

Study Notes For Hebrews (Chapter Thirteen)

Hebrews 13:1-2 - *“Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares”* (Hebrews 13:1-2). Brotherly love is a clearly taught point in the Scriptures. Jesus said: *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:34-35). Jesus made it clear how far that love is to go: *“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:12-13). Paul later wrote this: *“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”* (Romans 12:9-10).

Love amongst the saints is of great importance (I Corinthians 12:14-27, Galatians 5:13, Philippians 2:19-30, I Thessalonians 4:9, Philemon 1:1-25, I Peter 1:22, I Peter 2:17, I Peter 3:8, and I John 3:7-18). There is not an end to it. Our relationships with one another matters. It matters so much that it impacts our ability to approach God. The following quote from Jesus uses terminology those familiar with the “Old Testament” would understand (Genesis 8:20, Exodus 20:22-26, Leviticus 22:18-25, II Chronicles 1:6, etc.). The point is one we should all be able to understand. Think about this: *“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”* (Matthew 5:22-24).

Besides that, the Scriptures also teach that we cannot love God if we do not love our brethren. Notice: *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us... If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments”* (I John 4:11-12; 4:20-5:2).

So, how does the continued love for brethren work in with not forgetting to entertain strangers? The wording “entertain strangers” (KJV) is from the Greek word “φιλοξενία” which is defined as: “Hospitality: — entertain stranger, hospitality. Love to strangers, hospitality” (Strong’s # 5381). In dealing with being hospitable, we should know the following Scriptures: *“Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality... And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”* (Romans 12:13 and I Peter 4:8-10). That part of our study is pretty easy. Where people get a little hung up is on the aspect of entertaining strangers.

Those reading this letter were undoubtedly familiar with the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses taught Jews this: *“But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God... Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt”* (Leviticus 19:34 and Deuteronomy 10:19). In the New Testament we read: *“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth”* (III John 1:5-8). One of the qualifications of a “widow indeed” is that she entertained strangers (I Timothy 5:9-10).

Think about how that played out right from the establishment of the body of Christ in the New Testament. Jews from all over had come to Jerusalem (Acts 2:5-13). After the preaching of the truth by the Apostles, about three thousand had been converted (Acts 2:14-41). Among that number, there were those by implication of the text that were not from Jerusalem. They had no where to live or work whereby they could support themselves. They were strangers that then needed daily provisions, a place to live, etc. The saints shared everything and some even sold their possessions to support those who had moved there (Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-37).

To further draw upon a principle of old, it was brought forth that some had entertained angels unawares [without knowing]. One’s mind is drawn back to Abraham and even Lot with their hospitality towards angels (Genesis 18:1-21 and Genesis 19:1-2). Samson’s parents did similarly (Judges 13:1-25). Now, I have heard some in the past say that we should entertain strangers for that one might be an angel. If you read Hebrews 13:2 again, the text does not say that would happen then or now. It is

about what had happened in the past. Be cautious not to turn that into something more than what is said. It is of great importance that we rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:14-18). We do not want to be guilty of twisting the word of God (II Peter 3:15-17). So, we shall leave this context at what it says and nothing more!

Hebrews 13:3 - *“Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body”* (Hebrews 13:3). The word translated “bonds” [δέσμιος] means: “a captive (as bound): — in bonds, prisoner” (Strong’s # 1198). Generally, when you think of a prisoner you think about someone who has broken civil law. We know that Christians are supposed to obey civil law (Romans 13:1-7 and I Peter 2:13-16) unless those laws are contrary to the will of God (Acts 5:12-42). So, how would a faithful Christian end up being a prisoner?

Before anyone was ever called a Christian, the forerunner for Jesus was cast into prison for preaching the truth (Matthew 14:1-12). Jesus warned that persecution would include imprisonment (Luke 21:12). Jesus was arrested, tried, convicted, and put to death through the plotting of the ungodly (Matthew 26:47-27:56). Therefore, we can see that someone being in prison doesn’t necessarily mean that person was guilty of a crime (Acts 8:1-3).

After Jesus left this world the Apostles experienced what Jesus warned them of (Acts 4:1-3). Notice what later happened to Paul and Silas: *“And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his*

sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed” (Acts 16:16-40).

Paul spent plenty of time in prison. Some of his letters were written from prison (Ephesians 4:1; 6:20, Philippians 1:7-16, Colossians 4:3, II Timothy 1:8, etc.). While Paul was in prison there were various brethren that came and tended to his needs (Philippians 2:25-30 and Philemon 1:10-13). When Paul wrote he desired that he would not be forgotten while he was in prison (Colossians 4:18). That shouldn't have been a concern though, right?

Brethren are supposed to relate to one another and love one another well enough to feel the sufferings of brethren. We are all part of the same body. Consider these Scriptures: *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits... That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”* (Romans 12:15-16 and I Corinthians 12:25-27).

Take a moment and read through part of the description Jesus gave concerning the Judgment Day (Matthew 25:31-46). Think about what you read as it applies to our study. The King said: *“I was in prison, and ye came unto me...”* To which the question was asked: *“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?”* The King

responded: *“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”* The saints that the Hebrew letter was written to were not neglecting brethren in prison (Hebrews 10:34). Yet, they were still being taught to remember those in bonds and those suffering affliction. If our brethren are suffering for righteousness sake (Matthew 5:10-12), we need to be there with them and for them. All of our souls depend on that!

