

# JESUS IS BETTER

An In-Depth Study of Hebrews

## Course Outline

<u>Week</u>	<u>Passage</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Hebrews 1:1-4	Introduction to Hebrews, God's Final Word in His Son
2	Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4	Jesus is Greater Than the Angels
3	Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6	Jesus' Sonship is Greater than Moses' Servanthood
4	Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13	Jesus' Rest is Better than Joshua's Rest
5	Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10	Jesus, Our Great Appointed High Priest
6	Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20	Exhortation to Persevere in Light of God's Promises
7	Hebrews 7:1-28	Jesus, The Greater Melchizedekian High Priest
8	Hebrews 8:1-13	Jesus, The Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
9	Hebrews 9:1-22	Jesus' Sacrifice at the Greater Tabernacle
10	Hebrews 9:23 - 10:39	Drawing Near to God Because of Jesus' Greater Sacrifice
11	Hebrews 11:1-40	The Faith of the Ancients in Action
12	Hebrews 12:1-29	Running the Race with Perseverance
13	<b>Hebrews 13:1-25</b>	<b>Instructions for a Thankful Life and Godly Fear</b>

## Recap from Session 12

### Hebrews 12:1-29

- The ultimate example of persevering faith is Jesus Christ himself. For the joy set before him, he endured the shames, scorned its shame, and completed his work of salvation.
- He is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, and therefore we look to him so that we do not grow weary in our souls.
- Christians will face struggles and hardships in our race, and the pastor calls us to endure hardship as God's discipline of growing us in our holiness. God's discipline shows us that we are indeed his children.
- Unlike the Old Testament saints who fell away, we have come to a different "mountain" – one of glory, joy, and gladness.

- Jesus will come again in the future to wipe away all sins from all creation. It is only those who are part of the unshakeable kingdom that will remain.
- That is why we should be thankful and worship God with reverence and awe.

## Structure of Hebrews

- **Hebrews 1:1-4 – God has Spoken to Us in the Son Who is also High Priest**
- **Hebrews 1:5 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Greater Sonship**
  - Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4 – Jesus is Greater than the Angels
  - Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6 – Jesus’ Sonship is Greater than Moses’ Servanthood
  - Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Rest is Greater than Joshua’s Rest
- ***Transition Passage - Hebrews 4:14-16 – Jesus, the Son of God who is also High Priest***
- **Hebrews 5:1 – 10:39 – Jesus’ Greater Priesthood**
  - Hebrews 5:1 – 6:20 – Exhortation to Persevere in light of Jesus’ Priesthood
  - Hebrews 7:1-28 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest in the order of Melchizedek
  - Hebrews 8:1-13 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
  - Hebrews 9:1-22 – Jesus’ Sacrifice at the Greater Tabernacle
  - Hebrews 9:23 – 10:18 – Jesus’ Greater Sacrifice in the True Tabernacle in the New Covenant
  - Hebrews 10:19-39 – Persevere in light of Jesus’ Sacrifice
- **Hebrews 11 – The Faith of the Ancients in Action**
- **Hebrews 12:1-3 – Fix our Eyes Upon Jesus**
  - Hebrews 12:4-17 – Endure God’s Discipline as Sons
  - Hebrews 12:18-29 – We Have Come to a Better Mountain
- **Hebrews 13:1-25 – Instructions for a Thankful Life and Godly Fear (this session)**

## A Life of Thankfulness and Godly Fear

When reading Hebrews 13, there seems to be an abrupt change in style in the pastor’s sermon. At first glance, Hebrews 13 appears only as a collection of miscellaneous commands to his hearers. However, on closer reading, the last chapter of Hebrews draws on everything that he has touched on in the previous chapters and makes concrete applications of the key themes. This chapter is not merely tacked on at the end of the sermon.

In Hebrews 12:28-29, the pastor exhorts his hearers to a life of thankfulness and worship of God in reverence and awe. That passage is “the bond that unites chapters 1 through 12 with the verses that follow. Heb 12:28-29 is the pastor’s richest description of the life of faith as it is lived by those who experience what God has done in Christ.”<sup>1</sup> These final instructions cover a broad range of Christian responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 2012), 675.

**Discuss:** Hebrews 13:8 – “Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever.” How have you seen this verse applied?

## Hebrews 13:1-25

**13** Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. <sup>2</sup> Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. <sup>3</sup> Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

<sup>4</sup> Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. <sup>5</sup> Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

“Never will I leave you;  
never will I forsake you.” <sup>5</sup>

<sup>6</sup> So we say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.  
What can mere mortals do to me?” <sup>t</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

<sup>9</sup> Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so. <sup>10</sup> We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

<sup>11</sup> The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup> And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. <sup>13</sup> Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. <sup>14</sup> For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

<sup>15</sup> Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. <sup>16</sup> And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

<sup>17</sup> Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

<sup>18</sup> Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. <sup>19</sup> I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, <sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>22</sup> Brothers and sisters, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you quite briefly.

<sup>23</sup> I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.

<sup>24</sup> Greet all your leaders and all the Lord's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings.

<sup>25</sup> Grace be with you all. <sup>2</sup>

Hebrews 13 can be divided up into three sections:

- **Hebrews 13:1-6**
  - Four pairs of commands telling the hearers how to live the faithful life and godly fear as the people of God
- **Hebrews 13:7-17**
  - The call to imitate, submit, remember, and have confidence to their leaders.
- **Hebrews 13:18-25**
  - Benediction and some final greetings

## A Faithful Life of Gratitude and Godly Fear

*Hebrews 13:1-6*

13:1-3 – “Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.”

