

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 28 September 2025
CORRECTED VERSION

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:1-5

Opening Hymn: 446 Be Thou My Vision

Confession of Sin

O eternal God and merciful Father, we humble ourselves before your great majesty, against which we have frequently and grievously sinned. We acknowledge that we deserve nothing less than eternal death, that we are unclean before you and children of wrath. We continually transgress your commandments, failing to do what you have commanded, and doing that which you have expressly forbidden. We acknowledge our waywardness, and are heartily sorry for all our sins. We are not worthy to be called your children, nor to lift up our eyes heavenward to you in prayer. Nevertheless, O Lord God and gracious Father, we know that your mercy toward those who turn to you is infinite; and so we take courage to call upon you, trusting in our Mediator Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Forgive all our sins for Christ's sake. Cover us with his innocence and righteousness, for the glory of your name. Deliver our understanding from all blindness, and our hearts from all willfulness and rebellion, we pray through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. *Amen*

Assurance of Pardon: Romans 4:20-25

Psalm of Preparation: 66A O Shout to God with Joy

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 40:27-31

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 12:12-17

Sermon Title: *Run!, Strive!, Win!*

Hymn of Response: 407 Let Our Choir New Anthems Raise

Confession of Faith: 1 Heidelberg Catechism (p. 872)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 291 O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

PM Worship

22B All You That Fear Jehovah's Name

557 Great King of Nations, Hear Our Prayer

452 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

Old Covenant Reading: Hosea 8:1-14

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 7:24-27

Sermon Title: *Common Delusion*

Adult Sunday School – Public Profession of Faith III: Sin and Salvation

Suggested Preparations

Monday (9/22) Read and discuss Hebrews 12:12–17

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. Strive for peace with everyone, and for 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 by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

What sort of situation in the church, then and now, does Hebrews imagine will be parallel to [the story of Esau]? From the beginning of verse 15, it looks as though the writer is aware that within every church, every Christian fellowship, there may be some people, whether few or many, who are, as it were, ‘passengers.’ They are enjoying being where they are; they like the company of Christian people; they feel safe and secure. But they have not done business with God for themselves. They have not sought, and found, His grace, that loving mercy which goes down to the root of their very being and transforms them at the core. Nobody, says the writer, should ‘lack God’s grace.’ Other members of the community must take care at this point, must watch out for one another and make sure that grace reaches everyone.

Because, if people continue to miss out on knowing God’s love for themselves, the warnings of Deuteronomy 29:18 may come true. Deuteronomy warns that, even within the people of God themselves, there may be ‘a root sprouting poisonous and bitter growth.’ Sometimes, from within an apparently happy church or fellowship, discontent can arise. It may take the form of doctrinal or ethical disagreement; these can be real enough, but often they can provide a smokescreen for personal agendas. The sign is always the sense of bitterness that accompanies it. Disagreement between wise, praying Christians can take place without bitterness; where that troubling and poisonous bitterness starts to make its presence felt, we should recognize what’s going on. When people are outwardly part of the community, but inwardly not completely open to God’s love and leading, they are capable of saying and doing things which disgrace themselves and the community. Like Esau, they can have a moment of madness which creates a new situation, and they can’t go back.

Read or sing Hymn 446 Be Thou My Vision

Tuesday (9/23) Read and discuss Hebrews 12:4–11

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.
For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (ESV)

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes writes:

