

## Hebrews 13:1-25

As we have traveled through Hebrews, the Holy Spirit has given us a glimpse of heaven.

Our Lord and Saviour and Intercessor is there already, and because of Christ, one day heaven will be our home also.

Most of Hebrews is a heavenly book, but its doctrines should make an earthly difference in our lives.

Yes, as is always the case in the Word of God, heavenly principles should produce good earthly practices.

**"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."** John 13:17

So in chapter 12, the practical applications of the spiritual truths found in this

book began to appear, and Chapter 13 continues this theme.

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In the first verse of Chapter 13, the Hebrew believers are exhorted to **"Let brotherly love continue."**

They had followed Jesus Christ, the Messiah that their nation had rejected, so it is not surprising that they also were rejected by their society.

Indeed, Jesus told His disciples, **"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."**

So under these adverse conditions, it was fitting and needful for them to be bound together in love.

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And it was also important that they be bound together by hospitality.

V 2 **"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."**

In that day there would be servants of Jesus Christ traveling from place to place that needed accommodation, so hospitality was a very important service in the early church.

So to encourage these believers in this ministry, Abraham's hospitality and its unusual consequences were cited as an example for them to follow.

Yes, Abraham was only trying to be hospitable, but, surprisingly, he had - - **"entertained angels unawares,"** and it also seemed that the LORD Himself was in that company!

As a result of this generous act of hospitality, Abraham obtained the LORD's confirmation of a long awaited promise.

Yes, the Lord had said to him, **"At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."**

And also his hospitality eventually led to his negotiations with the LORD that were instrumental in saving his nephew Lot's life from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

What a visit that turned out to be!

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V 3 **"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."**

Here another ministry is encouraged.

In that day, many were in bonds for Christ's sake, so the saints were reminded to help them in their affliction.

They should not be uninvolved, but identify themselves with their brothers' and sisters' plight.

They should sympathize with them and help them as much as possible, for, indeed, they could also be in the same situation some day.

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V 4      **"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."**

Not only were they living in dangerous times because of the hostile Roman government, but they also lived in a society of loose morals.

So for that reason, the writer of Hebrews reminds them of the sanctity of the God-given institution of marriage. It was to be preserved in all its purity by the believers.

And God would judge those who violated this sacred institution.

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V 5-6 **"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.**

<sup>6</sup> So that we may boldly say, **The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."**

Verse 5 says, **"Let your conversation be without covetousness,"** and by the

way, that was a message to  
Christians.

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I heard about a Christian who had done very  
well financially.

Now there is nothing wrong with that, but,  
unfortunately, this man's heart was  
set upon material things.

One night he had a dream, and in that dream  
an angel said to him, "Tomorrow you  
will die."

Now he was thankful for his place in heaven,  
but he just didn't want to leave all  
his nice possessions behind.

So he implored the angel to ask God if he  
could just take *some* of his wealth  
with him to heaven.

Surprisingly, he was permitted by God to take one suitcase full of whatever he wanted to bring with him.

The next day found him struggling along red faced with an exceedingly heavy suitcase which he sat down with a thud in front of the pearly gates.

St. Peter said, "Wait a minute. You can't take anything in here." But he protested that he been given special permission by God to take one suitcase full of whatever he wanted.

So St. Peter said, "All right then, but let's see what you've got in there."

Upon opening the suitcase, he found that it full of gold bricks.

St. Peter scratched his head and said, "Now why would you be lugging paving stones all the way up here?"

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Of course, this is just a story. You can't take anything to heaven, but on the other hand, why would you ever want to?

And even down here, a Christian should not covet the material possessions of others, but be satisfied with the blessings that God has given him.

And that should have been the attitude of these Hebrew Christians.

What they had in Christ surpassed all that any unbeliever could have obtained.

After all, what better provision could they have for this life's journey than Christ's promise, **"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"**?

