

(Hebrews) ch.12:5-13:25

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's discipline through trials as a means to grow in holiness and faith.

Duration: 1:18:32

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 3:12, Hebrews 12:15-24, Hebrews 13:1, Hebrews 13:7

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "New Covenant Living"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the book of Hebrews, specifically chapters 3, 4, and 5. The main theme is the importance of holding fast to the faith and not falling away, using the example of the Israelites who came out of Egypt but did not enter the promised land. The speaker emphasizes the rest of God and the role of Jesus as our high priest. The sermon also highlights the concept of the new covenant and the transformation it brings, particularly in terms of our attitude towards material possessions and our love for others.

Transcript

We turn now to Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 5. In verses 1 to 4, the exhortation is to run the race, looking unto Jesus who himself was tested with the testings that we go through in our earthly life, and to avoid fainting in the midst of tribulation and affliction and temptation and trial. God has given us his own son as an example for us. God sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and he has gone ahead of us in this race, and we are to look at his example who was tested in all points like as we are, yet without committing sin.

Hebrews 4 and verse 15. Therefore we can come boldly to the throne of grace and receive grace to help us in our time of need, because Jesus himself has been tempted as we are. Therefore he is able to come to our help when we are tempted, we are told in Hebrews 2:18. So this is the first provision that God has made.

We are to look away from everything else unto Jesus who was himself tested like we are, tempted in everything, and who endured the cross, and who also endured the hostility of sinful people who had no interest in godliness against himself. We are to look at his example who strove to the point where he shed his blood. We haven't come that far yet.

Then in verses 5 to 11, we are told to look to our father, to God himself who has appointed the trial for our eternal good. We are to look at Jesus who suffered and share in the fellowship of his sufferings in the midst of trial, and we are also to look at our heavenly father who has allowed this chastening, this testing, to come into our life for our spiritual profit. That's what we read in verses 5 to 11.

So we are to look at Jesus the son of God and at our heavenly father. The Holy Spirit within us leads us to look at Jesus in his earthly life and leads us to look at our heavenly father who disciplines us for our profit. So we read in verse 5, you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as son.

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are approved by him. For those whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives. These exhortations are found in Proverbs 3 verse 11 and 12, that the Lord disciplines those whom he loves.

He scourges every son whom he receives. Just like we as fathers do not punish the children who walk the roads who are not our own, we do not punish our neighbor's children when they do something wrong. But we punish our own children.

We discipline our own children. We chasten our own children. Why? So that they may be freed from the evil that is in their flesh.

And so it says in verse 7, it is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But, verse 8, if you are without discipline of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

And so it says here that if you are facing trial and testing in your life, that is an indication that you are a child of God, that God is testing you. Because it's only those who are not his children whom God leaves without testing. Think of the wicked people in the world.

Think of the people who live for themselves. Think of the cheats and the crooks. They have quite an easy time in this world, in a sense.

They make a lot of money. They enjoy themselves. It appears as though testing is reserved in its intensity for those who are the faithful children of God.

The book of Job is a clear example of this. Job had three friends who were not as godly as he himself was, who were not as much God-fearing as Job himself was. And they did not get testing like Job got.

Job got a far more severe testing than those three comforters of his. Because Job himself was one who feared God and hated evil. God himself could testify to that fact.

So we see from the book of Job, it's those who fear God and who hate evil whom God desires to purify even more, who find themselves going through testing. This is what Jesus himself said in John chapter 15. He said that every branch in me that bears fruit, John 15 2 in the middle, he, that is my father, prunes it, purges it, cleanses it, that it may bear more fruit.

He takes the pruning knife and cuts so that such a branch may bear more fruit. And so it is an indication of God's love that he chastens us and disciplines us just like a father disciplines his own children. In fact it says if you're without discipline then you're illegitimate children.

You're not really sons of God then. Verse 9. Furthermore we had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much rather be subject to the father of spirits and live? And when an earthly father disciplines a child in love, not in anger but in love, the son grows to respect that father.

