

THE EPISTLES TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 10:19-13:19, THE SUPERIORITY OF FAITH IN CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

A. An outline of Hebrews

1. The superiority of the person of Christ (1:1-4:13)
2. The superiority of the work of Christ (4:14-10:18)
3. The superiority of faith in Christ (10:19-13:19)
 - a. The assurance of faith (10:19-39)
 - b. The reality of faith (11:1-40)
 - c. The vitality of faith (12:1-29)
 - d. The outworking of faith (13:1-19)
4. Conclusion (13:20-25)
 - a. Benediction (13:20-21)
 - b. Final greetings (13:22-25)

B. Review of Hebrews 12:18-29

1. R. Kent Hughes, *The twin peaks of our spiritual life demand two things as we march to Zion: obedience and worship. Let us obey his Word implicitly, for it is effectual—it never fails, and it is final—it will shake the whole universe. Let us worship him with reverence and awe and thanksgiving!*
2. Warren Wiersbe, *Remember that your Father loves you. And draw on God's enabling grace. . . . While others are being frightened, you can be confident!*
3. Douglas Mangum, *Themes of a hopeful, secure future continue as these verses draw this portion of the letter to a conclusion. Creation will be shaken, but God's unshakable kingdom will remain.*

C. Introductory comments on Hebrews 13:1-19

1. Thomas Constable, *The writer concluded his written sermon with specific exhortations, requests, and greetings to enable his readers to continue to worship God acceptably under the New Covenant (cf. 12:28).*
2. Robert Gundry, *Growing out of Christians' reception of "an unshakeable kingdom" and God's being "an incinerating fire" (12:28-29) are practical exhortations designed to prevent apostasy.*
3. Raymond Brown, *In the teaching of these verses Christians are expected to be loving, pure, contented, loyal, bold and worshipful.*
4. R. Kent Hughes, . . . *what we think about God has everything to do with our relationship to each other and with the world . . . So the question that our text answers is this: understanding that God is both the consuming fire of Mount Sinai and the consuming love of Mount Zion, how ought we to live—especially in the church?*
5. Warren Wiersbe, *In Hebrews 13, he presented the evidences of faith that should appear in our lives if we are really walking by faith and not by sight. There are four such evidences.*
6. Ray Stedman, *The great pastoral heart of the writer comes to the fore in his closing words. Far from being an unrelated addendum, written perhaps by another hand or at another time as some commentators have claimed, the chapter is a natural close for one who has finished his teaching and warnings and now gives some final words of loving application. One by one, he touches on the kinds of behavior by Christians which will impress a secularized society with the value and power of Christian truth.*
7. Douglas Mangum, *For Hebrews, doctrine, spiritual instruction, and practical commands are integrally entwined with one another.*

HEBREWS 13:1-19, THE OUTWORKING OF FAITH

A. Responsibilities to social and moral issues (1-6)

1. Keep loving the brethren (1), *Let brotherly love continue.*

a. Scriptural references on *brotherly love*.

- 1) Romans 12:10, *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*
- 2) 1 Thessalonians 4:9, *Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,*
- 3) 1 Peter 1:22b, *love one another earnestly from a pure heart,*
- 4) 1 John 4:7, *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.*
- 5) 1 John 3:14, *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.*
- 6) 1 John 4:21, *And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

b. Comments

- 1) The relationship between Christians is based on our union with Christ as coheirs.
- 2) Robert Gundry, *Here the author uses "brotherly love" to stress how strong and close should be the relationship of love between fellow Christians.*
- 3) Warren Wiersbe, . . . *the deepest kind of fellowship is not based on race or family relationship; it is based on the spiritual life we have in Christ. A church fellowship based on anything other than love for Christ and for one another simply will not last.*
- 4) Raymond Brown, *If believers belong to the same family, then the Father's love must be expressed in their lives. This exhortation may have been particularly important if, as seems likely, this local church had been disrupted by divisions, rivalries and feuds (12:14; 13:9) . . . Christian love must not degenerate into a mere pious emotion. It must be expressed in continuing practical concern.*
- 5) R. Kent Hughes, *Their impulse to brotherly love provided a sweet, inner self-authentication. It also announced to the world that their faith was the real thing, for Jesus had said, "All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:35).*
- 6) William Barclay, *In a church which is threatened from the outside and desperately in earnest on the inside, there are always two dangers. First, there is the danger of heresy-hunting. The very desire to keep the faith pure tends to make people eager to track down and eliminate the heretic and the person whose faith has gone astray. Second, there is the danger of stern and unsympathetic treatment of those whose nerve and faith have failed. The very necessity of unswerving loyalty in a hostile pagan world tends to make more rigorous the treatment of any who in some crisis did not have the courage to stand up for their faith. It is a great thing to keep the faith pure; but, when the desire to do so makes us censorious, harsh and unsympathetic, mutual love is destroyed, and we are left with a situation which may be worse than the one we tried to avoid. Somehow or other, we have to combine two things—an earnestness in the faith and a kindness to those who have strayed from it.*