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And the Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem,  
Judea, and in Samaria were going to  
face many trials in the days ahead.

We know that from secular history.

So they needed to remember that God was not  
going to forsake them.

They needed to trust Him so completely that  
they could confidently say---"**The  
Lord is my helper, and I will not  
fear what man shall do unto me.**"

Someone has wisely said, "God is the  
substitute for everything, but  
nothing is a substitute for God."

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And the poet has written ---

*"In that circle of God's favour,  
Circle of the Father's love,  
All is rest, and rest forever,  
All is perfectness above.*

*Blessed, glorious word 'forever'!-  
Yea, 'forever' is the word,  
Nothing can the ransomed sever,  
Nought divide them from the Lord."*

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V 7 **"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."**

It seems that the spiritual leaders referred to here were those that had been their guides in the past.

They were to remember their faithful preaching, and praying, their private counsel, and their godly example.

And not only were they to remember them, but they were to follow their example.

Yes, V 7 says **"whose faith follow."**

So these Hebrew believers had a wonderful heritage in their former Christian leaders, but beyond that, they had the stability and leadership of God's own Son.

Yes, as V,8 says, they had the Lord Jesus Christ Who is "-- **the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.**"

So, with this settled foundation, they should be established in Christ, and not be carried about by false doctrines.

And error was present in their Christian assemblies.

From the very early days of the church, and particularly in the Jewish Christian assemblies, false teachers had arisen.

They had stressed the importance of the Mosaic and Rabbinic commandments concerning meats and ordinances that belonged to the old economy, but had no place at all in the Christian assembly.

So the writer admonishes them in V 9 **"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."**

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And then the writer pleads with them to completely separate themselves from the old Jewish ways.

The dark clouds of judgment were already hanging over the land of Palestine.

And it would not be long before Jesus' prophecy concerning the temple would come to pass--"**See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**"

Yes, the old ways were ready to pass away. No more would the smoke of sacrifice rise from Jewish altars.

So the Hebrew believers are urged to make a complete break with the old system.

As we see in verses 10 to 14, they were admonished to come out of the camp of Judaism and separate themselves unto Christ.

V 10-14 **"We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.**

11 For the bodies of those beasts,  
whose blood is brought into the  
sanctuary by the high priest for sin,  
are burned without the camp.

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he  
might sanctify the people with his  
own blood, suffered without the gate.

13 Let us go forth therefore unto  
him without the camp, bearing his  
reproach.

14 For here have we no continuing  
city, but we seek one to come."

Yes, Christians have a heavenly sanctuary in  
which Christ is seated at the right  
hand of God.

Those Hebrews who would go back to Jewish  
altars, and those in Christendom  
today who worship at man-made altars,  
are sadly missing the point, for the

sacrifice is over, and the work of  
salvation is finished.

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♪ *No blood, no altar now,  
The sacrifice is o'er;  
No flame nor smoke ascends on high,  
The Lamb is slain no more.*

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In V 11, the writer makes an interesting  
application from an Old Testament  
sacrifice.

In the sacrifice for sin, the blood was  
brought into the sanctuary, but the  
body was burned without the camp.

In like manner, the blood of Christ is  
honoured and valued in heaven, and is  
the absolute basis upon which man is  
reconciled to God.

However, on earth, Jesus was crucified

**"without the camp"** of Israel, being lifted up upon a cross outside the city of God.

V 12 **"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."**

He was rejected by His own nation, and for the most part, He is rejected in the world we live in.

Therefore, when we come to Christ for salvation, we come to a rejected Lord.

And we must identify ourselves with Him in His rejection if we are to be faithful to our Lord.

To the Hebrews receiving this letter, this would have a special cost.

The deepest affections of their hearts  
before they knew Christ as their  
Saviour had been wrapped around the  
temple and its sacrifices.

But now they were to go forth **"unto him  
without the camp, bearing his  
reproach."**

It would mean the breaking of ties with  
neighbours and relatives.