That's a good thing for us to remember who our father. It is not God's will that we ever discipline our children in anger or in impatience or with irritation. At the same time it is not God's will that we leave our children without discipline.

The correct thing to do is to discipline them in love with no trace of anger, irritation or impatience. Where there are these other traces in our discipline, those are sins that we need to ask God to free us from. If we truly discipline our children with love, our children will grow to respect us.

We had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. God himself disciplines us in love, never in anger or impatience. And so shall we not then much rather be subject to the father of spirits and live.

God himself disciplines us, we are told in verse 10, for our good. Our earthly fathers disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, and the best of earthly fathers are imperfect in their discipline. But he, our heavenly father, disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness.

This is God's will for us. Just like our earthly fathers discipline us so that we may become a little better, we may get rid of some of those bad habits of disobedience that we have. But our heavenly father disciplines us through trials and testings and sorrows and many temptations that he allows.

He does not tempt us himself, that's very clear in James chapter 1, but he allows the devil to test us. God has permitted the devil to remain in the world and to bring sorrow and suffering with a purpose that we might be tested. Just like the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden, that was not created by the devil.

Remember, the tree of knowledge of good and evil which led Eve and Adam to sin was created by God himself. But God did not tempt Eve or Adam. No, he created the tree and he told them not to partake of it.

It was the devil who came and tempted Eve, but it was God who created the tree. And when God created the tree, we read in Genesis 1 31, he could look out over all that he had created, and behold, it was very good. Even the tree of knowledge of good and evil was very good, because there lay the possibility of Adam and Eve being tempted and thereby proving that they wanted to obey God and thus partake of God's holiness.

And so without temptation, without trial and testing, we cannot prove ourselves to be obedient, we cannot partake of his holiness. That's very clear in verse 10. He disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness.

Obviously an all-wise God has seen that there's no other way by which we can partake of his holiness. The only way by which we can partake of his holiness is through testing, through chastening. Just like the only way Adam, innocent as he was, he was not holy, he was innocent, could become holy was through obedience, and for that he had to be tested, but he disobeyed.

We don't have to disobey because we are not followers of Adam, we are followers of Jesus who obeyed when he was tested. Those who follow Adam disobey in testing. Those who follow Jesus obey in the time of testing.

They submit to their father like we today submit to our heavenly father so that we may partake of his holiness. God doesn't want us to produce our own holiness, our own purity, our own patience, our own love, our own long-suffering. No, he wants us to partake of his nature, and even though the discipline at the moment is sorrowful, it is grievous.

Verse 11. It's not joyful, yet if we are trained by it, if we allow ourselves to be disciplined by God, then afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. There is a fruit of righteousness that should come forth from our life if we submit under testing, but the question is whether we submit under testing.

There's a lot of wasted suffering in the lives of God's people. Why is it wasted? Because when God sends it into their life, they grumble, they complain instead of submitting to the will of God, and so it's wasted, but if only they would submit to the thanks and say, Lord, you have permitted this for my good, then their senses would be exercised and trained, and they would grow up into maturity, they would grow up into perfection. May God help us to take these exhortations seriously.

We turn now to Hebrews and chapter 12 and verse 12. In the previous verses, verses 5 to 11, we were told to look at our heavenly father who is appointed the trials that come into our life for our eternal good. Verse 10, that we may share his holiness, not a holiness of our own making.

Left to ourselves, we would think the Christian life is a matter of self-purification, that we try to become more humble, we try to become more loving, something like Abraham producing a son in his own strength, an Ishmael. No doubt Abraham's son, but produced in his own strength, not the son of promise. And we are all in danger of producing these Ishmaels in our life, our own patience and our own humility, and this, that and the other.