Hebrews 13:4 - *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”* (Hebrews 13:4). This passage of Scripture begins by pointing out that marriage is esteemed; most precious (Strong’s # 5093). This sentiment is echoed throughout the Scriptures. Solomon wrote: *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD”* (Proverbs 18:22). When the pattern God set forth for marriage is followed among two believers (i.e. Ephesians 5:22-33), you have a wonderful relationship with two people working together to be heirs together of the grace of life (I Peter 3:7).

From the beginning, our Lord looked upon the needs of man and decided to establish the marital relationship. Notice: *“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed”* (Genesis 2:15-25).

The word translated “bed” [κοίτη] is defined as this: “a couch; by extension, cohabitation; by implication, the male sperm: — bed, chambering, x conceive...” (Strong’s # 2845). That word has been translated as an actual bed (Luke 11:7). It also has been translated “conceived” (Romans 9:10) and “chambering” (Romans 13:13). The word translated as “undefiled” [ἀμίαντος] is defined like this: “Unsoiled, i.e.

(figuratively) pure: — undefiled...” (Strong’s # 283). Every time this term is used in the New Testament it is translated as “undefiled” (Hebrews 7:26, James 1:27, and I Peter 1:4).

The point of the marriage bed being undefiled is really simple and it ties to the point made at the end of the verse. Marriage is the appropriate relationship wherein sexual activity is to be had. Sex, in itself, is not dirty or bad. Sex is not only for procreation. Sex is pleasurable and is something married Christians can lawfully enjoy. Taking pleasure from the body of the opposite sex is natural and lawful within a marriage (Proverbs 5:18-19). Sin enters in when sexual pleasure is sought outside of a lawful marriage.

Notice what was written to the saints in Corinth as those words serve as a great commentary to our current study: *“Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s. Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency”* (I Corinthians 6:13-7:5). {*Note: Since the Holy Ghost is mentioned in the above quote, I want to give this information to clear up any possible misunderstanding. The saints in Corinth had miraculous spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit which have ceased to exist today (I Corinthians 12:1-14:40).}

The term translated “whoremonger” [πόρνος] is defined like this: “a (male) prostitute (as venal), i.e. (by analogy) a debauchee (libertine): — fornicator, whoremonger...” (Strong’s # 4205). In other Scriptures that term is translated

“fornicators” (I Corinthians 5:9-11 and I Corinthians 6:9), “fornicator” (Hebrews 12:16), or whoremongers (Ephesians 5:5, I Timothy 1:10, Revelation 21:8, and Revelation 22:15). Fornication and adultery are both sinful activities throughout both the Old and New Testaments (Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:18, Matthew 5:27-32, Acts 15:20, Romans 1:18-32, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:3, and I Thessalonians 4:1-5).

Marriage can be a joyful relationship (Ecclesiastes 9:9). Fornication on the other hand only leads to eternal damnation (Jude 1:7). Sex is not worth eternal damnation!

Hebrews 13:5-6 - *“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. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”* (Hebrews 13:5-6). Our study from this text will be mainly about contentment. From old, it was taught: *“Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom... A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent”* (Proverbs 23:4 and Proverbs 28:20).

As we break down the wording of the passages we are studying a little bit, we start with the word translated “conversation” [τρόπος]. One definition is: “a manner, way, fashion; as, even as, like as; manner of life, character, deportment” (Thayer; Strong’s # 5158). “Covetousness” [ἀφιλάργυρος] is defined as: “not loving money, not avaricious” (Thayer; Strong’s # 866). Therefore, the teaching is that the manner of living for a child of God is to be without the love of money.

To put Scriptures with that, consider what Paul taught Timothy: *“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (I Timothy 6:6-14).

It is not sinful to do well financially. In fact, if you read the whole context of what I just quoted above you will see that (I Timothy 6:17-19). Going far back into the word of God we find that a friend of God (James 2:23) was wealthy (Genesis 13:1-2). It is the love of money that puts one into a sinful state. Paul lived as a great example (I Corinthians 11:1). The congregation in Philippi financially supported Paul. When he was writing to them about that support, he pointed out that he was content with little or with much in regard to his financial means (Philippians 4:10-20). God's people have to learn contentment (Proverbs 15:16, Matthew 6:19-34, Luke 3:14, etc.).

The Hebrew penmen drew a great thought for consideration. Contentment includes a mindset that having a relationship with God is enough. Throughout the Scriptures, God promised His faithful children that He would not forsake them (Deuteronomy 31:1-8, Joshua 1:1-9, I Samuel 12:1-25, I Chronicles 28:20, Psalms 37:23-28, Matthew 28:16-20, and II Timothy 4:10-17). We understand that God was a physical presence of old and brought carnal inheritances to His people (Deuteronomy 6:18 and Deuteronomy 12:28). We also understand that now our blessings are primarily in Heaven (Ephesians 1:3). What has not changed is that God does not forsake His people. When someone says God is not in that person's life, it is not God that moved. If we who are in Christ continue to walk in the light, our fellowship with God will not be broken (I John 1:1-7).

