

# THE STAND

## PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE HEBREWS CHAPTER 13



### Chapter 13 Commentary

As we come to the end of the book of Hebrews, the writer is prepared to offer his final words to the audience. The writer's entire message has been about the faithfulness of God toward His people throughout history and His continued love for them through His Son, Jesus Christ. This second covenant is not a different revelation from a changing God, but a final revelation from an unchanging God. The writer has worked very hard to establish the claims of Christ and prove his case. He has shown them how mankind is finally being redeemed through Christ. Now it is time for those who believe to move forward.

The writer knows the challenges these people will face as they move forward. As we look at the challenges this 1st Century audience faced, we will see how they are very similar to the challenges that we face as Christians in a 21st Century world as well. In these parting words, the writer will lay out some foundational principles to guide the people through the suffering and power struggles of a fallen world. As well, he will address two main internal struggles these people deal with on a daily basis.

At the very beginning of this chapter, the writer calls the believers to continue the love they have for one another as brothers. They have begun to establish in-depth, family-like community with one another and it's this love, through Christ, that will hold this community together. Not only should it be the basis for the community itself, but it should pour over into those outside the faith. One of the best witnesses to mankind is the love of Christ, shown through His people. The writer calls them to embrace these strangers, or outsiders. For this audience, strangers would have been Samaritans, Gentiles and other ethnic groups that the Jews had not traditionally had good relationships with in the past. This was a big task for these new believers. But the writer encourages them by explaining that in showing hospitality to these strangers, they may even entertain angels as Abraham did in Genesis 18.

They must also remember those in prison. The writer not only calls them to simply remember these people in their prayers, but he really wants the people to learn to share in each other's suffering. If they are to overcome the power struggles of oppressive empires and come to the aide of those who are hurting, they must approach these forces with compassion and mercy.

In verse 4, the writer begins to look at the two internal struggles his audience will face. He first offers guidance and a warning about marriage. Marriage is the ultimate picture of Christ and the church. Marriage between a man and a woman should exemplify the love of Christ to the church and the church's response to Christ. It is for this reason that sexual immorality is so dangerous. The writer calls his audience to hold marriage and sex in honor, not defile this relationship with adultery. When two people engage in adultery, they are taking the most sacred example of God's love and defiling that living example. Marriage is one of the most valuable tools God has given mankind, but one that mankind has traditionally mocked. The writer wants his audience to see that sex and intimacy with a spouse is the highest level of intimacy we as humans can share. This intimacy is a picture of God's love for us.

Sexual immorality and money are two destructive forces that many people will be tempted with at some point in their lives. It's important to note that it's not money that is destructive. The love of money has brought devastation to the lives of many. Jesus spoke more about money in the last week of His life than any other subject; we see Him talk about money more than Heaven and Hell combined. People get caught up in the love of money because they essentially do not believe that God will provide for them completely. People who love money do not believe the riches found in God to be as good as the worldly riches that money can bring here and now. But the writer reminds his audience that God has always provided for His people. God the Father and Jesus the Son are the same yesterday, today and forever. God will continue to provide for His people. We must remember that true wealth is found in being content, not in material things.

The writer also calls his audience to not get caught up in petty things such as the Old Testament food laws. Instead of teaching what you can and cannot be eaten, they should be teaching about grace. The results of their teaching should be changed hearts, not changed diets. He calls attention to a new place of worship. The writer is basically giving the people permission to worship outside the Temple. Instead of holding on to the earthly Temple or Tabernacle as their place of worship, the writer challenges his audience to seek something "outside of the camp" (v13). God no longer dwells in the Holy of Holies in the earthly Temple, but in the heavenly Temple where we have direct access to Christ. No longer is there a need for animal sacrifice because of the blood of Jesus Christ. Their service to others is now seen as a sacrifice to God. Sharing with others and doing good deeds are pleasing sacrifices to God. These are not sacrifices to be performed in an earthly Temple, but ones to be done in the streets, in homes and throughout the nations. If the people are to offer up themselves to a hurting world, they must leave man-made buildings and set out into the streets. It's here, outside the temple, that these new Christians will offer their sacrifices to God, through the praise of their lips and service to others.

The writer also calls the people to respect their leaders. These leaders are meant to be shepherds, not dictators. These leaders will have to give a special account for their leadership; a leader should not take his task lightly. They should take on this task with joy and be given the proper respect and love from those they are leading. The people should pray regularly for these leaders.

In the writer's closing statements, He reminds the people that God has given them everything they need to fulfill His perfect Will. As Christ-followers, we have a task. God's people have been called and equipped to do a good work and spread the message of God. We are not to sit idle and wait on the day that Christ will come. Instead, we are to bring the things of Heaven to Earth. Through the local church, we must share the love of Christ to the nations. When we share and give of ourselves, we offer a pleasing sacrifice to God. We can show the love and nature of Jesus Christ by feeding the hungry and clothing the poor. As the church, we are the living and active Body of Christ. We are His healing hands and guiding feet. We must take a stand individually and collectively for the cause of Jesus Christ.

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# Personal Study Questions

The purpose of these study questions is to help you get into God's Word. We hope that through a personal encounter with God's Word, He will reveal His Truth and allow you to understand His story first hand.

1. What non-family members do you consider "brothers and sisters"? Why?

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2. What people, groups or individuals do you consider "strangers" in your life?

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3. What is one step you can take to be a friend to these strangers?

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4. Sexual immorality and the love of money are the two internal struggles the writer addresses in the final stage of his message. How have these struggles manifested themselves in your life. How are you / did you work through those trying times?

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5. What are some recent sacrifices you have offered to Christ, according to Hebrews 13?

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6. What is one area of your life where you need to take a stand for Christ? Write that on the back and pray over it this week. Share it with the group during your group time.

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