The reminder is now gently added that their experience of affliction has in fact been lighter also than that of so many other contestants, both past and present, for in *the struggle against sin they have not yet resisted to the point of shedding their blood*. In the days following their reception of the gospel, as we have seen, they had “endured a hard struggle with sufferings,” involving public abuse, the plundering of their property, and imprisonment for some, but so far they have not been tested with the challenge of laying down their lives for the faith they profess. This suggests a striking contrast between such affliction as they had passed through and the manner in which Christ came with the express purpose of shedding His blood on the cross for their redemption. It is true, of course, that the sufferings of Christ’s followers, however severe they may be, are always incomparably slight when weighed against the sufferings of the Master Himself. But the point here seems to be that these Hebrew Christians are now shrinking back, and even thinking of abandoning the race, as the possibility of further and perhaps more painful persecution presents itself. Well do they know that their consciences have been purified from dead works and their eternal redemption procured by the shedding of the blood of Jesus: how willingly, then, should they be prepared to persevere and to suffer, even to the point of shedding their lifeblood, in gratitude to Him who gave His all for them and in loyalty to so wonderful a gospel! The contest continues and the sabbath rest for the people of God is not now but hereafter. “There is no reason for us to seek our discharge from the LORD, whatever service we have performed,” says Calvin, “because Christ does not have any discharged soldiers except those who have conquered death itself.”

Read or sing Psalm 66A O Shout to God with Joy

Wednesday (9/24) Read and discuss Isaiah 40:27–31

Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
“My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God”?
Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and to him who has no might he increases strength.
Even youths shall faint and be weary,
and young men shall fall exhausted;
but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint. (ESV)

Alec Motyer writes:

Even if we wouldn't dream of saying it, circumstances can easily prompt the unbidden thought, "Where is God in all this? And why is He not doing something about it? Has He forgotten?" There is, of course, a god who is not there when we need him (1 Kings 18:27), but not the LORD God Almighty. He is 'unfainting, unwearying,' that is, He lacks neither energy nor commitment; His strength does not ebb away, nor does He tire of the task [at] hand. It's just that 'He is unfathomable in His discernment' – He sees to the heart of the situation in a way we never can and in ways we are not equipped to appreciate. The sooner we learn that lesson the better. It will meet us again in Isaiah in the famous words (55:8), 'My thoughts are not your thoughts ... your ways are not My ways.' But please remember: our inability to 'discern' does not mean that no discernment is at work; our inability to see point or purpose does not mean there is no point or purpose. The more we exalt the greatness of our God, the more we learn to appreciate our smallness, weakness, incapacity. We need to learn not to fret and fume; we need to accept our limitations of knowledge, wisdom, and foresight. Or, as Isaiah tells us, we need to practice 'waiting' for the LORD. Waiting is looking. When Isaiah puts Israel's grouching into words (v. 27) what does He do next? He directs our eyes to the LORD (v. 28). Look away from yourself, *look at Him*. Next comes, *expect from Him* (v. 29); He is ever the giving God – giving strength to surmount the problem, to run the race, and (best of all) to walk the path (v. 31). But this is not (so to speak) a hypodermic syringe operation – the injection of some transforming serum called 'strength.' It is what the LORD is in Himself: the unfainting, unwearying One imparts His own unfainting, unwearying [presence with and in us].

Read or sing Hymn 407 Let Our Choir New Anthems Raise

Thursday (9/25) Read and discuss Matthew 7:24–27

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” (ESV)

There is only **one foundation** upon which you can build your life so that your life ultimately matters both in this age ... and in the age to come.

On Christ, ... the solid rock, I stand;
all other ground ... is sinking sand,
all other ground ... is sinking sand.

That is where the wise person builds his life. That is the immediate application of this passage. Yet, intriguingly, this passage also points beyond the wise builder to the Master Builder.

As Jeffrey Gibbs points out:

Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount by teaching with astonishing and unparalleled authority, giving present salvation and promising certain future comfort and fulness. [Our Lord] concludes with that same authority ... [declaring that] **He** will stand as **Judge of all**, ... granting or denying access [to the eternal Kingdom of God] on that Last Day.

Jesus is not merely a wise Teacher who has some interesting ideas about how you could make your life better. Your life, right now, and your life for all of eternity depends entirely on what you do ... with this Jesus.

The authority that Jesus is claiming is breathtaking. The reverence that committed Jews had for the Torah as the word of God they were to have for Christ’s teaching. But instead of presenting Himself as a Second Moses who pointed the people of God to have faith in Yahweh; Jesus is putting Himself in the place of Yahweh and demanding that we entrust ourselves to Him.