So, how is God our helper? Does He keep us from harm? No, God does not keep us from being harmed physically or even spiritually (Matthew 5:10-12, Acts 14:22, Romans 8:28-39, Galatians 3:1-3, Ephesians 5:6-11, II Timothy 3:12, Hebrews 13:9, and I Peter 4:12-19). Is God our helper in keeping us from suffering from hunger or thirst? No, God is not going to miraculously fill your refrigerator or keep you from being hungry (I Corinthians 4:11 and II Corinthians 11:27). What it does mean is that no person will, without your consent, be able to move you away from the spiritual blessings we have in Christ (John 10:27-29).

So, how does that keep us from fearing man? Consider what Jesus taught to those entrusted with continuing His work: *“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon*

the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:22-28).

Jesus did not promise safety. Jesus did not say everything would be fine. Jesus did not try to sell some sort of Heavenly security system for the flesh. What Jesus did promise is that those who could harm the faithful physically could do nothing to the soul of that faithful disciple. For us who are faithful, that has to be enough. Jesus came to offer eternal life to His faithful followers (Hebrews 9:15 and I John 2:24-25). While it is a blessing to have brethren and other benefits of being in Christ, if all else fails; eternity has to be enough!

Hebrews 13:7; 17 - In this study we are going to cover verses out of sequential order as to avoid repetition in a future study. Here is what we are going to study in this article: *“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... 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” (Hebrews 13:7; 13:17).*

The term translated “remember” [μνημονεύω] is defined as: “To exercise memory, i.e. recollect; by implication, to punish; also to rehearse: — make mention; be mindful, remember. To be mindful of, to remember, to call to mind; to think of and feel for a person or thing; to hold in memory, keep in mind; to make mention of” (Strong’s # 3421). Considering both passages, it is obvious that those who have the rule over us are to be obeyed and thus we are to be mindful of them. What earthly men who teach the word of God, that have been given authority from God, are we instructed to obey?

Elders are the overseers in the local church. That does not mean elders have all authority. We will talk about that momentarily. What it does mean is that elders are the shepherds of the congregation. They feed and protect. When Paul was talking to the elders in Ephesus (Acts 20:17), notice part of what he said: *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).* Notice what Peter wrote concerning elders [a.k.a. shepherds; pastors; bishops]: *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords*

over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Peter 5:1-4).

Elders were responsible for overseeing funds intended for needy brethren (Acts 11:27-30). Elders were involved in the instruction of saints even in other congregations (Acts 15:1-35 and Acts 16:1-5). Clearly, the Lord has given elders significant authority. However, that authority is limited. As with all men and women, we are subject to obey the authority of Christ (Matthew 28:16-20). Whatsoever we do, we must do by the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:17). The church is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:12-20). Therefore, elders are not our supreme authority figures. Jesus has been and always will be the one we submit to above all others (Ephesians 5:23-24 and Hebrews 3:1-6). Having said that, if elders are truly qualified and really doing the work of the Lord; we should be able to follow them.

With the authority elders are to have, they are to use such for teaching. Among the qualifications of elders (I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9), we see that elders must be able to teach (I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:9). (*Note, for an in-depth study on the qualifications of elders, see the following: <https://www.wordsoftruth.net/qualifiedelders.html>). As with all who teach the word of God, elders are supposed to be an example for those being taught by them to follow (I Timothy 4:11-16). Thus, we consider the end of the conversation. The word translated "conversation" [ἀναστροφή] means: "manner of life, conduct, behavior, deportment" (Strong's # 391). If they are holy and blameless as all elders must be (Titus 1:6), the end of their conduct will be eternal life (I Peter 1:1-17 and II Peter 3:9-14). Let me say also, being holy and blameless is not a higher standard just for elders. All Christians are expected to live up to that same standard (Ephesians 1:3-4, I Thessalonians 4:7, and Hebrews 12:14).

Elders have rule over the flock (I Timothy 5:17). As watchmen for our souls, they have a great responsibility to be aware and to issue warnings as needed and they will answer for how they do so (Ezekiel 3:16-24 and Ezekiel 33:1-16). We can see under the Old Law that watchmen were not always aware and alert (Isaiah 56:10-12). So, we'd be ignorant to wholly trust any man, including elders. If you were to back up and read the context of an earlier reference in this article (Acts 20:17-31), some elders even sought to draw away disciples. Those were elders that the Holy Ghost had appointed. So, while we are to obey the authority of elders and allow them to watch for our souls; we are never to be blind followers (Luke 6:39).

If elders are truly qualified and faithful, we are expected to live in such a way that they may give an account with joy rather than with grief. It is unprofitable to the sheep if the shepherd cannot be joyous in his work. Think about that. What does that mean?

Elders give an account to the Lord as we all do (Romans 14:11-12 and II Corinthians 5:10). Yet, not only of themselves but also of their work as shepherds. If in that accounting process elders would report to the Lord that it was grievous unto them to shepherd you; where would that leave you? If their account is “unprofitable” for you, that means it is hurtful to you (Strong’s # 255). While Paul was not an elder, as an Apostle he wanted to see the saints live in a way that in the day of Christ he could rejoice (Philippians 2:14-16). As an Apostle, faithful brethren were his glory and joy (I Thessalonians 2:20). On the other hand, if those he taught were to fall away, he felt as though his labor was in vain (Galatians 4:8-11 and I Thessalonians 3:5). Now with that detail to consider, think about the importance of being mindful and obedient to the lawful words of elders. Don’t cause them grief. Your salvation depends on it!

