

Q1 L01 - **The Letter to the Hebrews and to Us** - 2022-01-01

Doug Batchelor: Once again, I want to welcome those who are also joining us on AFTV or Facebook or the Amazing Facts YouTube channel. We're so glad that you're here to study the Word of God with us. And I forgot to bring it out the first time. This is our new quarterly dealing with the subject of Hebrews, the message of Hebrews in these last days, and it is one of the richest studies in the Bible. Why don't we have a word of prayer? And then we'll have our teacher come out.

Loving Lord, we're very--we're very thankful for the truth that You send to us in Your Word and the power of that truth to transform hearts. We pray that You'll speak to us now in a special way as we delve into this wonderful book of Hebrews. Be with our teacher, and we thank You and pray this in Jesus's name.

Very thankful that we can have one of our associates at Amazing Facts. Pastor Alvin Ho is going to present the lesson for us today.

Alden Ho: I am really excited about this new start of this lesson because this lesson is a very powerful one because I like it when lessons not only give the perspective of what the Bible says, but also, it implies, What does that mean for us today? Do you like those two? Are you out there? All right, just making sure everybody's alive there. So we're on Hebrews. The message of the Hebrews, since you probably did not study this lesson yet and we are really broadcasting this the beginning of the year for January 1, this particular title starts with the letter to the Hebrews and to us. It starts on December 25, and goes to the 31st. I want to read to you the memory verse because the memory verse kind of encapsulates what this particular lesson is about, and it's found in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 36. Paul writes, and he says, "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." "After you have done the will of God."

Do you know what the will of God is? Sometimes we do know it. Now, the bigger question is, How many of us really follow the will of God? Because many times we know what it is. We hear the voice, but the conviction is kind of slow to us, especially when it comes to the health message. Don't you think so? In the Bible, we find little snippets of different talks, and we find the beatitudes, talking-- when Jesus was talking to-- on the Sermon on the Mount, He was talking to the people there, but we don't find, really, anywhere in the Bible, except for this particular book, a complete sermon. Hebrews is a complete sermon that we find, and God had preserved this particular message in its completeness for us.

It has been argued that Hebrews is one of the earliest, complete Christian sermons that we have, and this is addressed here-- the Hebrews was addressed to the believers who accepted Jesus but had then experienced difficulties. Some were publicly shamed, some were persecuted, others faced financial problems, and this has a lot of implications for us today with the things that we're dealing with in relevancy as well. The apostles, in a stirring sermon, the apostle Paul, in a stirring sermon, however, challenged us and them to persevere in faith by fixing their eyes upon Jesus. Remember that hymn 290, "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus?" Why do you need to do that? Because we're told that "The things of this world will," what? "Strangely grow dim in the light of His glory and grace."

When we go to Sunday-- Sunday starts off, and it has a very important paragraph for us here, and it says, "In order to understand the sermon and to apply its message to ourselves, we need to understand the history of the congregation and their situation when they received the letter from the apostle." So I'd like you to turn with me to Hebrews chapter 2, and we're going to look at verse 1. Hebrews chapter 2. We're going to start off with verse 1.

Now, the lesson starts off with verse 3, but I want to jump back because this is kind of important, and Paul does this actually twice in the book, and it kind of lays it out interestingly because right at the beginning of chapter 2, verse 1, what's the first word you find there? "Therefore." He does that some other place. Do you know where that is? I'll mention that in a moment, but in order to find out what the "therefore" was therefore about, you got to go back to chapter 1, because remember, when they wrote

the Bible, they didn't have verses. They didn't have chapters. It was one continuation. So where they cut short on chapter 1, at the very end, we've got to go back to verse 14, of chapter 1, to see what the "therefore" is about. In verse 1, I mean, chapter 1, verse 14, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" Question mark. "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away."

There's also a second "therefore," and that's found in Chapter 12, verse 1. Paul starts off with "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us." What's the "therefore" about? He's talking about "a great cloud of witnesses." He's talking about chapter 11, and all those who made it into the faith hall of fame. That's what Paul's referring to in there, but what we're looking at here is in chapter 2, verse 1, "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away."

