

Hebrews 13

Last time we went through Hebrews chapter 12. And we saw Paul urging the Hebrews not to grow faint in their affliction and persecution, but rather to accept it as chastening from the LORD. To look at Jesus, and how much he was willing to endure at the hands of sinners, and know that the inheritance is worth it. To accept God's rebuke, knowing that it will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, and that God chastens them for that purpose, that they, as his children, might be partakers of his holiness.

And so they need to not grow faint, but instead to lift up those that are. To not grow bitter, or profane. To not fornicate, or despise their birthright as Esau did. Because if they do that, they will be rejected, and they will not receive the blessing.

And the inheritance set before them is one greater than any of their fathers have been brought unto. They are like their fathers in the wilderness, approaching a great inheritance. But they aren't come to a mountain burning with the fire of the wrath of God, with a trembling, quaking Moses before them. But they come before mount Zion, the city of the living God, and the general assembly and church of the firstborn. They come sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ himself, the mediator of the new covenant.

And that blood speaks before God in heaven, just as Abel's cried out to God on earth. And so just as the voice of God shook the earth when he descended on mount Sinai, once more the voice of the Lord will shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

And the inheritance that the Hebrews come to is not an inheritance that can be shaken. But when all other things fade away, shaken and melted away at the wrath of God, their mountain will still not be a mountain of blackness and darkness and tempest. The city of the living God will still remain.

And so seeing that they have so great salvation, let them not faint in their tribulation, but rather serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for their God is a consuming fire.

Verse 1

Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue.

So Paul says that they have been showing love to one another as brethren in the faith. They have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And he wants that to continue. He wants them to show the same diligence to the full assurance of the hope unto the end. Because they need to all be ready to receive that hope, so they need to be exhorting one another, so let them love one another. Let brotherly love continue.

Verse 2

Hebrews 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

So love their brethren, and don't forget to be kind to strangers as well. Entertain strangers also, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Now that's a kind of strange statement. People come up with all kinds of doctrine out of that.

The first thing to understand here is what he means by strangers. We use the word stranger today to refer to anybody who we don't know. That's not the way that the Bible uses it.

The Bible uses the term stranger to refer to somebody who is a foreigner. They are from a different place, a different nation, a different culture, a different ethnicity. They are strange to you, they are different, they act a little different, look a little different, talk a little different. They are strangers.

So he is telling them to be kind to their brethren. Hebrews, Hebrew Christians. But also to be kind to people who aren't Hebrews, who aren't brethren, who aren't children of Abraham, who have a different ethnicity, they're strangers.

And he says that by entertaining strangers, they might entertain angels unawares. That wouldn't happen just from them entertaining brethren. If they just entertained Hebrews, they wouldn't entertain angels unawares. Because if an angel comes down from heaven, he's not going to be a Hebrew. He's not going to have their ethnicity. He's going to be a stranger. He's going to have a heavenly accent, and he's going to look a little different, and some of his customs might be odd, he might not just fit in just right. He's going to be different, he's not going to be Hebrew, or any other earthly nationality, he's going to be a stranger.

Do you see how this is different from the way that most people think of this? People think they see angels all over the place sometimes. They see angels in everybody. Black, white, yellow. They see angels that are women, angels that are children, angels that are dogs, angels that are old and decrepit.

Folks, I'm not saying that God doesn't work through people, but that's not the kind of things that Paul is talking about here. Paul is not talking about angels that look like you, that you'd never know. He's talking about angels that don't look like us, who are strangers, who are foreigners, who aren't from 'round here. Because they aren't an apparition taking on some other form than their natural state. They are just appearing as an angel, the same way he'd look if you met him up in heaven.

Most people get mixed up on this because they don't understand that angels are physical beings. Any time that the Bible is talking about angels, it is talking about something physical. If you don't understand that then you don't understand the first thing about what an angel is.

Acts 23:8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, *neither angel, nor spirit*: but the Pharisees confess both.

So they didn't believe that you'd be resurrected as a spirit. And they also didn't believe that you'd be resurrected as an angel. Two different things. Angels, and spirits.

They didn't believe in any kind of resurrection, in either kind of resurrection that there is. Now, one of those resurrections, is a spiritual resurrection. The other, is a different kind. So what other kind of resurrection is there? What other kind of resurrection does the Bible talk about?

It talks about physical resurrection. A resurrection where we are given physical glorified bodies, just as Christ has right now.

And there it calls that type of resurrection being resurrected as an angel. Not that you're going to be transformed from a human into an angel, but that your new body is going to be like the body of an angel: holy, immortal, and glorious.

So it is a physical body, but a holier, more glorious body, that does not suffer physical decay. That is what the Bible terms an angel.

