
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Hebrews

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Hebrews 13:9-25: *Concluding Exhortations!!*

General idea: So do not be led astray by false ideas, trends, or other things just because they are new. Rather, receive and build your strength in Christ's true Truth. He is our Altar and help; our truth for daily living comes from Him and nothing else—no ceremonies or special practices, for such things do no good and may even hurt us. Only by God's special favor will we excel spirituality and in life. For Christ suffered and paid our debt of sin so we can all live in Him. Under the old system, the priests brought the sacrifice of animal blood into the Holy Place. But Christ shed His blood for us in disgrace. So now, we can be an offering of praise and sacrifice of our will over to His so we can do good, listen, and live properly, thus pleasing God. The sacrifice that pleases God is our obedience and our trust in Him. We can even bear His disgrace, for our home is not of this world. With Christ, we can succeed in sharing His Name and we can do good too. We can obey our spiritual leaders (as they are responsible to look after us) and be accountable to them as they are to God, doing it all with joy. For if we are ingrates, we will be filled with sorrow and miss what God has for us. Pray and live honorably so God may produce even more in you. Remember your fellow Christian workers and pray for and support them. May the God of peace who saved you continue to equip you. May you produce effectual fruit for the glory of Christ, our Great Shepherd. To God be the glory!

Contexts and Background:

The author closes with his final moral exhortation, his point being for us to live as a response to what Christ has done for us. If you love Him, then you are to love others too. This is almost written as a letter of recommendation to encourage the hearers to continue in the faith and not give up, and to obey their leaders, because if they do not, they will face dire problems. What they were going through then was nothing like what would come. The fall of Jerusalem was just two years away when all their property and vocations and means would be taken away and families would be fragmented. He advised them to "shape up" so they could grow through it with joy and not melt in bitterness. In context, this was also a call to be responsible for one another so they could encourage and equip others, helping them when they slipped or were about to slip (Rom. 12-14; Gal. 4-5; Eph. 4-5).

Commentary; Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Do not be carried away.* Lusting for something we may think is better, from a bad food to being charmed by a clever preacher teaching false doctrines and thinking, *hey, that is their interpretation and it is OK!* We are as responsible in listening to bad or false or junk teachings as is the false teacher for speaking ill of God's Word. We must go to God's Word—not to whims; the Bible means what it says and you

can know who is false because false teachers will never use discernment or context or real word meanings.

- *Strange teachings.* Referring to false doctrines rooted in speculative thinking and whims and not upon God's clear Word. This can also refer to the emptiness of rituals and traditions that serve no purpose or doing nothing to grow one's communion with Christ. *For it is by grace we are saved* and we respond to God in and by faith (Lev. 7:11-18; 1 Cor. 10:18; Eph. 2:8-9).
- *Ceremonial foods/meats.* Food that the law said not to eat for health and separatist reasons and to not lust for what is not good or will harm. These foods not only differentiated the Jews from the other people groups, but also kept them healthy and disease-free. The foods and one's pledges thereof are not to be legalistic nor are they the means to draw closer to God; faith and obedience are. Also meaning what is reserved for the priests (Lev. 9:11; 11; Num. 19:3; Deut. 14; 1 Pet. 2:5).
- *Altar.* Refers to the work of Christ on the cross, which ended the old covenant and the priesthood (John 6:48-58).
- *No right to eat.* Refers to the priests who usually had a right to eat these foods but could not eat of the sacrificial meats and offerings on the Day of Atonement. We can participate in God's blessings because of His sacrifice. Also referring to using for ourselves what is sacred and offered to God. This shows disrespect for God. (Lev. 6:18, 29; 7:6, 28-36; 1 Cor. 9:13).
- *Through his own blood.* Blood was sprinkled on the altar by the priests for the forgiveness of sins; now, Christ has done this permanently for us. That sacrifice is now what Christ fulfilled to sanctify us, and the theme of Hebrews is about how Jesus is superior to the OT system so there is no reason to rely on it (Lev. 16:27-28; John 10:11; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 2:24-25).
- *Outside the camp.* Referring to as the Day of Atonement offerings were burned outside of the city, Jesus paid for our curse of sins outside of Jerusalem, doing so for our atonement while also fulfilling both Jewish burial laws and Roman law too. The author's point may have meant that to fully embrace the Christian Church and life, they had to be willing to be put out of the temple and synagogue and even suffer (Lev. 4:12; 9:11; 16:5-19; 27; 24:14; Num. 15:35-36; 19:3; Deut. 17:5; 22:24; Heb. 11:10-16).
- *Bearing the disgrace/reproach.* Perhaps referred to the willingness to be disgraced by family and culture by explicitly turning away from Judaism to fully embrace Christ (Psalm 69:7-9; Rom. 15:3; Phil. 3:1-14; Heb. 11:25-26).
- *Enduring city.* Referring to our living faith that God gives and builds on along with our efforts. Here, it is a warning for negating our spiritual development or neglecting what God gives. If we refuse to allow His work, then our faith and the future He has

