: daily examining the writings if He might have it so.” — Acts 17:11

“Similarly, younger people, be submitted to [your] elders; all of you be clothed with humble mindedness toward one another: because, ‘God opposes [the] proud; but, gives grace to the humble.’[[5]](#footnote-5) Therefore, be humbled under the strong hand of God, so that He would exalt you in due time: casting all your care on Him: because, He cares about you.” — 1 Peter 5:5-7

Be clothed with poverty, Peter says: for: humility and poverty are very close companions.

### Introduction

“I know that with my arrival[[6]](#footnote-6) fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the little flock. Out of you yourselves men will stand up, speaking well established perversions[[7]](#footnote-7), to wrench away the disciples after themselves.” — Acts 20:29-30

“For, [though] walking about in flesh, we do not soldier according to the standard of flesh: for, the armaments of our soldiering [are] not fleshly, but powerful in God for destroying bastions... destroying [corrupted] reasoning, with every arrogance rising against the knowledge of God, capturing every thought in the obedience of Christ.” — 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

The Church

### Hebrews Chapter 12

Verses 1-4: The Head of the Church

“For, consequently, we also, having so great a cloud[[8]](#footnote-8) of witnesses surrounding us, setting aside every burden and the easily ensnaring sin, we should run the race being set before us with patient endurance, concentrating on the Founder and Finisher of the faith, Jesus, Who, for the joy being set before Him, remained on [the] cross, ignoring [the] shame, He was enthroned at the right of God’s throne.” — Hebrews 12:1-2

The Church consists of both the living and the dead; the dead are watching what we, the living, do. The dead members of the Church are spectators, watching the great race of life. We, the living, are running the great race of life, which we run best unburdened: our burdens, which we must set aside, are our sins and our love of sinning… so our race preparation, our warmup exercises, have to do with confession and fighting temptation. During the race, we must fix our eyes on the goal, the prize, the finish line, which is Jesus Himself, especially in His death. We must take up our crosses; we must embrace Christ-like death as the goal. Many have taken their eyes off of the prize and fastened them on the Bible, on technical issues of theology, or on the cares of this world. The only prize is Jesus Himself: we do well to burn that thought into our minds. The living run with and to Christ; He is the front runner and the pace setter.

We keep this focus in the Church because we know that Jesus is our enthroned King, the Ruler of the Church. If we had no other proof, yet we do, that Christ is equal to the Father, here at least, the Son is equal to the Father in every status: for, He is seated on the same throne, at the same level, in the place of honor.

This is not about a physical race. The Bible everywhere describes two distinct created realms: the physical and the spiritual. The interface of these two kingdoms is exceedingly mystical: all Christians have vocations extending into both spheres. The uncreated God is separate from both of these regions: but, He primarily makes Himself known in that which is often called heavenly. Christ is enthroned in the heavenlies. All of these spectators rest in a heavenly stadium. Clearly, spiritual matters outweigh physical affairs by many magnitudes. Living the Christian life, racing the Christian race is largely a matter of forsaking physical realities and embracing the spiritual reality, which is ultimately expressed as death… the metamorphosis from one kind of life to an entirely new kind of life, replete with spiritual bodies.[[9]](#footnote-9) We must strive, learn, and finally master at our deaths, how to live this spiritual life while we are still physical beings.

For, consider the One enduring such a contradiction by sinners against themselves; so that, you would not be wearied in your souls, quitting. You have not even withstood blood, struggling against sin.” — Hebrews 12:3-4

The unbelieving world around us lives in a self-caused, internal contradiction. The human race is in love with, and constantly fighting against, its own sin; which is two, contradictory, equal, and opposite things, fighting with each other at the same time: this is what we must fight to strip away, and set aside. If we lose focus on Christ, our prize; if we fail to keep pace with Him; if we become absorbed with our own sin: we become weary, discouraged, depressed, tempted to quit. Many do quit. The cure is to get our eyes back on Jesus, and get back in step with Him. We do not race alone. The Church is in a coordinated double-time march. We are poorly disciplined soldiers, if we cannot join the march. As long as we remain alive we must persevere in the war against sin. Since, The Church is a fully armed military unit in double-time march:[[10]](#footnote-10) let us be perfectly clear; we are not talking about physical marching; we are talking about spiritual marching. This marching is a trope of the heavenly reality which we must engage, while still in our mortal bodies.

