

Hebrews

Chapter 13

Concluding Exhortations

Keep on loving each other as brothers. ² Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. ³ Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. ⁴ Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. ⁵ 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.” ⁶ So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” ⁷ Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹ Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ 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. ¹² And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. ¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. ¹⁴ For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. ¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. ¹⁸ Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. ¹⁹ I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon. ²⁰ 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, ²¹ 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. ²² Brothers, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written you only a short letter. ²³ I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you. ²⁴ Greet all your leaders and all God’s people. Those from Italy send you their greetings. ²⁵ Grace be with you all.

13:1 LOVING EACH OTHER AS BROTHERS – Philadelphia – Love for known brothers and sisters in Christ. The writer is urging the continuance of this type of love in their Christian community. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5 & 11, Parts 3 & 3)

This noun, Philadelphia, speaks of brotherly affection, the special love which Christians have for each other. Bruce says: "in the biblical area the classic passage is Psalm 133:1 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!'" But the very fact that our writer says *menetow*, "let it remain," shows that it can easily be lost. Christians are very much aware of their own sinful flesh, their old Adam (Romans 7). Satan attacks them often and when they least expect it. He is a master at causing division among Christians. Our Hebrew text implies that it must be carefully nurtured. It is so easy to neglect Christian affection. The word Philadelphia occurs again at Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Peter 1:7. Guthrie comments: "Brotherly loves expresses that special mutual regard for one another irrespective of race which is particularly characteristic of Christians." Lenski says: "It is the new commandment given us by Jesus in John 13:34 and repeated again and again: 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 2:10; 3:11, 23: 4:7, 11, 21." Bruce writes: "the grace of brotherly love itself, whatever terms be used is inculcated throughout the NT. Exegetical Notes – Buls)

The inspired author has presented the matter to which he wanted to call the special attention of the Hebrew Christians. But in connection with this doctrine he now takes occasion to address some special admonitions to his readers: Brotherly love should continue. Love of the brethren had existed in their midst, as he had frankly acknowledged, chap. 6, 10. But if they did not heed the appeal and warning addressed to them in the preceding chapter, there was danger that the general decay of their faith would be accompanied by the inevitable corresponding loss of true brotherly love. (Kretzmann)

13:2 DO NOT FORGET – In verse 1 it is *meneto* (let it remain). Here is it "do not forget." In verse 3 it is "remember." Christians need constant reminders. They need Law and Gospel constantly. The world is not inclined to love a stranger. In fact in many cases it is not inclined to love the one who is well known. Lenski comments: "Public hotels and lodging places were unknown at this time." And Guthrie: "In the environment of the early church it was essential, since alternative facilities for travelers were such that Christians would not choose to make use of them. Wayfarers' hostels, where they existed, were notorious for immorality. This was a common practice in the early days of the LC-Ms. Pastors, with their whole families, would often stop at each other's houses and even spend the night o (or two) with each other. In those days people would often spend Sunday afternoons visiting with each other. Modern living has curtailed much of earlier hospitality. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

But in order that brotherly love might remain, it required constant exercising, two forms of which are here mentioned. First of all: Entertainment of strangers do not neglect; for through this some have entertained angels without knowing it. True hospitality is here earnestly recommended, not an indiscriminate feeding of loafers. Conditions often made it necessary for the Christians to move from one place to another in those days, and many of them could ill afford to make use of the public inn. In such cases the brethren should be willing to show their love by receiving others, often fugitives, into their homes and providing for their wants. (Kretzmann)

entertained angels without knowing it. As did Abraham (Ge 18), Gideon (Jdg 6) and Manoah (Jdg 13). (CSB)

There are two important points in this verse: kindness to strangers and the blessing which God may have in store for us. On this point Lenski comments: "It is sufficient to say that, as some were unexpectedly blessed by receiving strangers, so we, too, may be thus blessed. (Matt. 25:38, 40)." And Bengel brings out another point: "An unknown guest is often more worthy than he appears, and has angels as attendants, although they are unseen. (Matt. 25:40, 45)" It is not limited to welcoming people into our houses. Love for strangers can be exercised just about any place. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