(And by the way, this is a separate study, but angels do not have wings. Just thought I would clarify that, or else what we're going to see here won't make much sense to you.)

In Acts chapter 12 Peter is released from prison, and he comes knocking at the door of the house where the church was holding a prayer meeting, asking God for his deliverance. And so you remember how Rhoda went to the door, and she ran in and told everyone that Peter was standing at the door. And they wouldn't believe her.

Acts 12:15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is *his angel*.

So they said, "Well, it can't be Peter, our prayers can't possibly have been answered. And it can't be his spirit, because he's knocking at the door. It's a physical body out there banging on the door, so it must be his angel. It must be that they executed him early, and for some reason God sent his angel to come and talk to us."

And so there are times in scripture when it calls resurrected saints angels. Because it isn't just their spirit that is alive after death, it is their angel, themselves in a physical, immortal body.

And so it calls that certain group of created beings that minister before God "angels," because that is the kind of body they have. That is how God created them. They aren't fallen like man, so they still have an immortal and holy body. And so they are just called angels. That's a statement that they are physical beings, not just spiritual.

And so an angel is a physical thing, it is a physical manifestation of a spirit, a physical body that is used to clothe a spirit. Just as we have physical bodies, and will one day be resurrected into physical bodies, angels have physical bodies that God created them with.

And so Paul has consistently spoken of angels as physical beings here in Hebrews.

You remember back in chapter one, how Paul quoted from Psalms saying:

Hebrews 1:7 And of the **angels** he saith, *Who maketh his angels spirits*, and his ministers a flame of fire.

He said that God makes his angels spirits, he turns them into spirits, or a flame of fire, at his will. That isn't their nature, but he makes them that way to fulfill his purposes, to fulfill the jobs that he gives them to do.

So when God wants an angel to be a spirit, to do a job as a spirit, then he has to make them a spirit. They are physical beings and have to rely on God to transform them as is necessary to fulfill the ministry that he gives them.

And so Paul said again in chapter 2:

Hebrews 2:16 For verily he took not on him *the nature of angels*; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

So he said that angels had a particular nature, that was different from the nature of the Son. And Christ didn't take on the nature of angels, instead he took on the seed of Abraham.

And in taking on the seed of Abraham, he became a physical man. Paul says that he could have taken on the nature of angels instead, if he wanted to. But he didn't.

So like the seed of Abraham, angels have a physical nature. And the only reason that he doesn't say "the *seed* of angels," is because the holy angels do not procreate. So he could not take on their seed. But he could have taken on their nature. In a similar manner as he could have taken on the nature of man, instead of being born as a son of Abraham. He could have created himself as a son of Abraham. And he could have created himself as an angel.

And in fact, Jesus has an angel. He didn't become an angel, a part of that group of created beings. But now that he is resurrected he has an immortal, glorified body. And so it speaks of that as his angel.

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it *by his **angel*** unto his servant John:

So Jesus has an angel. The angel of his physical, incorruptible body. And he sent his angel down to earth to show John the Revelation that God had given him.

And in fact, if you look in the OT, it speaks of God himself having an angel, a physical body that he appears in. That's a bit beyond the scope of what we're covering here. But sometimes in the OT when it says "the angel of the LORD," it is talking about the angel of God himself. It is talking about the LORD himself appearing in a physical body, or some physical manifestation. It was his angel.

And just one more verse to give you an idea of what an angel is, in that sense. Paul says:

Galatians 4:14 And *my temptation which was in my flesh* ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me *as an **angel** of God, even as Christ Jesus*.

So Paul reminded them about the infirmity of his flesh, his sickness and his failing eyesight. But he said that they didn't despise him as a minister of the gospel because of that. They received him as an angel of God. As if he wasn't a man in an ailing body, but was God, or Jesus Christ himself, come to them in a holy and incorruptible body.

So an angel is a holy, incorruptible, physical body.

And even here in this verse it is clear that Paul is talking about physical people, when he is talking about angels.

He is telling them to entertain strangers. To show hospitality to foreigners. To go ahead and invite them home for dinner, and entertain them as your guest, even if they look like they're not from 'round here.

So he's telling them to have them for a meal, to entertain them. And so obviously, if you could entertain an angel, then they have to be somebody who could eat something. Who you would expect to entertain like that.

And so in the OT we do find them entertaining angels. For example, Gideon entertained an angel:

Judges 6:11 And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.

12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

17 And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.

18 Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

19 And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it.

20 And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so.

21 Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

22 And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.

So before that, Gideon didn't know that he was an angel. He wasn't sure who he was. He didn't know him. He just knew that he must be a prophet of God. And he wasn't even sure of that, so he wanted to prove him, and wanted a sign from him. And boy he sure got one. It wasn't what he expected. He found out that he was entertaining an angel unawares.