2. Care for strangers (2), *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

a. Scriptural references on *hospitality to strangers*.

- 1) Matthew 25:35, *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,*
- 2) Romans 12:13, *Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*
- 3) Titus 1:8, . . . *hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.*

b. Comments

- 1) The writer expands Christian responsibility from those within the body of Christ to strangers, as well.
- 2) William L. Lane, *The specific reference to the entertainment of strangers in v 2 is a reminder that early Christianity shared in the mobility of Roman society and that this was a major factor in the expansion of the Church.*
- 3) Raymond Brown, *He [the writer] reminds his readers of the generosity of Old Testament saints who, in entertaining angels, received the attendant blessing of God. Of course, as Jesus said, when we welcome strangers we receive not only angels, but Christ himself.*

- 4) Thomas Constable, *Abraham entertained angels when he showed them hospitality (Gen. 18)* . . . Since the word “angel” means “messenger,” in one sense any time we entertain someone who brings a message from God (e.g., a visiting preacher or missionary) we entertain an angel. In the sense of entertaining a spirit being who comes to us in human form with a message from God, perhaps some have that privilege even today.
- 5) Donald Hagner, *Probably it is traveling Christian workers who are primarily in view (see especially 3 John 5–8)*.
- 6) Robert Gundry, . . . *the context of persecution makes it probable that the author of Hebrews has particularly in mind the provision of room and board to fellow Christians who are fleeing persecution . . .*
- 7) R. Kent Hughes, *By presenting the delectable possibility of hosting a real angel, the preacher was not promoting hospitality on the chance that one might “luck out” and get an angel, but was simply saying that the possibility of its happening indicated how much God prizes hospitality in his people . . . Why this great premium on opening one’s home and life to others? There is a reason beyond meeting each other’s occasional material needs—it is in each other’s homes that we really get to know one another.*
- 8) William Barclay, *Christianity was, and still should be, the religion of the open door. The writer to the Hebrews says that those who have given hospitality to strangers have sometimes, without knowing it, entertained the angels of God. He is thinking of the time when the angel came to Abraham and Sarah to tell them of the coming of a son (Genesis 18:1ff.) and of the day when the angel came to Manoah to tell him that he would have a son (Judges 13:3ff.)*.
- 9) Ray Stedman, *Fear, lest one be taken advantage of, keeps many from this practice, but first-century believers found a way to minimize that. An early Christian commentary, the Didache, limited visits to only one day, or two if necessary. If a Christian stayed three days, he was regarded as a false prophet . . .*
- 10) B. F. Westcott, *We only observe the outside surface of those whom we receive. More lies beneath than we can see.*

3. Show concern for prisoners and the afflicted (3), ***Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.***

a. Scriptural references

- 1) Matthew 25:36, *I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.*
- 2) 2 Timothy 1:16, *May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains,*
- 3) Hebrews 10:34, *For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.*