In other words, what he's saying to us is "Look, when you hear something, go back, check it out for yourself in the Bible, in the spirit of prophecy," because, according to Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, there is--" how much light? "There's no light in it." So when you hear something, you need to go back to it, and if it is as it was preached, then we must give heed to these things. Verse 2, "For if the word spoken through angels proves steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward--" now, Paul then asked, in verse 3, a kind of rhetorical question-- "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard it?"

"How shall we escape?" Well, let's put it this way. We will not escape. When persecution comes, none of us are going to escape. You can run to a different country, but persecution is going to be worldwide. It's going to come to everybody as a test of our faith. I find this in the Seventh-day Adventist Commentary, and it says, "The 'we' is contrasted with those who, in the Old Testament, transgressed the Mosaic code." In other words, they transgressed the Mosaic law. They neglected the word spoken by angels, those represented by the, quote, unquote, "We are in danger of neglecting the word spoken by Christ."

Listen to the words here Mrs. White writes, an inspiration found in "The Review and Herald," February 20, 1908. She says, "The Mosaic code, given for the good of the people, was sadly disregarded. Sin was in the camp. Even some of the men who had been entrusted with sacred responsibilities, lived in open sin. Their course of action largely neutralized the efforts of others to advance the cause of God; for so long as flagrant violations of God's law were allowed to go on unrebuked, the blessing of heaven could not rest richly upon the people."

Now, think for a moment. If that was written to them then, that also applies to us today. So don't push it aside, "Well, that's Old Testament," but it was written a New Testament. All Scripture is given for us, to edify us and to teach us. Verse 4, "God is also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" You know, sometimes we have people that come into our church, and there they sit here and they listen, and they're wondering, like, "Something's different here." It's not like their church: People are standing up, speaking in tongues. People are jumping up and down. The praise band is going at it. Sometimes you'll get colored lights, smoke machines, the whole works.

You know, today, they expect miracles, and you'll speak with some evangelicals, "Well, do you speak in tongues? I have the gift of tongues." Really? And sometimes, if you're in a particular place, you'll hear somebody babbling off. Well, what's the babbling for? If somebody can translate that, which, most of the time, if not all the time, there is no translation for it because it's just vain utterance, but the gifts are there. The Holy Spirit is there quietly working. The Holy Spirit is there quietly speaking.

I'll give you an instance. I was down in--many years ago, I was down in San Diego, and I was preaching. It was--a large majority were Chinese. Now, I, in case you didn't know, I am Chinese. People ask, "Do you speak Chinese?" My answer is "No, I eat Chinese. I don't speak Chinese. I eat Chinese." So I cannot speak, certainly not preach. I know a few words, but I can't do anything to save my life. And at the end of

the sermon, I was telling my testimony there. An older lady came up to me and just started babbling off in Mandarin. I looked at her a little dumbfounded 'cause I didn't know what to say. I had no idea what she was saying. I didn't know what to reply. So I had to pull somebody to translate, and I said, "Could you translate for me?" She said, "Yeah." So she asked the lady, "What were you saying?" So she translated back. She said, "She wanted to thank you for your testimony." And I said, "But there was no translation." She said, "Yes, but she heard that in her own language." And I thought, "Wow."

See, the Holy Spirit is quietly working. It doesn't have to be a big show, but the Holy Spirit is quietly working. We find that, "At the beginning of the Christian church, God poured out His Spirit to the apostles in Jerusalem so that they were able to announce the gospel in languages previously unknown to them." I mean, that would be such a wonderful thing. If I could speak Mandarin today, I would be heading off to China to be able to preach. I would love to be able to do that. This week, we had the appreciation dinner for Amazing Facts, and we had all the international people who have been serving outside. They came back, and we listened to the reports from China, from India, from Africa, and I'm telling you, it warms my heart. It just makes me want to say, "Let me out. I want to be out there. I want to be in the trench. I want to make a difference out there," but I guess where I'm at, I'm making a difference too.

