

**HEBREWS 13**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Hebrews chapter 13 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

We will be finishing up our study in the book of Hebrews this evening and I pray that you have been blessed by the lessons that God has shown us as we have been studying through Hebrews.

And, keep in mind that Paul wrote this letter to Jewish believers who were struggling with their faith because of the persecution they were facing, mostly from their fellow Jews.

Thus, they were being drawn back into the legalism of Judaism, back to the types, the pictures, instead of the substance, which is Christ!

And so, as we have seen over the past few months, Paul clearly shows us how Jesus is superior to angels, to Moses, to Joshua, over the Levitical priesthood by showing that Jesus has come from a better priestly order, that He has a better covenant for us, a better sanctuary, and He is a better sacrifice.

Now, in this last division of this letter we have seen how Jesus is superior over the principle of faith and He is the One who enables us to walk by faith.

To encourage these believers who were struggling with their faith he gave them examples of faith that were manifested in the lives of the Old Testament saints – men and women who walked by faith and not by the Law. And we saw that in Hebrews chapter 11.

Then, in Hebrews chapter 12, since they saw these great examples of faith to encourage them, Paul exhorts them to continue strong in this race of faith and finish well, knowing that Jesus is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. In other words, keep your eyes on Jesus. Paul was encouraging them to have endurance in this walk of faith, not to give up.

And here in chapter 13 Paul is going to ***EXHORT THEM IN THE FAITH***, to show them that true faith demands true living.

You see, our lives should match what we believe.

A great example of how the early church lived out their faith is seen when Pliny the Younger reported on the Christians to the Roman emperor Trajan in the first century.

This is what he wrote back then about Christians and the way they lived,

***“They bind themselves by an oath not to any criminal end, but to avoid theft or robbery or adultery, never to break their word or repudiate [deny] a deposit when called on to refund it.”***

You see, he was looking for something to charge them with, some reason to have them arrested and he couldn't find anything because they didn't commit crimes, they paid their debts!

Our faith is to be real; people should see us live out our faith. Peter makes that point as he tells us in I Peter chapter 2, **“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. . . . For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”** I Peter 2:11-12, 15.

Thus, Paul is going to give to us very practical exhortations on how to live out our Christian faith, what should flow from our lives.

As I have said, our faith should be real, we should live what we say we believe and that will happen as we surrender our lives to the Holy Spirit.

You see, when we do the fruit of the Spirit will flow from our lives, love will be manifested with its multifaceted qualities of joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

If we are living in the Spirit, we then need to walk in the Spirit, or the works of the flesh will manifest themselves in our lives and that is not pretty!

Warren Wiersbe, in his commentary on Hebrews titled this chapter like this, ***“PARDON ME, YOUR FAITH IS SHOWING.”***

I like that. Listen to what he wrote regarding this chapter and then we will begin looking at Hebrews chapter 13 this evening. He wrote,

As you read this last chapter in Hebrews, you get the impression that the writer had a great deal of miscellaneous matter to discuss and saved it till the end.

In Hebrews 12, we were rejoicing on Mount Zion, and now we are discussing such everyday topics as hospitality, marriage, church officers, and who was the last one to be released from jail.

But in the Bible, there is no division between doctrine and duty, revelation and responsibility. The two always go together.

The emphasis in this last section of the book is on *living by faith*. The writer presented the great *examples* of faith in Hebrews 11, and the *encouragements* to faith in Hebrews 12. In Hebrews 13, he presented the *evidences* of faith that should appear in our lives if we are really walking by faith and not by sight.

How true that is. With that said, let's begin reading in Hebrews chapter 13, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

### **HEBREWS 13**

#### **VERSE 1**

I think this is an interesting place for Paul to start. Think about this for a minute. When you think about Christianity, what is a characteristic that should come to mind?

It is love and not just any love, but that **AGAPE** love or that unconditional love that can only come from God. It is something that the world cannot give because they do not have the Spirit of God in them, but we as Christians, this is what should flow from our lives.

Now, in saying that, the word that Paul uses for love here in Hebrews 13:1 is not **AGAPE**, but he uses the Greek word **PHILADELPHIA** for love, and it speaks of a brotherly love.