And just like God rejected Ishmael, God rejects all this human perfectionism, this human self-purification. That is not Christianity. That's Buddhism and yoga, which is not the teaching of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ has not come to teach us to purify ourselves with our own self-power. No, he gives us the power of his Holy Spirit, so that he may communicate to us his nature, the nature of God himself, which is patient, which is loving, which is humble. That's why there's no room for anyone to boast.

Salvation is by grace. We partake of God's holiness by grace, but God permits us to go through trial, and we are to submit in that trial, so that we may partake of his holiness. Now the danger of fainting, because we don't understand why God has allowed this testing to come into our life, is present at all times.

We are all tempted to give up. We are all tempted to lose heart and to get discouraged and to faint. Even Paul, the apostle, was tempted to get discouraged and to lose heart, but to be tempted and to give in to the temptation is not the same thing.

The New Testament does not teach at any place that we should ever be discouraged or depressed or gloomy. No, never. The temptation may be there, but we don't give into it.

Never. Paul said, thanks be to God, 2 Corinthians 2.14, who always leads us in this trial. Not most of the time, but always.

And if we are always led in his triumph, and we are always more than conquerors, Romans 8.37, then there's no room for discouragement and gloom or complaining and murmuring. To complain and grumble and murmur and to be depressed and discouraged is a substandard Christian life. It's not the Christian life

described in the New Testament.

It's not the Christian life that lives in the full blessing of Pentecost. No, it's a Christian life that lives like those under the old covenant, like Elijah and Moses, who were depressed and discouraged and lost their temper, etc., but not one under the new covenant, where we receive the full blessing of Pentecost and can partake of God's own nature, God's own holiness, where there is no gloom or depression. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3.18 that we are transformed into the same image of the Lord, from one degree of glory to another.

Then in the next verse, chapter 4, verse 1, he says, Since we have such a ministry, we do not lose heart. Yes, he attempted to lose heart, but we do not lose heart, because we're being changed by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ. Chapter 4, verse 16, he says, We do not lose heart, because even though our outward man is suffering and decaying, our inner man is being renewed by the Holy Spirit day by day.

This is the thing that encourages us not to lose heart, that inwardly, by the Holy Spirit, God is transforming us increasingly into the likeness of Christ, making us a partaker of His nature and of His holiness. And so we find even in Hebrews 12, in the midst of testing and trial, do not lose heart. Hebrews 12.3, consider Jesus, who also endured such afflictions, so that you don't grow weary and lose heart.

And also consider the fact that the Father Himself is testing us with a purpose. So knowing that, don't get discouraged. Don't lose heart.

But on the contrary, verse 12, strengthen the hands that are weak. Lift up those hands that are hanging down. Don't get discouraged in the midst of testing.

Lift up your hands in prayer and make straight paths for your feet. Strengthen the knees that are feeble. Get down on your knees and pray and lift up your hands and cry out to God for strength.

Come boldly to the throne of grace in the midst of your testing, knowing that you are being tested with a purpose that you may partake of His holiness. And instead of giving up and losing heart and getting discouraged, lift up those hands that are hanging down. Strengthen those knees that are feeble and get on your knees and lift up your hands in prayer and seek God for grace.

Let us come boldly to the throne of grace. Let us come boldly into the most holy place. That is the meaning here.

On our knees, with our hands lifted up, let us make straight paths for our feet to enter right into the most holy place, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out a joint, but rather healed. There are lame limbs in us, spiritually speaking, and God designs the testing and the chastening in order that those lame limbs may be healed. Not that they may be put out a joint, but alas, with many, many Christians, they go through suffering, and God intends that their lame limbs might be healed through that suffering, but they complain and grumble and murmur and do not submit to the will of God, and the result is that lame limb gets worse, and it's put out a joint.

Oh, that we would see the reason with which God allows us to go through testing. Then we shall give thanks and praise God for the trial that comes into our life, and then thereby we submit to God. We express our submission to God by giving thanks, and thereby the lame limb in our inner man gets healed, and we are able to be strong and walk and run the race more perfectly, because the lame limb is healed through chastening.

