

Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews XL Preparing the People of God

(Chapter 13)
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The book of Hebrews is a profoundly important book for our day. Chapters 1-12 are basically a compilation of a sermon that the Apostle Paul undoubtedly gave over and over again to show the difference between the covenant with Israel and the covenant with the Church all based upon the promises given to Abraham. Now, beginning in Heb. 13 we have what is called an epistolary or an epistle kind of writing. The first 12 chapters are in a preaching or homily type of writing. This now becomes personal and direct with *encouragement, commands, warnings* and all those things.

Hebrews 13:1: “Let brotherly love be present *among you* continually....” Continually follows along down the first three verses of everything that is said here. It means:

Verse 2: “Do not forget to show hospitality... [in other words continually show hospitality] ...for by this some have unknowingly welcomed angels *as guests*. Be mindful of prisoners... [continually] ...as if you were imprisoned with *them*; and think of those who are suffering afflictions, as if you yourselves were in *their* body” (vs 1-3).

Let’s go back and analyze these things here, which are very important. He starts out showing that the thing that becomes most important with the brethren—the love of God, loving each other.

Verse 1: “Let brotherly love be present *among you* continually.” Or *continue in brotherly love*. That goes back to the commands of Jesus, where He said, ‘A new commandment I give you that you love one another as I have loved you’ (John 13:34). That’s the high standard that God has given, as Christ has loved us. He also repeated it in John 15 to show that brotherly love is to continue.

What we’re going to do is look at some other Scriptures and I think that if you do a separate study comparing Heb. 13 with Rom. 13_[transcriber’s correction], you will see the similarities in what is said, and the similarities also in the admonitions.

Romans 13:8_[transcriber’s correction]: “Do not be indebted to anyone for anything, unless *it is* to love one another.... [see the similarity there] ...For the one who loves another has fulfilled *the* Law...” That doesn’t mean the whole law, but fulfilling the law of

loving your neighbor and loving the brethren as yourself. Notice how this upholds what the Apostle John wrote, that love is the keeping of His commandments.

Here’s how you fulfill the Law. It is an active, doing thing, v 9: “Because *it says*, ‘You shall not commit adultery. You shall not commit murder....’” When we come back to Heb. 13, what are we going to talk about, the first thing: marriage is honorable! You see the similarity and the thought flow here.

“...‘You shall not commit murder. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not lust.’....” (v 9). We’re also going to see in Heb. 13 about lust, covetousness and the love of money.

“...And if *there be any other* commandment... [Is that not broad? Does that not cover all of them? *Yes, indeed!*] ...it is summed up in this saying, *even by this standard*: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does not do any wrong to *its* neighbor; therefore, *love is* the full expression of God’s Law” (vs 9-10)—which is the most accurate translation of that. See the similarity there and how that follows along with what we find in Heb. 13.

The reason I bring it out is because a lot of people do not believe that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. I talked to a man who said, ‘Well, Apollos wrote it.’ I said, ‘No, Apollos didn’t write it.’ You have nothing of Apollos and when you read 2-Corinthians very carefully you see that Apollos refused to go to Corinth when Paul asked him to go.

When you understand that Apollos came from Alexandria, Egypt, he was probably a part of the Hellenistic Jewish group, which maybe later fell away. You hear nothing of Apollos. If it were written by Apollos, and it was his first thing that he wrote and recorded in the Bible, would you not think that his name would be associated with it? And would that not be more readily accepted by the Hellenistic Jews than Paul? *Of course!* It was written by Paul, and that’s why when we come to Heb. 13 we see the hand of Paul and the way that he has expressed different things here, which shows that he wrote it.

Today we have problems with *brotherly*

love, a lot of problems with it. Let's look at some of them. Let's see what they are. Let's see the biggest problem we have with love in general in the world. What happens is that because people are confronted by these things. When you really read Matt. 24 from the point of view of the end-times you really understand that these things—as listed here and as Matthew wrote and that Jesus said these things—you know the end is near.

This is a prophecy of the end-time much more than a prophecy of the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. When we understand and juxtaposition this with the book of Revelation, how Revelation shows worldwide events, this also follows right along with worldwide events. Here's why that it is difficult in loving each other, and yet, also should serve as an incentive to follow what Paul said in Heb. 13 to love one another.

Matthew 24:9: "Then shall they deliver you up to affliction... [that's going to be happening] ...and shall kill you; and you shall be hated by **all** nations..." When it says *all* you need to pay attention. It means *all!* That's a time that is coming very, very soon.

"...for My name's sake. And then shall many be led into sin... [Have we seen that within the Church? within the world? *Yes!*] ...and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another" (vs 9-10).