Hebrews 13:8 - *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever”*

(Hebrews 13:8). Earlier in this epistle this was written concerning Jesus: *“And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail”* (Hebrews 1:7-12).

There are some obvious things Hebrews 13:8 is not talking about. Jesus has not always been the same in some ways. For example, He once left Heaven and came to Earth in the flesh (Luke 1:31-35, John 1:1-16, Romans 1:3, and Philippians 2:4-11). While on Earth He was transfigured (Mark 9:2-13). He lived in the flesh, died, was buried, rose from the dead, ascended back into Heaven, and later appeared to Paul (Luke 23:18-24:51 and I Corinthians 15:1-9). Those are clearly times wherein things were not always the same with Jesus.

The authority of Christ is something that has changed and will change again in the future. Prior to Jesus ascending into Heaven we read: *“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen”* (Matthew

28:16-20). Right now, Jesus still has all authority in Heaven and Earth (Ephesians 1:19-23, Colossians 1:12-20, and I Peter 3:18-22). However, notice this: *“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all”* (I Corinthians 15:24-28).

The identity of Christ is what has not and will not change. When Jesus came in the flesh He did not cease to be who He is. Notice: *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen”* (Romans 9:1-5). While Jesus was on earth He said: *“I and my Father are one”* (John 10:30). The Jews understood what that meant: *“Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God”* (John 10:31-33).

The point is not to be thought of in the physical sense. The point was to draw the mind of the reader to the fact that Jesus is, was, and always will be Himself. The Holy Spirit used this point when He had John write to the seven churches of Asia: *“John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty”* (Revelation 1:4-8).

Under the Law and the prophets a similar point was made. Malachi wrote: *“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”* (Malachi 3:6). God made a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 22:1-18). God keeps His word (Numbers 23:19, I Samuel 15:29, Titus 1:1-3, Hebrews 6:13-20). Therefore, He did not consume Israel even when they were a grave disappointment. That point would apply the same way with Jesus. Jesus is not going to go back on His covenant with His faithful followers. His promise, to the faithful, is eternal life (I John 2:3-25).

In the context of this Hebrew epistle there is a point that is building from this statement. That point is what we will be addressing in our next article. To state it simply for now, these Jewish Christians needed to realize that Jesus isn't changing so they needed to guard themselves against any changes in doctrines that would come about (Hebrews 13:9). When the lawmaker says He is not changing, one should understand that the law is not going to change either.

Hebrews 13:9 - *“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”* (Hebrews 13:9). The previous verse that we studied in our last article dealt with the fact that Jesus was not going to change (Hebrews 13:8). We live under the “law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). These are the words that will outlast the world and from which we shall all be judged (Matthew 24:35-36 and John 12:48). So, any new doctrine from any source is not to be followed (Galatians 1:8-9).

The term that is translated “carried about” is the Greek term περιφέρω which is defined as: “To convey around, i.e. transport hither and thither: — bear (carry) about. To carry round, to bear about everywhere with one; to carry here and thereto be driven; in doubt and hesitation; to be led away now to this opinion, now to that” (Strong's # 4064). Notice what was written to the saints in Ephesus: *“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.). And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and*

cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:7-16).

Each Christian is expected by our Lord not to follow any sort of false doctrine (Proverbs 19:27, Matthew 24:4, Acts 17:10-11, Romans 16:17-18, Ephesians 5:6-11, Colossians 2:4-23, I Thessalonians 5:21, II Thessalonians 2:3, I Timothy 6:3-5, etc.). Jewish Christians should have known this. Their history had examples of people being led astray by false prophets (Isaiah 9:8-16, Jeremiah 23:14-15, Ezekiel 13:1-16, etc.).

Notice something Jesus said: *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).* So, one comes to know the truth. Then, something strange [foreign] is taught. It has been taught that Jesus doesn't change. You should know the doctrine is false. Isn't that a simple point to realize?

Jesus did not teach any disciple of His that their hearts were to be established by meats. So, reason says that such a doctrine is false if it was taught. Well, there is a problem. Saints who converted to Christ from being under the Law of Moses often were conflicted between the two laws (i.e. Acts 15:1-35). In regard to the matter of what to eat and not eat, the Law of Moses had specific instructions (Leviticus 11:1-47). In Christ however, we read: *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (I Timothy 4:1-5).*

The church in Rome had a problem with this matter. This was addressed in Romans 14:1-15:9. Notice something written from within that context: *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17).* When you study that context you find that meat does not matter one way or another to God. The Corinthians were taught this: *“But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse” (I Corinthians 8:8).*

Some of the Jews wanted to put laws in place even beyond what God had said in the past (Matthew 15:1-14). It is not that we are not under a law now, as noted earlier in this article. However, the law we are now under is one of liberty (James 1:25; 2:9-12). When one seeks to impose restriction after restriction they are missing part of what grace is. Remember what was written: *“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”* (John 1:17). Now, we are not under the Law of Moses, but under grace (Romans 6:14-15).

When the writers of this letter wrote, *“which have not profited them that have been occupied therein”* we can know they were referring to the ordinances under the Law of Moses. This epistle has already covered this (Hebrews 9:1-10). Whether them then or us now, we cannot be justified by things written under the Law of Moses (Galatians 5:1-4). Yet, sincere first century Jewish Christians struggled with this and like matters (Acts 10:9-17). Learn from them. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ needs to be in our hearts. We are liberated. Why seek to be in a self-made bondage? Beware of such doctrines that would impose such! It is through the grace [not grace alone] of our Lord we [Christians] shall be saved (Acts 15:11). Thus, grace and peace (I Corinthians 1:3) rather than meats confirms our hearts!