In this work of love the thought was to encourage them that some people at least who practiced hospitality in that way had entertained angels without knowing it, Gen. 18, 19. The hospitality of the early Christians was commented upon favorably even by heathen writers. It is a virtue which might be practiced with far greater liberality in our days, when a suspicious coldness has come to mark the intercourse of Christians with one another, Rom. 12, 13; 1 Pet. 4, 9; 1 Tim. 3, 2; Titus 1, 8. (Kretzmann)

13:3 *remember those in prison ... and those who are mistreated.* See 10:32–34; 1Co 12:26. (CSB)

Not criminals but believers suffering persecution, possibly under Emperor Nero. (TLSB)

mimnaskomai – Many of their brothers and sisters were wrongly imprisoned because of their faith. It also recalls Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25:36. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

mimnaskesthe is a present imperative which means "keep on remembering." Two classes of people are mentioned, the prisoners and those who are mistreated. What do they have in common? Those who are down and out, the helpless, the defenseless. A man's real attitude toward others comes out when he is confronted with situations like this. On the first part of the sentence Guthrie writes: "Prisoners are out of sight and apt to be forgotten, hence the exhortation to remember." Lenski says: "As having been made fellow prisoners is not to be understood in a physical but in a spiritual sense: feeling their imprisonment as if it were your own." He correctly quotes 1 Cor. 12:26: "Whether one member suffer, all members suffer with it." The Living Bible has a good paraphrase here: "Share the sorrows of those being mistreated, for you know what they are going through." Guthrie comments: "The words 'since you also are in the body' are added to remind the readers that they too could be exposed to the same treatment. The words draw attention to the physical limitations to which all are subject." Lenski says: "'As being yourselves also in the body' refers to or susceptibility to the same sufferings. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

But some of their fellow-Christians might be in even a worse plight, and therefore the text continues: Be mindful of those in bonds as fellow prisoners, of those that suffer evil as being yourselves also in the body. The Christians to whom these words were addressed were living in troublous times. The general persecution which came upon them after the death of Stephen had indeed subsided, but the hatred of their enemies remained, and there were probably local disturbances. The believers, then, should feel a prayerful sympathy for all those that were languishing in prison for the sake of the Gospel, just as though they had been bound with them and were suffering the same hardships. In the same way they should remember those that were being abused, maltreated, showing this cordial sympathy all the more readily since they, being in the body, were liable to similar ill-usage. It was in accordance with these and similar instructions that the early Christians composed special prayers for those suffering imprisonment and in every way provided for their relief. (Kretzmann)

13:4 MARRIAGE SHOULD BE HONORED BY ALL – en pasin – In every way, in all aspects. Marriage is honorable in all aspects and the marriage bed should remain undefiled. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

Not contaminated by sexual immorality. Cf Lv 18. (TLSB)

Both Gentiles and Jews (especially those who followed the teaching of Hillel) in early NT times were quite lax in their sexual morals. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

The defilements that dishonor marriage are fornication, which dishonors marriage in advance, and adultery, which dishonors marriage after it has been entered into. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

GOD WILL JUDGE THE ADULTERER AND ALL THE SEXUALLY IMMORAL –
The combination of these terms is intended to include those who sin in and out of wedlock. Those who ignore this commandment should expect a fearsome judgment, often beginning in this life (disease, poverty, brutality). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

He will punish with bodily afflictions, heartbreak, and if they do not repent, eternal condemnation. (TLSB)