That's part of the problem with *brotherly love* that we have. One of the difficulties: hatred in the world/betrayal in the world, hatred within the Church/betrayal within the Church. Have we not lived through those things? *Yes!* Do these not leave an impression at the very least, and a wound at the very most: in trusting people, in loving them, in committing yourself to one another? *Of course!* We also have that within marriages. Just compound all of that and we see that that is a problem in loving one another.

Verse 11: "And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many." That's what we are on guard against all the time: false prophets, false teachings. That presents the difficulties that are going on. I suppose if we sat down and analyzed all the things that are taught in all the Churches of God that there are probably more sermons given concerning false doctrine, false prophets, false people coming into the Church than anything else, because we are so assaulted with it. Not only that, we are assaulted by false brethren, like Paul said there in Gal. 2: *false brethren stealthily came in unawares to spy out our freedom in Christ!* There it

was a real problem, because that was circumcision inspection—deceived many!

Verse 12: "And because lawlessness shall be multiplied..." This is the great thing to watch out for today. *Lawlessness!* There's a thing we need to understand about lawlessness: ***It is a changing of the laws of God by adding to it with laws of the 'religions' of the world—satanic interpretations and things like that—with the commandments of God!*** It's a very tricky thing.

And because it says that "...lawlessness shall be multiplied... [and everything leading up to that] ...**the love of many shall grow cold**" (v 12). That becomes the #1 problem in society and the #1 problem within the Church. Especially when you're dealing with people coming in and try and take over.

I just talked to a man in Idaho who said that they had their summer meeting and they advertised it. Guess who showed up? *A whole bunch of Judaizers with praise dancing, prayer shawls and all this sort of thing!* They constantly disrupted their meetings. That's just one little example. It's awfully hard to maintain brotherly love and really love each other when you have all of these contentions going on. *Very hard!* We really have to work at it today.

We really have to have forbearance and understanding, yet, at the same time have an absolute rigid standard by which we do not allow false doctrines to come in and take root. That's why it is so imperative in the things that we do and our studies and our sermons that we meticulously go through the Word of God, because that is, coupled with the Holy Spirit and the love of God, our defense. That's what makes it difficult.

Verse 13: "But the one who endures to *the* end, that one shall be saved." That ties right in with Heb. 12 about all the endurance that we need and everything like that. Then you can read in there about all the false prophets. If you want an interesting study, go through the Bible and study about the prophets of Baal, the prophets of these other false gods. Read about the false apostles and things in the New Testament, and I would think with that then you will understand the real spiritual war that we are confronted with all the time. After all, who is Satan interested in derailing, but those who love God and keep His commandments. Who is he interested in getting off the track and going in a different direction? *The true believers in Christ!*

The #1 issue that starts it, that takes you away from God quicker than anything else is Passover! ***The #1 issue is keeping the correct Passover as Jesus instructed at the time that He***

gave it on the day that He gave it! That is the first thing that is under assault because Satan knows that if he can get you off base on that, then he can bring in other false doctrine and other leaven.

Why is Passover primary? *Because you are in covenant with God!* Sabbath then would come next. You can look at it this way: When you first come to the Truth, the first thing you come to is the knowledge of the Sabbath, that is true. When you come to the knowledge of Sabbath where does God lead you after that? *To the Holy Days and the Passover!* Then you understand that the Passover is very important.

Have there been subversions of the Sabbath? *Absolutely!* All you have to do is just look at the way the Seventh Day Adventists understand other doctrines, because they don't keep the Passover. The Sabbath is secondary, although when you first start coming to the knowledge of the Truth, it does become primary. It's a mix. It's primary as you're coming to the Truth, then Passover and being in covenant with God becomes the most important thing. If you are not in covenant with God and that is not renewed year-by-year then you leave yourself open for other problems that come along. Have we not seen that down through time? *Yes!*

Hebrews 13:2: "Do not forget to show hospitality..." Very interesting! This is also talking about a time when there were a lot of 'house churches'; there were a lot of people traveling in different areas. So, hospitality was an important thing. Let me just mention concerning hospitality that is important. For those who do receive hospitality, be thankful and grateful and do not take advantage of it to make yourself covetous and obnoxious! We've also seen that, too!

There is a balance: to the one who shows hospitality, and also the one who receives hospitality: Be thankful, be grateful, do what you can to help out and so forth. I don't know if we've ever done this, but:

"...for by this some have unknowingly welcomed angels *as guests*" (v 2). I don't think we've ever had an angel walk in here in the form of a human being, or visit any of our fellowship groups, or anything like that. That would be astounding! I'm sure as we go on down in time, when things get more difficult, that there will be angels to help us, because God says they are 'sent as ministering spirits to those who are heirs of salvation.