But we, wherever you are, you don't have to be out there, but if God allows you go out there, praise the Lord, but remember, wherever you are, serve the Lord in whatever capacity you are doing because here we find "Philip performed similar miracles in Samaria. Peter was in Joppa and Caesarea," and he preached over there also in different languages, "Paul throughout his ministry in Asia Minor and Europe. These powerful deeds were experiential evidence that confirmed the message of 'salvation,' the establishment of the kingdom of God and the salvation of condemnation and freedom from evil powers. The Spirit gave early Christian believers the conviction that their sins have been forgiven, thus they were not fearful of judgment, and as a result, their prayers were bold. They were confident, and their religious experience was joyful."

Many times today, we come with great fear and great trepidation when we come before God. We're not sure. We have this uncertainty. There's no peace within our hearts. Sometimes sometimes we have to ask ourselves, "What's our conversion experience?" I've asked people, "Do you have a conversion story?" Is there that crossroads experience where Christ intersected your life, and you can bring it down to the day? Some people can bring it down to the hour of when Christ entered their lives. Other people cannot. Many times, the ones that cannot are the ones that were raised within the church. I was one of them. I was raised in the church. I didn't go out and do my-- sow my wild oats. No, I was just a really good Laodicean. That was me.

But what's your conversion experience? In what ways have you been confirmed in the faith and belief in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? Because the reason I ask you this, it's good to remember how God worked in your life to begin with because, if you can remember this moment, then you have something to share to other people out there in your experience with sharing the gospel, and believe me, you cannot say, "I didn't have an opportunity to share the faith." God gives us opportunities each and every day. Whether you pray for them or whether you don't pray for them, the opportunities come to us. It's whether you will take that moment and seize the opportunity when the Holy Spirit prompts you, "Here's the open door. Go for it." But many times, because of our trepidation, our uncertainty, our lack of faith, our lack of understanding of our conversion, we say nothing at all.

Monday, we talk about "The Struggle." "The Struggle." Let's read Hebrews chapter 10, verse 32. Hebrews 10:32, Paul writes here, and he says, "But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endure a great struggle with sufferings, partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulation, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated," verse 34, "for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and enduring possession for yourself in heaven."

We're called to remember. Paul writes here, and he addresses us directly that we may understand what

it means by reflecting on our past experience as Christians. Remember where you were. Remember when you did this. Remember how you came out of this. In the "former days," meaning the experiences that came to them soon after their conversion, the first intended readers of Hebrews was the Jews. That's who Paul was speaking to. When this was not written yet but in spoken form, this is when Paul was speaking directly to that, and then we find, as numerous passages in the book of Acts reveals, nonbelieving Jews from the very first, then they were persecuting their brethren who accepted Christianity. And then he writes, "after you were illuminated," that is, "after you received the light of the gospel." In chapter 13, verse 3, "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also." Chained to them.

This is this very special type of ministry that some people just absolutely do not like to do, and that's prison ministry. Has anybody here ever done prison ministries? Do I see any hands? We see a couple hands. Prison ministries is--I love doing prison ministries because, when you go door-to-door, you get the door slammed. People aren't interested. Look, when you go to prison ministries, you come in there. They know you're a pastor or a minister or somebody that is a Bible worker. They will come to you. They walk right over to you. They're hungry for the Word.

Yeah, you'll have those that are in the cells that just aren't interested, but they will come to you, and, yes, it can be a little intimidating, depending on what level of prison you've been to. If you've ever been to a federal, that's quite intimidating because you've got to go through all these metal detectors, pat downs, all these things. And you see these guys, and I'm telling you, some of these dudes are rough, very, very rough, and they're very scary, but when they come to you, and they say, "Pastor, can you tell me more about Jesus?" They don't look so big and tough anymore. The gospel has a way of melting them down.

So we find here, ministry to men in prison and other activities of sufficient importance, that's to come up for consideration in the final judgment. When we take the gospel to those, do you know, I found out that Amazing Facts, in our Bible Study Department, there's a huge percentage that is going out to those. I believe, if my memory serves correct, it's 70% is going to those who are incarcerated. That's a lot. So the gospel is, by far, far reaching much more than even we can do because it is going out there to every nook and corner possible.