A special admonition concerns the sacredness of holy wedlock: in honor let marriage be held by all, and the marriage-bed be kept unstained; but fornicators and adulterers the Lord will judge. Whether a person has already entered the state of holy wedlock or is still unwed, marriage should be held in honor, sacred as an institution of the Lord. There must be no violation of its sanctity either by the unmarried, by presuming upon the special functions of this state, or by the married, by defiling the marriage-bed through unfaithfulness or in entering this holy estate for the mere gratification of sexual lust. The conjugal relations should be chaste. With solemn emphasis the writer adds that it is God who will judge and condemn the fornicators and adulterers, those who in any manner

violate the sacredness of the boundaries which He has drawn around the state of marriage. (Kretzmann)

13:5 *love of money*. See Lk 12:15, 21; Php 4:10–13; 1Ti 6:6–10, 17–19. (CSB)

It is dangerous to put our trust in earthly goods. God Himself must have our confidence and trust. All else fails He will never fail us. This is the opposite as Luke 16:14. There we learn that love for money is attended by self-righteousness. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

This phrase speaks volumes about our society which has such an obsession with consumerism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

1 Timothy 6:9-10, ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grief's."

be content. See Php 4:11–12; 1Ti 6:8. (CSB)

Contentment is hard to come by, for the appetites and fears of the flesh must be curbed, and trust in God's promise must be cultivated. The writer helps by giving the assurance, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

Lenski says: "Contentment with whatever little God has given or left us is the cure for all money-love, all worry about money and the like... We have what is far better than all earthly wealth." Here one can apply 1 Tim. 6:9-12 and Phil. 4:11. The words of Jesus found at Matt. 6:25-34 are very applicable here. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

1 Timothy 6:8, "But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."

Of the entire conduct of the Christians the author says: Your mode of life be without covetousness, being content with what you have: for Himself has said, I will by no means leave thee, nor will I at all forsake thee. The entire life of the Christians, all their thinking and doing, their conduct under all circumstances, should be free from avarice, from the love of money, for God demands that His children on earth should be satisfied, content with what they have, with what He has given them. This contentment has a firm foundation in the promise of God that He will under no circumstances leave His own to want, nor will He in any manner forsake them, Deut. 31, 6. 8; 1 Chron. 28, 20. Cp. Gen. 28, 15; Josh. 1, 5; Is. 41, 17. (Kretzmann)

NEVER LEAVE...FORSAKE – God categorically denies that He will ever forsake us. Guthrie says here: "The words appear to come from a mixture of sources (cf. Josh. 1:5; Deut. 31:6, 8) Bengel comments: "What was said to Jacob, to Joshua, the people,

and to Solomon applies also to us.... He will neither withdraw his assistance nor his presence.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

13:6 THE LORD IS MY HELPER; I WILL NOT BE AFRAID – This is a direct quotation from Psalm 118:6-7, a favorite of Luther. The confidence of the child of God in his heavenly Father is not mere wishful thinking. It is based on the saving act of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

Guthrie says: “Psalm 118 formed an important part of the Jewish Festival services, and is quoted several times in the NT. The Lord is constantly speaking the Gospel of verse 5b. And the Christian should constantly be responding with the confession of verse 6. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

John 16:33, ““I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Romans 8:31, “What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?”

This promise of God being secure, we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear, Ps. 118, 6. The Psalmist asks the challenging question, but the author here changes the question to the bold statement of faith which fears no danger with God on its side. Cp. 1 Chron. 28, 20. Men can at their worst but take our lives; but our salvation in Christ Jesus is secure in the hands of the Father. The body they may kill, but the soul has been entrusted to the certainty of everlasting Mercy. (Kretzmann)

13:7 *leaders, who spoke the word of God.* See 2:3; 5:12. (CSB)

Office distinct from “the saints” (v 24). Its duty was to speak God’s Word (v 7) and refute error (cf v 9). Perhaps former elders or pastors, including some already put to death for their Christian confession. (TLSB)

mnamoneuete – Present imperative which means “keep calling to mind.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

elalasan – The aorist (past tense) verb indicates that these leaders were no longer with them, but they had taught them the Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

Consider the outcome of their way of life. Probably indicates that these exemplary leaders were now dead. (CSB)