Let's see some things about hospitality; again we see this parallel; notice how these admonitions come and how similar they are to Heb.

13.

Romans 12:12: "*Be* rejoicing in hope. *Be* patient in tribulation. *Be* steadfastly continuing in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, *and* strive to be hospitable.... [Very similar, isn't it?] ...Bless those who persecute you; bless, and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep; *be* of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high ambitions... [we're going to see that again, how similar it is in Heb.13] ...rather, be accommodating with those of low estate. Do not be wise in your own eyes" (vs 12-16).

Today being hospitable is a little different than back then. Some people take advantage of it and make themselves dependents of those who habitually give hospitality and sort of make it a quasi welfare thing. What it's talking about here is to help people, especially when they were traveling, with food, drink and lodging, to help them on their way so that they would go someplace else, not continually stay in one place. You have to use judgment in understanding that and seeing how these things work out.

You need to study and read the book of Proverbs because it will give you practical applications of dealing with people and so forth. It balances it out. Let me give you another example of something that happened concerning hospitality and helping. There was one woman that we were helping with assistance from the Church and we found out that she was getting assistance from four churches and then bought herself a house with the money. Well, that's obviously taking advantage. I wrote her a letter and said that we're happy to help people in need, but since you're getting from three other churches I'm sure that you no longer have any need for assistance from us. I didn't tell her how we found out she was getting from three other churches, but a watchful brother wrote us and told us that. That sort of gets into the other one: *Don't have the covetousness of the love of money.*

Let's see the parallel things that come along here. Let's see the proper fulfillment of these things and how they come about and how they happen and the lack thereof and the problems with it.

Matthew 25:34: "Then shall the King say to those at His right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from *the* foundation of *the* world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat..." (vs 34-35).

If someone truly has the Spirit of God and is a true brother and is a true Christian, in helping and

serving them you're doing it to Christ. That's how He looks upon it. That's why we are to have the *brotherly love* and love each other the way that God wants us to and to do the things that He desires us to do.

Verse 35: "...I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and fed You? Or thirsty, and gave You a drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and took You in? Or naked, and clothed You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to You?' And answering, the King shall say to them, 'Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you have done *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you have done *it* to Me.'" (vs 35-40).

It shows that we do have the responsibility, plus with the safeguards and you have to exercise judgment and discernment as you do it. If it's truly for brethren who have the Spirit of God, they'll be grateful, they won't take advantage. They won't want to take and get, but they're just happy to receive. On the other hand, if you let the *spirit of lawlessness* cutoff all love and you do not help and do not do these things, then you come into the category here.

Verse 41: "Then shall He also say to those on the left, 'Depart from Me, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you did not give Me *anything* to eat; I was thirsty, and you did not give Me *anything* to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not take Me in; I was naked, and you did not clothe Me; I was sick, and in prison, and you did not *come to visit Me*.' Then they also shall answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and we did not minister to You?' Then shall He answer them, saying, 'Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, neither did you do *it* to Me.' And they shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (vs 41-46). So, that shows the difference. Those are the two extremes.

If it happens that someone does take advantage and you find out, like we did with this woman who was getting aid from four different churches—God is the One Who let it be known, of course—God would still rather have you give the benefit of doubt and help out instead of closing up and having no mercy and no kindness and no giving

and no hospitality. All of these things are lessons for us, and we need to make the judgment concerning it.

Hebrews 13:3: "Be mindful of prisoners, as if you were imprisoned with *them*..." We do have a program with the Church that we do this: There's another church group out there that we're not affiliated with, but they actually do prison visiting and do things to go and see those who are in prison. We do our part by providing, at no cost, the Bible for them. If that helps them to get their lives squared around and to begin to find out about God and what they need to do when they get out of prison, then we are in a sense visiting with them, because we're sharing with them the best thing that we've been able to produce as a group, a church and so forth.

Likewise, here were those who were suffering, v 3: "...and think of those who are suffering afflictions, as if you yourselves were in *their* body." This helps us to understand what we need to do. Let's realize that Paul was in prison, many times. In the Roman times there were two kinds of prisons:

1. the ones which put them in dungeon conditions, like the incorrigible or hardened criminals
2. the ones which were under house arrest—that's what Paul was in

That's what Paul was in when he was in prison in Caesarea for two years. He was actually under house arrest within the complex of the Roman governor in Caesarea. They had facilities there within the palace in Caesarea where they would keep prisoners under house arrest. In that situation Paul had where people could come and go. They could visit him, he could teach them. He probably had Sabbath services there, and actually down in the history of the writings of Paul—and especially the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts—the time in Caesarea was a very important time for the writing and compiling of these things.