So we find also that the principle is set here forth that the Christian should endeavor, for us as Christians, to think of himself as being in the same circumstances any person he finds in need to minister accordingly in harmony with the golden rule, and that is "To do unto others as you would have them," what? "Do unto you." "It is very likely that the readers of Hebrews suffered verbally. They suffered physically at the hands of the mob," because sometimes it's going to come to a point where they don't want to hear it, and you're still going to want to say something, but even if you don't say something, just your mere presence is very agitating for them themselves.

You know, there was, many years ago, when James White experienced this too. He was in the situation where he had preached, and the mob was very, very angry. He didn't know what else to do. He was at a church. They opened the windows because it was wintertime because there was so many people that wanted to hear it. The mob was outside, and they were picking up snow, making snowballs, and they were hurling it at him. It hit the back wall. All the broken pieces of the snowball came down. It landed in his Bible. He said his Bible was totally soaked, but when he went to leave, the crowd was-- the mob was waiting for him out there.

And as he was standing there, a man came up to him, locked arms with him, and walked him through the mob, and that was an angel that just appeared out of nowhere to accompany him, and when he let him go, he turned to thank him, and he was gone.

You know, we have to understand that, when we do the work of God, we are not ever alone. You may think you're alone because physically you're standing there, but if you could see angels that are around you, attending to you, to help you, to protect you, but that requires something really big. It's called faith.

"How do the experiences of Moses and the readers of 1 Peter, we find here, help us understand why Christian believers were persecuted?" Well, in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 24, we're told that "By faith Moses, when he became of age, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he looked to the reward."

In 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 14 and 16, we're told, "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified." Verse 16, "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this manner." I don't know whether you've ever been persecuted, reviled, or had insults heaped on you. Persecutors calmly begin their work by slandering a person or a Christian's integrity, their intelligence and conduct as a citizen. Being persecuted is not very fun.

I grew up as an Adventist, as I mentioned, but I went to public school. My parents didn't want to send me to the church academy. I grew up in the Toronto area in Canada, and when I went to high school, it's not like high school here where it's four grades: 9, 10, 11, 12. We had five: 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. So they're even bigger at that point. And when I was a freshman, I was almost half my weight now. I was only 106 pounds as a freshman. I remember that because I had to weigh in for wrestling. I was really no match for anybody at all, 106 pounds, and I was always very fearful.

There was one section that, no matter what you did, you could not avoid. There was this section where you come down the stairs, and everybody comes through, and this hallway was the only way to get to the cafeteria, and all the big dudes were all there. It was a very short area, maybe 20 feet long, and they were all in their school-letter jackets from football and all the other things, and they were all standing against the radiators on both sides. And you kind of wait till everybody's going through at the same time, and you try to squeak through, but you've got to remember, this was an Italian high school, and I was the only Asian.

"Oh, wow," doesn't describe it. They made fun of me. Talk about persecution. "Hey--" I won't say the names that they called me, but you can think of any name you can think of. That's what they called you. "What do you got for lunch?" Sometimes you go hungry because they take your lunch. Thankfully, within a few months, I kind of made friends with one of the guys, so he was my secret pass. Every time the other guys would pick on him, he would look at me and says, "Hey, just leave him alone." It's like, oh, that was my guardian angel.

And you know what? You have a guardian angel, and he is willing to protect you, but you've got to believe that he's there, but at the same time, don't expect a free pass all the time. We are going to have reproach. We are going to be persecuted whether we like it or not. "Everyone, a Christian or not, suffers. What does that mean?" It means that if Christ had to suffer, why should we be any different? We're going to have to suffer also. We need to move along here. Tuesday, "Malaise" is the title. Hebrews 4:15, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."