Greek – *φιλαδελφία* – “brotherly love”

“...some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”

Abraham and Sarah – Genesis 18:2-15

Lot – Genesis 19:1-22

“Continue to remember those in prison...” (cf. Heb 10:33-34)

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<sup>2</sup> [\*The New International Version\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 13:1–25.

13:4-6 – “Marriage should be honoured by all...”

“...marriage bed kept pure...”

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have...”

Wordplay

- v1 – “brotherly love” – *φιλαδελφία* – *philadelphia*
- v2 – “hospitality” – *φιλοξενίας* – *philoxenia*
- v5 – “without love of money” - *Ἀφιλάργυρος* – *aphilargyros*

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (cf. Deut. 31:6, 8)

“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.” (cf. Ps. 118:6-7)

These exhortations draw on themes that are common in Christian and Jewish moral teachings. Nor are they without parallel in pagan sources. However, the pastor’s selection and careful combination of these themes are his own. They take on new meaning as the proper expression of awe-filled gratitude for the all-sufficient work of Christ. They are also integral to what the pastor has taught about the nature of God’s people as his “household” (3:6), made up of his children, who are “brothers and sisters” of Christ and of one another (2:10-14).<sup>3</sup>

**Discuss:** Which of these commands do you think the people of God are most lacking in obedience? How can we encourage obedience in that area?

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<sup>3</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 678.

## Imitate Your Leaders

*Hebrews 13:7-17*

13:7-10 – “Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.”

“...who spoke the word of God to you.”

“word” (2:2, 4:2, 4:12, 6:1), spoken by God (1:1, 1:2, 2:2-3, 3:5, 4:8, 5:5, 11:4, 11:18, 12:24-25)

“...imitate their faith.”

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

**Discuss:** Based on the context, what do you think Hebrews 13:8 means and how is it supposed to be applied?

“Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.”

“We have an altar...”

Here also, *altar* is a cultic term used in a shorthand and figurative way for the many dimensions of Christ’s death. His sacrifice is the source of both the saving and sustaining grace by which our hearts are strengthened.<sup>4</sup>

13:11-16 – “...but we are looking for the city that is to come.”

“...the bodies are burned outside the camp.”

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<sup>4</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, n.d., 521.

“...so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate...”

“...bearing the disgrace he bore.” (cf. Heb 11:26)

“...we are looking for the city that is to come.” (cf. Heb 12:22)

“...let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise...”

13:17 – “Do this so that their work will be a joy...”

“...submit to their authority...”

“...as those who must give an account.”

“...so that their work will be a joy...”

## Benediction

*Hebrews 13:18-25*

13:18-19 – “Pray for us.”

“...desire to live honourably in every way.”

“...so that I may be restored to you soon.”

13:20-21 – “...equip you with everything good for doing his will...”

“...through the blood of the eternal covenant...” (cf. 8:6-13, 7:22, 9:14-15, 10:15-18)

“...great Shepherd of the sheep...” (cf. Isa. 63:11, Ps. 23:1-6, Eze. 34, John 10:11)

“...equip you with everything good for doing his will...” (cf. 10:5-10)

“...may he work in us what is pleasing to him...”

13:22-25 – “...bear with my word of exhortation...”

“...for in fact I have written to you briefly...”

The pastor, then, has ended what has appeared up until now to be a sermon as if it were a letter. The simplest explanation for this situation is that the author of Hebrews was not able to deliver his sermon in person, so he committed it to writing and sent it to be read to the congregation over which he was so gravely concerned. His letter ending, then, is no claim to Pauline authorship. However, by appending this ending he is associating his message with the other early Christian letters in our NT and claiming his place as a faithful interpreter of the message of Christ handed down through the apostles.<sup>5</sup>

“...our brother Timothy has been released...”

“Grace be with you all.”

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<sup>5</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 711.

## A Life of Thanksgiving and Godly Fear

Towards the end of Hebrews, the pastor calls his hearers to worship God acceptably with reverence and awe. He continues to explain how that looks like in the life of a Christian. He tells his readers to continue their love for one another, including those who are in prison. Honouring marriages and living a life of contentment were also emphasized.

After this, he exhorts his hearers to remember their past leaders. They are to consider the outcome of their lives and to imitate the example of their faith as they persevered. These leaders spoke the word of God about the great salvation of Christ to them (2:3). Thus, from this passage, we can reason that one of the main roles of a Christian leader is to speak the word of God (the Gospel message) to us (v7) and given what the author has touched in this book about the importance of the word of God – it is not surprising. God has spoken to his people in many different ways in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, he has spoken to us by his Son (Heb 1:1-2). The only way that we can “read” and find out about this Jesus now, is through the Scriptures.

That is why later on, the pastor calls his hearers to have confidence and submit to their leaders’ authority. If they do not, they will be a burden to these leaders and having overburdened leaders are “of no benefit to” (v17) them. This is because the leaders are supposed to speak the word of God to everyone. By burdening them, they will have less time or opportunity to do so, and that means that the leaders are not serving everyone with a joyful heart. When that happens, that would be of “no benefit” to his hearers, particularly if the result is unfaithfulness. These leaders then are there to “keep watch” over us, helping us to persevere in our faith. They do this as people who must give an account to God.

He ends his sermon with a wonderful benediction that once again reiterates most of what he has covered so far. In particular, he acknowledges that God is the one who equips us to do everything good for his evil, working in us what is pleasing to him. God achieves in us what is most pleasing to him. To him be all glory!

## Bibliography

Cockerill, Gareth Lee. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Eerdmans, 2012.

O’Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Hebrews*, n.d.