Then when Paul went to Rome, what happened was, he was, again, in his own hired house; he was under house arrest. No one was forbidden to come to him. I imagine he had Sabbath services there regularly, Holy Day services. As a matter of fact, when he first got there, the first thing he did was send off for the leaders of the Jewish synagogues in Rome and they came to him. What did he do? *He preached to them about Christ!* What did they say? *We have heard of this sect and it's everywhere spoken against, but we don't know anything about it! We'll come back and hear you again!* (Acts 28).

That's a very interesting thing from this point of view: What does that prove? *Peter was never in Rome!* If Peter had been there, beginning in 40-something_{A.D.} and then Paul comes there beginning in 60_{A.D.} Peter would have been there 20 years. Since he was the apostle to the circumcision, then all of those Jews who came to Paul would have already known about it and said, 'Peter's been here; we already know all about this. What are you doing coming here? Aren't you the apostle to the Gentiles and why should come here and teach us?' That ties in with several different things.

Go through and read the different places where Paul says, 'I, the prisoner of the Lord...' and 'certain ones were not ashamed of my chains...' and 'when I was brought to trial, everyone deserted me' and everything like this. Then you come to the last of it in 2-Tim. 4 where he says, 'I've run the course, I've finished the race and now I'm going to be delivered up.'

There's going to come a time when there will be those of us who will be in prison. Not for sin, but for preaching the Word of God. In Ethiopia there was a man who was thrown in prison because he translated something from one of our publications concerning Easter, and guess who had him put in prison? *The Seventh Day Adventists!* So, let's just understand that if things like that happen over there, sooner or later they're going to come here.

Verse 4—Paul is talking about the family, about marriage: "*Let marriage be held honorable by all, and the marital union be undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.*"

Marriage with one husband and one wife upholds the Holiness of God! Anything that gets into the realm of fornicating and adulterating then despises the Holy union that God has created. This is a very important and imperative thing, because this is where many people fail. They fail either because of sin—of fornication or adultery—or they fail because they become focused entirely on themselves, which then creates problems and tensions within the marriage. Living in the world we live in today, this becomes very important for us to understand about that.

Verse 5: "*Do not allow the love of money to influence your behavior, but be satisfied with what you have...*" Very important for today. Let's see where it talks about the 'love of money.' A lot of people have gotten off base because of the love of money, as well as churches merchandizing brethren for more money, building great, elaborate things that the church really doesn't need.

1-Timothy 6:6: "But Godliness with contentment is great gain." To know that you love God, love the brethren, are in right standing with God, you're pursuing Godliness (Heb. 12) and *contentment with it is great gain.*

Verse 7: "For we brought nothing into the world, *and it is evident that neither do we have the power to carry anything out of the world.* But having food and clothing, we should be satisfied with these" (vs 7-8). If you've suffered as the Apostle Paul suffered, then, yes, you'd be very happy for that.

The next time I start grumbling and griping about something—and we all do, don't we? If something doesn't work just right. Today we're spoiled. We have air-conditioners, we have heaters, so we don't get too hot or we don't get too cold. Just think of how you would immediately start grumbling and griping if you lived in Arizona where the temperature has averaged 115 degrees, where over 30 homeless have died. Immediately you'd say it's too hot. What happens if you don't get your food just the way you want it? *It's not done or it's burned, or it's too much or not enough!* You start griping and complaining.

When you've come to the point that you've suffered enough so that you know—with food and clothing—that you're going to be very happy with. Paul was!

Verse 9: "For those who desire to become rich fall into temptation..." Why? *If you start making money then you figure you're going to make more!* This is especially exemplified in the lotto and in gambling, because these are shortcuts to make money. There are widow women who *go to Las Vegas, they go to Reno and they gamble away their money!* The owners of the casinos are very happy to have them come. Others who don't go to that, they go down to the local store and they buy their little lotto tickets and buy them every week.

I know people who are on welfare that take so much of their welfare and they go down and they buy lotto tickets in hopes of making money. I also know of other people—I've heard it many different places—where there are widows and widowers who sit at home and believe everything that Reader's Digest sends them, and they spend a lot of money every month trying to win the \$10-million check that comes out. I've never seen it, yet! It hasn't happened in my neighborhood! They send that to everyone! They write these letters that sound like you're right in line for the next check. Never happens! But you have a lot of magazines, whatever!

