

Hebrews 12-13

- Chapter 11 ended by invoking the legacy of the saints of old
 - And binding their promises and their inheritance to ours
 - The glory reserved for those OT saints will not become reality until the Church is complete and the Lord returns to reign
 - And the thought of countless saints of old assembled and waiting for their day of reward
 - Leads us directly into chapter 12

Heb. 12:1 ¶ Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
Heb. 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- The writer smoothly transitions between one thought to a new thought
 - He says let's be motivated and encouraged by the examples of these people and by the fact that they waited for us to join the family of God
 - He calls them a cloud to emphasize they are still awaiting their bodies
 - They are only in spirit form presently
 - This is metaphoric reference
 - Both the grammar and the context
 - The word in Greek is martyr or martus, which doesn't mean an observer
 - Same word for a witness at a trial
 - Secondly, the context isn't one of them watching us
 - It's of us watching them

- And learning from them
 - So we can't misuse this text to mean that saints are witnessing and watching the happenings on earth
 - Because of this cloud, let's be motivated onward
 - Then the writer introduces the familiar image of running a race
 - The word for race is agon
 - Literally means a conflict , struggle, a fight
- 2Tim. 4:7 I have fought the good **fight**, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;
- The word argon is the root of another word – agony
 - For some of us, it's appropriate that the word for race is the root of the word agony
 - So our Christian experience on Earth is like a race, but in the sense of a struggle, conflict, fight
 - And we know who are enemies are
 - The enemy and our own sin
 - And to each the writer says lay them aside
 - First he says lay aside every encumbrance
 - The word for encumbrance is only used here
 - It refers to any weight or drag on the runner as they try to race
 - It's a reference to anything that doesn't profit us in our race or struggle
 - And the enemy is constantly placing such encumbrances in front of us, like hurdles
 - And lay aside sin
 - Our own flesh will become an obstacle to this race if we allow it

- In the case of these readers, the reference to sin is likely even more specific
 - The writer probably had the sin of returning to the Law as a primary focus as he wrote this
- And run this race set before us
 - We didn't ask to be in the race, we didn't earn the right to be in it
 - But by golly, by the power and grace and mercy of God, we're in it
 - Now let's go run that race set before us
 - Running a successful race has a few critical elements
 - First in verse 2, fix you look or gaze on Jesus
 - Whatever we may have learned from the examples in chapter 11, they still failed at times
 - Jesus sets the perfect example for us
 - So don't get distracted like the church at Ephesus in Revelation
 - Secondly, remember in whose power you are even able to run
 - Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith
 - He is the basis for our salvation and the one who will bring us to perfection in that faith
 - Thirdly, follow Jesus' example as you decide how to run
 - Jesus ran His race for a joy that was set before Him
 - Running His race meant His earthly walk
 - And the joy He sought meant His privilege to be at the right hand of the Father as King and Judge
 - And for the prize of His Bride
 - And in the course of His race, He endured the cross

- One argument for Paul as author of this epistle is this is the only non-Pauline epistle to use the word cross
 - This is our example
 - Can we logically demand that our Christian walk be trouble-free?
 - Persecution free?
 - To those who might have assumed as much, look what the author says next

Heb. 12:3 ¶ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Heb. 12:4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

Heb. 12:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,
“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,
NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;

Heb. 12:6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

- Our best proof that this walk of faith will bring trials and struggle is to look at what God asked His own Son to endure in his race
 - The writer says consider Jesus
 - The word for consider is analogizomai
 - It's where we get the word analogy
 - He's asking the readers to draw a lesson or comparison from Christ for themselves
 - He endured hostility at the hands of sinners against Himself
 - So if the unbelieving world turns against us, how could we use such a turn of events as excuse to shrink back?
 - If these Jewish Christians were persecuted by Nero or other Jews, could that be a reason to retreat to the safety of the synagogue?
 - We haven't done what Jesus did
 - He resisted sin to the point of shedding blood
 - This statement begins the first hint of admonishment