It would mean enduring grave misunderstand-  
ings, but there was no other way to  
be faithful to their Lord, for the  
fact remained that their nation had  
rejected the Christ who had bought  
them with His own precious blood.

In a sense, they must be like their father  
Abraham who left his kindred and  
sought a city which had foundations,  
whose Builder and Maker is God.

V 13-14 **"Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.**

**14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."**

These Hebrew believers would suffer the loss of all that was near and dear to their Jewish roots, but on the other hand, they had gained a heavenly sanctuary and a heavenly High Priest, and a standing with God that was of infinitely more value than anything in the old economy.

Under the covenant of grace, they had been made believer-priests, and were now privileged to offer sacrifices to God, made acceptable by Jesus Christ Himself.

V 15    **"By him therefore let us offer the  
sacrifice of praise to God  
continually, that is, the fruit of  
our lips giving thanks to his name."**

God has said in Psalm 50:23, **"Whoso offereth  
praise glorifieth me."**

When we come together as the Body of Christ,  
we assemble for several reasons.

We come to learn more about God's Word.

We come to learn about our Lord and Saviour  
Jesus Christ.

And we come together for Christian  
fellowship with our brothers and  
sisters.

But the most important reason for assembling  
together is the offering of our  
collective sacrifice of praise to our  
Heavenly Father.

As Holy priests, we enter into the sanctuary  
to present our worship and adoration to  
our Heavenly Father.

It is a sacrifice, sanctified by His Son,  
which is well pleasing to God.

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Then, as royal priests, we are exhorted to  
do good to our fellow man . . . in His  
name.

V 16 **"But to do good and to communicate  
forget not: for with such sacrifices  
God is well pleased."**

Our priesthood has both a God-ward and a  
man-ward aspect, and so preserves that  
even balance that is so characteristic  
in the Word of God.

The daily worship and the daily work of the  
believer should always be in balance.

It should never be justly said of the child  
of God that he is so heavenly minded  
that he is no earthly good.

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And there is another balance that should be  
maintained in the Christian life.

Not only should there be a balance between  
worship and works, but there should be  
a balance between witness and works.

Although it is not found in this chapter, I  
would like to spend a few moments to  
look at this other balance in the  
Christian's life as it is typified for  
us in the Old Testament.

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Over in Exodus 28:33-34 concerning Aaron's  
garment, we read, **"And beneath upon the  
hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates  
of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet,**

round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about:

<sup>34</sup> A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about."

So here we see, in type, an example of the well-balanced Christian.

The golden bell speaks of testimony.

We should ever be ready to give a witness for Christ, "**ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.**"

But balancing out our golden bell of testimony there should be a life of fruitfulness.

"**A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate.**"

Yes, the believer-priest's life should be a balance of testimony and fruitfulness. There should be a word for the Lord, and a godly walk to back it up.

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Let's return to Chapter 13.

In verse 7, the Hebrew Christians were admonished to honour and emulate the life of their past leaders.

**"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God."**

Now, in V 17, the writer again stresses obedience to those who were presently caring for them in holy things.

V 17 **"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with**

**joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."**

True spiritual authority will be manifested by real shepherd care of the people of God, and when the Lord gives the pastoral gift, it is for the blessing of all.

God intends that leaders in the Church be under-shepherds, operating under the direction of the Great Shepherd.

So in respect to leaders, two things should apply.

The under-shepherd must not flaunt his gift, but exercise it in obedience to God.

On the other hand, the congregation should not refuse recognition of this office, but give due honour and respect to their leaders.

However, the so-called clergy order that we see in some denominations is not scriptural.

Although training and knowledge of the scriptures is essential, it is the giving of the "gift" by the Head of the Church Himself, not the degree, which makes a man a pastor.

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At the close of this book, as at the beginning, I will again mention the problem of authorship.

Because there is disagreement as to who wrote Hebrews, I have referred to the author throughout as "the writer."