So we can praise God for all his dealings with us, that we might run the race with strength. Verse 14. Pursue after peace with all men, and after the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

Now there it is very clear that no one can see God without sanctification, without holiness. We don't just sit back waiting to see the Lord. No, we pursue after holiness.

That's the same race spoken of in verse 1. That's the race that Paul ran, and he said, let all those who are mature follow my example of running this race. There's no place for a static Christianity in the New Testament. Christianity is a dynamic thing where we run, and we pursue after sanctification.

We don't sit back in an easy chair waiting for some blessing that brings entire sanctification to us. No, not at all. We pursue after it, and thus we possess it.

We pursue also after peace with all men, because our relationship with God is also affected by our relationship with our fellow men. We cannot have sanctification in our life if we don't have peace with all men. Is there a single man in the world with whom you have strife? Someone with whom you have a quarrel? Someone whom you're not talking to? I exhort you, dear friend, pursue after peace.

Go and seek for reconciliation, because you cannot have sanctification without that. Pursue after peace with all men, and sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. He goes on to say, see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God.

Is it possible to come short of the grace of God? Is it possible to frustrate God's purposes for our lives, to receive God's grace in vain? Yes, it is. Otherwise, there's no need for such an exhortation. It is possible to fall from the grace of God, looking diligently, it says in the King James Version, lest any man fail, or as the margin says, fall from the grace of God.

It is possible to fall from the grace of God, and that's why the book of Hebrews has so many warnings. Paul, writing to Corinthians, said in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 1, I beseech you, I urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain. What does it mean to receive the grace of God in vain? That means even though God's grace is given to us, that we might come into a life of victory over sin.

For that is the purpose of grace. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are under grace. But I can receive that grace and remain in a place where sin has dominion over me.

Then I have received the grace of God in vain. Then God's grace that comes to me in times of testing and chastening and trial, that I might be more holy and partake of His holiness, and I grumble and complain and sin, then I have frustrated God's purpose. So it says, see to it that no one falls or comes short of the grace of God.

That there's no root of bitterness that comes up in you in the midst of the testing and trial, and that will cause trouble not only to you, but many others will be defiled. Oh, how many people can be defiled if we have a grumbling spirit, but how many people can be blessed if you have a spirit of thanksgiving? See to it that God's grace is not received by you in vain. We turn now to Hebrews and chapter 12 and verse 15.

After having exhorted the Hebrew Christians in verse 14 to pursue after peace with all men and after holiness or sanctification without which no one will see the Lord, then he says, see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God. That is an exhortation not only for ourselves, that we are to see to it that we ourselves do not come short of the grace of God or fall from the grace of God or receive God's grace in

vain, but it is also an exhortation that we look carefully that others around us who are in the faith do not fall from the grace of God also. It's very easy to think that our responsibility ends with ourselves.

Like Cain said, am I my brother's keeper? In Genesis chapter 4, when God asked him where his brother was, the answer to that question is, yes, you are your brother's keeper. For the New Testament command is to love your neighbor as yourself, to love one another as I have loved you. And so see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God.

We have a responsibility for one another, and to ensure that no one comes short of the grace of God, we are also to be careful that no root of bitterness springs up in our hearts against anyone else, and we are to ensure as much as lies within our ability that we don't give any room for any bitterness to rise in the hearts of another. Not just bitterness expressing itself, but here in this verse we are told that even the root of bitterness should be pulled out. Once it becomes a strong tree, it's more difficult to pull it out, but when you see the root growing either within yourself or suspecting it within another, we are to see that it's pulled out.

We are to stimulate one another to love. We read that in Hebrews 10. See that there is no bitterness.