Thus, we see Jesus, the Founder and Finisher of the Church, the object of its profession of faith, Whose death on the Cross defeated sin for us, providing the full authority for our salvation.

Verses 5-13: The Father’s Loving Discipline of the Church

“You have been entirely erased[[11]](#footnote-11) of the conversation which coaches you as children. ‘My child, do not take casually [the] Lord’s tutoring, or quit at His correcting: for, whom [the] Lord loves, He tutors, He punishes every child whom He welcomes.’

“In tutoring, endure, [whatever] God offers to you, as children: for, what child [exists] whom a father does not tutor? If you are without tutoring, in which all have become partners: then you are illegitimate, not children.

“Besides, on the one [hand], we have had fleshly fathers [who] tutored [us]; whom we also have respected. Will we not much more be subject to the Father of Spirits, and live? For, on the other [hand], they tutored [us] a few days, as they were thinking; yet [He]… in bearing with [us], to share His devotedness.

“All tutoring, for the present, is not thought to be joyous, but grievous, only later it yields [the] peace-ruling fruit of righteousness in those having been trained by her. So, straighten up the sagging hands and the shaking knees. Make straight tracks for your feet; so that, the lame would not be thrown out [of joint]; rather, be healed.” — Hebrews 12:5-13

Some things about childhood can be quite pleasant; we were often allowed to run free and play. There is little pleasant about preparation for adulthood. There are endless disciplines and drills which must be learned by rote, often with intense rigor: reading, writing, and arithmetic, for example. Failure results in certain punishment: even timeout is no joke. Such learning serves the parents, teachers, tutors, or a government goal: not what the child wants to learn. God’s training of His children is likewise necessary, not fun, often painful, and follows a pattern that God wants.

Earthly parents fail, make mistakes, stumble; human parents are quite imperfect, as everybody who has ever tried parenting knows. God, on the other hand, is perfect; that’s a reality with which we find it hard to cope: especially when we are told that God always does what is best for us… never for Himself… as earthly parents often do. God’s goal in tutoring is to bring us to heaven: there are painful things we must learn in becoming a heavenly people.

We need to accept this tribulation with patience and respect. We need to learn to pursue it on a straight track: for, this leads to our healing, and someday, our perfecting. Resisting God results in our spiritual wounding and crippling. Consider Jacob who resisted and wrestled with God at Peniel, who made himself a cripple before he finally believed.[[12]](#footnote-12) This is not all bad: in wounding us, God often establishes our calling, direction, vocation in life… it makes us into what we will become… Jacob becomes Israel… we receive a new name.

The key to this transition is being begotten from above or being born again, as some prefer to translate the words, which are found in John 3. The start is being begotten from above in Christ by the power of the Spirit. Some try to make this all about Christ, without the Spirit; while others try to present this as exclusively about the Spirit, without the Son: both paths err. We cannot begin a life of constant communication and communion with God, without the Spirit: the Spirit is the Vicar of Christ while Christ is in heaven. However, the Spirit’s job is to teach us about the Son and the Father; as well as, to bringing us into their presence.

“Jesus said to [Nicodemus], Amen, amen, I tell you, unless someone would be begotten from above, they are not able to see the kingdom of God.” — John 3:3

“Jesus [said], Amen, amen, I tell you, unless someone would be begotten out of water[[13]](#footnote-13) and Spirit[[14]](#footnote-14), they are not able enter into the kingdom of God.” — John 3:5

We begin with prayer, asking for this gift. And we keep on asking, throughout life, every day: asking the Spirit to show us the meaning of words, verses, whole passages of Scripture.

“If therefore you, evil rulers, had known to give good gifts to your children: how much more, The Father out of Heaven will give [the] Devoted Spirit to them [if] they ask Him?” — Luke 11:13

However, just as soon as Jesus teaches about the essential necessity of the Spirit; He shows how this leads right back to the Father and the Son, Himself.