Hebrews 13:10-13 - *“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach”* (Hebrews 3:10-13).

The first time we read about an altar in the Scriptures was in the days of Noah (Genesis 8:20). After that, there are around four hundred times altars are mentioned in what is known as the Old Testament. The Greek term [θυσιαστήριον] that appears here in our study is only recorded twenty-three times in the New Testament. This term simply is referring to a place of sacrifice (Strong’s # 2379). We know that Jesus offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice and therefore there is no more offering for sin (Hebrews 9:1-10:18). So, when Christians here are told that they have an altar, what is that referring to?

Later in this text, we will read about sacrifices that Christians still offer even till this day (Hebrews 13:15-16). We also read in other texts that we give our bodies as a living sacrifice to our Lord (Romans 12:1). The saints in Philippi were said to have offered an acceptable sacrifice when they financially supported the Apostle Paul (Philippians 4:10-18). We are priests that offer up “spiritual sacrifices” (I Peter 2:5). So,

what or where is the altar for those things? It is not a physical place (John 4:20-24). Isn't it obvious? It is your heart. We do the will of God from our hearts (Romans 6:17 and Ephesians 6:6). It is not the works of the flesh (Romans 2:28-29). We draw near with a true heart even when assembling in a public place (Hebrews 10:22-25). Jews, who still held to the Law of Moses, could not offer such sacrifices because their hearts were not opened to the Lord (Acts 28:17-29 and Romans 2:1-5).

Under the Law of Moses the Levities had rights to some of the meat that were sacrificed and the offerings given (Leviticus 6:16-18, Numbers 5:9-10, Numbers 18:8-20, Deuteronomy 18:1-5, and I Corinthians 9:13). This right was theirs because of their service to God. Now, the law has changed as well as the priesthood (Romans 7:1-6 and Hebrews 7:1-8:13). This change no longer has the sacrificial law of the past. As noted already, Jesus was the sacrifice.

To further the point of the context, those to whom this letter was written were reminded of the parts of the sacrifices of old that were burnt outside the camp (Exodus 29:14, Leviticus 4:16-21, Leviticus 9:1-11, and Leviticus 16:27-28). What was burned outside the camp was essentially the waste. It was not meant for the Lord or man. Think about that. Ponder it. The illustration made from this is powerful.

Jesus was the sin sacrifice (I Corinthians 5:7, II Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 5:2, and Hebrews 7:27). The inspired Apostle Peter wrote: *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you... For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit"* (I Peter 1:18-20 and I Peter 3:18).

Jesus was not sacrificed on an altar in the temple. Rather, this is where He was put to death: *"When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the*

midst" (John 19:13-18). "Golgotha" (Mark 15:22-24) was said to be a place outside of Jerusalem (Thayer). This is where they led Jesus away to. Outside of the camp. This is likened unto a place wherein the waste would be taken.

Then the lesson was driven home to these Jewish Christians. They needed to go outside of their system. They could not cling to Jerusalem, the temple, the Law of Moses, etc. If they wanted to follow Jesus they needed to realize that was a journey outside of the system they loved and were accustomed to. They had to embrace the freedom from the Old Law in Christ Jesus and salvation that came with that (Acts 13:38-39 and Romans 8:1-3).

Then they had to embrace the fact that walking away from the system of the Law of Moses and the traditions they had embraced had a price. Like Jesus, they would face certain reproach for going outside those gates (Luke 6:22 and I Peter 4:12-14). We have already seen this addressed, in part, in this letter (Hebrews 10:32-33). This price was too heavy for some Jews who believed (John 12:36-43). On the other hand, some were literally willing to die outside the gate for the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 6:8-7:60). That suffering is the price one must be willing to pay if necessary. Furthermore, and you will have to read the whole context of the reference I am about to cite, suffering for Christ is very beneficial (I Peter 3:8-4:19). So, don't be like the Jews of old and hold on to a human system of faith.

Hebrews 13:14 - For those Jews in the first century that decided to follow Jesus they were certain to face reproach. Our last article concluded with that point (Hebrews 13:13). You can see how Jews that followed our Lord were treated when you read about the healing of a blind man and what happened thereafter (John 9:1-41). Once a Jew was converted to Christ they were on the outside of the Jewish community. Being on the outside of their previous community, they needed motivation not to look backward. Looking back makes one unfit for the kingdom (Luke 9:57-62). That is where our current study comes in. Notice: *"For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come"* (Hebrews 13:14).

Life on earth is not permanent. That was previously written in this letter (Hebrews 9:27; cf. Genesis 3:19, II Samuel 14:14, Psalms 89:48, Ecclesiastes 3:19-21, Ecclesiastes 12:7-14, and Romans 5:12). In this epistle it was already taught that Abraham sought a city that is not of this world (Hebrews 11:8-16). Now again, this has to sink in for those whom this letter is written and for us too.

When Paul wrote of the affliction that Timothy and himself were facing (II Corinthians 4:7-12), this was written: *"For all things are for your sakes, that the*

abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (II Corinthians 4:15-5:1).