See that there's no root of bitterness in your own heart against anyone, because once it grows up, as it says in this verse, it will cause trouble, and you will be defiled, and many others will be defiled, and then you can fall from the grace of God. It is in that context that this exhortation comes, and also here is another way by which we can fall from God's grace. In verse 16 it says, we are to see that there is no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears. In the book of Hebrews we have a number of warnings like this, that we are not to presume on the fact that God has chosen us. For example, if you remember when we looked at chapter three, there was an exhortation to the holy brethren, the believers among the Hebrew Christians.

Chapter three, verse one, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, and he tells them in chapter three, verse twelve, take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you, that is, in you holy brethren who are believers, an evil unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God. Now that exhortation would be meaningless if, as many people believe, it's impossible once you believe to fall away from the living God. Then what need is there for an exhortation like Hebrews 3.12, take care, brethren, you who are believers, lest there should be, not in the unbelievers, but in any one of you, an evil unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God.

But to keep from that, encourage one another and exhort one another, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. And he goes on to say in verse fourteen of Hebrews 3, we have become partakers of Christ if. Now many people read that verse without the rest of that sentence.

They read it as though it said, we have become partakers of Christ. But that's not what it says. We have become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.

And then he gives the example of the people who came out of Egypt in verse sixteen, and who did not enter the promised land, verse nineteen. They came out, but they didn't enter in. And that's the example given to us, that God was angry with them, it says in chapter three, verse seventeen, for forty years.

And therefore, chapter four, verse one, let us fear, lest a promise remaining to us of entering into his rest, any of you, holy brethren, should seem to come short of it. And so, in many other places too, in chapter six, in chapter ten, we read warnings like this, that we should not presume on God's grace. This is exactly what the devil tempted Jesus to do on the top of the pinnacle of the temple.

He said, jump down, nothing will happen. God's promises will take care of you. That's how many believers live.

They say, we can be careless. They don't say that, but they act that way. They jump off pinnacles into sin, disobedience, and they say, God's promises will protect us.

But Jesus did not jump off the pinnacle. That would have been tempting God, and he said, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And God's forgiveness is given to us that we may fear.

That's what we read in Psalm 130, there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared. And so, this is a very meaningful exhortation. See to it, Hebrews 12, 16, that among you there be no immoral or godless person like Esau.

Is it possible for there to be an immoral person among those whose sins are forgiven and will come to Christ by faith? Yes. It's possible for them to fall from the grace of God, to become immoral and godless like Esau, selling their birthright for a single meal. Remember, Esau had the birthright.

It was his, and he lost it. That's the point, that we can have something that Christ has purchased for us. Then we can lose it by selling it for a single meal.

And he says, here is a warning. You know, afterwards, when Esau came, wanting the birthright again, he could not get it, even though afterwards he repented. There was a time when he should have made that choice, and that was when he was offered that meal by Jacob.

That was the time for him to say, no, I don't want that. I'll keep my birthright. Not afterwards.

He couldn't get that meal and sell his birthright, and afterwards hope to get the birthright as well. That's how many Christians live. They think that they can enjoy this world and live in sin, and finally go to heaven too, repenting on their deathbeds.

No, here is a warning. You know that afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, because he had treated the birthright lightly, he could not get it. He found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

Now that's a very serious warning. See to it that you don't fall from the grace of God. See to it that those around you don't fall from God's grace by presumption, by giving up your birthright, your inheritance in heaven for something worldly.

Examine your own life, dear friend. Are you selling your heavenly birthright for something earthly, for some compromise, some cheating, for some financial gain, some shady deal which is not exactly right in God's eyes? For some false statements you make, you sell your heavenly inheritance. Remember Judas Iscariot sold Jesus Christ for 30 pieces of silver, and many Christians today sell their heavenly inheritance, like Esau, like Judas Iscariot, for a paltry sum, for the passing pleasures of sin.

Think of that little pleasure that that sin can bring you, for a period. But then, what are you going to lose? Your birthright. And if we think, oh, the blood of Christ is always there to cleanse me, then we are behaving exactly like Esau, who thought, when he ate that meal, that, oh well, I'll get the birthright afterwards in any case.