Confessing Christ to the end, they died trusting in Him. (TLSB)

imitate their faith. See 6:12; 1Co 4:16; Eph 5:1; 1Th 1:6–7; 2:14; 3Jn 11. (CSB)

The first point which the sacred author brings out in this paragraph is that of keeping in remembrance the former teachers of the Gospel: Keep in remembrance them that had the rule over you, who spoke to you the Word of God, upon the close of whose life look closely, and copy their faith. The Christian's should remember their spiritual guides, or leaders, keep them in kind and honoring remembrance. This feeling should be intensified by the fact that it was they that proclaimed to them the glorious Gospel of their salvation, God's Word of Love, These leaders, these early guides of the Hebrew Christians, had now passed away, but they were still acting as examples through their conduct. These men had sealed their teaching with their lives; they had remained steadfast in their belief in the Gospel to the end, and had thus exhibited a faith worthy of imitation. The believers should carefully consider this; they should keep the same faith, and God would keep them. (Ktretzmann)

13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same.* A confession of the changelessness of Christ, no doubt related to the preceding verse. The substance of their former leaders' faith was the unchanging Christ. (CSB)

According to His eternal divinity, He is unchangeable (Mal 3:6). His covenant of grace also does not change. Cf Jn 1:1. (TLSB)

Everything that we deal with in this world is constantly, though imperceptibly, changing. Times, people, circumstances and conditions constantly change. And we soon learn that people are fickle. They change quickly. But not so with Jesus Christ. Bengel says: Jesus Christ, a solemn title: the sum of the Gospel, which is to be maintained by faith." Then he adds: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday – before he came into the world, before his passion, before his ascension – and today, in heaven. Westcott writes: "The thought of the triumph of faith leads to the thought of Him in whom faith triumphs. He is unchangeable, and therefore the victory of the believers is at all times assured." Christ and His Word continue. Matthew 24:35

yesterday. Probably the days of Christ's life on earth, when the eyewitnesses observed him (2:3). (CSB)

today. The Christ whom the eyewitnesses saw was still the same, and what they had said about him was still true. (CSB)

forever. And it will always be true. To compromise his absolute supremacy by returning to the inferior Aaronic priesthood and sacrifices (see chs. 5–10) is to undermine the gospel. (CSB)

This may be set forth all the more emphatically, since the object of faith has not changed or passed away: Jesus Christ, always the same, yesterday and today and forever. That is the inscription which the Christians may at all times place upon their banner. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, is the basis of our faith. There was and is and will be only this one Redeemer; but in Him we have all that we

need for this life and for the world to come, Acts 4, 12; 15, 11; Rev. 13, 5; 1 Cor. 3, 11. “Yesterday is the time before His incarnation, today is the time of His revelation in the flesh. Thus it is now and in eternity the same Christ, through whom, and through whom alone, all believers in the past, in the present, and in the future time are delivered from the Law, justified, and saved.” 15) (Kretzmann)

13:9 *strange teachings*. New teachings, not supported by Scripture. (TLSB)

not by ceremonial foods. As the legalistic Judaizers were teaching. The old Mosaic order was done away with at the cross and must not be revived. (CSB)

Either dietary rules or sacrificial meals. OT sacrificial meals strengthened faith in the coming Messiah. But with Christ’s coming, these meals are no longer needed. (TLSB)

