

# The Book of Hebrews

מְאֹנְשׁ מִנְמָה דָא מִנְהָת אַקְלָא  
צְמַאַלְלָא נְתַחְצְרָה דְרַחְסָנָה סָקָה  
אַחֲ פְּקָלָא תְּסִנְ סְרְבָּאַלְלָה  
רַרְתָּא סָקָה תְּאַקְסָנָה דְמַמָּצָה  
תְּאַתְּפָלָשָׁה נְתַרְדְּנָה הַרְפָּרָה נְרַלְדָה  
תְּאַגְּשָׁה רַלְדָה מְלַלְצָה סָסָה תְּלָשָׁה



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# Outline of Hebrews

## “Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)
- V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)
- VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)

# Introduction to the Epilogue (13:1-25)

- Chapter 13 is rightly described as an *epilogue*, for though it is part of the letter, it is not as tightly integrated as the preceding chapters.
- A few scholars have gone so far as to question whether it was even a *part* of the original letter, but there is no internal or external evidence to suggest that this is the case.
- The content of chapter 13 actually fits quite well with the rest of the letter.
- The admonitions found in chapter 13 unpack the concluding idea found at the end of the chapter 12: what it means to “*offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe*”, showing there is indeed a close connection between Heb 12:28 and what follows.

# Outline of Hebrews

## VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)

- A. Practical Expressions of Love in the Church (13:1-6)
- B. Remember Your Leaders and Suffer with Jesus Outside the Camp (13:7-17)
- C. Final Words (13:18-25)

# Practical Expressions of Love in the Church (13:1-6)

*<sup>1</sup> Let brotherly love continue. <sup>2</sup> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. <sup>3</sup> Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. <sup>4</sup> Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. <sup>5</sup> Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

# <sup>1</sup> Let brotherly love continue.

- The “*brotherly love*” (Greek: *philadelphia*) which the author encourages his readers to cultivate here is that love which should prevail between those who, as fellow **believers**, are brothers in Christ.
- This term is used in the same way by the Apostle Paul:
  - *Love one another with brotherly affection...* (Rom 12:10)
  - *Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.* (1 Thes 4:9 )
- And Peter:
  - *You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers...* (1 Pet 1:22 NLT)
  - *Make every effort to supplement your... godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.* (2 Pet 1:5,7)

<sup>1</sup> *Let brotherly love continue.*

- Our author has already provided the **key** to a proper theological understanding of this brotherly relationship **earlier** in the letter (Heb 2:11ff) where we see that the “brotherhood” shared **among Christians** comes from **Christ himself**:
  - First of all, by his **incarnation** through which he became one of us as **a fellow human being**
  - Secondly, by our becoming **one with him** through our experience of **redemption**, which **he** has accomplished **for us**.
- Christian brotherhood, therefore, is essentially **brotherhood in Christ**.
- For, he is the **only** Son (Heb 1:2) and it is only through union with **him** that we become **brothers** and fellow heirs (Heb 1:2; Rom 8:14-17; Eph 1:5-7, 11-14; John 1:13)

<sup>1</sup> Let brotherly love continue.

- If our **brotherhood** comes from Christ, so also does our **love** as brothers.
- **His** infinite love **for us** is the source, motivation, and example of the love we must have **for each other**:
  - *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* (John 13:34)
- Seeing that, as fellow Christians, we all share in the blessing of the supreme love of God in Christ, how is it even **conceivable** that we should **not** love one another?
- And yet, all too often we need to be reminded:  
*“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”* (1 John 4:11)

# <sup>1</sup> Let brotherly love continue.

- The Hebrew Christians to whom this letter is addressed are lacking, it seems, not only in their zeal for persevering in their Christian walk (Heb 12:1, 12) but also in the passion of their love for each other.
- Earlier in the letter, our author has urged them to “*recall the former days*” when they were wonderfully united by the bonds of love and compassion (Heb 10:32-34).
- And so here he admonishes them to “***continue***” in “*brotherly love*”.

<sup>1</sup> *Let brotherly love continue.*

- “*Brotherly love*” in the New Testament focuses on the responsibility to meet one another’s needs.<sup>1</sup>
- Such “*brotherly love*” is **not** mere sentimentality; it can be a very **costly** thing, as John emphasizes:<sup>2</sup>
  - *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?* (1 John 3:16-17)
- So, in the **next** two verses (Heb 13:2-3), the author is going to make an **application** of this admonition to “*Let brotherly love continue*”.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, George H. *Hebrews* (The NIV Application Commentary Book 15) (p. 468).