The mind of a faithful Christian needs to be focused on things above (Colossians 3:1-4). Even when material things are lost, the kingdom has to be sought first with a trust in our Lord (Matthew 6:19-34). For those to whom this was originally written, they needed not to worry that they may have been excluded from the synagogues of the Jews. They needed not to be worried that their community might have shunned them. They needed not to worry about being persecuted and possibly even chased from their homes (i.e. Acts 8:1-4). They could center their minds on what is to come rather than what might have been lost. Whether them or us, we should focus on finishing the course and receiving the reward (II Timothy 4:6-8).

The problem then and now is that people often love the world and the things of the world. Even though such is sinful (I John 2:15-17), it still was and is a struggle for those who proclaim to be the children of God. Among the first Christians (James 1:18) there was a strong desire for friendship with the world (James 4:4). So, to remind Christians that this world is temporary was and is a necessary teaching. There is a text I don't want to just reference, but quote in this article. It nails the subject matter far greater than anything else I can write.

Notice: “Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may

apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Philippians 3:4-21).

Paul and Timothy wrote the letter to the saints in Philippi (Philippians 1:1) from which you just read the statements above. From the context, Paul was speaking of himself. Timothy was not a full Jew (Acts 16:1-4). The Holy Spirit moved that writing (I Corinthians 2:1-16) and the words were from our Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:1-14). So, it was and is the will of our Lord that we realize we have not finished the course while alive in this world. Salvation is at the end (Romans 6:17-23 and I Peter 1:3-9). That continual city is something we have to wait for (Romans 8:24-25, I Corinthians 1:4-7, and I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11). That end, our salvation, will mean this world has ended (II Peter 3:9-14). There is nothing here to cling to.

Hebrews 13:15-16 - *“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. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”* (Hebrews 13:15-16). The “Him” in verse fifteen is contextually talking about Jesus (Hebrews 13:8; 13:12-13). In our study of verses ten through thirteen we considered, in part, how our altar is our heart. Keep that in mind as we proceed in our current study.

By Jesus we are able to come before God (Hebrews 4:14-16 and Hebrews 10:19-23). Notice what was written to the churches in Ephesus and Colosse: *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Ephesians 5:19-20 and Colossians 3:15-17).

The giving of thanks is not supposed to be only a dinner time or bedtime event. We are not just supposed to give thanks on the first day of the week. The word "continually" carries the point. Thanksgiving is not just something we offer on certain occasions. The saints in Thessalonica were taught this: *"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"* (I Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Praise and thankfulness are joined together (II Samuel 22:50, I Chronicles 16:4, I Chronicles 16:35, I Chronicles 23:30, I Chronicles 29:13, II Chronicles 5:13, Ezra 3:11, Psalms 18:49, Psalms 35:18, Psalms 69:30, etc.). Then comes in the connection of our altar and the sacrifice of praise. Consider the connection of the heart and praise: *"I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works... My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise... Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation... I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments"* (Psalms 9:1, Psalms 57:7, Psalms 111:1, and Psalms 119:7).

The sacrifices of doing good and to communicate is then mentioned. Doing good has long been expected of God's people (Psalms 34:14, Psalms 37:3, and Psalms 37:27). The problem of God's people not doing good has long been a problem too. Notice: *"For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge"* (Jeremiah 4:22).

Doing good is not a limited instruction towards those that are good to us. Jesus said: *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"* (Matthew 5:43-48).

We have to allow the word of God to teach us what doing good is. The Scriptures fully equip us regarding all good works (II Timothy 3:15-17). One area in which many err in this regard is giving money to people because of examples of such in the Scriptures (i.e. Proverbs 19:17). If we rightly divide the word of God (II Timothy 2:15), we learn that there are some people that may be poor that we cannot help (i.e. II Thessalonians 3:10). So, as with all instructions of God, we need to thoroughly study things through before acting. Having said that, let's return to the point of doing good and tie in what it is to communicate.

To the churches of Galatia, this was written: *"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"* (Galatians 6:6-10). The word translated "communicate" in both our text of study and what we just read that was written to the Galatians means fellowship (Strong's # 2841 and 2842). Whether you do a word study or a study of fellowship in general, that limits the sacrifice of doing good and to communicate (II Corinthians 6:14-18 and Ephesians 5:6-11).

So, the conclusion of the matter is that God is well pleased when brethren do good towards and have fellowship with one another. That includes financial aid to needy brethren (II Corinthians 8:1-9:13) and teachers of the Gospel (Philippians 4:10-20). While other Scriptures, as we addressed in this study does not limit doing good just to faithful brethren; this text is singling out the relationship among faithful brethren.

Hebrews 13:18-19 - *"Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner"* (Hebrews 13:18-19). In several letters, we see prayer requests. Paul wrote: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me"* (Romans 15:30). Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus wrote: *"Brethren, pray for us... Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith"* (I Thessalonians 5:25 and II Thessalonians 3:1-2). Paul wrote this to Philemon: *"But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you"* (Philemon 1:22). When Peter was in prison, we read: *"Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without*

ceasing of the church unto God for him” (Acts 12:5). Peter was later set free from prison by an angel (Acts 12:6-17). We know things such as that are not happening today. It did then, by prayer.