Why did he use that word?

Think about who he is writing to. He is writing to Jewish believers whose families have turned from them because of their faith in Christ and now they have a new family, believers, and thus, they are to have that brotherly love towards each other as Christ has brought them into the family of God! And thus, a characteristic of a Christian is their love for each other, for the brethren.

Now, in saying that, in knowing that, why in the body of Christ do we see Christians not loving each other, arguing and fighting with each other?

Like it or not, the answer is really simple. It is because our walk with God is not right!

Paul said in Romans 5:5, **“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”**

You see, you have cut off His love and it is then reflected in how you treat the brethren. If we can't love the brethren, if we can't love those who were created in the image of God, if we can't love those who we can see, then how in the world are we going to love God who we can't see, how can we say we love God?

The reality is, we can't!

I think the real issue is pride and refusing to obey God's command!

Paul wants this brotherly love to continue in their lives and so does the Lord in our lives!

We are told in I John 3:18, **“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”**

And Jesus tells us in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

Also, in Romans 12:10 Paul reminds us, **“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.”**

And in I Thessalonians 4:9 we are told, **“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.”**

As Christians, this kind of love should just flow from our lives and be an example to others of what brotherly love is all about.

Every person that comes through the door of this church should feel like they are part of the family. And I have seen some of you, you welcome them into the church like you are welcoming them into your home and it is such blessing to me to see that kind of brotherly love. May it continue and continue to grow!

## VERSE 2

Paul now speaks of hospitality and during that period of time, as you traveled you needed to find a safe place to stay, it was dangerous being out in the open.

But keep in mind that in those days they didn't have a lot of options when it came to finding a place to sleep at night.

They did not have any Motel 6's, you know, *"We'll leave the light on for you!"*

And even the places that travelers could go to were immoral places, many times being nothing more than brothels and inns, they were one and the same!

And often travelers would just sleep outside in the open, but that was just as dangerous. So not a lot of options for travelers.

Because of that, Christians were encouraged to show hospitality to other Christian travelers by opening their homes to them, and this showed that brotherly love we were taking about.

You see, for Christians, this was a way to live out their faith, by showing love to the brethren, by opening up your home to them.

And you know how it is. Because of their hospitality though, people caught on and started to take advantage of them, just as we see happen in the church today.

People would pretend to be church leaders, Christians, and thus, in around 90-110 A. D. the early church came up with this “*Ministry Manual*” you might say, called the *Didache* to help them recognize deceivers.

Listen to what they said regarding how you can identify a false prophet:

*Let every apostle that comes to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain except one day; but if there be a need, also the next; but if he remains three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goes away, let him take nothing but bread . . . but if he asks for money, he is a false prophet. And every prophet that speaks in the Spirit you shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this one sin shall not be forgiven. But not everyone that speaks in the Spirit is a prophet; but only if he holds the ways of the Lord. Therefore from their ways shall the false prophet and the true prophet be known.*

- The Ante-Nicean Fathers, Volume 7, p. 380

Will people try to take advantage of you? Of course they will, that is human nature and not a good thing. But error on the side of grace and show brotherly love towards people.

And here is where it gets interesting. Paul also adds this little note, basically saying that as you are entertaining strangers you may even be entertaining angels.

Now, is Paul speaking of messengers, pastors here?

I don't think so. I think he is speaking of angels.

Do we see this anywhere else in the Scriptures?

Yes, in Genesis chapter 19, for example, Lot has an encounter with two angels before the destruction of Sodom by God and the other cities and they appear to Lot in human form.

So what does this mean to us?

Are we to be hospitable to strangers because some may be angels?

I don't think that is the point, not at all.

The idea is that it doesn't matter who you are serving, you are ultimately serving the Lord and thus, do so accordingly. It doesn't matter if it is the President of the United States or your average Joe or even an angel, you are serving the Lord and may we not forget that!

In other words, don't focus on who you are serving, but serve each person the same and as we extend love to strangers, we are extending love to Jesus.

In Matthew 25:35-40 we are told by Jesus, **“for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”**

That is the correct perspective to have as you serve, you are serving Jesus!

### VERSE 3

Here Paul is speaking of those who have been imprisoned for their faith in Jesus Christ!