for us will not be received. If we leave the Church, our salvation is intact (if it was for real in the first place), but we limit our sanctification and cut ourselves off from God's reward for being faithful; we will fall to bad or natural consequences for refusing His guidance or the fellowship of others (Psalm 137: 5-6; 147:2; Isa 62:5; Gal. 6:24; Heb. 10:10; Rev. 21: 2-4, 9-27).

- *Offer to God a sacrifice of praise.* Meaning because Christ is the offering, we respond by offering ourselves up to God in devotion and surrender to His Lordship. It is our living faith and piety that pleases God and this is what endures even without the Temple (which would be destroyed in 70 AD, a few years after this letter was delivered). Thus, animal sacrifices are no longer necessary or even desired by God. He desires our intimacy. Also in Scripture, meaning a *living sacrifice*. For the ancient Jews, this was a lifestyle of worship—that God be continually praised. This motive continues and refers to the fact that we belong solely to God, not to ourselves or the world or anything else. This is a key component to maturity and spiritual growth in the faith. This streams from our trust, obedience, and gratitude for Who Christ is and what He has done for us (Lev. 7:11-21; Psalm 4:5; 27:6; 40:6; 50:7-15; 54:6; 69:30-31; 119: 108; Pr. 21:3; Hos. 14:2, 12; Luke 10:36-37; Rom. 3:25; 6:12-17; 8:13; 12:1-3; John 15:13-15; 37-38; Eph. 4:23; Phil. 4:18; 1 John 3:16),
- *Obey your leaders.* Meaning a call to have respect for authority and their call to care for and keep careful watch over the people as shepherds, because leaders will be held to account. Another call to submit to those in authority and to value and respect them, enjoy orderliness, and learn from them. In contrast, a person with a lack of faith will not respect others because the emptiness where faith is supposed to be is filled with pride and even self-destruction, worry, and stress that lead a person nowhere good. This does not mean we submit to dictatorial or dysfunctional leadership (Isa. 21:8; Jer, 23:4; Ezek. 3:17; 33:6; 35:7; Hab. 2:1; Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:2-4; 3 John 9-10).
- *Pray for us.* An example of a prayer request. Also, as Christians, we are all priests to one another as we collectively rely on Christ and minister to one another. Christianity is community; we are all mutually dependent upon one another and must act accordingly with goodness to one another (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 4:16; James 1:27).
- *Live honorably.* The desire to pursue Christ and His precepts and be careful that we honor Him and not stay others from Him. This must include our devotion and surrender to Christ, for only in Him—by Word and Prayer—and being held accountable by others will our conscience be clear. This is also a request for the people who hear and read this to keep others and the author in prayer too (2 Cor. 1:12).
- *God of peace.* A benediction and a title for God. Even in the face of struggles and hardships, we are to refer to and focus on God as comfort! If we just live our lives with the attitude of how things affect "me" and not "others," then we are living with

the devil, and not with God (Rom. 15: 33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16)!