With this basis of faith, it follows: With various teachings, and strange, be not carried away; for it is a fine thing for the heart to be confirmed by grace, not by meats, which were of no avail to them that had recourse to them. This was the great danger which was menacing the Jewish Christians. There were many men that sought admission to the Christian congregations in those days who construed the Old Testament doctrine in such a way and insisted upon the former institutions and practices with such emphasis as to loosen the attachment of the believers to Christ as the only Mediator. Many a Christian who was not firmly grounded in the liberty of Christ was swept away by the flood of specious arguments brought forward by these Judaizing teachers. It was necessary, therefore, that the hearts of the Christians be strengthened and confirmed, a fact which only the grace of God in the Gospel could bring about. A fine and laudable thing it would certainly be if all Christians would stand firm in the knowledge of the efficacy of this grace, for it is all that we need for this life and the next. The writer, in this connection and for the sake of his readers, purposely rejects the idea that this aim might be reached by the use of certain foods of the sacrificial meals, of which some Jewish Christians still believed that they had the power to give spiritual strength. All the people that had ever placed their trust in these sacrificial meals, in the eating of the meat and other food that was connected with the offering of certain sacrifices, had had no benefit of their work, having thereby not become justified before God, Gal. 4, 9. 10; 5, 1-4. (Kretzmann)

13:10 *We have an altar*. Probably refers to the cross, which marked the end of the whole Aaronic priesthood and its replacement by the order of Melchizedek, of which Christ is the unique and only priest. (CSB)

Table of the Lord (1Co 10:21), from which the faithful receive the Lord’s body and blood. (TLSB)

serve the tent. Those who still seek cleansing and forgiveness through the OT rituals performed at the temple. “Tent” is used to describe the impermanent nature of their devotion. The OT could not last. (TLSB)

no right to eat.† The priests could not eat of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, but we can partake of our sacrifice, so to speak—through spiritual reception of Christ through faith (see Jn 6:48–58). We have a higher privilege than the priests under the old covenant had. (CSB)

Distinguishes those who may commune from those who may not. The distinction depends on the faith they confess in their speech and actions. “The priest stands daily at the altar, inviting some to the Communion and keeping back others” (AC XXIV 36). (TLSB)

It is in contrast to this ceremonial eating of the Old Testament that the author says: We have an altar, from which to eat they have no authority that serve the tabernacle. The contrast is between those that cling to the Levitical sacrificial cult and those that place their trust in the mercy and grace of God alone. Those that still serve the tabernacle, whose heart is bound up with the form of worship of the Old Testament, who insist that the observance of the Ceremonial Law is necessary also in the New Testament, have no authority, no right and power to take part in the blessings which come to us from our altar, from the Cross of Christ, on which the Lamb of God was offered for the sins of the world. For to eat of this altar means to become a partaker of the benefits which the great Sacrifice brought to the world, it means to accept in faith the true righteousness before God and eternal salvation. Cp. John 6, 51-58. (Kretzmann)

13:11 *burned outside the camp.* See Lev 4:12 and note; 16:27. (CSB)

This is emphasized by another comparison between the sacrifices of the Old Testament and the one great offering of the New: For of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, their bodies are burned outside the camp; therefore also Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside of the gate. According to the Ceremonial Law of the Jews, the carcasses of those animals whose blood, on the great Day of Atonement, was taken into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled against the mercy-seat, chap. 9, 8-25; 10, 19, had to be burned outside of the camp of the Jews, and later outside of the city of Jerusalem, Lev. 16, 27. Of the flesh of these sacrifices, therefore, no one was permitted to eat, as was the case with many other offerings. But now the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement is the principal type of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, chap. 9, 7-12. (Kretzmann)

13:12 *Jesus also suffered outside the city gate.* Christ’s death outside Jerusalem represented the removal of sin, as had the removal of the bodies of sacrificial animals outside the camp of Israel. (CSB)

It was for this reason, then, that Christ, in consecrating the sinners to Himself, in working salvation for all mankind through His own blood, suffered and died outside of the gates of the city of Jerusalem. Like a malefactor He was taken outside of the city and put to death, Lev. 24, 14; Num. 15, 35. 36; Deut. 17, 5; Mark 15, 20-28. The very fact that Christ was cast out and condemned and put to death won salvation for all men. Those, then, that still insist upon keeping all the precepts of the Ceremonial Law are

obliged to look upon Christ as an unclean criminal; whereas we, who know ourselves to be free from the demands of the old church law of the Jews, rejoice that Christ was made to be sin and a curse, because we know that it was done for us, 2 Cor. 5, 21; Gal. 3, 13. (Kretzmann)