Aristodes, the pagan orator, said this of Christians, *“If they hear that any one of their number is in prison or in distress for the sake of their Christ’s name, they all render aid in his necessity, and if they can, they redeem him, to set him free.”*



That is how it should be. Keep in mind that the Roman government under Caesar Nero was brutal towards Christians.

And if you were in prison for your faith, or in prison in general, you would have to depend on the generosity of others to bring them food, warm clothing, reading materials and other necessities. The Roman government didn't care if you died in prison from a lack of food or freezing to death because you didn't have any warm clothes.

And the problem was that as these Christians found out about their brethren in prison, they were afraid to step forward as they too may be placed in prison.

And Paul reminds them that **“you yourselves are in the body also.”**

In other words, you are part of the body of Christ and you need to take care of each other, don't neglect them, but help them!

Now here's the thing. Is this just for Christians who are in prison?

I don't think so.

I also see this extended to all who are in prison, all who are in distress, to show them the love of Christ.

But why, they are evil, they did wrong, they broke the law!

Because folks, we all stand by the grace of God. And as Christians, we can do foolish things, but we are still family.

And those that are not saved, they need the love of Jesus in their lives so they can be taken out of the kingdom of darkness and placed into the kingdom of light through Jesus!

Let brotherly love continue – let the love of Christ continue!

Let me share with you how this is played out in the lives of Christians who face very difficult situations and how their lives are a witness to their faith in Christ.

This took place several years ago, but I think you will remember the events and how hard it was for even those who did not know this family. We are told,

The final words of a dying Christian father of three fatally shot during a Sunday walk with his family on a Wisconsin trail bridge were, ***“forgive the shooter,”*** his wounded wife has revealed.

Erin Stoffel, 32, woke from a coma with a breathing tube in her throat on Tuesday just two days after she and her husband of more than a decade, Jonathan, 33, and their 11-year-old daughter, Olivia, were shot during a random attack on the Trestle Trail Bridge in the city of Menasha.

While Erin survived the shooting, Jonathan and Olivia did not, and the first thing that the grieving mom of three did when she awoke in a hospital bed was write down her late-husband’s final words to her.

***“The family would like to make it known that Erin said Jon’s last words to her after he was shot were, ‘Forgive the shooter.’ We truly love because Christ first loved us. This was the heart of a man who walked the talk - his dying breath and last wish was only that his wife forgive the gunman,”*** Julia Stoffel, Jonathan’s sister-in-law, wrote . . .

Loved ones are still trying to come to grips with the senseless shooting, which has affected many in the community. . . .

Erin, who sustained three gunshot wounds to the abdomen, was able to get her two youngest daughters, Ezra, 5, and Selah, 7, to safety and they were unharmed. Jon and Olivia, along with another man, Adam Bentsdahl, 31, of Appleton, died at the scene.

“This is a tragedy. It’s something awful and we’re going to grieve and go through all of the emotions of that, and at the same time we do have hope,” Calvary senior pastor Danny Leavins told Fox 11.

The family is said to be leaning on their faith after the tragic shooting. Julia quoted Romans 8:28 and said she trusts that the senseless killing “somehow will be used for good.”

“The family has a lot of faith in the Lord and we’re just leaning on that. We know that Jon and Olivia are with the Lord. We are holding strong to the Bible first,” she said, according to The Northwestern. . . .

Jonathan was remembered at a prayer vigil on Monday as a good Christian man who truly lived out his faith.

“Jon was the guy that would give the shirt off his back to anybody. If somebody was doing something, he would be the first guy there,” said Tommy Bongers, Jon Stoffel’s second cousin. . . .

- <https://bit.ly/2EPbe8C>

I met her at one of the safety conferences, and her faith is strong, it is real. And in this situation we see her live what she says she believes, and even in death they honor God! It is not easy, but it is what God has called us to do. We are to love with a brotherly love our brothers and sisters in the Lord. We are to love with a brotherly love those who are strangers, unbelievers. We are to love those in prison, those who are in need and minister to them the love of Jesus Christ!