For, thus God loved the world; so that, He gave His only-begotten Son; that all believing in Him would not be destroyed; but, would have eternal life: for, God did not send the Son into the world that He would judge the world; but, that the world would be saved through Him.” — John 3:16-17

No one can communicate or commune with the Father and the Son without the help of the Spirit. No one can be saved without the Word and Works of the Son. The Son came because He wanted to share the Father’s love. The Spirit proceeds from the Father. We cannot leave any One of the Three out of the picture. Communication begins with the Spirit.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Verses 14-17: The Behavior of the Church

“Pursue peace with everyone, and the devotion, without which no one will see the Lord. Overseeing [that] no one is lacking from the grace of God; [that] no one is growing up [as] a root of sourness[[16]](#footnote-16) [that] would disturb — many could be defiled through it — [that] no one [be] a prostitute[[17]](#footnote-17), or worldly as Esau, who, for one dinner, gave away his own first-born rights: for, you know that also, later, wishing to inherit the blessing, he was rejected: for, he did not find a place of repentance, although seeking it with tears.” Hebrews 12:14-17

This race in which the Church is the sole participant is supposed to be characterized as avoiding strife: hard to do in our argumentative and litigious society. It has been this way since at least 313, when “Christians” were killing each other over right doctrine or dogma. Today, even the suggestion that we ought to set our dogmas aside, and work at forgiving and loving one another by establishing koinonia in communion, will doubtless be made into a point of contention. Even absolute silence may not be interpreted as peace and devotion seeking. Many Christian soldiers are being left behind, left for dead, deserted on the battlefield. Sour dispositions, far from being banned, rule the day: we might even call ourselves the pickled church. Worldliness seems to win; everyone is a shill: everything is up for grabs… for sale… even souls. We have great difficulty, trying to obey these verses. How will we ever throw off our sourpuss attitudes?

Verses 18-13: The Old Testament Church

“For, you had not come to a tangible [thing], to a [visibly] burning fire, to darkness, gloom, and storm; to an [audible] trumpet blast, spoken sound: which, the hearers begged not to be subjected to [another] word to them: for, they could[[18]](#footnote-18) not bear what was being commanded, ‘if even a beast would touch the mountain it will be stoned.’ Thus, so terrible had been the appearing [that even] Moses said, ‘I am terrified and trembling.’” — Hebrews 12:18-21

The Old Testament Church rejected the sound of God’s voice out of fear. As a result, they were turned away from His Presence on the mountain. What might have resulted in spiritual gifts for all, was now limited to spiritual gifts for a few. We are aware of less than one hundred people with spiritual gifts during the days of Moses: Moses, Joshua, possibly the thirteen tribal elders, possibly Aaron and Miriam, and the seventy-two…. Instead, God taught his people through metaphors or tropes. The heavenly glory was modeled by a tent and courtyard with furniture. The death of Christ was modeled by bloody sacrifices. The work of the Spirit was written out in detailed books of Law, rather than directly on the heart. The Father was depicted as a pillar of fire and smoke riding around on His sedan chair, the Ark, and speaking from His special chamber, the Oracle, through the strange symbols of the Ephod, Urim, and Thummim. Only Prophets — like Moses, Samuel, and David — spoke directly with God as their Friend.

However, the trope is still necessary: for, we are still creatures of flesh: nearly all of our thoughts are expressed in terms of time and three dimensions. We can’t talk about heaven without thinking, up. No discussion of the Lake of Fire takes place without supposing, down. Our conceptions are all based on material uncertainties and unrealities, rather than the spiritual certainties and realities that are beyond our understanding. We talk about the resurrection of our spiritual bodies:[[19]](#footnote-19) but we have no idea what that means.[[20]](#footnote-20) We are still a very long way away from what we one day will become.

Verses 22-29: The New Testament Church

“But, you had come to Mount Sion, City of the Living God, Heavenly Jerusalem; to myriads of angels, a festal assembly; to a calling out of [the] firstborn, having been written out in heaven; to God, Judge of all; to righteous spirits, having been made complete; to a new covenant mediator, Jesus; to sprinkled blood, speaking better than Abel’s.” — Hebrews 12:22-24

In direct contrast with the Old Testament Church, Paul sets before us the Beatific Vision of the New Testament Church. By the power of the Spirit of God, through the lense of Scripture, we have a chance to look into heavenly things themselves. Instead, we return to the beggarly things of the flesh: dogmas written in great tedium on paper pages in books, are preferred above the dogmas cut in blood on our own hearts. We, all too frequently return to grudge and grunge after the paltry treasures of earth.[[21]](#footnote-21) We preach and seek a prosperity gospel made of things that are returning to dust. We listen to every voice, except to the voice of the Spirit of God.