Join Him in being rejected by unbelievers. (TLSB)

13:13 *go to him outside the camp.* Calls for separation from Judaism to Christ. As he died in disgrace outside the city, so the readers should be willing to be disgraced by turning unequivocally from Judaism to Christ. (CSB)

Phrase used in Lv, Ex, and Nu to describe where unholy things such as refuse should be discarded. Here used ironically to describe abuse and rejection of Jesus by the Jerusalem authorities. (TLSB)

Here the natural consequence of our having cast our lot with the crucified Christ is brought out: Let us, therefore, go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. The author wants his readers to consider it a privilege to be branded outcasts and traitors to the Jewish cause. Having chosen Jesus as their Lord and Master, they should freely confess that they were willing to join Him in His shame and reproach as a malefactor and criminal in the eyes of the Jews. True believers will have nothing to do with the Law and its ordinances as necessary for their salvation, they will have nothing to do with legalistic practices. Having cast their lot with Jesus and His salvation by grace alone, they will be glad to bear the shame and reproach which fell upon Him, for His sake. (Kretzmann)

13:14 *city that is to come.* See notes on 11:10, 14, 16. (CSB)

The new Jerusalem, the kingdom of heaven. Cf Gal 4:26; Rv 21:2. Luther: “God permits him [a Christian] to remain alive in the flesh and lets his body walk the earth in order that he may help others and bring them to heaven too. Therefore we must use everything on earth in no other way than as a guest who travels across country.... Thus we must also deal with temporal goods as if they did not belong to us. We must limit our enjoyment of them to what is necessary for the preservation of the body. With the rest we must help our neighbor” (AE 30:35). (TLSB)

Surely this step is one which should not cause regret in the heart of any one that has accepted Jesus in truth: For not have we a lasting city here below, but we seek earnestly the one to come. The believers are strangers, sojourners, in this world; they are the Lord’s pilgrims, Ps. 39, 12. The short span of life which is granted them in this world is but a time of preparation for the world to come. Our real home, where we have our true citizenship, is in heaven, Phil. 3, 20. Only that which is spiritual and eternal can truly satisfy the ambition and fill the heart with that peace which passes all understanding. We strive earnestly, therefore, for the city which abides forever; we keep our attention centered on its glorious advantages, on its bliss inestimable. (Kretzmann)

13:15–16 “In these last times it is certainly no less needful to encourage people to Christian discipline <to the way of right and godly living> and to do good works. We need to remind them of how necessary it is that they exercise themselves in good works as a declaration of their faith [Matthew 5:16] and gratitude to God” (FC Ep IV 18). (TLSB)

13:15 *sacrifice of praise*. “Sacrifice” is used metaphorically here to represent an offering to God (see Ro 12:1; Php 4:18). Animal offerings are now obsolete. (CSB)

“These sacrifices are not satisfactions.... He asks us to offer praises, that is, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, and the like. These benefit not by the outward act, but because of faith” (Ap XXIV 25–26). (TLSB)

Thus we are enabled also to do what the inspired author urges: Through Him, then, let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is to say, the fruit of lips celebrating His name. We believe in the virtue of Christ’s atoning sacrifice, we have openly taken the part of Him who was condemned as a criminal by men; but through Him we are also identified with the Father as His children and worshipers. As such it is our cheerful duty, our glad privilege, to bring sacrifices to Him through Christ. Not only occasionally and periodically, but continually we offer to God, our heavenly Father, the fruit of our lips in the praise and celebration of His holy name. Hos. 14, 3; Ps. 50, 14. 23; Is. 57, 19. (Kretzmann)

the fruit of lips. God’s forgiveness leads us to confess Him and praise Him. See SC, Second Commandment, p xxxv. Luther: “We learn that we do not offer Christ as a sacrifice, but that Christ offers us.... That is, we lay ourselves on Christ by a firm faith in his testament and do not otherwise appear before God with our prayer, praise, and sacrifice except through Christ and his mediation. Nor do we doubt that Christ is our priest or minister in heaven before God. Such faith, truly, brings it to pass that Christ takes up our cause, presents us and our prayer and praise, and also offers himself for us in heaven” (AE 35:99). (TLSB)