Listen to how R. Kent Hughes sums these verses three verses we have looked at so far this evening. He wrote,

- We must will to practice brotherly love, Philadelphia: “Keep on loving each other as brothers” (v.1). We must will to contemplate the fact of our mutual generation, its profundity [understanding] and eternity. Our words and actions must be committed to enhancing brotherly love.
- We must will to practice love of hospitality, philozenia – a love for strangers: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (v.2). Open hearts and open houses are the Christian way. Hospitality builds the Body of Christ and opens the door to a lost world.
- We must will to be empathetic, to be imaginatively sympathetic: “Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering” (v. 3). The will to imaginative sympathy will make our hearts like that of the Master and will encourage an authentic Christian walk.

- R. Kent Hughes, Hebrews Volume Two, An Anchor for the Soul, p. 212

Some pretty powerful words to think about and then apply to our lives. To live out our faith and Paul is not done. Listen to what he says next.

#### VERSE 4

First of all, let’s think about the period of time that Paul wrote this letter. During Paul’s day there was a common view held by Jewish and Christian ascetics or those who abstained from things, to remain single and celibate because it made you more spiritual and it produced a holier life than those people who were married.

For example, a Christian named Origen, who lived in the third century, had himself castrated as a way to honor God and serve Him with greater devotion. And many men did this.

Foolishness. In fact, Paul warned us in I Timothy 4:3 that in the last days there will be false teachers who will “*forbid marriage.*” So we are coming around to that once again, I guess.

And yet, Paul tells us that “**Marriage is honorable.**” And yet, in our society today, we have made it dishonorable.

But how?

Listen carefully.

- *Marriage is dishonored by divorce, justified or not.*
- *Marriage is dishonored by living together outside of marriage.*
- *Marriage is dishonored by adultery.*
- *Marriage is dishonored by neglect.*
- *Marriage is dishonored by re-definition.*

God has given to us marriage and what the Bible tells us and what Paul is saying here is so straight forward that the only reason people don't follow what God is saying is because they choose not to, they would rather live in sin than obey the Lord.

Make no mistake about it, the Bible condemns sex outside of marriage, any sex outside of marriage. I don't care how much you love each other, it is still a sin in God's eyes, not because I have said it, but God has!

The word that Paul uses for “**fornicators**” is the Greek word PURNOS and it speaks of any sexual sin, any sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, bestiality and-so-on. And notice that fornication and adultery is not a sickness it is a sin!

Now, what some do is they take this and apply it also to marriage and they say that sex is only for propagation or for producing children, and that is wrong.

God has given to us this intimate relationship between a husband and his wife to enjoy. Thus, sex within the bounds of marriage is honorable, but outside of marriage it will be judged!

And for Christians, there are consequences to your disobedience.

I remember pastor Mike Macintosh share a story that took place in his church several years ago. There was a gentleman whose walk was not too good, and he hit the bar scene to look for women. He found one and took her home and they had sex. The next morning when he woke up, she was gone. As he went into the bathroom to wash-up, there on the mirror written in lipstick were these words, *“Welcome to the world of AIDS!”*

I think God knows what is best for our lives and we need to listen.

Paul, in I Corinthians 7:2-5 has this to say in regard to the sexual relations between a husband and his wife. He tells us, **“Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”**

In other words, don't use sex as a weapon against your spouse, but enjoy the intimacy that God has given within the bounds of marriage!

And think about our witness as others look at our life, if we are living together outside of marriage or, even worse, committing adultery, it sheds a bad light on the God we serve and our witness!

Make no mistake about it, we live in a world that is trying to conform us into its image, make us look just like the rest of the world is, doing the things that they do, and God does not want you to be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, by being in His Word and not only reading and studying it, but applying it to your life.

In other words, walk worthy of the high calling by which you have been called. Live what you say you believe, or your words are empty!

### VERSES 5-6

Paul is saying a lot with very few words and here he is dealing with covetousness. And when you think about it, covetousness is the opposite of contentment.

And what we see today, so often, is that covetousness and greed are excused or even admired in today's culture and are simply called ambition.

And yet, there is no contentment. Someone asked millionaire Bernard Baruch, *"How much money does it take for a rich man to be satisfied?"* Baruch answered, *"Just a million more than he has."*

So what is Paul speaking of when he speaks about being content, and not being covetous? How can we be content?