- *Eternal covenant.* Christ takes the place of our debt of sin and fulfills the old covenant which was instated by the Law of Moses and the blood sacrifice, which was temporary and flawed, to atone for sin. Now, it is superseded by Christ so we can go directly to God, person-to-Person. Also means that God renews His relationship with us, His people, and gives us an age of grace in Christ by faith alone (Ex. 24:8; Deut. 30:11-14; Psalm 37:31; 40:8; 119:11; Isa. 51:7; 55:3; 61:8; Jer. 31:31; 32:40; Ezek. 37:26; Rom. 6:9; Heb. 8:8-13; 9:11-22).
- *Great Shepherd.* A Name for Jesus, meaning He is the One who leads, equips, and guides us—as we all desperately need it. It is our call to hear His voice and obey as a good sheep does in order to be fed and not be eaten by predators. For us to be in the safety of faith, we not only need to be in Christ, we have to obey. This is a result of our intimate relationship with Him. We know Him, He knows us, and we do what He says. We are concerned with what concerns Him, and we act accordingly. Like sheep, we can't lead ourselves or others without being forever lost and unfed (Psalm 23; Isa. 63:11; Jer. 23:1; 31:34; Ezek. 34:6-16, 31; Hos. 6:6; John 10:1-8; 16:13-15; Rom. 10:7).
- *Word of exhortation.* A statement of humility and encouragement to remind them to remain in Christ and not fall away. We do this as we honor the superiority of Christ and hear God's call so we can venture into Christian maturity (Phil. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:3).
- *Brother Timothy has been released/set at liberty.* He was arrested by Nero in Rome and perhaps released when Nero died because of all the turmoil and confusion, or maybe to show contempt to Nero's' legacy. Of course, it was a "God thing." This is a prime statement to date the letter to 68 AD (see background article).
- *Those from Italy.* This indicates where author was writing *from* (Rome), not *to*. This would be only if Jews were there in hiding like the early Christians. Also, like Romans, this may have been a "circular letter" and went to all these destinations (see background article (Heb. 10:32-34)).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Francis Schaeffer and others have warned that *the attitude and trends of the church tend to be the attitudes of the culture*. We must heed this warning, for if we do not, this will be a very wrong outcome! We are called higher, to listen and put into practice what Christ teaches and gives. We are to be good and faithful as followers, first and foremost, before we can be so as leaders. We are to care for our souls and watch over and care for others too. This is Christian community and leadership in action—the practice and application of our faith in our lives first and then letting it pour over others. For we lead by venturing forward with our eyes upon Christ as Sovereign Lord. This is a responsibility; as we follow our Shepherd, we shepherd others. We do not dictate or

lead from behind; rather we are in front, forging ahead on His path, cutting the way of His Way for others to see and follow. We make Him real and visible as we all come to the throne of grace. Let us be fruitful, practical, real, and faithful. If we are not, we will have enormous problems and strife instead of the love of Christ in and through us and our churches.

As Christians, we are in tighter community together in Christ; as Christ-followers, we are to be deep friends who are bonded as family. The purpose of our doctrine and the study of His Word is not just for the knowledge, (which is very important), but our supreme goal should be what we do with that knowledge. This is the relationship that is growing in Christ, then outward to others around us. Remember: His shed blood paid for us! You have truly dedicated your right to yourself to Christ! We give Him our all! It is easy to die for a cause, but are you willing to live for Him in perfect obedience, so your life is poured out so that your strength is gone and you must rely on His? Hebrews is about keeping your faith real and growing. Our relationship with the Lord must be transparent and not secretive (unless you live in a closed Muslim country)!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever been led astray by false ideas, trends, or other things just because they are new? How did you discern? How are Christians misled and what can church leaders do about it?
2. How can you have confidence in Christ? How will this help you when you need to not be afraid of situations or peoples?
3. How is Christ your Altar and help, and what comes from Him into your daily living? What more needs to come from Him?
4. How can superfluous ceremonies or special practices be no good and even harm us? What do you need to do to excel spiritually and in life?

5. Why does God want us to feel the pain of others? How does this help with developing compassion and doing something to help?
6. How can you look ahead to be better at what you do so the choices you make are lasting and have a good impact?
7. Why is it important that we obey our spiritual leaders? How does it help you that they are responsible and accountable to look after you?
8. How can you better embrace Christ head on, fast and hard? What would your life look like if you did?
9. How well do you and your church support and help Christian workers by praying for and supporting them? What happens when we live as *ingrates*? How will we be filled with sorrow and miss what God has for us?
10. How can you better live your life for Christ? What do you need to do now to further receive and build your strength in Christ's true Truth?
11. What do you need to do to motivate yourself, to examine your attitudes, and see if there is room (and there should be lots of it) for improvement in your relationships with both God and those around you? How can you make this happen? When will you do it?
12. What are some of the highlights you received from this Hebrews Bible Study? What will you do now to live in response to what Christ has done for you?