And a similar thing happened to Manoah, Samson's father. He thought he was speaking with a prophet, and found out that it was actually an angel.

And that story is found in Judges chapter 13:

Judges 13:1 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.

3 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:

So she didn't know whether this was an angel of God or not. But she said that he looked like one. The countenance of his face was what she would have expected of an angel.

So angels have a distinctive appearance. They don't look just exactly like the average person, and so that is why they are taken for strangers.

They look very similar to a man, and so Manoah's wife concluded that he was probably just a prophet, a man of God. But he looked almost like an angel, and he was a stranger, she didn't know what his name was or where he was from.

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

8 Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

So again they call him a "man of God." They thought he was a man, not necessarily an angel.

9 And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her.

10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.

11 And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am.

12 And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?

13 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

14 She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.

15 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.

16 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the LORD.

17 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?

18 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?

19 So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.

20 For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.

21 But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD.

22 And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

23 But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.

So they entertained an angel, and didn't realize it until he vanished out of their sight.

And that isn't something that happened only in the OT. There is actually an account of something like that in the NT.

Luke 24:13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

So the resurrected Lord starts talking with these guys. And so he is in his resurrected body, it is incorruptible, it is holy, and it is glorified. So you could call that an angel. It doesn't actually use that term here, but it does later refer to his physical body as the angel of Jesus Christ, in the book of Revelation. So this is an angel, the angel of Jesus Christ. But they don't know that.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a **stranger** in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

So they think that he's a stranger, that he must not be from around there, he must have just arrived in town, or he would know about what just happened.

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

And so although they took him for a stranger, they invited him in, and entertained him. And it turned out that they were entertaining an angel, even Jesus Christ, unawares.

So the Hebrews need to entertain strangers, foreigners and people that they don't know, in addition to loving their brethren. And by doing that they may at times entertain angels unawares.

And I think that it is interesting to note that in every one of these situations that the Bible records, the angel didn't actually end up eating the food that they had provided. They entertained the angel and offered to prepare a meal and everything, but the angel didn't actually eat it.

So angels generally don't eat our food. One time when Abraham did have three angels over for dinner, he had to bake unleavened bread, and they ate that along with the meat that he fixed for them. So they prefer manna, they prefer angels' food, and generally don't eat what we have to offer. And so in every one of these cases, the people that were entertaining angels, were entertaining them unawares, but then before they ate anything they vanished out of their sight, and then they knew that they were an angel.

So they didn't just entertain somebody and then later think, "I wonder if that was an angel. I guess I'll never know." They knew, when they had entertained an angel. They just were unaware while they were entertaining them. Up to that point they were just a stranger. But afterward, they knew that they had entertained an angel. No doubt about it.

And so Paul tells the Hebrews that this kind of thing could happen to them.

And why does he do that, why the Hebrews specifically? I mean, he never tells any of the Gentile churches anything like this. Just the Hebrews.

And there's several reasons for that. One reason is, if you actually look it up, you'll find that the only people that ever do entertain angels in the Bible, are Hebrews. You never find a Gentile entertaining an angel. Or really, interacting with an angel in any way. Any Gentile who has a run-in with an angel, it's because the angel has been sent out to kill them. Really the only time in scripture that we find an angel talking to a Gentile, is when Cornelius the centurion sees a vision of an angel, in Acts chapter 10. And that was just a vision, and that is the exception to the rule. So, we really never find anybody but Hebrews entertaining angels in scripture.

And they are also the ones that are the most likely to entertain them in the future.

Because you see, the Hebrews are going to have the opportunity to entertain angels during the tribulation. God's going to send angels down to earth for various reasons, and the Hebrews will entertain them.

We've already talked about the two witnesses, Moses and Elijah, that are going to be sent down from heaven. And so just as Hagar entertained the strangers, the spies that had come into the city, so the Hebrews will entertain those strangers come down to earth. And so there will be things like that going on. The Hebrews will be entertaining strangers that are angels.

And interestingly, it isn't just the Hebrews that need to entertain strangers during the tribulation. It is all of the Gentile nations as well.

Matthew 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

So this is a parable about when Christ returns to earth and sets up his kingdom. And he says that when he does that he will bring all of the holy angels with him. And I think that by that he's likely meaning all of the saints, not just those of the angel race, but resurrected men as well. Their angels.

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

So he will gather all nations, all of the Gentiles:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a **stranger**, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

And so Christ commends those who entertained strangers of his brethren, the Hebrews, during the tribulation. And he says that when they did these things to them it was just as if they had done it unto him. Just as if they had entertained his angel.