13:16 DO NOT FORGET TO DO GOOD – Another fruit of forgiveness. (TLSB)

At the same time we do not lose sight of the fact that our faith, expressed in the sacrifice of the lips, will also express itself in the fruit of the hands: But do not forget beneficence and charity; for those are the sacrifices which are well-pleasing to God. A heart that is enjoying the certainty of salvation through the redemption of Christ cannot but feel some of the deep and wonderful love which the Savior showed all men in His vicarious suffering and death. All acts of beneficence, therefore, all forms of doing good, of communicating to the brethren and to all men in need, are the sphere of the Christian’s activity. And such good works, growing out of a heart filled with faith, imperfect as they are in themselves, nevertheless are looked upon by the heavenly Father with all good pleasure, since the merits of Christ cover up all their shortcomings. Thus we Christians are living under the good pleasure of God. (Kretzmann)

sacrifices are pleasing to God. “Our spiritual offerings are acceptable to God through faith for Christ’s sake” (FC SD VI 22). (TLSB)

13:17 *your leaders*. Their present leaders, as distinct from their first ones, now dead, mentioned in v. 7. (CSB)

Same word as in v 7, but here speaks of leaders currently serving. (TLSB)

submit to their authority. Dictatorial leadership is not condoned by this command (see 3Jn 9–10), but respect for authority, orderliness and discipline in the church are taught throughout the NT. (CSB)

This passage requires obedience to the Gospel. It does not establish a dominion for the bishops apart from the Gospel” (Ap XXVIII 20). See SC, Table of Duties, pp xlii–xliv.(TLSB)

But in this connection there is one more point to which the holy writer deems it necessary to call attention: Obey your leaders and submit yourselves; for it is they that watch for your souls, as men that will have to render an account of their trust; that with joy they do this and not groaning, for this would be a loss to yourselves. Of the example of the former leaders the author has spoken above, v.7. Here he speaks of the teachers, pastors, ministers that have charge of their spiritual welfare at the present time. They should yield themselves trustfully to their teaching, as long as they teach the Word of God, the pure Gospel of the salvation of all men, as this was being done by the teachers in Judea. Christians should always remember what a great responsibility was resting upon these men and is resting upon the true pastors today, that they must render an account to the Lord on the last day for every soul that was entrusted to their pastoral care. It is a solemn word for both the teachers and the hearers. Since it is in the interest of the souls of the people that faithful pastors discharge their duty, therefore the parishioners should make it their object thus to conduct themselves toward their pastors at all times that the latter may perform the work of their office cheerfully and joyfully and not groaningly, with sighs and laments; for such a condition of affairs would surely react in such a manner upon the hearers as to deprive them of at least some of the benefit which God intends for them through the ministry of the Word, Luke 10, 16; Ezek. 3, 17-21. This word of warning should be heeded also in our days when men are inclined to look with suffering compassion upon the pastors and to disregard their teaching and warning from the Word of God. On the other hand, it should be remembered that this passage does not give the ministers absolute power over the souls of the parishioners, as the Romanists falsely claim.16) (Kretzmann)

watch over your souls ... give an account. Luther: “I have the commission and charge, as a preacher and a doctor, to see to it that no one is misled, so that I may give account of it at the Last Judgment” (AE 21:44). (TLSB)

joy. A true pastor has joy when his hearers believe God’s Word and lead godly lives. (TLSB)