- This is generally thought to mean that Jesus resisted sin in that He resisted sinning until it caused those who opposed Him to put Him to death
- Let me offer you an alternative interpretation
 - The word shedding isn't in the original Greek
 - The most literal interpretation would be, "In struggling against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of blood."
- I think this may be a reference to Christ's struggling against the temptation to sin by not going to the cross
 - And he agonized over this so much he perspired drops of blood
 - None of us can say we have wrestled with the prospect of sin so much that it has brought us to the point of blood
- And in case we were ever tempted to think that trials and struggles are inconsistent with our calling as a Christian, the writer goes back the OT once again for proof
 - He quotes the LXX in Proverbs 3: 11-12
 - Don't despise or hate the discipline of the Father
 - Remember that a Father disciplines all His children
 - In fact, Proverbs equates discipline with love
 - In other words, the writer says they had forgotten this principle, which then led them to assume that when these trials come
 - Which the author calls the Lord's discipline
 - They should have accepted it as necessary and loving
 - But instead they have despised it and turned back to Judaism to escape the Father's discipline
- Now since they have such a wrong view of discipline, the writer spends a moment giving them the correct view of discipline

Heb. 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

Heb. 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Heb. 12:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

Heb. 12:10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.

Heb. 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- This passage allows us to review some principles of discipline
 - But before, we need to carefully examine the beginning of verse 7
 - The word for discipline in Greek means training up a child
 - And the word endure is *hypomeno* which literally means to stay behind or to wait
 - Look at what the writer just said
 - Why do does God keep us waiting on earth after we are saved?
 - So we can be trained up like a child
- This carries with it several vitally important implications
 - First, it says that the principle purpose (maybe only) God has in leaving us on earth is to train ourselves up in righteousness
 - We are like interns developing skill while showing our trustworthiness for higher positions in God's kingdom
 - Like the parable in Luke 19 that God has entrusted us with varying degrees of opportunity to serve Him
 - We must take that responsibility seriously
 - Don't waste whatever time we have left
 - Use what God has given to train up and become as spiritually mature as you can

- And accept the test and trials that come as a way to become all the more mature and strong (e.g., apostles)
- Secondly, this implies that what we are able to achieve in this life in terms of spiritual maturity and personal character carries over in some form after death
 - Death frees us from the body of sin and thus from sin itself
 - But there is no reason to think that our conscience self is radically altered
 - To be without sin means our body can't die and won't see illness or weakness
 - And Paul says our understanding of God will no longer be obscured or hazy as it is now
 - But apart from those things, there is no reason to assume we suddenly make up for all our deficits in Character or spiritual maturity
 - This verse among others in the NT suggest strongly that we will must make progress here in order to have the use of that maturity and knowledge in serving God in our new bodies
- It is for training that we wait, so devote yourself to training
- The other principles are simple
 - Discipline is the unique bond of a parent to a child
 - Love and kindness and respect and provision are all possible with another's child
 - But only true discipline is possible with a parent and child
 - So the author uses that principle to teach that we should take encouragement from our discipline, not discouragement
 - In fact, the only thing worse than receiving discipline (trials and hardships), is not receiving them
 - Because that would suggest we are not actually one of God's children

- And the writer draws from the example of earthly fathers with a lesser to greater argument
 - If we accept that our earthly fathers brings us pain and anguish from time to time and it's considered proper and acceptable
 - How can we think less of God?
- And if our earthly father's discipline caused us to respect (meaning to respect their commands),
 - Then shouldn't God's discipline cause us to respect His commands?
 - In other words, rather than disobeying God by retreating back to the false worship found in the synagogue when persecution breaks out
 - Shouldn't that persecution lead to obey God all the more and respect His commands?
- Finally, he makes one last point of logic
 - It's natural not to like discipline
 - But it yields something we will like

Heb. 12:12 ¶ Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,
Heb. 12:13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Heb. 12:14 ¶ Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