And so they will get to enter into the kingdom with Israel, because they took care of the Hebrews during the tribulation, instead of persecuting them.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

And then he rebukes those who did not aid Israel during the tribulation.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

So the Gentiles that are left after the tribulation will be judged by Christ based on whether or not they helped Israel. If they did, they'll be allowed to enter the kingdom. If they didn't, they'll be damned.

So the Gentiles will also need to be entertaining strangers in the tribulation. Just as the Jews ought to, in addition to loving their brethren.

Verse 3

Hebrews 13:3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

So love the brethren, entertain strangers, and remember especially your brethren that are in bonds and are suffering adversity.

So they are experiencing persecution, and some of them are being bound and put into prison. Some of them are suffering other forms of persecution and adversity.

And Paul doesn't want them to forget them, just as he doesn't want them to forget to entertain strangers. He wants them to be mindful of their brethren that are suffering, as if they themselves are in the same body. To not forsake them, but to continue to seek to encourage and minister to them. To continue to exhort them, lest any of them be hardened.

Verse 4

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

So he's given them direction in regard to their brethren, strangers, those suffering persecution, and now also in regard to family life.

And he encourages them, despite their persecution, that marriage is still honorable. That marriage is still honorable in all. The brethren, the strangers, those persecuted, and those not. So marriage is honorable, it isn't something that they should all be trying to avoid. But what they ought to be avoiding is fornication. Let them not be fornicators, and sell their birthright, let them not be whoremongers and adulterers. Because God is going to judge them and they will have no place in the kingdom.

And so to avoid that, what they ought to be doing is marrying. They should be considering marriage an honorable thing, and if it is a choice between getting married or being a whoremonger, then they should get married. They shouldn't be looking at that as some kind of an unholy thing. Marriage is honorable. What is profane is being a whoremonger, or an adulterer, breaking the marriage covenant. That's what they need to be avoiding, not marriage. Marriage is honorable.

That might seem like a strange thing for him to have to say here, but you know, there are people that need to hear that. Many people in the Roman Catholic religion need to hear that. Many of

their priests and nuns think that they are more holy somehow because they are avoiding marriage. When in fact many of them are just becoming whores, whoremongers, and fornicators, who God will judge. They'd be far better off recognizing that marriage is honorable, honorable in all, and avoiding fornication.

And it's something that the Hebrews will need to hear during the tribulation for a similar reason. Because there is going to be a temptation for them to think that marriage is less honorable, and that they should avoid it for religious reasons.

You see, God is going to choose out 144,000 young Hebrew men that are virgins. Unmarried, and never having fornicated with anyone. And they are going to be the first fruits unto God, sealed right at the start of the tribulation. And they're going to go on to preach and ultimately be martyred for their faith.

And so the Hebrews that come to faith after them, are going to likely feel this need to abstain from marriage and follow in their footsteps. And that is not what God is calling them to. Marriage is honorable in all. And the Hebrews will be much better off marrying, rather than becoming whoremongers.

Married people, that honor the marriage covenant, and don't commit adultery, they get to receive the inheritance. Unmarried people, who fornicate, will end up like Esau, and get nothing. So let them not put themselves in that temptation. Let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn.

Verse 5

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

So marriage is honorable, and don't go out on it and commit adultery. Don't covet other men's wives. And in general don't covet what other people have. Be content with you've got, in every area. Because they have a great inheritance coming, and in the mean time God has said that he will never leave them nor forsake them.

Verse 6

Hebrews 13:6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

So don't try to wish away your persecution. Don't look at what the sinners have and be tempted to sell your birthright for a single morsel of meat. Be content, and know that God is your helper, and you have no need to fear what man will do to you.

Verse 7

Hebrews 13:7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

So Paul speaks of those that rule over them. And he's not speaking politically, he's talking about those among them that are guiding and directing them, telling them what they ought to do.

Paul speaks of that role, that some men have in the church, in some of his other epistles.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

And so Paul is admonishing them not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to consider themselves in accordance with the measure of faith that God has given to each of them.

So God has given each of them a measure of faith.

And Paul explains what he means by that:

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

So Paul says that there are different offices in the body of Christ. We are all members one of another, all members of the same body, but we have different offices, different purposes, a different measure of faith that God has dealt to us, a different position and purpose that he has given to us.

And so rather than comparing ourselves among ourselves, and measuring ourselves by ourselves, we should measure ourselves according to the faith that God hath dealt to every man. Not judging ourselves by the fact that I have this office, this gift of God, and you have that office, and that one is lesser in some way. But rather thinking soberly, and each judging ourselves in accordance with the measure of faith that God has dealt to us. In other words, measuring ourselves not by the office we've been given, not by the calling that God has given us, the faith that he's made possible for us by his grace. But rather judging ourselves by how well we fulfill that office, by how well we measure up to that measure of faith that he's given to us.