However, much of the style of the writing of this book does point to Paul's authorship.

This is especially true at this point, for in true Pauline fashion, the writer requests their prayers on his behalf.

V 18-19 **"Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.**

**<sup>19</sup> But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner."**

If it was Paul writing here, we know that the time of his martyrdom was drawing near.

So there is the thought that perhaps in answer to their prayers he might be restored to their service, in the will of God.

At any rate, in these verses we find the writer's recognition of the value of intercessory prayer.

And who can tell how much each servant of  
Christ is indebted to the prayers of  
God's people?

To bear up God's servants in prayer is a  
wonderful ministry, the full fruits of  
which will only be revealed when God  
rewards His children.

If you have a ministry of prayer, do not  
think it a little thing.

It is a high and privileged ministry, and an  
important office before God.

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In verses 20 and 21, we have the beautiful  
benediction that brings this epistle to  
a close:

**"Now the God of peace, that brought again  
from the dead our Lord Jesus, that  
great shepherd of the sheep, through  
the blood of the everlasting covenant,**

21     **Make you perfect in every good work  
to do his will, working in you that  
which is wellpleasing in his sight,  
through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory  
for ever and ever. Amen."**

How blessed is the title that we see here--

**"the God of peace."**

He is **"the God of peace"** at the same time as  
He is the God of righteousness.

This has only been made possible because His  
Son has made peace between Himself and  
man by the blood of the cross.

On that basis alone, God is now at peace  
with all who trust Christ as their  
Saviour.

There are scriptures that tell us that Jesus  
raised Himself from the dead, but here  
we see that God was very much involved,

--"the God of peace, that brought again  
from the dead our Lord Jesus."

So, by His participation in Christ's  
resurrection, "the God of peace" gives  
testimony to the fact that justice was  
satisfied, and the law was fulfilled.

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Christ sits at the right hand of the Father  
as the Mediator of the New Covenant.  
And as the Good Shepherd, Who gave His life  
for the sheep, He is now guiding His  
chosen flock through the *wilderness* of  
this world.

And during that journey down here, the Holy  
Spirit is sanctifying us to Jesus  
Christ: "--working in you that which is  
wellpleasing in his sight, through  
Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever  
and ever. Amen."

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In the final salutation, the writer pleads with these Hebrew believers to willingly receive the words of exhortation found in this epistle.

V 22 **"And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words."**

He modestly says he has written **"in few words."**

Indeed, it does not seem to be **"few words"** to me.

And the content is deep and rich, a treasure for all Christendom.

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Because of their attachment to the old ways, this epistle would cut across the

natural inclinations of these Hebrew believers.

However, it would be necessary for them to take a stand and separate themselves from Judaism unto Christ.

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In the final greetings, the words of this epistle would also argue for its Pauline authorship. V 23-25 **"Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.**

<sup>24</sup> **Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.**

<sup>25</sup> **Grace be with you all. Amen."**

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Well, I trust that these lessons have been a blessing to you.

For my part, I have found that I needed to be a learner as much as a teacher.

I have appreciated this book for many years, but when I came to teach it, I found myself lacking, so I would like to recognize the contribution of three friends from the past.

Their thoughts and meditations have formed a large part of these lessons, and many times their very words have become my own.

Their names are H. A. Ironside, Matthew Henry, and J. Vernon McGee.

Also I must recognize the real Teacher of this book, the author Himself, God's Holy Spirit.

Once again He has done what He loves to do--

**"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

I trust that the lessons learned will not  
fade away with the sound of my voice,  
but will live on in your lives.

Much of this book is a heavenly scene.

Today, Jesus, our Mediator, is in the  
*heavenly sanctuary* for us, and He will  
be there until He comes again for His  
own.

However, although He is in heaven, He also  
treads the dusty roads of this world  
once again, only this time, He walks in  
*our sandals*.

Where will He take you today?