- Now he makes his approach to the final warning of the book by using images of a human body to draw an analogy to the Body of Christ
 - As Christians in the body, we have certain obligations to one another
 - Strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble
 - In other words, come along side those who are wavering in their commitment
 - Make straight paths for your feet
 - The idea is of a path that diverts left and right

- Which means we wander away from the target
- And the walk is harder and more treacherous
- Walk on easy, straight roads
 - Which has a healing effect
 - It takes a limb that is out of joint and brings it back
 - The imagery here is great
 - It reflects both how an individual wandering away hurts the body and causes all of us to walk less effectively
- Pursue peace
 - The word for pursue means chase down
 - It's not passive, it's active
 - And the same verb is attached to the second noun, sanctification (holiness)
 - Here again, we're talking about the process of growing more holy in our lives
 - Pursue that like you're chasing a school bus as it leaves without you
- So why does he say "without which we won't see the Lord"
 - We know from 1John 3:2 that no sin can abide in God's presence
 - And we know that He must bring us to holiness if He is to bring us into His presence
 - So knowing that He calls us to holiness, one day to make us holy
 - It falls to us now to pursue it, chase after it, because we desire to see that day
 - And we gain eternal benefits from the pursuit

- Now the writer begins the final warning (exhortation)

Heb. 12:15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

Heb. 12:16 that *there be* no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal.

Heb. 12:17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

- See to it that no one comes short of grace
 - The word for see means provide oversight, watch diligently
 - That no one comes short (*hustereo*)
 - Means to be lacking, needing

Matt. 19:16 ¶ And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?”

Matt. 19:17 And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is *only* One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Matt. 19:18 Then he *said to Him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS;

Matt. 19:19 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

Matt. 19:20 The young man *said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?”

- Someone lacking grace must refer to someone who is unaware of the gospel
 - And the presence of such a person within the congregation of God’s people is a source of trouble, the writer says
 - A root of bitterness (Deut 29 – used to describe an Israelite who became like the idol worshippers of the unbelieving world)
 - Who defiles many around them
- This is an important principle in its own right
 - When the unbeliever hides out within the walls of the church

- Inevitably, the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the impossibility of true communion leaves the person bitter
 - They are a source of discontent
 - They rebel against things that believers are called to accept
 - And misery loves company, so they often begin to stir up others to follow
- To the Christian under their influence, it's easy to assume that they are Christian and take their counsel as godly
 - The only defense is to be counseled in scripture and led by the Spirit
 - Then we can be an oversight to watch for those who have come up short of the grace of God
 - When we find them, we make it clear they are outside the family of God and offer them the one and only door by which they may enter
- To make his point, the writer goes to the OT to use Esau's example
 - Esau's story is found in Genesis 27
 - He was the brother of Jacob who lost the birthright when Jacob and Rebecca tricked Isaac into giving the birthright to Jacob
 - The writer says in verse 16 that there be no person like Esau
 - In other words, Esau is an example of the person in verse 15
- So how is Esau an example?
 - Well, first notice that the writer describes Esau as godless and immoral
 - We can learn a lot about what kind of person the author thinks Esau is when we see how the word immoral is used elsewhere in scripture

1Cor. 5:9 ¶ I wrote you in my letter not to associate with **immoral people**;

1Cor. 5:10 I did not at all *mean* with the **immoral people** of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.

1Cor. 5:11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an **immoral person**, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

- Or the book of Revelation

Rev. 21:8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and **immoral persons** and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

- And the word for godless means wordly (as in of the world)
 - So Esau is described as one who is not reconciled to God (not saved)
- Secondly, we know that Esau lived in Isaac's household
 - And he was a member of the family of Israel
 - Yet he was not really a member of the family from God's point of view

Rom. 9:6 ¶ But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel;

Rom. 9:7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: “THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED.”

Rom. 9:8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

Rom. 9:9 For this is the word of promise: “AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON.”