The only way a person is going to be content is as he trusts in the Lord, as he is satisfied in the Lord and what the Lord has given to him. You see, outside of the Lord there is no real contentment!

And I believe that true contentment begins on the inside and when you are content in the Lord, you have everything. And when you are not, there is nothing external that is going to satisfy! And we see that played out for us so often today.

Paul, in Philippians 4:11-13 shows us how to live by giving his life as an example for them to follow. He said, **“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”**

You see, contentment has much more to do with what you are on the inside than what you have in regard to possessions on the outside, like I have said!

Paul knew how to be content in any state he was in because his contentment was based in the Lord and so should ours!

And notice how Paul links this contentment as he quotes out of Deuteronomy 31:6 and the Lord tells us, **“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

In other words, we can't count on material things, but we can depend on God and His promise to us, He will never leave us, He will never forsake us – ***NEVER!***

And, the way that this sentence is structured in the Greek speaks of this being impossible, Christ can never leave us, never depart from us, it just can't happen!

But what if we walk away from Him? As soon as you turn around, repent of your sin, He is standing there with His arms open wide with forgiveness!

Spurgeon put it like this, ***“You that are familiar with the Greek text know that there are five negatives here. We cannot manage five negatives in English, but the Greeks find them not too large a handful. Here the negatives have a fivefold force. It is as though it said, ‘I will not, not leave thee; I will never, no never, forsake thee.’”***



He also wrote, *“Here it is – ‘For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ This is the reason why we must not be covetous. There is no room to be covetous, no excuse for being covetous, for God hath said, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ We ought to be content. If we are not content, we are acting insanely, seeing the Lord has said, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’”*

And lastly, he wrote, *“I cannot under the influence of this grand text find room for doubt or fear. I cannot stand here and be miserable to-night. I am not going to attempt such a thing; but I cannot be despondent with such a text as this, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ I defy the devil himself to mention circumstances under which I ought to be miserable if this text is true. Child of God, nothing ought to make you unhappy when you can realize this precious text.”*

Now, in knowing that, Paul wrote, **“The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”**

In other words, *“Since the Lord is with me, since He will never forsake me, I have no need to fear what man can do, the Lord is with me and thus, I am content in Him as I can rest in Him!”*

#### VERSE 7

Please understand that Paul is telling us to follow godly leadership, not leaders who are moving you away from God, leading you away from His Word.

Today, we see people flocking to those that are not faithfully teaching God’s Word because they want their ears tickled, they don’t want the solid meat of God’s Word that will cause them to examine their life!

Paul told Timothy, “**Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.**”

And yes, leaders are accountable to the Lord. James 3:1 tells us, “**My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**”

Paul says to remember them, be mindful of those leaders that God has placed over them.

I would ask that you be mindful of the leadership here at Calvary and you keep us in prayer, we all can use it.

You see, the battle is intense and as we watch over you and pray for you, you are doing the same for us and what we see is a healthy body, we see brotherly love for it is hard to pray for someone you don't love!

#### VERSE 8

Now what is the connection between what Paul just said in Hebrews 13:7 as he was speaking about following godly leaders and what he says here in Hebrews 13:8 about Jesus?

I think the point that Paul is making is that these shepherds of God's people need to be steadfast in the faith and they are following the example of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ who is “**the same yesterday, today and forever.**”

That is my heart's desire as I share with you the Word of God, that I am steadfast and immovable in the faith and I am committed to pure living and pure doctrine.

Now, as you move away from the purity of doctrine, from the Word of God then you start changing Jesus.

And think about that. That obviously contradicts what the Scriptures are teaching, that Jesus is immutable or unchanging. The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament and He is our God today and forever!

Thus, this should bring great comfort to our lives and as we learn of the nature of Jesus, as we are taught the nature of Jesus, that same nature should flow from our lives!

Now, as we read on, in the next several verses, Paul is going to speak of not being carried away from Christ, He hasn't changed, and He won't change. So don't be carried away by these false doctrines, these false teachings.

So let's read on and examine this important point that Paul is making here.

#### VERSE 9

Make no mistake about it. There is never a shortage of various and strange doctrines in the church.