“See that you would not reject the Speaker: for, if these did not escape on earth, rejecting the Warner, much more we [must not be] turning away from the [Warner] of the heavens, Whose voice then shook the earth; now, He had promised, saying, ‘Yet once [more] I will shake, not only the earth, but also the heaven[[22]](#footnote-22);’ this ‘yet once’ makes clear about the shaking things, a transformation, as of things that had been created, that the not shaking things would remain: through which, receiving an unshaken kingdom, we should have gratitude; through which, we would serve God well-pleasingly, with respect and fear: for, our God [is] a consuming fire.” — Hebrews 12:25-29

The warning is clear. Rejection of God’s Spirit is a fatal error. The Son speaks: but, the Spirit enables us to hear and understand.[[23]](#footnote-23) It returns us to the fleshly condition of the Israelites, who also refused to listen, who died in the desert without ever seeing the Promised Land. So also, we will die in hopelessness and never enter Heaven itself, if we do not pay attention to the Son’s voice from heaven and the Spirit’s voice in our ears.[[24]](#footnote-24) The Spirit gives us direct access to the Father and the Son: what more could we desire? For what more will we ask? What else do we need?

We also learn from these verses that there is only One Church. There are not thirty-thousand denominations. There is not one church triumphant and another church militant: but, church triumphant and church militant are comrades in arms, co-participants, struggling to march together in one conflict. This conflict, we will soon discover, is as much or more heavenly than it is earthly… fleshly… physical. Just because the devoted residents of heaven are spectators of our struggles here on earth, does not mean that they have no struggles of their own. At the very least, the devoted angels are engaged in such struggles against the powers of darkness: so, the church militant is as much or more heavenly than it is earthly. We also, do not struggle against blood and flesh: but, our own battle is in the heavenlies.[[25]](#footnote-25)

We also learn that there is only One headship of The Church: that of the Father and the Son. This Church has no earthly human headship, not even a temporary one. The Spirit is Vicar of Christ on Earth. It is God who does the shaking, not man. It is God who does the burning.

The unshaken things are the uncreated things, which is God Himself: Father, Son, and Spirit. We remain unshaken, only to the extent, He has brought us to Himself within the shelter of His Heavenly Kingdom: we are sealed.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Amen.

[[27]](#footnote-27)

1. If therefore you, evil rulers, had known to give good gifts to your children: how much more, The Father out of Heaven will give [the] Devoted Spirit to them [if] they ask Him? [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. God, let me be pardoned, the sinner. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jesus, let me be remembered when you come in your kingdom. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The name, Jezreel (יִזְרְעֶ֑אל) means God spreads or scatters; in its positive connotation, it paints a picture of God sowing seed on the earth. In its more negative meaning, it suggests that God is dispersing a gainsaying, wicked people. Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8; Ecclesiastes 11:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Proverbs 3:34 LXX [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Paul refers to his arrival in heaven; which would be a departure from earth. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. These διεστραμμένα are in the perfect passive: the most likely source of these is Jewish fables, such as Oral Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. a crowd of witnesses as dense as a cloud [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 1 Corinthians 15:43-45 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_step>

“Nor is anything of more consequence either on the march or in the line than that they should keep their ranks with the greatest exactness. For troops who march in an irregular and disorderly manner are always in great danger of being defeated.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Someone or something has done this to you; erased your brain: perfect passive. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. We are suggesting that this phrase, “lame … thrown out [of joint] has Jacob specifically in mind as the example. Genesis 32:30 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This is a normal physical human birth. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This is an abnormal miraculous heavenly spiritual birth; in which, through prayer, the Holy Spirit of God begins to dwell within us and communicate with us, teaching our human spirits about Jesus and the Father, mostly from the Old Testament. This kind of evidence is not magic: it requires an active and sometimes painful prayer life… prayer is a toilsome process… not a walk in the park. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13; Acts 1:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. πικρίας: pikrias, pickled is sour, not bitter. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Who, male or female, Esau like, sell their own bodies for a lie in an idol temple, instead of selling their birthright as Esau sold his birthright . [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. conative or inceptive imperfect [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 1 Corinthians 15:44 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9; John 14:2; Revelation 21 and 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Matthew 6:19-21; 13:7, 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. He does not mean by this that He will shake the sky and space. He means that He will shake all life in both physical and spiritual realms; angels, and humans; all with moral responsibility, who are unsealed. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ephesians 1:17-19 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Father, Son, and Spirit: these three have one voice. Matthew 10:20; John 8:28, 38; 12:49-50; 14:10; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:2, 9, 16; 2:16; 6:9; 19:13, 15, 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ephesians 6:10-18 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ephesians 1:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
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