Rom. 9:10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac;

Rom. 9:11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

Rom. 9:12 it was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.”

Rom. 9:13 Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.”

- God makes clear that Esau fell outside the family of God
 - Esau's presence in the family of God didn't change the reality that spiritually he was an outsider
- Next we're reminded of how Esau despised his birthright
 - He gave so little regard for his inheritance that he was willing to trade it to Jacob for the value of a meal
 - That birthright was the right to inherit the promise God had given to Abraham and Isaac
 - Esau cared nothing for the promised inheritance God offered
 - In other words, he didn't believe God's promise to provide an inheritance
 - So he tossed it aside for a meal
 - He was an unbeliever and had no inheritance
 - In the church, an unbeliever will have the same contempt for God's promises of glory and inheritance
 - And therefore, he will easily toss it aside
 - For example, he may retreat to a Jewish synagogue when faced with persecution, since the promises of God mean nothing to such a person
 - And they may take believers with them through their negative influence
 - When Esau finally discovered that with the birthright, he was also giving up any right to the blessings that come from being a part of God's family
 - He then showed sorrow, but it was worldly sorry
 - Being sorry isn't the same thing as repentance and faith

2Cor. 7:10 For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- The implication we draw from Esau's example is that there will be those who discover too late that they have lost something valuable
 - They will seek what they thought they had with tears, but it will not work
 - Like the virgins who didn't have oil in their lamps when the bridegroom came,
 - They were excluded from the wedding party even though they expected to go with the groom
- So Esau serves as a good example of the unbeliever living among the family of God, yet never trusting God
 - And their negative influence will become a cancer in the church
 - We do want the unbelieving world to join themselves to the church,
 - But only after they come to believe the Gospel

Heb. 12:18 ¶ For you have not come to a *mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,

Heb. 12:19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which *sound was such that* those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.

Heb. 12:20 For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED."

Heb. 12:21 And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling."

Heb. 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

Heb. 12:23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

Heb. 12:24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel.

- Now the exhortation and warning takes a turn for the home stretch and he's beginning to direct the message at those Esau's in the audience
 - Here's another lesser to greater comparison, but with a negative connotation
 - The first Covenant was physical, fleshly, remember?

- Everything about was of flesh and physical manifestations designed to teach about the greater spiritual realities that underlie them
- The writer wants to emphasize here is how the physical presence of God in this world invoked great fear and dread among the Israelites
 - He invokes the memory of the Mountain of Moses
 - And all the terrible signs and powers that accompanied that experience
 - Even Moses was Tremendously fearful
 - But he begins by assuring the readers they didn't come to this kind of experience
 - They're encounter with God has been provided in a new and better way
 - They have come to something that isn't physical
 - Notice that all these descriptions are not visible to us, at least not now
 - We have come to these things in that we are apart of them and they are promised to us by faith
 - But they stand in contrast to the things which were associated with the Old Covenant
 - We come to a new Mt Zion in heaven (not the one on Earth)
 - To a heavenly city

Rev. 21:1 ¶ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

- With uncountable numbers of angels
- Together with the church of the firstborn
 - These are the Church saints
 - Firstborn emphasizes our privilege to receive the inheritance

- It makes a contrast with Esau who was firstborn but didn't receive an inheritance
- We are the truly firstborn through faith and will receive that inheritance
- And to God the judge
- And to the spirits of righteous men made perfect
 - A reference to OT saints differentiated from the church saints
- And to Jesus Himself, whose blood is better than Abel, who's death as a righteous man is a type of Christ
 - Remember what the Father declared as he came upon Cain inquiring about Abel?

Gen. 4:8 Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Gen. 4:9 ¶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Gen. 4:10 He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.

- If Abel's blood cried out to God for justice, how much more will Jesus' blood cry out to God for justice against those who despise Him?
- It introduces the exhortation and consequence of the warning

Heb. 12:25 ¶ See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will* we escape who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven.