That is a form of covetousness and a

“...temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which cause men to sink into destruction and perdition” (v 9). What else comes along with that? *Sex, power, the love of money!* So, along with gambling, also comes illicit sex, too much drinking, drunkenness, all of this; all of those come with it.

Paul gives us a summary here, v 10: “For the love of money is a root of all evils...” That follows along in every field that you want get into today. We know some examples of what happens to churches that get into that, but in Hollister the Red Cross—who is supposed to help people; give them money, rescue them; if there are problems and difficulties, supposed to help them—the director absconded over \$150,000 in this little old county. They had to combine it with the chapter over in Monterey. I know this since where our office building is there was a Red Cross office and they have shut it down and have moved out, because someone had the *love of money* and was covetous in taking it for their own personal gain. That never works.

It will work for a while, but they got caught. Rather than the *love of money*, which it says, “...by which some, *while* striving after *riches*, were seduced from the faith, and have impaled themselves with many sorrows” (v 10).

I remember a man who had a terrible gambling habit. He could not keep himself from driving up to casinos and taking family money and tithe money and trying to increase it, but only lose it. Then you have the cycle that happens, and you want to go at again so you can make up for what you have lost. Those are exactly the kind of people that the casino owners love. “...and have impaled themselves with many sorrows,”

You know that impaling means *to thrust a sword clear up into your innards to your brain beginning from your buttock!* That’s what impaled means! Paul is being very descriptive as to what happens spiritually when people get involved in that.

Verse 11: “But you, O man of God, flee these things and... [Our goals are to] ...pursue righteousness, Godliness, faith, love, endurance and meekness. **Fight the good fight of the faith!....**” (vs 11-12). That’s what we are to do.

Hebrews 13:5: “...for He has said, **‘In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.’**” That is really quite a profound way of saying it.

We need to understand that all of these other things that Paul is talking about here concerning

fornication adulterating and things like this. What are you trying to do with those things for those who try and do it? *Trying to help yourself!* Satisfy the self! Build the ego! Build whatever it is and that cuts off faith. Rather than trusting in God—regardless of the circumstances that we are in—“...**‘In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.’**” That’s what we need to realize.

Let’s see how similar this is. God also does this: He says in another place, *if you forsake Him, He will forsake you!* Of course, in the process of forsaking Him there will be many trials and difficulties to wake you up so that you won’t do it, but if you do, He will forsake you. That’s the worst condition that can possibly be—if God forsakes someone! But you have to forsake God first. Christ gives the promise that He will never leave us, ever!

- He’s personally called us!
- He has personally chosen us!
- He has given us the Holy Spirit!

Joshua 1:5: “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life.... [withstand you or stand against you] ...As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. **I will not fail you nor forsake you.**”

Whenever you get down or discouraged, this is the place to go and claim this promise—Heb. 13 and Jos. 1. Claim the promise! God has promised—hasn’t He? God has spoken it. **He will not leave you or forsake you!** Then we have in Psa. 71 when you’re old and gray God is not going to forget you. When you’re weak and feeble God is not going to forget you. He is *with* you! **He will not ever leave you or forsake you!**

Verse 6: “Be strong and of good courage...” Don’t worry about things! Don’t fret about things! Put them in God’s hands. Do what you need to do, but be: “...strong and of good courage...”—a positive aspect in everything that you do, regardless of the circumstances. We can claim the promise:

Romans 8:28: “All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.” That’s another promise! Combine that with us.] ...for you shall divide for an inheritance to this people the land which I swore to their fathers to give it to them.”

He repeats it, v 7: “Only be strong and very courageous so that you may observe to do according to all the Law, which My servant Moses commanded you...” We can add to that all that Jesus has commanded us!

The same thing, because Jesus said, *‘nor*

will I ever leave you; no, I will never forsake you ever!' What does that do? *That takes care of all the discouragement. That takes care of all the troubles and problems.*

"...Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left... [we've heard that before] ...so that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth... [same thing of the New Testament] ...but you shall meditate therein day and night..." (vs 7-8). Isn't that the whole purpose of the New Covenant, to have it written in our heart and mind? How does it get there? *By:*

- meditation
- study
- prayer
- obedience
- doing the things that God wants us to
 - ✓ by fighting sin
 - ✓ by overcoming
 - ✓ by going through the circumstances that we do and still end up following God

"...so that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it, for then you shall make your way prosperous..." (v 8)—rather than the love of money; rather than coveting. Wait on God, He'll provide!