<sup>2</sup> F. F. Bruce. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*

<sup>2</sup> *Do not neglect to show **hospitality** to **strangers**, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares...*

- “*Strangers*”, and especially strangers belonging to the Christian brotherhood, must be shown “*hospitality*.”
- Among both Jews and Gentiles, hospitality to strangers ranked *high* as a virtue; it was, in fact, a religious *obligation*.
- Among the pagan Greeks, strangers were viewed as being under the special protection of Zeus, in his role as, “Zeus the patron of strangers.”
- On occasion, Zeus or one of the other gods was believed to have assumed the disguise of a wayfarer and brought great blessing to those who treated him hospitably, not realizing whom they were entertaining.
- Among the Jews, **Abraham** was regarded as *outstanding* for his hospitality
- A **true** son of Abraham therefore **must** be hospitable.

<sup>2</sup> *Do not neglect to show **hospitality** to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares...*

- In the New Testament “*hospitality*” is incumbent on *all* Christians (Cf. Matt. 25:35ff; Rom 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9, etc.), and Christian leaders in particular are required to be hospitable (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:8).
- Christians traveling from one place to another on business would be especially appreciative of hospitality from fellow-Christians.
- Inns throughout the Roman Empire were places of dubious reputation, and were often unsuitable, even dangerous, places for Christians to stay.

<sup>2</sup> *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares...*

- The opportunity of free board and lodging might tempt *some* unscrupulous characters to *masquerade* as Christians.
- The necessity of some rough-and-ready rule of thumb for detecting impostors is implied in an early Christian handbook of church discipline, dating from about AD 100, known as the *Didache*:
  - *Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord, but he must not stay more than one day, or two if it is absolutely necessary; if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. And when an apostle leaves you, let him take nothing but a loaf, until he reaches further lodging for the night; if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.*

*<sup>2</sup> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares...*

- Some Christians who had been deceived by such impostors might be wary of offering hospitality too readily next time they were asked for it.
- But here they are encouraged with the remark that some who have given hospitality to passing strangers found that they were entertaining “*angels unawares*.”
- The reference here is, no doubt, alluding to Abraham's experience when he entertained “*three men*” so hospitably by the “*oaks of Mamre*” (Gen 18:1-8), and found that one of them was none other than Yahweh, who promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son the following year.

<sup>2</sup> *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares...*

- When Yahweh stayed to speak with Abraham, his two angelic companions went on to Sodom and were shown hospitality by Lot, to whom they brought deliverance from the catastrophe which overwhelmed the city the next day.
- The incidents of Gideon (Judg 6:11-21), Manoah (Judg 13:3-20), and Tobit (Tob 5:4-16) at a later date, may also have been in our author's mind.
- The author is not necessarily encouraging his readers to expect that those whom they entertain will always turn out to be supernatural beings traveling incognito.
- But he *is* assuring them that some of their visitors *will* prove to be true messengers of God, bringing their hosts a greater blessing than they receive as guests.

<sup>3</sup> ***Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.***

- These readers had demonstrated practical ministry to those in prison in the past (Heb 10:34), and they are called upon here to ***continue*** that practice.
- Prisoners were not treated well in the first century, often having to depend on friends and family even for the most basic necessities of life.
- Christians could minister to fellow believers in prison, who were suffering for the sake of the gospel, either by offering consolation and gifts (Matt 25:36; 2 Tim. 1:16) or by praying for them (Col 4:18).

***³ Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.***

- To “remember” means to keep present in one’s thoughts, an idea strengthened by the phrase “as though in prison with them.”<sup>1</sup>
- In other words, Christians are to keep their imprisoned friends constantly in mind as if they were right there looking at them.<sup>1</sup>
- Such concern should also be extended to those suffering mistreatment.<sup>1</sup>
- The phrase at the end of the verse: “since you also are in the body” is interpreted by Barclay as “for you have not yet left this life, and the same fate can happen to you.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, George H. *Hebrews* (The NIV Application Commentary Book 15) (p. 468).

<sup>2</sup> Hagner, Donald A. – *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series - Hebrews*; p. 235

<sup>4</sup> *Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.*

- Another common theme in early Christian ethical teaching was the need to keep the “*marriage*” relationship in proper perspective.
- The institution of marriage was assaulted from *two* sides in the ancient world:
  - Some felt faithfulness in marriage was unreasonable. For example, in some corners of Greco-Roman culture, men were expected to take mistresses as their sexual partners.
  - Others felt marriage stunted spiritual devotion and thus held that *abstaining* from marriage was the ideal (cf. 1 Tim 4:3ff).
- In this context, it appears that the first rather than the second error is more in view.

<sup>4</sup> *Let marriage be held in **honor** among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.*

- The Greek word translated “*honor*” (*timios*) connotes “respect” or attributes “preciousness or value” to someone or something.
- For example, this word can be used of:
  - Valuable material possessions (1 Cor 3:12),
  - A respected teacher (Acts 5:34),
  - The promises of God (2 Peter 1:4),
  - Even the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:19).
- As used here, the word suggests that marriage, rather than an arrangement to be treated *lightly*, should be esteemed as of *great worth*.