b. Comments

- 1) William L. Lane, *The instruction to sustain a compassionate concern for prisoners and the mistreated further exemplifies the admonition to maintain brotherly love in v 1 . . .*
- 2) Robert Gundry, *Prisoners got at most, if at all, a little bread and water from the jailer, who might also abuse the prisoners physically. To remember prisoners therefore meant not simply to keep them in mind. It meant to keep them in mind by way of taking them adequate food and drink and even to stay with them for the prevention of abuse.*
- 3) Thomas Constable, *The prisoners in view were evidently Christians who were suffering for their testimonies . . . The existence of a significant number of prisoners supports a date for writing after A.D. 64. The readers might suffer the same fate themselves one day since they were still leading a mortal existence.*
- 4) *Those who are mistreated probably of those who were persecuted but not incarcerated.*
- 5) Raymond Brown, *It is most likely that those who are in prison were there because of their faith, but of that we cannot be certain. The reference to compassionate responsibility for those who are ill-treated does sound as though some believers had been physically assaulted.*
- 6) The context of Hebrews directs one to consider those in prison as Christians incarcerated for their faith in Christ. Many Christians have taken the command of verse 3 to include those incarcerated for crimes committed. God’s grace is never intended just for the innocent but for the guilty, as well.
- 7) *Since you also are in the body*
 - a) Some believe it speaks of the bond of humanity where those who have not suffered are empathetic to those who are suffering.
 - b) I believe one should consider that it speaks of the body of Christ. Our commitment to the mistreated should be based on our family relationship. When one part of the body suffers the rest of the body feels the pain. William L. Lane notes that *Christians were prepared to share the actual living conditions of an imprisoned brother in order to demonstrate their solidarity with him.*

- 8) William Barclay, *When the Numidian robbers carried off their Christian friends, the Church at Carthage raised sufficient money to ransom them and promised more. There were actually cases where Christians sold themselves as slaves to find money to pay the ransom for their friends . . . The Christians became so notorious for their help to those in prison that, at the beginning of the fourth century, the Emperor Licinius passed new legislation that 'no one was to show kindness to sufferers in prison by supplying them with food and that no one was to show mercy to those starving in prison'. It was added that those who were discovered to be doing this kind of thing would be compelled to suffer the same fate as those they tried to help . . . In the early days, no Christians who found themselves in trouble for the faith were ever neglected or forgotten by their fellow Christians.*
4. The importance of verses 1-3.
- a. William L. Lane, *The sequence of 13:1-3 suggests an implied call to full participation in the life of the confessing community. Those who respond in love, providing shelter to persecuted brothers and sisters, visiting them in prison, and caring for them when they are ill-treated, will through these acts acknowledge themselves to be Christian . . . In the context of 12:28-29, the expressions of brotherly love to which the members of the house church are summoned are the responses of gratitude that constitute authentic worship . . .*
- b. Hebrews 12:28 declares that our God demands acceptable worship. Hebrews 13:1-3 details an expanding circle of worship in action. We are to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to love strangers. We are to love prisoners and the ill-treated. We must always remember that love is an action word.
4. Honor marriage vows (4), ***Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.***
- a. Marriage is to be held in honor.
- 1) Thomas Constable, *Under the Old Covenant the Israelites were to punish fornicators and adulterers, but under the New Covenant God does it.*
 - 2) Robert Gundry, *Marriage is to be valued in all respects, but in particular as the sole legitimate framework for a fulfillment of sexual desire. Outside that framework, sexual intercourse defiles the bed where it takes place and thus debases marriage.*
 - 3) Some groups, including ascetics, disdained and even prohibited marriage, trying to separate completely from the physical and focus on the spiritual.
 - 4) William L. Lane, *Regard for marriage is an essential expression of the quality of love that binds the community together as brothers and sisters who share a common confession. As a community they must respect marriage as the gift of God and support those who share the marriage relationship with empathy and affection.*
 - 5) R. Kent Hughes, . . . *for those of us who live under the authority of God's Word, marriage is an ordinance of God. Genesis proclaims, after God gave Eve to Adam, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (2:24). Marriage is patently heterosexual and indissoluble. As Jesus said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:6).*
 - 6) Warren Wiersbe, *In these days, when sexual sins are paraded as entertainment in movies and on television, the church needs to take a stand for the purity of the marriage bond. A dedicated Christian home is the nearest thing to heaven on earth, and it starts with a Christian marriage.*
- b. God will judge the sexually impure.
- 1) Scriptural passages declare sure judgment.
 - a) 1Corinthians 6:9-10, *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*
 - b) Ephesians 5:5-6, *For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*
 - c) 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7, *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.*