You can't judge Abraham for not believing that God was going to give him the moon. God never told Abraham that he was going to give him the moon. That's not the measure of faith that he dealt to him. And so you don't look at others and think, "They aren't fulfilling this office, so they aren't as good as me." Well, they're not supposed to be fulfilling that office, that isn't the office that God has called them to.

So instead of judging others, he says to look at yourself, and measure yourself by how well you are measuring up to the faith that God has dealt to you. He's called you to this office? That's great. How well are you measuring up to that measure of faith? Are you receiving that gift of God and fulfilling that office well?

And so there are many different purposes that God has given us, and our focus should be on our own faith, how well we are fulfilling the role that God has given us.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

So we are given these different gifts by grace and faith.

And if you are given the gift of prophecy, then you ought to be prophesying according to the proportion of faith. You can't prophecy beyond what God gives you, and you shouldn't diminish anything from it either. You need to do it according to the proportion of faith. Not thinking about

yourself more highly than you ought to think, but considering how well you are doing what God has given you to do.

Whether that be prophecy:

7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that **ruleth**, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

So there are other offices that God gives us as well: ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, and showing mercy. Those are all different gifts and callings that God gives us.

And we find in other passages that some of them are superior, in terms of how much edification they bring to the body of Christ. But all of these that Paul has listed here are needful. And the question isn't who's been given the best gift, but how well each of us is by faith using the gift that we've been given.

And he says that one of those gifts, is ruling.

So being a ruler is a gift and an office that God gives to people within the body of Christ. To bear rule over others within the body.

Now, personally, if I was writing the Bible, I probably wouldn't have put that in there. I'd be a fool and say, "well, you know, I don't think that's really necessary." But God in his wisdom does make some men rulers in the church. He gives them that office.

Now, when it calls this an office, it isn't talking about a formal office that the church designates somebody as holding. It is just like each of these other gifts or offices: it is something that is given by God.

He compares it to the different members of our physical body. You've got a head, feet, hands. And each one of them has a particular calling. And how did it get that calling? How did your head get to be a head? Is it because the head decided that it wanted to be a head? Is it because the rest of the body got together and ordained it as the head? No, of course not. It's a head because God made it a head. And in the same way a prophet isn't a prophet because the church decides to ordain them as a prophet. God has to give them that gift of being a prophet. He has to give them that office and calling.

And the same for each of these. This isn't some formal designation handed out within an institution, it is the natural callings of different members within an organism. Members of a body that is created by God, and each one given an office and grace by God.

And so God gives some people the gift of teaching, some people the gift of prophecy, and some people the gift of ruling.

So that office of ruling, what does that entail? What is he talking about?

Well, he says, "he that *giveth*, let him do it with simplicity; he that *ruleth*, with diligence; he that *sheweth mercy*, with cheerfulness."

So he puts ruling alongside giving and showing mercy. So some people give to others, some people rule, and some people show mercy.

It is almost like a progression. One person is giving something, that can be used to aid the poor. Somebody is ruling, he's making sure that that gift is being put to a good and proper use. And somebody is showing mercy. They are finding somebody in need of help, and showing them mercy by dispensing to them from the generosity of the church.

So the ruling is in regard to giving and showing mercy. A ruler is somebody with wisdom and discretion, who makes sure that whatever people give is put to good use.

He says, “he that ruleth, with diligence.” So this is something that requires diligence, they need to be diligent in making sure that there’s no misappropriation of anything, that people’s gifts are being used to help people, and that when they are being used, they are being put to a proper use.

And for a confirmation of that we need look no further than Paul’s first epistle to Timothy:

1 Timothy 5:1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;

2 The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

So he begins this chapter with direction for Timothy on how he should interact with various people. And his focus here is really going to be the elders, he’s got more to say about them later. But it is important to see that when he says “elder” here, he isn’t referring to a formal office. By “elder”, he just means an elder man, an older man. And so he tells him that he shouldn’t rebuke an elder, but intreat him as he would a father. Because Timothy is a younger man, and so an elder would be old enough to be his father. So he should recognize that, and respect them, and relate to them in the same way that a son would respectfully relate to his father. And in a similar manner he should treat the older women as mothers, and the younger men and women as brothers and sisters, respectively.