Heb. 12:26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN."

Heb. 12:27 This *expression*, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Heb. 12:28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

Heb. 12:29 for our God is a consuming fire.

- Now the voice shifts to second person
 - The writer is speaking to members of the audience
 - Don't refuse Him who is speaking (Christ)
 - Using another lesser to greater, the writer reminds them that those in the desert who refused to follow the God when He warned them from the earthly mountain didn't escape judgment
 - How can they expect to escape His judgment when they refuse to follow a God who warns them from heaven
 - And then he uses what I can you ain't seen nothing yet argument
 - When God met the Israelites on the mountain, He gave them a reason to obey Him by providing a preview of His power and judgment
 - He shook the mountain with earthquakes we're told in Exodus
 - But in a coming day, the Lord promises to do more than shake a single mountain

Hag. 2:6 "For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.

Hag. 2:7 'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

- In other words, the judgment day that is coming is so much more than anything the Jews saw in their day
 - But the writer emphasizes this is a remaking of creation itself
 - Yet once more, meaning it is the last time God will bring this kind of judgment to bear on the physical creation
 - It is a final reckoning for Earth
- He's emphasizing that what is coming is the complete removal of all things related to this physical world and the preparation of a new heavenly dwelling place for God's people
 - We don't want to miss that nor refuse it

- The ones on earth who refused God missed the promised land
 - What we have at risk is something greater, the new heavens and earth
- Better that we show gratitude
 - Literally, the words means something different in Greek (strange translation)
 - It means let us have grace
 - Let's receive the gospel of grace
 - And only by faith is it possible to please God
 - But lest we forget, our God of grace and mercy is also a God of judgment for those who refuse Him
 - He is an all-consuming fire

Fill out the warning

- The writer ends the letter with a series of exhortations concerning the obligations and responsibilities of the church

Heb. 13:1 ¶ Let love of the brethren continue.

Heb. 13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Heb. 13:3 Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, *and* those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.

Heb. 13:4 Marriage *is to be held* in honor among all, and the *marriage bed is to be undefiled*; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Heb. 13:5 *Make sure that* your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"

Heb. 13:6 so that we confidently say,
 "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID.
 WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

Heb. 13:7 ¶ Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

- Verse 1 is two words: philadekplia meno
 - Continue is brotherly love
 - This is our chief responsibility to one another
 - And do not neglect to show hospitality to one another
 - This is also a single Greek word – philoxenia
 - This is a chief responsibility to those outside the church
 - Because you never know who you are serving
 - Whether angels (Abraham)
 - Or a future believer
 - Third, remember prisoners as if you are there with them
 - By the context and given the nature of the times when this was written, it's obvious that these are believers who are imprisoned for their faith
 - You are in the body (part of your body is in prison)
 - This doesn't preclude showing kindness to prisoners in general
 - But the real exhortation is to visit and sympathize with those imprisoned for their faith
 - Respect marriage
 - Hold it in high regard
 - Those who have sex outside marriage (fornicators)
 - And those who commit adultery inside marriage God will judge
 - Whether unbeliever or an unrepentant believer
- Next, he says be free from a love of money
 - What's the best way to free yourself from this love
 - Be content with what you have
 - Contentment is unrelated to how much we have

- It's being satisfied with whatever we have
 - Because God is your provider, and what you have is what He wants you to have
- In the writer's day, the loss of property was a common set back for believers under persecution
 - If they made the pursuit of that wealth their goal, they would place themselves in a position of choosing their wealth over the practice of their faith
- That's what the writer means in verse 6, when he references Ps 118
 - No matter what man does to us, we can rely on God to take care of us, all the way to the grave and beyond
- If you want to understand how to put all these together, just consider those who taught you (the apostles)
 - Imitate their faith
 - This is why it's important that our leaders not only speak the truth of God's word but mirror it to the best of their abilities
 - Because they serve as an example as well as a source of knowledge

Heb. 13:8 Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today and forever.