I mean, how would you like that as the perfect model for us? You want to know what to do in this situation? Just look and see what Jesus did. But people will say, "Yeah, yeah, but that's-- that's Jesus. That's not possible for us." Look, He made the way for us. He showed us the way so that we can follow it, but that's up to us if we choose to follow it, and many of us don't want to follow that. In Hebrews chapter 10, verse 25, "not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the Day approaching."

You know, with this crazy COVID stuff going on, "not forsaking the assembly of ourselves," in other words, the excuse of not going to church. Just want to share a really quick illustration. Pastor came to a house once, and the man let the pastor in. The man had not been to church for a long time. It was a cold winter day in the evening. He invited the pastor in, and they both sat down, facing a blazing fire, and as they sat there, not a word was spoken. The pastor got up, walked over to the fireplace and grabbed the

tongs, and he grabbed one of the burning orange coals, clamped it, and then he just moved it off to the side, and he sat back down. And the man and the pastor watched that particular burning coal just kind of go from a bright orange to a dark orange, to pretty much black, and then totally cold.

The pastor got back up with the tongs, picked that dark, cold coal up and stuck it right back in the blaze. Within a few moments, the colors started changing again, and it went from black to a burnt orange to, once again, a blazing orange, and without a word spoken, the pastor got up, headed towards the door, and the man said, "Pastor, thank you for your fiery sermon. I will be at church the Sabbath." There is a certain coldness that develops when we just "church" by ourselves. There is also a certain warmth and certain encouragement that we get when we are around like-minded people, fellowshiping with them, amen?

But you see, Satan is at work in so many different ways. "Hebrews tells us that the readers continued to experience difficulties, verbal and probably other kinds of attacks as well. They were tired, and it was easy for them to 'lose heart.'" And you can see why it's so easy to withdraw, just to stay home, turn on AFTV, and just tune in. Where I pastored in Texas last, a lot of the church members, when there is inclement weather, 3ABN was the big thing because they all had their 3ABN satellite dishes out there.

By the way, I just wanted to mention this: Persecution can come in many different forms, and sometimes it doesn't have to be human propelled. Sometimes it could be natural. My daughter, I was talking to her last night. She texted me, and she's in Texas. She just got married in October. She didn't want to go to bed right away, because there was a line of storms coming, and she always would ask me, because I'm a weather watcher, "What's happening here?" And I'm looking, and I said, "The red's going to go north, so you should be okay. Just rest assured with that." She said, "What about the dark red?" I said, "There's no dark red cells. It's all going north."

Little did we know that, in the morning, she sent me a text. Whether you saw it or not on the news this morning, but the tornadoes touched down, and for the first time in history, history was made last night or this morning when the tornado traveled nonstop for 230 miles, creating a swath, early morning hours. It's estimated, confirmed 50 people, but unconfirmed possibly up over 100 people have passed away in Kentucky alone. The National Weather Service clocked some cells at over 300 miles an hour.

Should we be surprised, or should we understand this is all fulfillment of what we were told in Matthew chapter 24. None of these, really, should surprise us. Neither should fires or earthquakes surprise us because we know we are living in the last days, and the words from "The Spirit of Prophecy" tell us, be ready, be ready, be ready. Paul writes here in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, he says, "Do you not know that those who run all run in a race, but one receives a prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it." In other words, there should be no distractions, no distractions at all.

Yesterday, I was asked on Thursday by Sabrina, the secretary of the church, if I could play the piano for a funeral that happened. It was Sally's husband that passed away. So I played, and I listen to the eulogy, and how this man loved to cycle, and then a friend of his came up, and they were talking. Then I started talking to him at the end of the service because last year, at the beginning of the coronavirus, I took a break, a sabbatical from ministry, so I understand what this means, when you run, you run in a race. I cycled from San Diego, California, all the way to St. Augustine, Florida. That was my, ha-ha, wilderness experience because it took me 40 days of riding 2,500 miles solo on a recumbent with all my gear. I entered the race. When I left San Diego, there was no stopping. It was St. Augustine or bust, and I can tell you, I watched everybody else who were out there, cycling just before I hit the road, and everybody folded. I was not about to fold. I entered the race. I was going to finish the race.