But the ones specifically in mind here seem to deal with a return to Mosaic ceremonies and laws that were fulfilled in Jesus.

And today, it seems like various and strange doctrines are blowing through the church at a rate I have never seen before and people are setting their sails and they are being carried away by them! In fact, the stranger the doctrine the more people seem to gravitate to it!

Today, there is this greatest book, this book is so inspired book, this teaching and that teaching and when you try to show them that it is not biblical, they get mad and go away. If you don't agree with their book or teaching you have a problem.

The reality is, and I will be honest with you on this, the only book I hold dear to my heart, the only book that I treasure and I know is inspired, is the Word of God, the Bible. So I hold onto that. Not that I don't read books, but they are not inspired, only the Bible is!

And for these Jews who were thinking about going back to the Law, Paul wants them to understand that we are not established or confirmed by the keeping of the Law or the ceremonies, but by the Grace of God that has been imputed into our lives by faith in Jesus!

It is not an approval by merits, the keeping of the Law, but God approves us through His Son, Jesus Christ, even though we don't deserve it.

Paul put it this way in Ephesians 2:8-9, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**

#### VERSES 10-14

What is Paul speaking of here?

Simply, the unsaved Jews probably told these believing Jews that if they did not return to the Levitical system, the Law, they were illegitimate.

But Paul tells them, ***“Forget about it! We have an altar that those outside of the faith have no right to unless they come by faith to Jesus!”***

I believe that altar is the cross!

Paul put it this way in I Corinthians 1:18-25, **“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”**

And in I Corinthians 2:1-5 we are told, **“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”**

Here’s the thing. If Jesus suffered outside the gates of the city of Jerusalem, where Calvary was located, then the altar in the Temple is done away with because the new altar, the cross and the work that was done on that cross is completed!

We see that Jesus, as He suffered, was branded illegitimate by the Jewish religious leaders, and if that is true, and it is, then why should we expect anything more from the unsaved upon our own lives.

Paul tells us this very thing in Romans 8:16-17, **“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”**

And in II Timothy 3:12 we are told, **“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”**

Notice not *“might”* but **“will”** suffer persecution for the Gospel’s sake!

Thus, Paul is telling them to go **“outside the camp”** or to leave the old system, the legalism of Judaism and come to the New Covenant that is in Christ.

You see, to the Jewish people, everything outside the camp was unclean, it was evil, but now Jesus has been taken there and by His shed blood that which was unclean has been made clean, you and me!

And let’s face it, it is difficult to face persecution, to bear His reproach but when we take our eyes off the temporary and look at the eternal, it is much easier.

All that this world has is temporary, thus, look to the eternal.

Paul said in II Corinthians 4:16-18, **“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”**

We are citizens of heaven and await that glorious city that is to come!

VERSES 15-16

You see, we have an altar, the cross and we have a High Priest, Jesus, let us offer sacrifices, not blood or grain sacrifices, but the sacrifice of praise that comes from our lips!

But not only what we say but our entire lives should be placed on the altar of sacrifice as a living sacrifice unto God.

Paul put it this way in Romans 12:1-2, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

And think about it, a sacrifice must cost you something or it is worthless, it is not a sacrifice.

People may say, *“I just don’t have the time for that!”* or whatever and that is the case for most of us.

But for the things we do for the Lord, it will cost us something, and God will honor our sacrifice of praise, and all our sacrifices made unto Him! He will equip us and give us the time and ability to do those things and as we do that, we are bringing glory and honor to Him!

As you are praising God your focus is not only upward, but it extends outward to your fellow man as you do good towards others. You reach out to others with the love of God that has been imputed to your life!

VERSE 17

Here is the problem. When a pastor speaks with the authority of God's Word, they have the right to say how we are to live, how we are to walk after God.

Now some have taken that to an unbiblical extreme like with the Shepherding Movement. There the people have to bring all they do before the pastor or elders. They can't get married, buy a car, change jobs without the okay from the leaders of the church.

That is wrong, how do you grow in the Lord and if the leaders die, then your god has died, who are you going to go to?

As a pastor I am to teach you the things of God and you are to take those things to heart.