Heb. 13:9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.

Heb. 13:10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

Heb. 13:11 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned outside the camp.

Heb. 13:12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

Heb. 13:13 So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

Heb. 13:14 For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come.

Heb. 13:15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

Heb. 13:16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

- Now he gives the audience an encouragement for how to contend with the persecution and rejection they are experiencing
 - The truth and power of Christ doesn't change
 - But this verse is sometimes misused to teach that aspects of Jesus' ministry on earth should be expected to continue today
 - Because Jesus healed men and women in one day, we should expect that every Christian can and will receive healing or other miracles
 - But the message of the gospel hasn't changed
 - And we can tell that it's the message the writer is referring to by looking at verse 9
 - He then says because Jesus is unchanging in His message, don't be carried away by strange teachings
 - What would constitute a strange teaching?
 - Rather than teaching that we are to seek strength in life through God's grace
 - Instead, we receive a teaching that says our strength comes from following some restriction or dietary rule
 - Someone who wants to reinstitute the dietary restrictions
 - Ironically, those who tried to follow them gained no benefit themselves from such rules
 - Don't mourn the loss of their company or the opportunity to participate in their practices and rituals
 - We have a better altar in a better tabernacle that they can't approach
 - Heavenly, not within sight
 - Then he compares the way the bodies of the animals used for sacrifice are disposed outside the gate of the city
 - With the way Jesus Himself was crucified outside the city
 - Therefore, as the Jewish Christians were being barred from the assembly of Israel, they can take that reproach willingly

- Because it means they identify all the more with their Lord and His reproach
- And who needs their city anyway?
 - We have a better city, one that is to come
 - Like the saints of Chapter 11, we set our minds there and don't despair over the loss of anything in this world
 - And I can hear Him saying that if you miss the opportunity to sacrifice with your brethren in the temple
 - Then offer up sacrifice of praise
 - And like the grain and harvest offerings, offer the fruit of the lips in giving Him thanks
 - And by doing good for one another and sharing with one another
 - These are the sacrifices that please God, unlike those still offered in the temple

[Heb. 13:17](#) ¶ Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

[Heb. 13:18](#) ¶ Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.

[Heb. 13:19](#) And I urge *you* all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner.

- Finally, Christian duties includes obeying leaders and submitting to their authority
 - Leader is anyone who gives evidence of the anointing of God to pastor and teach God's people and is recognized by the people in that role
 - This is a tough job; don't make it harder
 - The leader will give an account for their leadership
 - And it suggests that if their account includes details of how you made their job unnecessarily more difficult, you will come off poorly

- Making their job harder only makes your life less profitable
- Likewise, pray for the leaders (we) because they want to uphold their end of the relationship by living honorably and setting good examples
- And he exhorts them to do this all the more so he could be restored to them
 - This suggests strongly that he was in prison and therefore wanted to hold to gain his release though without compromising his witness
 - How does all the writer has said change in your mind when you consider he is writing these things from prison?

Heb. 13:20 ¶ Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord,

Heb. 13:21 equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Heb. 13:22 ¶ But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.

Heb. 13:23 Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you.

Heb. 13:24 Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

Heb. 13:25 ¶ Grace be with you all.

- This is his closing words of encouragement – spoken like a prayer
 - May God, who raised His Son to become our Shepherd
 - May He equip you to do His will
 - This is how it works
 - We are equipped, made able to serve God, by his power in us
 - And the work God does in His the hearts of His church
 - The work of the church is not a program or a building or an event

- It is the work of changing us so that we might be prepared for what comes next in the kingdom
 - But the writer asks that his readers bear with this exhortation
 - Because it is brief
 - Dwell on it and return to it frequently
 - Be reminded of it so that you won't stray from it
- Then a few person comments about Timothy being released from prison and restored to them
 - He passes along greetings from those in Italy
 - These concluding comments give the most support to those who would argue the author is Paul