So he tells Timothy to relate to people within the church as family, based on their age. And then he goes on in the following verses to talk about widows. And he explains to Timothy that widows shouldn’t be living off of the generosity of the church unless they are over the age of 60. If they are younger than that, then they should be remarrying. And if they have any family members that are brethren, then they should be providing for them. So the church should only be supporting a widow that is an elder woman, that has nobody else to lean on.

And then Paul goes back to talking about the elders, and says this:

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders that **rule** well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

So he’s just been talking about how to deal with widows, about who the church should be distributing to, and who they should not. And then he immediately begins talking about the elders that rule well. And what he’s saying is, that it is generally for the elder men, who have more wisdom and discretion, to take responsibility for making sure that Paul’s instructions about this are followed. They should be ruling, overseeing the church’s bounty, and seeing that it is used properly, to help those that are truly in need.

And he says those elders that do that, and do it well, those that rule well, should be counted of double honor.

So he’s told him before that he needs to respect his elders. And now he’s telling him that he needs especially to honor those elders that God has given the gift and office of ruling, and that do so with diligence. That he should count those elders that rule well worthy of double honor.

And he says, “especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” So it is also for some of the elders to be laboring in the word and doctrine, and being teachers. And he should be especially honoring them.

So there are some elders that are just elder men, and he needs to respect them as fathers. And when they are also given the office of a ruler by God, then he needs to count them of double honor. And those that in addition have the gifts of teaching and exhortation, he should be especially counting them of double honor, and showing them special respect.

So now we should understand exactly what Paul is talking about here in Hebrews when he says, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God.”

He’s talking about those men among them that God has called to oversee them, to oversee their distributions, and who have also spoken the word of God to them. Just as Paul told Timothy that some elders would be counted worthy of double honor, because they labored in the word and doctrine.

And so just as Paul told the Hebrews to remember them that are in bonds, he tells them also to remember those that have the rule over them. Those men that have that weight of responsibility on them, that have that care on them, helping the many that are in adversity.

And who also may be more in danger, as chief men among them, and because they spoke to them the word of God.

So at the time, this would have been elder men like James, John, and Peter. Those that had heard the word of God from the Son, and spoken it to the people. And so they are to be mindful of them, of what they are doing and what they have done.

And to consider them also as examples. He says, “whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” He says walk in their faith. They’ve spoken the word of God to you, you see how they are living it out, and you live it out the same way. Considering the end of their conversation. Considering what their goal was, what they were striving toward, what motivated them to that faith, to that walk. What it was that God has said, that so motivated their actions. Consider that, and do likewise.

Verse 8

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

And so here is what the end of their conversation, their daily living was. Here is the author and finisher of their faith. Jesus Christ.

And so they too should be considering them, and looking unto Jesus.

And know that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

He’s come, he’s done it, it is finished. He is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.

So they can walk in the faith of those that have spoken to them the word of God. It will still be good for them for the rest of their lives. They can walk in the faith of their fathers, because the faith doesn’t change, it is forever.

If there were any muslims, or Mormons, or Catholics that had any doubts, that should clear them up for you. No room for new prophets, for new cannon and dogma.

Verse 9

Hebrews 13:9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

So he says that there are diverse and strange doctrines. Doctrines that are different than what they have heard from the word of the Son, that are diverse from that. Doctrines that are strange, that are strange to them, that they've never heard before.

He says there is no strange doctrine that they've not heard before, there's no other doctrine about Christ for you to find out after this, that you've never heard about, there's nothing new to be added after the word of the Son. Once he has spoken, that's it. Diverse and strange doctrines will arise, but don't be carried about with them.

So even at the time that Paul was writing, there were diverse doctrines, and unfamiliar doctrines that the Hebrews could hear of, that people were teaching. And Paul tells them to ignore them. Not to be carried about with them, to stick with what they've got.

"For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."

So their hearts should be established in the grace of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.

And in contrast to that, he speaks of meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. And he's going to explain what he means by that. What particular strange doctrines he has a fear will effect them.

Verse 10

Hebrews 13:10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

So in particular, he is fearing doctrines that relate to eating. That pertain to meats. Doctrines that have to do with eating things that are sacrificed, eating things that are taken from an altar.

And he says he fears them latching onto to some kind of doctrine about eating from an altar, because that wouldn't be their altar. That would have to be some other altar, not the altar of those that follow Christ. Because the altar of the Son, is an altar that they have no right to eat of. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."

Now, under the Mosaic law, the Levite priests, those that served the tabernacle, they did have a right to eat of the altar. They ate of those things that were sacrificed. But as Paul is going to show, that depended on the nature of the sacrifice. That wasn't for every sacrifice, and it isn't for this one.

Verse 11

Hebrews 13:11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

So when an offering was made, the once-yearly offering by the high priest, where he went into the holiest, and offered the blood, he wasn't allowed to eat the body of the sacrifice, as he normally would have. Instead it had to be burned without the camp.