"...and then you shall have good success. Have I not commanded you?... [here it is a third time]: ...**Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid...** [regardless of the circumstances] ...neither be dismayed... [discouraged and frustrated] ...**for the LORD your God is with you in all places where you go**" (vs 8-9). Let's add to that: *Having the Holy Spirit of God, Christ is with you wherever you go!*

Is that not true? *Yes!* That's why we need to have great encouragement even in the face of terrible things that are going to come on the world and they will affect our lives, too. What this does, this gives us a spiritual shield as it were; a spiritual insulation as it were; so that we do not allow these things to affect us and take us down. They can affect us and turn us toward God and to good, or we can let it affect us and take us down. Paul is preparing them. Remember, as we have discussed, the book of Hebrews is preparing them for the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and how they need to face that and then live their lives through it and out of it and beyond it. That's why it's so important for us at the end-time that we also do the same thing.

What I want you to do is take all of these things and you can do some more in-depth Bible study covering these things, covering the different Scriptures of it. Get out your handy-dandy

concordance and go through it, or if you've got a computer concordance go through that. If you've got comparative Scriptures and things like that, go through it; that will help you with it.

Psalm 118:1: "O, give thanks to the LORD..." You do that! You go to Christ and say, 'Thank You, Lord, that you have promised:

- You will never leave me
- You will never forsake me
- You will never desert me'

Even in the most trying and difficult times.

Remember the 23rd Psa., which are the words of Christ as He was on the cross! 'The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want...' That is *lack anything*. He says, '**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, You are with Me, and Your rod and Your staff comfort Me.**' That's all a part of 'Christ will never leave us or forsake us.' We thank God:

"...for He is good because His steadfast love endures forever. Let Israel now say that His steadfast love endures forever. Let the house of Aaron now say that His steadfast love endures forever. Let those who fear the LORD now say that His steadfast love endures for" (vs 1-4).

This is a sample prayer for us. When you are confronted with a situation or problem that is too much for you to bear, and I guarantee that we'll all go through that. I've been through that. I know others who have been through that. This is what we do:

Verse 5: "I called upon the LORD in distress; the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place." Gives you peace of mind. Gives you space away from the problems and difficulties. As long as you call upon the Lord, take it to Him, because He won't leave you or forsake you.

Verse 6: "The LORD is on my side..." That's provided you're on the Lord's side. If you're His, you're on His side. Is that not true? *Yes, indeed!*

"...I will not fear what can man do to me?" (v 6). With the Spirit of God, you are guaranteed—by being faithful unto death—you're going to live forever! That's a guarantee! That's what we need to hang onto here.

Verse 7: "The LORD is for me as my helper; therefore I will look in triumph upon those who hate me." God is going to take care of them. Putting the enemies in God's hand is a whole lot better than you trying to take them on yourself. Let God fight the battle! That's what it says.

Verse 8: “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to trust in princes.... [notice, this is about Christ]: ...All the nations surround me... [that was depicted in the crucifixion] ...but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. They surround me; yea, they surround me, but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them” (vs 8-11).

- God is there to fight for you!
- God is there to help you!

That’s why there is the love of God and no fear!

Hebrews 13:6: “So then, let us boldly say, ‘The Lord is my Helper, and I will not be afraid.... [Matt. 10:28] ...What can man do to me?’”

He can take your physical life, but if he does, you’re guaranteed eternal life. So what have they really done? *They prematurely cause the body to die!* But they cannot take eternal life from you, because that comes from God. What can man really do to you? *Nothing!* There may be a time of suffering and difficulty and pain, but what have they really accomplished? *Nothing!* God is going to resurrect you. Then I wonder what it’s going to be like when it comes time for whomever did what they did to you is resurrected and you say, ‘Hello, I am here. Remember me?’ Maybe that will be something that will lead them to repentance. ***There’s nothing that they can do!***

Verse 7: “Remember your leaders who have spoken the Word of God to you, considering the outcome of *their* conduct; *and* imitate *their* faith.” Let’s read this in the *King James* because the *King James* translates this entirely incorrectly to bolster a higher hierarchical system of church government. Everyone who believes in a hierarchical church government, when they give a sermon on church government they always go to:

King James Version of v 7: “Remember them **who have the rule over you...**”—that’s how it’s brought out. *No!*

Verse 7 (FV): “**Remember your leaders who have spoken the Word of God to you**, considering the outcome of their conduct... [Not the rule!] ...and imitate their faith.”

That’s why it is very, very important for all teachers, elders and ministers—and yea, if you proclaim yourself an apostle—you’d better humble yourselves so that maybe you might be, otherwise you put yourself on a course of destruction before God. However, ***you do not rule the brethren of God!*** We’ve got a booklet on that: *Is the Ministry*

the Government of God? No, it is not! Christ is the Head of the government of God of Whom we all come under.