Each of us, if you are baptized within the church, you entered the race. You have a number, and you are running the race, and Paul is saying, then, "Run in such a way. Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things." That's the health message. "Now, therefore, they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty." And then Paul quotes things that happened like during the Olympics. He says, "Thus I fight, not as one who beats the

air. But I discipline my body. I bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

We have entered a race, brothers and sisters, and we have to run in such a way that our eyes are focused on the end. There can be no distractions because, I'm telling you, if you give any peripheral vision to distractions, Satan is going to make sure you see them. He's going to do everything that he can to impede you from finishing that race. A very similar thing happened to Elijah. In 1 Kings chapter 19, we find what happened here between verse 4 and 1, 1 and 4, Jezebel is talking to Elijah, and what happens to Elijah? Did he have the confidence? Oh, no, no, this man of God basically put his tail between his legs, and he took off. He was scared.

What was he scared about? Well, we find in Wednesday, he took off, and he headed to Horeb. That's a long journey. Just before he went there, he lay asleep under a broom tree. An angel woke him up. Can you imagine having an angel as your chef? as your servant? The angel prepared food for him, prepared cakes for him, woke up Elijah, said, "Arise and eat." And then Elijah did that, and then he laid his head back down, and in case first course wasn't enough, a few hours later, second course comes up. The angel wakes him up again, prepares another cake for him and says, "Arise and eat."

And it was on this strength, on this food, that he went for-- do you remember how long? Forty days, forty nights, 200 miles. Wow, I mean, we're not talking 200 miles on a nice, paved road. That was pretty arduous stuff. And then, when he gets there, he's so scared, and we find in verse 11, of 1 Kings 19, it says, "Then He said," the Lord says, "'Go out. Stand on the mountain before the Lord.' And behold, the Lord passed by."

I love this scene. If you picture this in visual--visually, "the Lord passed by, and a great, strong wind tore the mountains, broke the rocks to pieces, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake, there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire, a--" what? "A still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in the mantle. He went outside and he stood at the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" Sometimes in our journey, you may find that you may run from reality. You can't handle the pressures, and the voice of God will speak to you because God loves you, and He will say, "What are you doing here? What are you doing here? Why are you here?" Or better yet, "Why did you do that?"

In these last days, God is trying to reprove His people. He's trying to prepare them for what is coming. So we find that the story of God's dealings with Elijah after Carmel is fascinating because it shows a tender, loving care that God has given, and God ministers to those who are under distress, who struggle to regain their faith.

God did several things for Elijah that I want to remind you about in case you are struggling yourselves. First, He cares for your physical needs. God does that. You may recall the story--or the hymn. I forget the number right now, but the title is "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus." The story behind that was this lady. Her husband had left or passed away. She had children. She had nothing in the house. This was many, many years ago, maybe even a century ago. She didn't know what else to do, and she knelt down, and she prayed that God would provide. God is not deaf to our cry. There was a knock at the door. She went to the door, and there was a basket of food, fresh bread rolls there. She looked, didn't see anybody.

God cares for our physical needs. Secondly, in the cave, when Elijah was there, He didn't yell at Elijah. He kindly reproved him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And then helped him to regain a deeper understanding of how He works and fulfills His purposes. God was not in the wind. He wasn't in the earthquake. He wasn't in the fire. He was in a still, small voice. Thirdly, God gave Elijah a work to do, and He reassured him, "You can do it."

For each of us, a reminder is given to us, "You can do it, but not on your own." You require His strength. That's what Proverbs tells us: "Trust in the Lord with--" half your heart? "All your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge-- and He will--" what? Does it say, "He may direct your

path?" No, no, "He will," He always will. The question is, Will you let Him?

In Thursday, we find that Paul is stressing here, particularly regarding certain times, he talks about the "forsaking of the assemblies of yourselves," and then, in verse 12:25, this is very much speaking to us today. If you have your Bibles, I want to really stress this and bring this out to you. Hebrews 12:25, it says this: "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they do not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth, but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more, I shake not only the earth, but also the heavens. Now this, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of the things that are being shaken, as things are made, and things which cannot be shaken will remain."