That's what many Christians think. I can play the fool now, I can live after the flesh, but finally I'll ask the blood of Christ to cleanse me, and I'll get the birthright in any case. No.

The Bible says very clearly in Galatians 6, that God cannot be fooled. What a man sows, that he will reap, Galatians 6, 7 and 8. If you sow to the flesh, you reap corruption. And you can't reap anything but corruption, even afterwards, if like Esau, you come seeking to repent.

If you have sowed to the flesh for years, that's what you're going to reap. On the other hand, it says in that same verse, Galatians 6, 7, 8 and 9, that we have the privilege of sowing to the Holy Spirit, and reaping eternal life, and so pursue after sanctification, and then we shall most certainly see the Lord. We come now to Hebrews 12 and verses 18 to 29.

And here again, as in the rest of the episode, a contrast is drawn between the old covenant and the new covenant, between living under law and living under grace. Perhaps there is no subject on which there is more misunderstanding among Christians, than this matter of living under law and living under grace. What does it mean to live under the law, and what does it mean to live under grace? Many people's idea is that under the law, we had to deal with a strict God who was demanding, every disobedience was punished.

But under grace, it doesn't matter whether we disobey, because God's all of a sudden become lenient and changed His mind, and as it were, changed His nature. This is certainly what most Christians believe, even though they wouldn't express it in those words. They live by this faith.

But this is a gross caricature of the truth of scripture. Grace is not meant to lead us into greater disobedience than what the law led people into. No, grace is superior.

The whole subject of Hebrews is that the new covenant is better and more perfect than the old. And so when we read this section about the fearful things that there were under the old covenant, speaking about the mount of Sinai, it says in verse 18, you have not come to Sinai. You have not come to that mountain that Moses came to and brought people under the law, that may be touched, a mountain that could be felt, and to a blazing fire, and to darkness, and gloom, and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet, and the sound of words, which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word should be spoken to them.

For they could not bear the command which said, even if a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned. And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I am full of fear and trembling. But in contrast, you see, all that's a description of the law.

Now it's a description of grace. The new covenant. But you have come to mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to myriads of angels, to the general assembly, to the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

Now this contrast, this vivid contrast between the seven things mentioned about Sinai in verses 18 and 19, and the seven things mentioned about Zion in verses 22 to 24, have led many people to believe that what this means is we don't have to fear anymore. It's under the old covenant that they went to this blazing fire, and to darkness, and gloom, and the blast of a trumpet, and the sound of words which they begged they would not hear anymore. But now we have come to mount Zion, we don't have to fear.

But on the contrary, it means exactly the opposite, because it says in verse 25, the explanation of this contrast, see to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking now, for if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on the earth, that's Moses, on earth, on an earthly mountain, Sinai, much less shall we escape who turn away from him who warns from heaven, from mount Zion. And in those days, under the law, verse 26, his voice only shook the earth, but now he says, I will shake heaven and earth. And this expression yet once more denotes the removing of the things which can be shaken, that is, created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore, since we are under the new covenant, verse 28, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire. That is the contrast. Under the old covenant they came to a mountain that blazed with fire.

It was just an earthly mountain. But we have come now to God himself. It says in verse 23, we have come to God, not just to an earthly mountain.

We have come to the church of the firstborn and to God, the judge of all. And this God is Himself, verse 29, a consuming fire. And so we are told that under grace it is a far more serious thing to disobey.

That is the contrast. Yes, if we read carefully, notice the whole section in verse 18 begins with the word for. That is referring back to what we have read in verse 15, 16 and 17.

Verse 15, see to it that no one comes short or falls from the grace of God. See to it that no root of bitterness comes up, that there be no immorality or godlessness like Esau, who sold his birthright wife for. We have now greater privileges.

The sum in substance of 18-24 is, we have greater privileges than those people who lived under law. Therefore, we have a greater responsibility. They only came to an earthly mountain, to an earthly fire.