Friday (9/26) Read and discuss Hosea 8

Set the trumpet to your lips!
One like a vulture is over the house of the LORD,
because they have transgressed my covenant
and rebelled against my law.
To me they cry,
“My God, we—Israel—know you.”
Israel has spurned the good;
the enemy shall pursue him.

They made kings, but not through me.
 They set up princes, but I knew it not.
With their silver and gold they made idols
 for their own destruction.
I have spurned your calf, O Samaria.
 My anger burns against them.
How long will they be incapable of innocence?
For it is from Israel;
a craftsman made it;
 it is not God.
The calf of Samaria
 shall be broken to pieces.

For they sow the wind,
 and they shall reap the whirlwind.
The standing grain has no heads;
 it shall yield no flour;
if it were to yield,
 strangers would devour it.
Israel is swallowed up;
 already they are among the nations
 as a useless vessel.
For they have gone up to Assyria,
 a wild donkey wandering alone;
 Ephraim has hired lovers.
Though they hire allies among the nations,
 I will soon gather them up.
And the king and princes shall soon writhe
 because of the tribute.

Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning,
 they have become to him altars for sinning.
Were I to write for him my laws by the ten thousands,
 they would be regarded as a strange thing.
As for my sacrificial offerings,
 they sacrifice meat and eat it,
 but the LORD does not accept them.
Now he will remember their iniquity
 and punish their sins;
 they shall return to Egypt.
For Israel has forgotten his Maker
 and built palaces,
and Judah has multiplied fortified cities;
 so I will send a fire upon his cities,
 and it shall devour her strongholds. (ESV)

Commenting on verse 14 (the last verse) Derek Kidner writes:

The first sentence is the key to it, for the Old Testament does not despise fine buildings or strong walls: only the notion that they are in themselves fit to be one's glory or security. Nehemiah, building his wall and carefully deploying his workforce, showed the right priorities of the day: 'Remember the LORD, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes' (Neh 4:14).

As for Judah's fortified ... towns, the brutal answer to them was only a generation away. There were forty-six of them, according to Sennacherib, and their fate is told in a single verse of 2 Kings. 'In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them' (2 Kings 18:13). The only one to survive was Jerusalem, following the message from God to Hezekiah which opened with the significant words: 'I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria' (2 Kings 19:20).

Read or sing Hymn 291 O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

Saturday (9/27) Read and discuss Hebrews 12:12–17

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. Strive for peace with everyone, and for 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 by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. (ESV)

Calvin writes:

Just as [the author of Hebrews] has already exhorted them to sanctification so now he mentions a particular example to call them back from the opposite kind of pollution, and says that there must be no fornicator. He immediately goes on to the more general remark, 'nor any profane person,' a word which is appropriately contrasted with holiness. The LORD calls us for the purpose of making us holy in His obedience. He does this when we renounce the world. Anyone who is so pleased with his own filthiness that he wallows in it profanes himself, and at the same time we can define the profane in general terms as those who do not value the grace of God highly enough to seek after it and reject the world. Since men become profane in various ways, greater care must be taken that there is no opening given to Satan to defile us by his corruption, and as there is no true religion without consecration we must always progress in the fear of God, in the mortification of the flesh, and in the whole practice of piety. ...

The example [of Esau] can serve for us as an exposition of the meaning of the word profane, for when Esau put more value on a single meal than on his birthright, he deprived himself of his blessing. The profane, therefore, are those in whom the love of the world so holds sway and prevails, that they forget heaven as men who are carried away by ambition, addicted to money and riches, given over to gluttony, and entangled with other kinds of pleasures, and give the spiritual kingdom of Christ either no place or the last place in their concerns. Moreover this example is most appropriate, because when the LORD wants to show the force of the love with which He follows His people, He calls all those whom He has called to the hope of eternal life His firstborn. This is a priceless honor which He bestows on us, compared with which all the wealth of the world, all its advantages, honors, pleasures, and everything else that is commonly thought of as leading to a happy life will be like a cheap meal.

Prayer: Please lift up tomorrow's morning and evening worship services.