Today, we are in the shaking, brothers and sisters. This is why it writes in Early Writings 270, and she says, "I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen and was shown it would be caused by the straight testimony called for by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodicean. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and pour forth the straight testimony. Some will not bear the straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what causes a shaking among God's people." It is no longer a calling out for God's people. That's for those on the outside, "Come out of her, my people," but for those people who are in the race, it's a shaking out because so many of us hear the message, but we're not convicted by that. Our progress, yes, we have to be progressive with it, but many of us have been in the same mode ever since we were baptized. Nothing has changed.

Brothers and sisters, the message that Paul is giving us in the Hebrews is a message for us today. We need to wake up and be wide awake because our salvation is nearer than we first believed. We are coming very quickly to the close of this world. If there's ever a time we need to be serious about studying the Bible, hiding the Word of God in our heart, it's now.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank You for the opportunity that You give us each and every day. We thank You for Your love and Your grace towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We ask and pray, Lord, that through Your grace and mercy, You would continue to encourage us to run the race, to not stop and meander, but to focus on the goal, the upward prize. Keep our eyes fixed upon You is our prayer, in Jesus' name, amen.

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the key word on your screen to 40544, or visit the web address shown on your screen, and be sure to select the digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with Amazing Facts wherever and whenever you want, and most important, to share it with others.

Announcer: Amazing Facts changed lives.

Darius Zeigler: My name is Darius Zeigler. I was born and raised in Elmore, Alabama. I grew up and I was raised Christian. We had to do exactly what my parents wanted as far as Christian living, whether it be our friends, what we watched on television, even down to the things that we ate.

Male: You know, I used to wonder and sometimes question my mom about it, you know, certain things, but she explained why, like, it's better for us, it's the reasons that the way that God actually wants us to live and eat.

Darius: And I'm starting to think in my mind, you know, "This can't be right, this isn't fair." So, you know, when college came after high school, and I was on my own, and I had no rules, I busted it wide open. After I had my, well, at least what I thought, my fill of partying, I started to realize that it wasn't all that it's cracked up to be. As time was going on, you know, as I was finishing up my freshman year of college, I still--I was very miserable.

I wasn't happy with anything, and I still wanted to just get away, and I was looking through the phone book. You know, I was looking in the back, in the yellow pages, and I seen, like, a recruiting

advertisement for the Air Force, so I did exactly like the number said. I called them. I'm off to the military, I get there, and I made friends. Everybody loved me, and this time, I was just like, "Yeah, this is what I've been missing," and all these guys doing all this together, it was awesome, or so I thought. They tell us that we're getting deployed, and of all places, we're going to the Middle East, and I'm going to a place to where they don't want us there.

Basically, every day, your life was on the line, and I'm terrified, but, thankfully, after the months go by and we do our tour in the desert, they send us back home, and I'm excited. I get to go back and be with my friends, and I get back there, I get back to my dorm, thinking everything is fine, everything's going to be cool-- something's changed. I'm the only person that's alone. All my friends, they have girlfriends, or they're married, and I'm the odd man out, so I tried to follow suit, and I went out, then I met a young lady, and as time went on, we ended up getting married. Everything at first was great--at first.

male: Well, I didn't know why they were sad or what they were going through, but it did seem like I got a impression that, you know, she was kind of trying to isolate him.

Darius: My wife doesn't want me having any type of contact with my family or friends. You know, the same thing that I was running from, now I'm living with. I remember one night, we ended up getting to a huge argument, and the next thing I know, the cops are there, and now I'm in jail, and my mind is just running a thousand miles an hour. You know, I'm scared and frantic. I don't know what to do.

After, I was released from jail, and I remember, one day, my sister invited us over for dinner, and they put on this movie. It was called "The Final Events of Bible Prophecy," by Amazing Facts, and I remember it got to the end of the film, and it was showing the part where the New Jerusalem comes down, and the Lord descended out of heaven. It had all the lost standing around the city, as numerous as the sand and the sea, and then judgment was given, and fire rained down from God in Heaven, and it destroyed them all.

