

After spending the bulk of this epistle on the doctrinal issue of the superiority of Jesus Christ, the writer of Hebrews focuses this final chapter on practical instructions on living for God. Among other subjects, he mentions love for other Christians, dependence on God, and warns us against being lured away from the teachings of Christ into doctrines that are based on Levitical practices.

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1 Let brotherly love continue.

The writer begins the chapter with the subject of love, the highest of all Christian virtues. Pure, unselfish love can only come from God because He is love (**1 John 4:7-8** “*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*”). Love is the basis of the two greatest commandments: **Mark 12:29-31** “*And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*” The writer wants his readers to continue exercising this virtue between them and other believers, for love is a Christ-like behavior (**John 13:35** “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*”).

**Verses 2-4:** The writer lists a few examples of this love in action: entertaining strangers (v. 2), remembering fellow Christians who are in prison or are otherwise suffering adversity for their faith (v. 3). He also mentions that God takes faithfulness in marriage (an expression of love) very seriously (v. 4).

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5 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. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

“**Let your conversation** [way of life; conduct] **be without covetousness** [love of money]; **and be content with such things as ye have**” – Our lives must not be spent in pursuit of wealth and possessions. We should be content with the things that God has provided to meet our needs. **Matt. 6:31-33** “*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*”

“**for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee**” – God has made this promise several times in the OT (Gen. 28:15; Deut. 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5; 1 Chr. 28:20). The writer is saying that we should be content with what we have because God has promised that He would never forsake us and leave us without whatever we need.

“**So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me**” – Quoted from **Psa. 118:6** “*The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?*” Our confidence in God should make us bold in standing for Him. God’s ability to take care of us far outweighs man’s ability to harm and persecute us.

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7 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.

“**Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God**” – We are also to “remember” (not neglect to meet their needs) the spiritual leaders within the church. They guide us by speaking to us the word of God. We should see that their needs are met.

“**whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation** [way of life; conduct]” – We should identify the spiritual leaders whose faith is worthy of emulating, considering the end result of the way that their faith causes them to lead their lives. Not every spiritual leader’s faith is worth following, but we should learn from the example of those that are.

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8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. 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.

“**Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever**” – The writer is emphasizing the unchanging nature of Jesus Christ. While Christ has changed in the sense of being in heaven, then living some 33 years on earth, dying and ascending back to heaven, the gospel of Christ has not changed nor evolved. He eternally has been the Savior and will always be. This verse seems to be laying the foundation for the next.

“**Be not carried about with divers** [various] **and strange** [foreign; alien] **doctrines**” – The writer warns against following new doctrines that deviate from the gospel preached by “them which have the rule over you” mentioned in v. 7. The true gospel of Christ does not evolve over time nor do portions of it become obsolete. It seems in our day that there are many who are preaching new doctrines that are man-centered rather than Christ-centered. However, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever and His gospel has also not changed.

“**For it is a good thing that the heart be established** [made firm; confirmed] **with grace**” – Our hearts can be filled with doubts about our salvation, especially when it’s based on the idea that we have to keep elements of the law since we never know when we may mess up and not keep it sufficiently. However, if our hearts are established with the grace of God, then we can have peace because we know our salvation is not dependent on us but God’s grace and faithfulness.

“**not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied** [to conduct one’s life] **therein**” – Under the Mosaic Law the diet of the Jews was restricted to clean animals only. The writer declares that those who now live their lives practicing those dietary laws have not benefited from it because the Mosaic Law cannot produce salvation.

**Verses 10, 11:** Normally, when a person brought an animal to temple to be offered for their individual sins, whatever was leftover was used for food for the Levitical priests and their families. However, on the Day of Atonement, the bodies of the animals used for the sin offering was not eaten, but taken outside the camp and burned. We (believers in Christ) have access to an altar (a sacrifice) that those who look to the Mosaic Law for salvation have no right.

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12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

The Day of Atonement was a shadow pointing to the day when Christ Himself would be “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” The bodies of the animals used in the sin offering were burned outside the camp, foreshadowing how that the Messiah would suffer “without [outside] the gate” of the city. Jesus died outside the city of Jerusalem in order to sanctify the people who would look to Him in faith.

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13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. 14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

The writer now calls on believers to turn their back on the Levitical sacrifices for their salvation and cling to Jesus despite the reproach of being associated with Him. As the old gospel hymn says, “This world is not my home,” our hope is not on this earth but in heaven. In figurative sense, we are to abandon the earthly Jerusalem (the Levitical system) and seek the city to come (the New Jerusalem) where our Lord will reside.

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15 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.

**“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually”** – The OT law required other sacrifices besides the sin offerings. Some were for worship and thanksgiving. In the NT, we no longer offer animal and vegetable offerings to God but our sacrifices are to be the sacrifices of praise to Him continually. We are to do this “by Him” (through Christ) because there is no other way we can offer an acceptable sacrifice to God.

**“that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name”** – In addition to the animal sacrifices, in the OT there were also offerings where they brought the firstfruits of their harvest to the LORD as a thank offering. The writer uses that analogy here, comparing the “fruit of our lips” to the OT offerings of thanksgiving. Our praise should include thankfulness and gratitude to God for salvation through Jesus Christ as well as all the other blessings He gives.

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16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

**“But to do good and to communicate [fellowship] forget not”** – The writer urges us to always do good and to engage in fellowship. These are acts of love for one another that are earmarks of the followers of Jesus Christ (**John 13:34-35** “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”).

**“for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”** – In addition to the sacrifice of praise, God is pleased when we sacrifice our time and resources to do good and fellowship with one another. Such expressions of love are in obedience to Jesus’ command in John 13:34-35.

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17 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.

**“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves”** – While we are to submit ourselves to governmental authorities (Rom. 13:1-5), the context here refers to the pastors and elders of the church who are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the saints. We are to submit ourselves to their leadership in spiritual matters. However, their authority does not extend into secular concerns. Cults have abused their adherents in the past, telling them who to marry, where to work, etc. God never has given church leaders such authority over people’s lives. Instead, their responsibility is to teach/preach the word of God and thus help God’s people to grow in their faith.

**“for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account”** – God has given them the responsibility of being a shepherd over God’s flock. A shepherd must feed the sheep and see to their safety and welfare. Likewise, pastors and other church leaders must see that the congregation is fed spiritually and should be concerned with their spiritual safety and welfare because they will give an account of themselves to God for how they cared for those under their care.

**“that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you”** – Seeking the welfare of the congregation is a heavy responsibility and we can make it easier or harder on our church leaders. Just as they are accountable to God for how they manage the church, we are also accountable to God for how we respond to their leadership. It would not be profitable (beneficial) to us if we make their job harder so that they cannot be as effective shepherds. Nor will it be profitable when we stand before God to give an account for how we responded to the leadership of those pastors and other church leaders that He placed over us.

**Verses 18-25:** The writer asks for the prayers of his readers then says a prayer of benediction for them. In his closing comments, the writer mentions Timothy being “released” (presumably from prison) and that “they of Italy salute you,” implying that the writer is in Italy. We do not know for sure who wrote Hebrews, but these two facts help make the case for those who believe that the Apostle Paul was the author.