

## Prayer

Powerful Lord, giver of life and sustainer of our every breath; lift the burden of our sins, comfort our hurting souls and bring peace to our lives as we live and work for You. You are the source of all things; You are the foundation of all that is good; and You are the one who made me. Thank You, Lord God, AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Fire Services

*Pray today about the way in which fire safety is promoted and taught in schools, institutions, offices and industries. Pray that what is learned will save lives.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for President Obama as he deals with the Middle East.*
- *Pray about population growth and the moral issues it raises*
- *Give thanks for new life, and God's gift of children to parents*

## Meditation

When life is quiet, Lord Jesus, fill my mind with what is good,  
So I may keep the enemy far away from all my thoughts.

When life is routine, Lord Jesus, give me the concentration I need  
So I may honour You with every detail of my work

When life is difficult, Lord Jesus, save me from all fear and panic,  
So I can focus on the truth and trust Your guidance.

When life is awful, Lord Jesus, give me courage and persistence;  
So I may use the Spirit's gifts to deal with trouble.

When life is easier, Lord Jesus, may I not forget Your love;  
So I remember faithfulness, and follow in Your ways.

When life is quiet, Lord Jesus, fill my mind with what is good;  
So I am ever ready and alert, Your faithful, loyal servant.

## Bible Study - Hebrews 12:25-29

<sup>25</sup> See that you do not refuse the One who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they ignored Him who warned them whilst on earth, how much less will our chance of escape be if we reject Him who warns us from heaven! <sup>26</sup> His voice shook the earth at that time, but now He has promised, 'I will shake once more not only the earth but the heaven.'<sup>27</sup> The words 'once more' indicates the removal of what can be shaken, meaning created things, so that what cannot be shaken may remain. <sup>28</sup> So let us be grateful because we are receiving a Kingdom which cannot be shaken, and therefore offer God acceptable worship with reverence and awe, <sup>29</sup> for our God is a consuming fire!

## Review

As Hebrews draws to its climax, the letter appeals to its readers not to disregard its essential message. The powerful words 'see that you do not refuse the One who is speaking' is an appeal to people to accept the offer of Christ's salvation which enables them to worship God afresh, as just described (12:22-24). This new worship of God through Jesus Christ reflects the heavenly celebration of His victory on the Cross and the all-sufficient salvation which He has achieved through His death ('the sprinkled blood which speaks more eloquently than the blood of Abel' – 12:24). However, as with so much of Hebrews, we have to be careful to understand exactly what the writer is saying because it is couched in the complex language of the religious devotion of the early Christian church, and the Judaism from which it was beginning to emerge.

When we read verse 25, it may not be immediately clear to us what is being described, but the passage is clearly a warning to pay attention to God's revelation. The verse is about God's justice and the difference between the Old and the new Testaments, just as verses 18 to 24 Hebrews described the difference between Moses (12:21) and Christ (12:24). With this in mind, verse 25 says that if the Jews have not escaped God's justice after they ignored the laws of God given them by Moses, then our chance of escaping God's justice now if we ignore what Jesus has done for us, is somewhat less! This is a rather strong way of saying that we ignore the wondrous work of God through Jesus Christ at our peril; moreover, if we know about it, we must worship Him who has done it!

Following this verse, the intention of Hebrews is to encourage God's people to look forward to what He has for them in a 'kingdom which cannot be shaken', where we can offer 'acceptable worship with reverence and awe' (12:38). However, what Hebrews says to explain this is characteristically difficult, and yet again, it needs explaining. The writer's intention is to contrast the eternal things of God that are 'unshakeable' (such as the eternal Kingdom of God) with the things of the world, which are 'shakeable' (such as the religious system of the Jews).

If we now follow this idea through the verses, we can see what is being said. The quote 'His voice shook the earth at that time' refers to the quaking of the mountain when God gave the law through Moses (Ex 19:18). However, Hebrews moves on to a far more interesting quote, and this time it is from Haggai 2:2; 'I will shake once more not only the earth but the heaven', though the version in Hebrews is not the same as what we find in Haggai 2:2, largely because of translational differences over time. Nevertheless, Haggai spoke at a time when God's Temple was being rebuilt, and he declared that God wanted to shake all the rubbish out of the old Temple, meaning all the religious paraphernalia that had gathered since the time of Solomon, in order to fill it with His glory. So Hebrews takes this prophecy as an indication of God's desire to shake the world 'once more' (12:27) to get rid of the rubbish of religious paraphernalia from Judaism, especially where it influenced the Christian church. It was His purpose to dispose of everything worldly, earthly and temporary that might be found amongst His people, and replace it with His new permanent Kingdom! As in yesterday's reading, there is a clear connection here with John's vision of a 'new heaven and a new earth' (Rev 21:1f.).

The final words of our passage, 'our God is a consuming fire' are an awesome declaration of truth. God will eventually consume everything that is mortal in the fires of His judgement. The world will come to its end and His judgement will come on all things and everyone, and all that will be left will be His 'unshakeable' new Kingdom, a new creation in which Christ is King. The call of Hebrews is no less than a call to worship the Lord God who will do this; and when we worship our Lord even now, it is with this remarkable vision before us! We worship Him because He is both our Creator and our Saviour; and He has the power to change the imperfections of this world and replace them with the eternal perfection of

heaven. God has begun this work in Jesus Christ and will one day complete it, when He comes in glory; this is the God we worship, and we should be in no doubt about this!

## Questions (for use in groups)

1. Does this passage convince you that the worship we offer God now should change? If so, what?
2. If this world this 'shakeable', then what is left after God 'shakes' it? What is left in the Kingdom of God after this, that we can recognise?
3. Does this passage inspire you to worship God, or does this passage make you concerned?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*Thinking about our future in the Kingdom of God is quite difficult. We need to read a significant number of passages in the New and the Old Testaments if we are to obtain a good general picture of the final destination of all things. It can be quite hard to live with the idea that everything we are familiar with now will be 'shaken', for what will come out of this? Of course, this is a test of faith, and one that we cannot ignore, but the intention of Hebrews is to inspire us to look ahead and be enthralled by God's future, not to make us seek further security in what we have!*

### Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *Spend time praying about the future glories of God's Kingdom, and ask the Lord to show you how you may better understand your own destiny. You may be surprised at what He will show you!*
- *Pray for God's future! It can be difficult to pray about the end times, so this is why we should perhaps do this and attempt to let go of our feelings about earthly things, and trust God!*

## Final Prayer

Your warmth, Lord Jesus, is like the sun that bursts through the clouds on an overcast day, bringing not only light and warmth, but colour, vitality and new life. May we always be open to receive Your warmth and love, because it is Your unconditional gift. Thank You Jesus; AMEN