Now many do reject what God has said because it goes against what they want to do – and that is wrong.

But also, you search the Scriptures to see if what I say, what others are teaching is from the Word of God and then apply those truths to your life if they are!

What we see today is that many are following leaders who are teaching false doctrine and their ears are being tickled but there is no growth in their lives because they are not being challenged in their faith.

VERSES 18-19

Here is a prayer request by Paul, the writer of this letter I believe.

It would seem that obstacles were preventing him from coming to see them and he knew that prayer could break down those barriers.

The word "**pray**" is in the present imperative verb tense and what that means is a continuous action and something that they were already doing!



Paul asked for prayer also in Ephesians, as well as other places.

Here in Ephesians he wanted them to pray, “**. . . that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.**” Ephesians 6:19.

In hearing that of Paul, how much more do God’s ministers today need people to be praying for them!

#### VERSES 20-22

Here Paul gives a benediction or blessing like Moses did in Numbers 6:22-27, where we are told, “**And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: “The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.”’ So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.**”

And notice that it is the Lord working in our lives and the power that was used to raise Jesus from the dead is the power that God will use in our lives to make us complete or to prepare us, make us ready for His use.

You see, it is not to do our own thing, but to do His will, to please Him for we were created for His good pleasure. He wants to make us – ***COMPLETE!***

Warren Wiersbe sums it up for us like this. He wrote,

*The phrase “make you complete” (Heb. 13:21) is the translation of one Greek word, katartidzo. This is an unfamiliar word to us, but it was familiar to the people who received this letter. The doctors knew it because it meant “to set a broken bone.” To fishermen it meant “to mend a broken net” (see Matt. 4:21). To sailors it meant “to outfit a ship for a voyage.” To soldiers it meant “to equip an army for battle.”*

*Our Saviour in heaven wants to equip us for life on earth. Tenderly, He wants to set the “broken bones” in our lives so that we might walk straight and run our life-races successfully. He wants to repair the breaks in the nets so that we might catch fish and win souls. He wants to equip us for battle and outfit us so that we will not be battered in the storms of life. In brief, He wants to mature us so that He can work in us and through us that which pleases Him and accomplishes His will.*

*How does He equip us? By tracing this word katartidzo in the New Testament, we can discover the tools that God uses to mature and equip His children. He uses the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16–17) and prayer (1 Thes. 3:10) in the fellowship of the local church (Eph. 4:11–12). He also uses individual believers to equip us and mend us (Gal. 6:1). Finally, He uses suffering to perfect His children (1 Peter 5:10), and this relates to what we learned from Hebrews 12 about chastening.*

Exactly, God is working in us, making us compete. Remember what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:12-16 , **“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”**

Paul is not saying that our salvation is based upon our good works but that God is working in us and as He does our salvation or the evidence of our salvation is worked out in our lives, the things we do!

And Paul ends this benediction with the word **“Amen!”** or *“let it be!”*

But he is not done with his letter just yet, he has a few more things to say!

#### VERSES 22-25

Paul has spent some 13 chapters here, just a **“few words”** to encourage these discouraged Christians. He wants them, by the time they finish this letter, to consider Jesus and be encouraged in the faith, living what they believe! He does not want them to go backward but to move forward in their relationship with Jesus. To anchor their lives in Jesus so that they will not drift away!

That should also be the case in our own lives as we have read through and studied this letter!

This writer, who I believe is Paul, knew Timothy and we don't know the situation, but Timothy was in jail for his faith and he has now been released. And it would seem, although we can't be dogmatic about this, Paul is writing from Italy as he says, "**those from Italy greet you.**" He probably wrote this letter from Rome!

Paul ends this letter by saying, "**Grace be with you all. Amen.**" Hebrews 13:25. Notice, the Old Covenant has passed off the scene and the New Covenant is established in Christ.

You see, Paul speaks of the Grace of God, not the Law of God!

Thus, Jesus is superior to all, don't go back, move forward, walk by faith and not by sight, endure to the end knowing that the work that God has begun in you, He will complete it!

Amen to that!

And thus, we conclude Paul's letter to the Hebrews, and may we learn and grow from this as the Holy Spirit teaches us those things that we need in our own lives to mature in the faith!