

1. The Lord Is My Helper (Heb 13:1-6)

The author now appends the main body of his epistle with various closing exhortations. Brethren must be loved (Heb 13:1); strangers must be received (13:2); the persecuted must be supported (13:3); marital partners must be honored (13:4). The context of the great promise “*I will never leave you nor forsake you*” is covetousness. Insecurity promotes an inordinate clinging to material things. Covetousness and all other insecurities are overcome by the knowledge that, with God as our ally, we have nothing to fear from men (13:6).

1. Read and comment upon Ps 27:1, 56:4 and 118:6.
2. What is undefiled? What is the eventual lot of fornicators and adulterers?
3. With what should we be content?

2. The Same Christ, the Same Doctrine (Heb 13:7-9)

The next exhortation concerns doctrinal purity. The author encourages his readers to remember those who originally taught them the truth and lived consistently with it to the end of their lives (Heb 13:7). He then makes an observation that, as with 13:5, must be viewed in its immediate context: “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever*” (13:8). The proper application of this truth is that the doctrines first issued by Jesus and then by “those who heard Him” (Heb 2:3) remain unchanged. What saved men in the first generation of the kingdom still saves in the second (and third and fourth and ...). The author warns against “strange doctrines” which have to do with dietary restrictions (Heb 13:9). This was a constant problem in the early church as evidenced by the many passages which address it (Rom 14:2-3, 15-17, 20-23; Col 2:16, 20-22; 1 Tim 4:3-5). Truly, Jesus Christ is the same today, for His will has not changed since first issued two thousand years ago.

4. What outcome is to be considered by the readers of this epistle?
5. Upon what principle is the believer’s heart to be established? What does this mean in the context?

3. Outside the Camp (Heb 13:10-14)

It is hard to fully appreciate the price early Jewish converts had to pay for their conversion to Christ. There was social, religious and family rejection along with consequent economic hardship. This cost is addressed in an analogy between the Jewish sacrifices being burned outside the camp and Jesus being crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem. His exhortation is that the brethren must be willing to “*go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach*” (Heb 13:13). Godly principles often conflict with earthly values. God’s people, whether Jew or Gentile, must weather ostracism and ridicule, exclusion and prejudice – the very things that Jesus, Himself, had to endure. If He was willing to suffer these indignities for us, should we not

be willing to suffer them for Him? After all, it was His blood that was shed “outside the gate” (13:12) that provided “*an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat*” (13:10).

6. If we are cast outside the “city” of human approval, what do we look for in the future?

7. What must we bear for Jesus in view of His sacrifice for us?

4. The Sacrifices of Praise and Service (Heb 13:15-19)

Many false religious systems incorporate sacrificial rituals in their worship. Since Jesus was the once-for-all sacrifice for sin, there are no ongoing atoning offerings. Instead, the sacrifices are spiritual, acts of praise and service offered to God by the worshiper out of love and gratitude. Both words and actions are emphasized (Heb 13: 15-16). One manifestation of proper attitude toward God is submission to the leaders whom God has chosen by divinely mandated characteristics. Elders are to be obeyed out of respect to their function (13:17). Israel’s rebellion toward God was demonstrated in their resistance to Moses’ authority. God therefore taught in some very graphic lessons that His appointed leadership was not to be trivialized or undermined (Num 12 [Aaron & Miriam]; Num 16-17 [Korah, Dathan and Abiram]). The author also urges that prayers be diligently offered for a speedy reunion with his readers (13:19).

8. With proper support, how will elders view their burdensome responsibilities?

9. Through whom must our spiritual sacrifices be offered in order to be acceptable?

10. Of what is the author confident about himself?

5. God’s Work in Us (Heb 13:20-25)

These closing inspirational thoughts summarize the gospel: Jesus shed His blood of the everlasting covenant, was raised from the dead, has become the great Shepherd of the sheep, and through Him God works in us and through is “*what is well pleasing in His sight*” (Heb 13:20-21). If these truths are allowed to sink down into the depths of our soul, we will persevere through all the trials of life and stand victorious in the end.

11. How does the writer describe his now-completed epistle?

12. What had befallen Timothy later in life?

13. Compare Hebrews 13:21 with Philippians 2:13. How is “work” a mutual effort?