But we have come to God Himself, who is Himself a consuming fire. They came to an earthly blast of a trumpet and the sound of words that spoke on earth. But now we are hearing the voice from heaven, verse 25, and if those people who heard God speaking on the earth did not escape when they disobeyed, verse 25, much less shall we escape if we turn away in disobedience from Him who warns from heaven.

So we see that the true grace of God is that which leads us to recognize our greater privilege under the new covenant and also our greater responsibility, that obedience is more expected of us today than under the old covenant, because our privileges are greater, far greater. Why? We have come to Mount Zion, verse 22, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to myriads of angels, to the general assembly, the church of the firstborn, this towards which God was working even under the Old Testament times, and to God Himself, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood of Jesus we have come to. We are not to treat that blood lightly, as though it is there just to cleanse us and we can keep on living in sin.

Certainly not. We are not to treat the blood of Jesus like tap water, and yet many Christians do just that. They think of the blood of Jesus exactly like tap water.

If your hands get dirty, you don't get too disturbed by it, because you say, well, I can always go and wash myself with soap and water. There's plenty of soap and water available, and if my hands get dirty tomorrow, it still doesn't disturb me, because I can go and get myself washed again, and the same thing day after, the same thing ten years from now. And many people treat the blood of Christ exactly like that.

Oh, well, we can always go to the sprinkled blood and be clean. That is degrading the blood of Christ to the level of tap water, and it is against such people that a warning is given in Hebrews chapter 10, and verse 29, those who regard it as unclean, the blood of the covenant. No, we have come to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, which is better and more perfect.

Therefore, see to it, verse 25, that you do not refuse him who is speaking, that you do not disobey, but seek God for grace and power to obey his word, because those who obey will build on the rock. Jesus said that very clearly in Matthew 7, verse 24, following, He who hears my word and obeys builds on the rock. That will never be shaken, but all the things that can be shaken, that is, houses built on sand, those who hear the word and don't obey, that will all collapse, because the Lord is coming to shake heaven and earth.

And everything that can be shaken, what are the things that can be shaken? Matthew 7, verse 24 to 27 is very clear. He who hears my word and does not obey. The thing is not hearing.

You can hear and you can understand and you can even preach it, but if you don't obey, you are building on sand and that will be shaken. But we have received a kingdom, verse 28, which cannot be shaken. We are building on the rock, and if we want to build on this rock, we are to serve God with reverence and godly fear.

No man can build on the rock who has not learned the fear of God. Oh, dear friend, ask God to teach you his fear if you want to build on that rock that will never shake and build a house that will never be burnt. Live before God's face, God who is a consuming fire, and then you will have no regret in eternity, for your house will stand.

In many of Paul's letters we find that he begins with a section on doctrine and then concludes with a section on practical exhortations for daily life. In the epistle to Ephesians particularly, this is very clear. The first three chapters of Ephesians deal with doctrine and the last three chapters are the practical results of believing that doctrine.

Where our doctrine is pure, it will lead to a pure life. An impure doctrine leads to an impure life, and when a person thinks that his doctrine is pure but his life is impure, then he is being deceived concerning the purity of his doctrine. For the life you live is the test of the doctrine you believe.

Paul said to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 3, You are a letter written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God, and the doctrine you believe is manifested in your life. This is the test of what we believe. This is the test of whether we believe in the real Jesus, holy and pure and loving and humble, as we see in the Gospels, whether our life is increasingly manifesting those characteristics, the same glory.

Now we find the same thing in the letter to the Hebrews. In chapter 13, the last chapter that we have now come to, we find a number of brief exhortations. In the previous chapters the main subject had been

doctrine, the superiority of the new covenant to the old covenant, the privileges and the blessings that are ours under grace, which they did not have under law, and at the same time the increased responsibility that is ours, the greater demand for obedience that comes upon us because we are now enjoying greater privileges.