<sup>4</sup> *Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.*

- Correspondingly, the “*marriage bed*”, used here as an idiom for the sexual relationship, is to “*be undefiled*.”
- The defilement that the author has in mind is made clear in the explanatory phrase that follows: “*for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous*.”
- The word, “*adulterous*” refers specifically to those who betray their marriage vows.
- The word translated, “*sexually immoral*” (*pornoi*), refers to all those involved in sexual activity apart from the sanctity of the marriage relationship.
- Together, the two words cover the gamut of illicit sexual behavior.
- “*God will judge*” those who dishonor marriage or defile the marriage bed.

**5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

- The sins of sexual impurity and covetousness are linked in several New Testament passages (e.g., 1 Cor 5:10-11; Eph 4:19; 1 Thes 4:3-6).
- Perhaps that's because the sexually immoral **and** those who are greedy for money **both** pursue a myopic self-gratification that takes them outside the bounds of God's provision.
- Such greed amounts to accusing God of being **incompetent** as a provider of our most basic needs
- Such an outlook is **utterly incompatible** with a commitment to God himself (cf. Matt 6:24).
- Consequently, we are exhorted here to keep our lives **“free from love of money”** and to **“be content”** with what we have.

*5 Keep your life **free from love of money**, and be **content** with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

- Absence of the “*love of money*” was even held up in the *secular* culture as a virtue because leaders would be incorruptible in the management of certain affairs – a thought that parallels one of the qualifications for elders (1 Tim 3:3).
- Here, however, the author has in mind Christians *in general* and the struggle to keep money in perspective in daily life.
- For the one who is “*free from love of money*”, money is simply a means of *meeting needs*, rather than a *driving motivation* or *preoccupation of life*.
- Such a person is “*content*” with what God has given.

*5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for **he has said**, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

- The readers, however, are to go beyond **mere contentment** with what they have – they are to find their security **totally** in God.
- The quotation introduced with the words “**he has said**” is taken from Deut 31:6 (and again in v. 8).
- Our author, however, has altered the third person of the original (“**he will**”) to the more vivid first person (“**I will**”).
- The same promise, but with slightly different wording, is made in the first person in Joshua 1:5 (cf. also Gen. 28:15; 1 Chron 28:20).
- Material possessions are by their nature subject to loss (Mat 6:19) and therefore unworthy of being our **ultimate** source of security
- On the other hand, God and his saving purposes are something we can **always** count on.

<sup>6</sup> *So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

- This citation comes from Psalm 118:6-7 and tells us that the plans of the wicked men who hate us will ultimately be thwarted by the provisions of God.
- This promise was given by the author as an encouragement to the *original* readers but it should serve as an encouragement **to us** as well, when we encounter those who seek to bring us harm.
- If, as was the case in the original reader's past, they were being forced to give up property or material possessions (Heb 10:32-34), this promise of God and the encouragement to make an appropriate response would be *especially* relevant.

# Class Discussion Time



# \*Class Discussion Time

- Today's text **condemns** the various kinds of sexual immorality that are so often practiced and even celebrated in our culture today. Our author assures us that "*God will judge*" those who practice such things.
- But there is also a **positive** message in our text that the **godly** sexual activity that takes place within a marriage is to be **honored** (of great value, precious).
- On a personal, practical level, in our marriage, how do we do this?
- Guthrie makes this comment concerning the application of Heb 13:4: "*The marriage bed becomes a mini-church in which the two covenant members sacrificially and ecstatically meet one another's needs and offer their bodies as living sacrifices in worship before God.*"
- Do you agree? Why or why not?

# \*Class Discussion Time

- Corrie ten Boom recounts an event from her childhood that illustrates the power of keeping money in perspective:
- *The ten Boom family prayed one morning that God would send a customer that day to the family's shop to purchase a watch, the income from which would pay bills that had come due at the bank. During that day a customer with a large sum of cash came into the store. He picked out and paid for an expensive watch but, at the same time, complained about a Christian watchmaker, suggesting that the merchant had sold him a defective piece of merchandise. Casper, Corrie's father, asked the man if he could examine the watch that was not working properly. Only a minor repair was needed, which Casper made, assuring the customer that he had been sold a fine quality watch that would work well for him. He then gave the astounded gentleman his money back, and the man returned the watch for which he had just paid.*

# \*Class Discussion Time

- *Little Corrie asked, “Papa, why did you do that? Aren’t you worried about the bills you have due?” Her father responded, “There is blessed and unblessed money,” explaining that God would not be pleased with the ruination of another believer’s reputation. God would provide, he assured her. Just a few days later another man came into the shop and paid for the most expensive watch produced at that time. The purchase not only allowed the family to pay their bills, but also provided the funds for Corrie to receive training in Switzerland as a watchmaker for two years.*
- Are any of the principles taught in Heb 13:5 illustrated by this story? If so, how?