- 2) R. Kent Hughes, *“Bed” is used here as a euphemism for sexual intercourse, and in demanding that it be kept “pure” “our author is referring in sacrificial terms to married chastity.” The bed—the sexual relationship—is an altar, so to speak, where a pure offering of a couple’s lives is made to each other and to God . . . We Christians are called to be outrageously pure—to be a source of wonder and even derision to this glandular world.*
- 3) Warren Wiersbe, *How does God judge fornicators and adulterers? Sometimes they are judged in their own bodies (Rom. 1:24–27). Certainly they will be judged at the final judgment (Rev. 21:8; 22:15). Believers who commit these sins certainly may be forgiven, but they will lose rewards in heaven (Eph. 5:5ff). David was forgiven, but he suffered the consequences of his adultery for years to come; and he suffered in the hardest way: through his own children.*
- 4) William L. Lane, *Sexual responsibility affirms the lordship of God the Creator over the sphere of bodily life . . . Illicit sexual intercourse defiles the marriage bed; it profanes what God has made holy . . . Sexual immorality is actually a rejection of the presence and goodness of God who created the human family in its maleness and femaleness.*
- 5) Ray Stedman, . . . *God views infidelity as serious and will allow the natural consequences of pain, hurt and guilt to take their terrible toll, and no way can be found to escape it. It is in this way that he judges the adulterer and all the sexually immoral . . . The moral climate of society may regard biblical sexual standards as quaint and old-fashioned, but the church especially ought to hold to such standards in a time of declension.*

c. Comments

- 1) William L. Lane, *The awesome prospect of the final judgment throws into high relief the ultimate importance of respect for marriage and for sexual integrity. They represent aspects of the pursuit of holiness that are foundational to the worship of God.*
- 2) R. Kent Hughes, *Here the command to honor marriage is directed at those who dishonored it in two opposite ways—asceticism and libertinism. Some first-century Christian ascetics considered “virginity as necessary to Christian perfection.” . . . But the greatest assault on marriage’s honor came from the libertines who saw marriage as irrelevant as they pursued unbridled sexual fulfillment.*

5. Be content (5-6), ***Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”***

a. Don’t make money a priority.

- 1) *love of money*
 - a) It means *greedy*.
 - b) Cestas Spicq, . . . *love of money is one of the signs of belonging to the world.*
 - c) Luke 12:15, *And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*
 - d) 1 Timothy 3:3, *not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.*
 - e) 1 Timothy 6:10, *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*

2) Comments

- a) Raymond Brown, *Covetousness, either of another man’s wife, or someone else’s property, is a perilous snare.*
- b) William L. Lane, *It is at least probable that some Christians wished to amass wealth in order to protect themselves from persecution through money . . .*
- c) Paul Ellingworth, *One of the results of persecution has been the loss of property (10:34). In these circumstances, the Christian response is not to grasp all the more eagerly at material wealth, but to rely quietly on God’s provision, even in the face of human opposition.*
- d) R. Kent Hughes, *Wealth has its disadvantages. It is difficult to have it and not trust in it. Material possessions tend to focus one’s thoughts and interests on this world alone. It can enslave so that one becomes possessed by possessions, comforts, and recreations. Jesus said, “The deceitfulness of wealth and the desire for other things come in and choke the word” (Mark 4:19).*
- e) Ray Stedman, *Loving money must particularly be avoided as it becomes a substitute for faith in God’s loving care and induces a false trust in an unreliable supply.*
- f) John Owen, *Covetousness is an inordinate desire to enjoy more money than we have, or than God is pleased to give us.*

- b. Be content with what you have because of Whose you are.
 - 1) *be content*
 - a) It means *to be sufficient, to be adequate, to be enough.*
 - b) 1 Timothy 6:8, *But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) William L. Lane, *With pastoral sensitivity, the writer calls his audience to display a contentment with what they possessed that was rooted in God's pledge of his constant presence . . . In Hebrews the injunction to contentment is a call to quietness in the situation, in confident reliance on the presence and provision of a faithful God. Members of the house church are to find their security solely in him.*
 - b) Donald Hagner, *Whereas material possessions are by their nature subject to loss and thus unworthy of ultimate commitment, God and his saving purpose are unchanging.*
 - c) William Barclay, . . . *those who belong to God need nothing more because they always have the presence and the help of God with them. Nothing that the world can give them can improve on that.*
 - d) Warren Wiersbe, *The material things of life can decay or be stolen, but God will never leave us or forsake us. This promise was made to Joshua when he succeeded Moses (Deut. 31:7-8; Josh. 1:5, 9); and it is fulfilled to us in Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:20; Acts 18:9-10).*
 - e) Douglas Mangum, *The antidote to loving money is contentment and trust in God.*

TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING

B. Responsibilities to spiritual issues (7-19)