And at that moment, I heard a voice as clear as day. I'll never forget it. It said, "Everything that you saw on this video is true, and if you do not change from the things that you have been doing, the lake of fire will be your end." I was more scared at that point than at any time in my life.

After that happened, I said, "Lord, I'm tired of breaking Your laws." I want to go get re-baptized and rededicate my life to God as I realize now that everything that I had been doing, all the running that I had been doing, God was doing nothing but chasing me. Now I'm back home. It's just funny when I think about it. The entire time, all I did was run in a circle. It actually took running in that full circle to make me realize that this is where I needed to be. You know, I ended up getting remarried.

Female: And being married to Darius is amazing. I cannot have asked for a much better husband.

Male: It's like we're kids all over again, you know? We run up together, and, you know, it makes a-- inspiration in my life, to keep my head up and things doing right and everything too.

Darius: I look at the story in the Bible of the prodigal son, and that's a story that I could relate to because I feel like I was actually the living prodigal, that, the entire time. God was blessing me, but I couldn't see it, because I thought that what the world had to offer was ten times greater, and when I came back, then He welcomed me back in with open arms, and my life is a hundred times better than I could've possibly even imagined.

Announcer: Amazing Facts changed lives.

Male: I'd have to say that I had a wonderful childhood, growing up. I went to a private school up until the seventh grade till junior high. I believe it was at that point in junior high that my life began to change. Going from a Christian education into a public school was a big difference. There was a lot of secular influence, peer pressure, and for me, it was the music. I started listening to heavy metal music. Every concert they would come to town, I was there. That had a profound effect on me.

I started using marijuana probably at the age of 14. I started drinking, using a lot of cocaine, and that led

to methamphetamine, and that completely changed my life. I dropped out of high school my sophomore year and went to work. I would get off of work, and we'd go into the bar until 2 o'clock in the morning. I'd get back up at 5, and I'd go back into it again, six, seven days a week.

At the age of 20, I lost my dad to a heart attack. I didn't know how to handle the loss, so I tried to mask my pain with alcohol and drugs. I got three DUIs in one year. I was arrested. They gave me a year in the county jail, and the moment I got out, I went back to doing the same thing, hanging with the same people, the same crowd. I was involved in a hit-and-run motorcycle accident, and I was charged with a felony DUI. Even though, at the time of the accident, I was not under the influence, I still had methamphetamine in my system.

At my sentencing date, I left the courtroom, and I didn't come back, and that left me with a felony warrant, and I had fallen asleep in a park, and I woke up to a park ranger knocking on my window. I knew I was wanted, and I knew that I was not going to just turn myself in. I turned to him, and I had made the comment, "Not today," and I took off. I led five different agencies on about a 35-minute chase, and I realized at the point that I wasn't going to get away and that this was going to end up either me killing somebody or myself, and so I made the decision to pull over.

At that point, everything that I had, I lost. I was sentenced to two years in state prison... and it was there that God got ahold of me, and that was through Amazing Facts Ministries. I remember listening on my radio to Pastor Doug Batchelor. I wanted to get to know the Bible. I wanted to know God. And so my Aunt Marilyn sent me the Amazing Facts study guides, and it was there that my relationship with Christ began.

I had called home, and I knew my mother wasn't doing well, but I didn't realize that she had cancer. She had about a 30% chance of making it through her surgery. She had told the doctors that she was not going to have chemo and she was not going to have radiation, that if her God was going to save her, then he would save her.

I remember hanging up the phone to what I thought was my last conversation with my mom. I turned around. I got down on my knees, and I prayed to God, and I said, "God, if You're there, please save my mother. Wherever You lead me in life, whatever You want me to do, I am Yours." And I had a feeling of such peace that I knew that my mother was going to be okay and that my life was going to change.

There are no words that I can adequately express to Amazing Facts and to Pastor Doug, to say thank you to all those people who support the ministry. I am a product of your support. My life has changed because of this ministry, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.