- we are to teach
- we are to help
- we are to instruct
- we are to protect from false prophets and false brethren

Yes, we’re all to do that! But it is by example and it is by teaching and that’s what is important. The important phrase here is this: “**...who have spoken the Word of God to you...**” If they speak the Word of God to you, what are they going to do? *Teach you the right way!*

Here’s the reason, v 8: “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” Paul is telling us He was God before He came to the earth. That’s verifying that He was God manifested in the flesh *yesterday*; that is in all of His teachings in the Gospels. *Yesterday* is quite all inclusive. *Today*—as Paul is writing this—is still the same. Paul is saying he’s not teaching anything different than what Jesus Christ did, and *forever!* That’s why it says there in Mal. 3:7 that ‘I, the Lord, change not.’ What is the first lie that comes from the pulpit? *Christ changed!*

If you don’t remember v 8—“Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, and today, and forever” and v 5: “...‘In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.’” Then the proper kind of leadership which comes from God to help perfect the saints and so forth; if you get your mind off of it. What is the whole focus of the book of Hebrews? *To get your mind on Christ!* Just like it starts out in Heb. 1 and ends up in Heb. 12 and 13:

Verse 9: “Do not be carried about by all kinds of strange doctrines.... [strange teaching] ...For *it is good for* the heart to be confirmed by grace *and not by foods*, which have brought no *spiritual* benefit to those who have been preoccupied *with them.*” Now he’s getting into the temple rituals and the different things that they had there.

Verse 10: “We have an altar from which those who are serving the *present earthly* tabernacle do not have authority to eat.” By the time Paul was writing this, they had already rejected Jesus Christ. This also shows you cannot take a mixture of Christ with the Judaism of the past.

Note sermon series: *Scripturalism vs Judaism*; book: *Code of Jewish Law*—you will never, never understand what it means in the New Testament concerning works of law unless you have a copy of *Code of Jewish Law* and know what all the customs and laws that the Jews added to it and,

which they try and emulate from the temple. When you read that it is the greatest eye-opener you have ever seen to understand the difference between Judaism and Scripturalism. It is a misnomer to say that the Church of God through Christ grew out of normative Judaism, which is what the scholars call it. It was a rejection of Judaism beginning with John the Baptist.

They do not have the authority to come to the altar of God in heaven above through the animal sacrifices and the various offerings that they had there.

Verse 11: “For *pertaining to* those animals whose blood is brought into the Holy places by the high priest for a sin offering...” That has to do with Atonement. We have the blood of Christ, that’s what it’s talking about, the whole book of Hebrews.

“...the bodies of all these are burned outside the camp” (v 11). As you read in the Old Testament, whenever there was a sin offering the blood was poured out upon the altar. On the Day of Atonement, special sacrifices were given for the priesthood, and then the blood of the goat—which was for the Lord—was sprinkled on the altar for the forgiveness of sin. But the bodies were taken out and burned outside the camp.

If you look at it this way: On your left hand is the Temple Mount, coming down from the Temple Mount is the Valley of Kidron. There’s a bridge that goes across the Valley of Kidron and you go up a steep path up the hill of the Mt. of Olives. Up directly across from the temple, looking back right into the temple area to the area of burnt offerings was what was called the Miphkad Altar, and that Miphkad Altar was the place where they took all the sin offerings and they were burned to ashes there. Then there was a special big conduit where they would periodically take the ashes of all of those animals that were burned for a sin offering and they would push it down through that conduit and the ashes would fall down into the Valley of Kidron.

Why is this important? *Because close to that Miphkad Altar was where Jesus Christ was crucified!* That’s why Paul is making this comparison here. He makes it in:

Verse 12: “For this reason, Jesus, in order that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, also suffered outside the gate. So then, let us go forward to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (vs 12-13). Come to Christ and His blood and His sacrifice.

Verse 14: “For we do not have a continuing city here *on earth*; rather, we are seeking the one that is coming. Accordingly, let us offer *the* sacrifice of praise continually to God through Him...” (vs 14-15). Rather than all the rituals; rather than the rote memorized prayers and so forth.

Just to give you an example: Everything for the whole year in the Roman Catholic Church is set by a missal for that year. Missal does not mean something you shoot off into the heavens as people would think of today. Missal was a book containing the outline of every Scripture, every prayer, every litany of saints, every Mass that was to be said, every Scripture that the priest was to read, the congregation was to recite back. Likewise with the Old Covenant. Every day had a prescribed sacrifice. Every sin had a prescribed sacrifice. They had prescribed prayers that they would do and so forth.