We have to understand something about these requests. The Apostles were men directly guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:4-13). That does not happen today. Notice what direct guidance looked like: *“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily. Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days” (Acts 16:1-12).*

The request in our text of study for prayer was “that I may be restored to you the sooner.” Where men guided by the Spirit were sent was as the Lord saw fit. For example, notice what was written to the Corinthians: *“But I will come to you shortly, **if the Lord will**, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power... For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, **if the Lord permit**. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries. Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do” (I Corinthians 4:19 and I Corinthians 16:7-10). Paul went where he was sent. In another example, notice: *“But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, **if God will**. And he sailed from Ephesus” (Acts 18:21).**

Earlier in this letter we are studying we saw that they needed to be taught further and move beyond the first principles (Hebrews 5:10-6:2). Notice what was said in direct connection to that: *“And this will we do, if God permit”* (Hebrews 6:3). So, the penmen of this letter knew that God can be influenced by the requests of the faithful (i.e. Genesis 18:22-33, Exodus 32:1-14, Deuteronomy 9:18-29, and I Timothy 2:1-5). If they are to come to see these brethren, it will be by the will of the Lord. So, these saints needed to let the Lord know how much they desired to have these brethren come to them.

We also learn in the text we are looking at in this study that the men writing this letter, *“have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.”* A good conscience is required of faithful Christians (I Peter 3:8-16). The defiled and unbelievers are those who suffer from defiled consciences (Titus 1:15). Having said that, the conscience of a man is not a dependable guide. Some can have a good conscience while committing sin at the same time.

Before Paul [aka Saul of Tarsus] was converted to Christ, he did much harm to faithful Christians (Acts 7:51-8:3, Acts 22:1-20, I Corinthians 15:9, Galatians 1:13-14, and I Timothy 1:12-16). Yet, he had a good conscience (Acts 23:1). How, you might ask. Consider what Jesus said: *“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me”* (John 16:1-3).

It is also required of Christians by our Lord that we all live honestly (Romans 13:13). That honesty is not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men (II Corinthians 8:21). As was written to the saints in Rome: *“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men”* (Romans 12:17). When we do live in such a manner, those that speak evil of us will be shown liars by our good works (I Peter 2:12). Such will not be hard for faithful Christians because at our core we are people of truth and light (Ephesians 4:17-5:11).

Hebrews 13:20-21 - *“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, 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”* (Hebrews 13:20-21).

A wonderful truth about our God is that He is the “God of peace” (Romans 15:33, Romans 16:20, Philippians 4:9, and I Thessalonians 5:23). When addressing the chaos

that had become the worship assembly in Corinth, Paul and Sosthenes wrote: *“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints”* (I Corinthians 14:33). The Lord is the source of peace (II Thessalonians 3:16). In fact, using the wisdom from above brings about peace rather than carnality that brings the opposite. Notice: *“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace”* (James 3:13-18).

The God of peace is who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus (Acts 2:22-33, Acts 3:26, and Ephesians 1:17-20). This point is more significant than just a statement of fact. For one, the Father’s resurrection of Christ speaks to the authority of Christ. Paul penned this to the saints in Corinth: *“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living”* (Romans 14:9). Secondly, the raising of Jesus speaks to our ultimate salvation. Notice: *“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power”* (I Corinthians 6:14). The resurrection of Christ and our looking forward to our resurrection at the end is paramount to our faith (I Corinthians 15:1-32).

Jesus is the great Shepherd (John 10:1-18). We, the obedient, are His sheep (John 10:27 and I Peter 2:21-25). Since we have already discussed in this study elders and their work (Hebrews 13:7; 13:17), we should have some understanding of the work of a shepherd. These points are tied together well by Peter. This is what he wrote: *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away”* (I Peter 5:1-4).

Jesus is known as the great Shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the everlasting covenant. This is something covered in this letter (Hebrews 8:1-10:22). When Jesus instituted the remembrance of His death, He referred to the fruit of the vine as His blood of the New Testament (Matthew 26:27-29). Those Jewish saints, as well as we, should know this well.

Through Jesus, the Shepherd, these saints were told they would be made perfect in every good work to do His will. Let's think about this. The saints in Philippi were told: *"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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 which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:12-13). By looking at that, we know that the work God was going to do in them was not separate and apart from their own freewill (cf. Genesis 2:15-3:19, Deuteronomy 5:29, Deuteronomy 11:26-28, Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Joshua 24:14-16, Ecclesiastes 7:29, Isaiah 55:6-7, Matthew 7:24-29, Matthew 11:28-30, Luke 9:23-26, John 7:16-17, Acts 2:40, James 4:6-10, and Revelation 22:17). Having said that, God did work in and through saints in the first century.

Remember, the promise of the Spirit working in and through Christians was promised in the first century (Acts 2:38 and Acts 5:32). The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred twice (Acts 1:1-8; 2:1-4 and Acts 10:1-11:18). By the time the letter to Ephesus was written Holy Spirit baptism had ceased (Ephesians 4:4-6). We know that because baptism into Christ through water is the only possible baptism to remain as it pertains to salvation (I Peter 3:20-21). The only other manner in which the Spirit was given after Jesus died was through the laying on of the Apostle's hands (Acts 8:1-25 and Acts 19:1-7). There are no Apostles today. Once Christians in the first century received the Spirit, they were given gifts. Gifts such as miracles, knowledge, faith, etc. (I Corinthians 12:1-11). Those gifts have ceased (I Corinthians 12:12-13:13). Therefore, what was written to those Jewish Christians doesn't apply the same way to us as it did to them. They did not have the complete word of God as we do.