13:19 *restored to you soon*. The identity and whereabouts of the writer are not known to us, but “restored” suggests that somehow he had been delayed in visiting those to

whom he was writing, perhaps by his current ministry. That he was not under arrest is clear from v. 23. (CSB)

13:1–19 Instead of sacrificing bulls and goats, we should offer up true speech about God to praise Him and do good works to serve our neighbor. These sacrifices please God when they come from hearts trusting in Christ. To obtain pure hearts, Christ sacrificed Himself on the cross. • O Lord, open the mouths of Your humble servants to speak Your praise, so that leaving behind all error, we may rejoice in the confession of Your name. Amen. (TLSB)

13:20–21 This benediction provides a fitting conclusion to the letter. (CSB)

Final blessing recalls Christ's roles as shepherd and lamb, His perfect leadership and holy sacrifice. (TLSB)

God of peace. A title for God used frequently in benedictions (see Ro 15:33; 16:20; Php 4:9; 1Th 5:23). (CSB)

Expression favored by Paul (Rm 16:20; Php 4:9; 1Th 5:23). (TLSB)

13:20 *brought again from the dead.* All three persons of the Trinity were involved in Christ's resurrection (cf Jn 10:18; Rm 8:11). (TLSB)

eternal covenant. The new covenant (see note on 8:8–12). What Jeremiah designates as the new covenant in 31:31 he describes as everlasting in 32:40 (see also Isa 55:3 and note; 61:8). On the blood of the covenant see notes on 10:29. (CSB)

With His blood, Christ empowered the new covenant of grace, a final covenant with eternal blessings. (TLSB)

great Shepherd. See, e.g., Ps 23; Isa 40:11; Eze 34:11–16, 23; 37:24; Jn 10:2–3, 11, 14, 27; 1Pe 2:25; 5:4. (CSB)

13:21 *do His will.* God's will is faith in Christ, revealed in the Gospel. This renews us to serve Him as His Law directs us. (TLSB)

working in us. By the gift of the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments. (TLSB)

13:20–21 We should pray for ourselves and others that God would equip us for all good works to do His will. By His blood, shed on the cross, Jesus our Shepherd redeemed us and made us well-pleasing to His Father. • O God, through the blood of Christ's covenant make us complete in Your sight, and cause us to do Your will. Amen. (TLSB)

13:22–25 A postscript. (CSB)

13:22 *word of exhortation.*† This phrase seems to have been the normal term for the sermon (or homily) which followed the reading of the Law and the Prophets in the

synagogue (see Ac 13:15). The sermonic character of Hebrews is shown by its emphasis on speaking and hearing (see 2:1, 5; 5:11; 6:9; 8:1; 9:5; 11:32). The main thrust of the letter is to go on in Christian maturity and not fall away from Christ.

Likely refers to the Book of Hebrews as a sermon but could describe this closing “letter.” (TLSB)

short. Compared to the lengthy treatise that would be necessary to explain adequately the superiority of Christ. (CSB)

13:23 *Timothy has been released.* Timothy, who was well known to the recipients of the letter, had recently been released from prison. (CSB)

13:24 *leaders.* Mentioned in v. 17. (CSB)

Those from Italy.† The Greek preposition seems to imply that some Christians from Italy (or Rome) are with the author and are sending greetings to their friends at home (see Introduction: Recipients).

Either those who are with the author in Italy or those who have come from Italy to the author. It is possible that the recipients of the Letter could be in Rome or near Jerusalem. The Letter hints at no other possible locations. (TLSB)

13:22–25 Hebrews sets forth God’s grace in Christ, earned on the cross, ratified in the new covenant, and distributed in Word and Sacrament. By holding fast to the teaching of this sermon and by receiving God’s grace through faith, we have fellowship with the writer of Hebrews and all the saints and look forward to our inheritance with them in heaven. • Grant us grace, O Lord, to bear all the crosses of this life. Bring us, with all the saints, into the heavenly city. Amen. (TLSB)