What Paul is saying here is that when we come to Christ through Him *our worship is from our heart*. The praise toward God rather than all this rote physical thing. Come continually to God, through Him,

“...that is, *with the* fruit of *our* lips openly professing *our faith* in His name” (v 15). This is just a summary of how we live by faith and serve God by faith, believe Christ, believe in His sacrifice and everything, and to understand what God is telling us. It is a spiritual thing.

God is more concerned about your heart and your mind and your conversion and your attitude toward God and the Holy Spirit that you have so that you can grow in grace and knowledge and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, rather than all these physical things. This is what Paul is saying. Remember, this was written just before the destruction of the temple to prepare them so that when it’s gone, here’s what you do:

Verse 17: “Follow your leaders, and be submissive, because they are looking out for your spiritual well-being, as *those who must be* ready to give an account *to God* in order that they may do this with joy, and not *with* groaning because that *would be* unprofitable for you.”

What he’s saying here is help make the life of your minister a little more comfortable by not being so cantankerous and antagonistic and not solving the problems of your own sins in your own life. Many times we have had not such joyful times in church, but we all overcome it in time.

Then Paul starts ending the whole epistle, v 18: “Pray for us; for we are certain that we have a

clear conscience, in all things desiring to conduct ourselves well.... [he was still in prison] ...Now, I am earnestly exhorting *you* to do this more diligently that I may be sent back to you more quickly” (vs 18-19). So that he can come back and see them.

Then he closes off very much like many of the other epistles, v 20: “And *may* the God of peace, Who raised our Lord Jesus from among *the* dead—that great Shepherd of the sheep—through *the* blood of *the* everlasting covenant, perfect you in every good work in order that you may do His will...” (vs 20-21).

Note sermon: *How are You Perfected in Christ?* What does that mean? The New Testament talks an awful lot about it. Here Paul ends up with it.

“...accomplishing **in you...**” (v 21). Not accomplishing *by* you; not the works that you may do outside, which are fine, but the greatest work is the work *inside* that He may accomplish in you!

“...that which *is* well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom *be the* glory into the ages of eternity. Amen” (v 21). That essentially ends the whole epistle.

Then he tacks on at the end, v 22: “Now, I admonish you, brethren, to patiently listen to this message of exhortation, for I have written to you in only a few words.” It took us 41 sermons! What is written is only in a ‘few’ words. Each one of the words in the book of Hebrews is fully weighted by all the rest of Scripture. That’s what makes it such a profound and important book.

Verse 23: “*I want you to* know that our brother Timothy has been released; with whom, if he comes soon enough, I will see you.”

In other words, what he’s saying, spiritually he’s going to see them through Timothy, if he goes to see them and comes back to Paul, he’ll bring a report. He’s saying that’s as good as ‘me seeing you.’ Today we could accomplish this a whole lot differently. We could have video conferencing and see everybody. That’s coming to that very quickly because of these cell phones they have are actually video cameras and you can do that. They are now selling video-phones that run like cell phones with pictures. They do have that you can see each other. Remember this: whenever you answer the phone now, if you have one of those, quickly have a comb handy. If you’re not clothed, don’t answer the phone, it may not be too comely.

Verse 24: “Greet all your leaders, and all the saints. Those from Italy send greetings to you.... [Where was he? *In Italy!* Where was he at the time

he was in Italy? *Under house arrest!*] ...*May God’s* grace *be* with all of you. Amen” (vs 24-25).

To finish off this series in the book of Hebrews, go ahead and read straight through the whole thing. Just let the Word of God talk to you, lead you and help you understand.

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* (except where noted)

Scriptural References:

- 1) Hebrews 13: 1-3, 1
- 2) Romans 13:8-10
- 3) Matthew 24:9-13
- 4) Hebrews 13:2
- 5) Romans 12:12-16
- 6) Matthew 25:34-46
- 7) Hebrews 13:3-5
- 8) 1 Timothy 6:6-12
- 9) Hebrews 13:5
- 10) Joshua 1:5-6
- 11) Romans 8:28
- 12) Joshua 1:6-9
- 13) Psalm 118:1-11
- 14) Hebrews 13:6-8, 5, 9-15, 17-25

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- John 13:34; 15
- Galatians 2
- Acts 28
- 2 Timothy 4
- Psalm 71
- Romans 8:28
- Psalm 23
- Matthew 10:28
- Malachi 3:7

Also referenced:

- Booklet: *Is the Ministry the Government of God?*
- Book: *Code of Jewish Law* by Ganzfried & Goldin
- Sermon Series: *Scripturalism vs Judaism*
- Sermon: *How Are You Perfected in Christ?*

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