Verse 12

Hebrews 13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

And so since Jesus's sacrifice was one where the blood would be brought in before the throne of God in heaven, into the true tabernacle, that the LORD pitched, and not man, he also suffered without the gate. Because it was a sacrifice for the sins of all the people, that might not be eaten.

And so any kind of a doctrine that would come along, relating to eating an offering, that is a diverse and strange doctrine. That isn't a true doctrine of Christ. Because the sacrifice that Christ made was one sacrifice for sins for ever, and thus they have no right to eat of our altar, which serve the tabernacle.

So any altar that a person is supposed to eat from, it isn't the altar of Christ, because Christ's sacrifice cannot be eaten of, because it was to take away all the people's sins.

So rather than embracing a doctrine of meats, when the offerings of beasts, that could be eaten, never profited them; rather than coming before an altar to eat of it, they should come boldly before the throne of grace. Their heart should be established with grace, not meats that enter at the mouth and are cast out into the drought.

So let them not accept some diverse doctrine, different from what they've heard, and go back into Judaism. Let them not accept some strange doctrine that hadn't even been come up with yet, and embrace the Baal worship of Roman Catholicism. Rather, let their hearts be established with grace, and let them not follow those diverse and strange doctrines, not spoken by Christ, but come up with after.

Verse 13

Hebrews 13:13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

So let them not go back into Judaism. Into the temple system. Instead let them go forth to Christ, without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Verse 14

Hebrews 13:14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

So let them not seek unto an earthly city. Let them not cleave to Jerusalem. Let them not be compelled to take religious pilgrimage to Israel, or the Vatican, or Mecca. They seek a city to come, the heavenly Jerusalem, whose builder and maker is God.

And this is really, really practical advice, both for the Hebrews of Paul's day, and for those in the tribulation.

Those Hebrews that heeded what Paul said, and by faith left Judea, escaped the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Those that went to Antioch or other places, because they weren't tied down to a religious system, escaped a lot of trouble and heartache.

And the same will be true during the tribulation. The quicker that a Hebrew gets out of Israel, the better for him. They have to flee into the wilderness as fast as they can. As Jesus said, let them not turn back again to take their coat. Just drop whatever they are doing and run. And that would be hard for some of the Hebrews to do. But they need their heart to be established with grace, not being established and tied down to a religious center or system because of meats, which cannot profit them.

Verse 15

Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

So this is the sacrifice that we should be offering, that we should be participating in. The sacrifice of praising God. Not a sacrifice of things that go into your mouth, but a sacrifice of the fruit of the lips, that which comes out of your mouth, from your heart. And so he says let us offer that sacrifice to God continually, by giving thanks to his name. And that is a sacrifice that they *can* indeed offer continually, whatever they are doing, wherever they are. They don't need a temple, or a priest, or an altar. They themselves can offer that sacrifice, and it is the sacrifice that is acceptable before God. Not a sacrifice of meats going into their lips, but a sacrifice of the fruit of their lips, giving thanks to his name.

Verse 16

Hebrews 13:16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

And in addition, here is another kind of sacrifice that they can offer. Doing good to others, and communicating to them, giving to them, whatever will fill their needs. He says don't forget to do that as well, because those are sacrifices also with which God is well pleased.

Verse 17

Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

And so he speaks again of those that have the rule over them. And it is very fitting that he does so right after talking about giving to others, isn't it? So that is once again a confirmation that that is something that they are supposed to be directing, that is what a ruler is. And he says that they also watch for their souls, having spoken unto them the word of God, and desiring that they would show the full assurance of faith unto the end. These are the elders that God has also given the office of teaching, exhorting, and shepherding them. And so they watch for their souls, knowing that they will have to give account before God for the office that they were given, whether they fulfilled it. And he says that they all need to take care to obey them, since it is the word of God that they are speaking unto them. They need to obey them, so that they can fulfill that ministry with joy, and not be grieved by people that are going astray. Because when they are grieved, that just

makes it harder for them to exhort and direct them, and so that is unprofitable for everyone. So it is important to obey them that have the rule over them.

Verses 18-19

Hebrews 13:18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

So Paul asks that they would pray for him. But he doesn't want to give them the wrong idea. He's not saying that he needs prayer because he's struggling with sin or something. He's not weary and ready to faint. He says that he trusts that he has a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. He's not asking for prayer because of some temptation, but rather for their sakes, that he might be released from his bonds. He says that if they pray for them, he'll be restored to them the sooner. It may please God to expedite his release, if it is his will.