What has not ceased is that God always expects His people to do that which pleases Him. The Thessalonians were told: *"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus"* (I Thessalonians 4:1-2). God is working in us, to perfect us through His written word (II Timothy 3:15-17). This work as well as the glorification of God through Jesus all comes down to the Scriptures for us today (I Peter 4:11).

Hebrews 13:22-25 - The Hebrew letter concludes with these words: *"And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words. Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. Grace be with you all. Amen"* (Hebrews 13:22-25).

The word translated “beseech” [παρακαλέω] is defined as: “to call near, that is, invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation): - beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort (-ation), intreat, pray” (Strong’s # 3870). The word translated “suffer” [ἀνέχομαι] is defined as: “to hold oneself up against, that is, (figuratively) put up with: - bear with, endure, forbear, suffer” (Strong’s # 3874). The word translated “exhortation” [παρακλήσις] is defined as: “imploration, hortation, solace: - comfort, consolation, exhortation, intreaty” (Strong’s # 3874). So, the desire of the Holy Spirit and the penmen of this letter is that those being addressed will bear with the words imploring them in this epistle. That may seem like a given. However, Paul had warned Timothy that the time was coming when many would not endure [same word translated suffer in this text] sound doctrine (II Timothy 4:3).

As this letter concludes we see “I beseech you” and “I have written.” However, throughout the letter we see other places where “we” was used (Hebrews 2:5, Hebrews 5:11, Hebrews 6:3, Hebrews 6:9, Hebrews 6:11, and Hebrews 8:1). It is possible parts of the letter were a collaborative effort. It was certainly not written just by one individual. Whoever is involved in the writing of this letter worked with Timothy. Timothy may have been part of writing this letter for all we know. He was involved in the writing of other letters (II Corinthians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, I Thessalonians 1:1, II Thessalonians 1:1, and Philemon 1:1). Yet, nothing in the Hebrew letter says directly Timothy was involved in the writing thereof.

Timothy being set at liberty implies that he was imprisoned for a period of time. We do know that Timothy was sent to various congregations to work with them from time to time (Acts 19:22, I Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 2:19-23, I Thessalonians 3:1-6, and I Timothy 1:3-7). When you read the references about Timothy he went to teach, keep the brethren from false doctrine, to see how they do, to report, etc. So, when Timothy would come to see the brethren to whom this letter was written we could expect that he would be doing the various works of an evangelist. The one writing about Timothy coming desired to come with him.

It is sort of interesting that this letter was said to be of few words. Paul told the Galatians that he had written a large letter to them (Galatians 6:11). Yet, it was much shorter than this letter. Peter said, he wrote briefly (I Peter 5:12). Paul had written to the Ephesians in few words (Ephesians 3:3). How large and small are determined is therefore a very subjective matter. On the other hand, if the person concluding the letter only wrote a short part of the letter to the Hebrews, that would make complete sense.

One thing that we see in the New Testament, and I can assure you of as a teacher of the Gospel, it is much harder to teach from afar than being in person. Notice

what was written in epistles said to be written by John: *“Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full... I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name”* (II John 1:12 and III John 1:13-14).

Something we see often in epistles, that we see at the end of this epistle, is that salutations were sent from brethren and instructed to be given (Romans 16:5-23, I Corinthians 16:19-21, II Corinthians 13:13, Philippians 4:21-22, Colossians 4:10-18, etc.). The word translated “salute” [ἀσπάζομαι] is defined as: “to enfold in the arms, that is, (by implication) to salute, (figuratively) to welcome: - embrace, greet, salute, take leave” (Strong’s # 782). The same Greek word is translated “embraced” (Acts 20:1). That gives us a good idea of what words of salutation were intended to do.

We also see the extending of grace in letters written to saints (Romans 1:7, Romans 16:20, Romans 16:24, I Corinthians 1:3, I Corinthians 16:23, II Corinthians 1:2, II Corinthians 13:14, Galatians 1:3, Galatians 6:18, Ephesians 1:2, Ephesians 6:24, Philippians 1:2, Philippians 4:23, Colossians 1:2, Colossians 4:18, I Thessalonians 1:1, I Thessalonians 5:28, II Thessalonians 3:18, I Timothy 6:21, II Timothy 4:22, Titus 3:15, I Peter 1:2, II Peter 1:2, II John 1:3, Revelation 1:4, and Revelation 22:21). From that pattern, we should only conclude that this was a common saying among believers. It was used as a greeting of sorts.

This concludes our written study of the book of Hebrews. There were many treasures in this letter. I hope that I did a good enough job in pointing them out that you were able to learn and grow in the knowledge of our Lord from this study (II Peter 3:18). We can see, from this study, that first century Jewish Christians struggled in learning the ways of the New Covenant because of their being rooted in the Law of Moses. While that does not apply to anyone today the way it did then, we can learn from that. We can learn that when one is converted from one system of belief to the one faith (cf. Ephesians 4:5) that can be a difficult transition. So, teaching with all long-suffering is a must in such cases (II Timothy 4:2). Thankfully, we got to consider a lot more depth about Jesus in this study because of the lacking knowledge those saints had. Therefore, be thankful for this letter!