Verses 20-21

Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,
21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

So he's spoken of those that have the rule over them, and he's also given them much exhortation of his own. But now he commends them ultimately to that great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ.

So Paul asked them to pray for him, and this is his prayer for them. That the God who resurrected Christ from the dead, would also make *them* perfect. That through Christ and his blood of the everlasting covenant, he would work in them that which is well pleasing in his sight, that they might be perfect in every good work, to do his will.

So he's asking that God would give them grace by Jesus Christ to live in faith, and serve him acceptably, doing that which is good in his sight.

Verse 22

Hebrews 13:22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

And Paul asks also that they would suffer the word of exhortation that he is giving to them. He says that he gave them exhortation in a letter that he's written unto them in few words.

Now, the book of Hebrews, is one of the longer epistles. It is in the top 3 or 4 epistles in terms of length. So you can't say that it was written in a few words, that wouldn't make sense. It wouldn't even make sense to say that Paul was just being very blunt and clipped, and speaking in a few words, because he wasn't. He was beating around the bush for about half of it. So it doesn't seem like he could be talking about the book of Hebrews here.

In the book of Galatians, which is only half the length, Paul says, “See how *large* a letter I have written unto you in my own hand.” So he considered that to be a large, long letter. And if this one is twice as long, I don’t think that he’d say it was written in just a few words.

So what is he talking about then?

Well, remember what I discussed at the start of this study. I said that I thought that the book of Hebrews was accompanied by a second mini-epistle. And that second epistle contained some additional specific exhortation for them, possibly naming names, as Paul sometimes does. And it would have also contained his salutations to all of them. You’ll notice that it doesn’t really have any salutations here, as many of his epistles do. He doesn’t mention anybody by name. And so that would have been done in a second, smaller letter, similar to what we find at the end of the book of Romans. And in this case Paul may have actually sent several different letters to different areas or groups of people, because he isn’t just writing to one specific location or city, but to the Hebrews as a whole.

And so that is why Hebrews starts the way it does, without Paul’s usual salutation, and that is the way that it ends the way that it does, without him saluting different people by name. That was in the accompanying epistle.

And that was of God’s design that it would be that way. That just this pure teaching here would be preserved for us, and for the Hebrews.

Verse 23

Hebrews 13:23 Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

And so Timothy is actually the one that wrote this epistle at Paul’s mouth. And so you’ll notice how sometimes Paul has been saying “we” here, instead of just “I”. And that’s because he’s kind of writing it along with Timothy.

He does something similar in some of his other epistles, like Corinthians. He wrote them along with other people.

So these are all indicators that Paul is that author of Hebrews. He knew Timothy, he had Timothy write his epistles for him, and we know that he had asked Timothy to come to him, in his letters to him. So Paul and Timothy were working together, and we’d expect to find them both in the same place at this point, because Paul had asked Timothy to come to him, where he was bound in Rome.

And from what Paul says, it is clear that Timothy also had been bound for the doctrine of Christ, but that he had been set at liberty. And Paul says that actually, as he is writing this last part, Timothy isn’t with him. He’s gone off somewhere else. Having been set at liberty, he had some places he probably needed to go, to strengthen the church. So he had taken a little trip.

So apparently what happened, is that Timothy wrote his epistle for Paul, and then he left. And so Paul added some of these final notes here himself, and the other letter of exhortation that he mentions.

Remember, he can’t just drop a letter like this in the mail. Somebody has to come along, that you trust, and who is going to the place you want the epistle delivered, and then you can have them deliver it for you.

So apparently there were some people who were traveling to Judea, who were going to deliver this epistle. And apparently, they had told Paul that some of the Hebrews were actually leaving Judea, and coming on a journey to Italy. Because Paul says, “with whom, if he come shortly, I

will see you.” So Paul said that he was going to see them, and Timothy too, if he got back in time.

So some of the Hebrews were coming to Rome. And in Peter's first epistle, we do indeed find him saying that he was at “Babylon”, which was a code-word for Rome. So that all fits together.

Verse 24

Hebrews 13:24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

So Paul just includes a very brief note here at the end and a salutation, and then closes.

Verse 25

Hebrews 13:25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

And so that ends the book of Hebrews. Commending them to the grace of God, as he does in all of his epistles.

And I would point out that Paul is the only person who says that. He is the only NT author who ends his epistles that way. Some of the others are very abrupt, they just kind of stop all of a sudden. But Paul always has a nice little summary and praise and blessing to say at the end, and he always commends them to the grace of God, because he was given a dispensation of God's grace for all mankind.

And so one day all of the Hebrews will taste of that grace. They will come boldly before the throne of grace, and they will indeed find mercy, and grace to help in their time of deepest need. Amen.