In chapter 1 he deals with the Deity of Christ, in chapter 2 with His humanity, in chapter 3 he calls us to hold fast and not to think that we can sit back and relax, and gives us the example of the people who came out of Egypt and who fell away, in chapter 4 he speaks about the rest of God, in chapter 5 about the high priest that we have, in chapter 6 how we are to press on to perfection and lay hold of the promises by faith and patience, in chapter 7 how our high priest is greater than the Old Testament high priest, in chapter 8 how the new covenant is better than the old, in chapter 9 how the sacrifice of Christ under the new covenant and the bloodshed leads us to a higher position than those under the old covenant, and in chapter 10 again the contrast between what Christ brings to us in the old covenant and in the latter part of chapter 10 the tremendous blessings and privileges that are ours under the new covenant, leading on to this great chapter on faith in chapter 11, and then chapter 12, a number of warnings and exaltations for those who are under this new covenant to run the race and not to slip back because of the tremendous privileges that are ours under grace, and then we come to chapter 13 where we have a number of one-sentence exhortations dealing with a vast variety of practical matters that should be the result of those who have come into this new covenant. It's not enough to say that I have come into this new covenant by faith in my heart. If it has come into my heart, it should be manifested in my life, and here is how it is manifested.

First of all, verse 1. Let love of the brethren continue. There's hardly an epistle in the New Testament which does not speak on this subject. Love for one another.

This is what Jesus said is the new commandment that I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you. This brotherly love, let it continue. Let it increase.

All our understanding of doctrine is of no use if it does not lead us to greater brotherly love. John says in his epistle, by this we know we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers. Otherwise we are in death.

He who says he loves God and hates his brother is a liar, and he who says he's having fellowship with God and hates his brother is walking in the darkness, and he is blind. Let love of the brethren continue. The purpose of all our teaching, Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1 and verse 5, the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart.

This is the primary mark of the new covenant. If we have come into the fullness of the blessing of the new covenant which these twelve chapters of Hebrews are speaking of, if we have come into this living relationship with Christ as the mediator of the new covenant and come to a place of superiority to those under the old covenant, then one of the primary manifestations in our life will be an overflowing divine love. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.

Romans 5 verse 5. This is the mark of the spirit-filled man. He is full of love. And here are some of those evidences of that love.

Verse 2. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Here's another great emphasis in the New Testament. To show hospitality and to invite people

into your home, to be glad to have visitors in your home, not to grudge and complain when you have to spend time and energy and money on your visitors, but to be glad to do it.

This is a mark of divine love. And the apostles have a lot to say about it. In 1 Peter chapter 4 he says in verse 9, be hospitable to one another without complaint.

Yes, this is our calling, to welcome people into our home, to welcome lonely people, particularly the brothers. It's speaking about brotherly love in verse 1 and it's primarily speaking about showing hospitality to the strangers who are believers in Christ. And here's another manifestation of love.

Verse 3. Remember the prisoners as though in prison with them and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves are also in the body. Yes, those who are suffering, those of our fellow believers in prison for the faith, those who are suffering in other ways, with difficulty and trial and sickness, many other ways, to sympathize with them because we are in the same body. We have a body just like theirs and we are in the same body, the body of Christ.

And if one member suffers, all suffer with it. And we are to identify with people who are suffering for the faith. This is a manifestation of divine love again.

This is one of the privileges of being in the new covenant, one of the blessings of being in new covenant, that we have such love. And here's another area of love and that's in the marriage relationship. Verse 4. Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Here is the area where we are to show great divine love in our relationship with our marriage partner. We are to be faithful to your wife, faithful to your husband and keep that marriage bed undefiled. Your marriage love undefiled, pure, even in your thought life, that you are faithful to one another, that there be no fornication or adultery even in your thoughts.

For that's what Jesus said, adultery was if one thought in one's heart with lust towards another. No, keep your thoughts pure for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Here is another area of love.

Now these are the areas where we are to pursue after love, hospitality, bearing with those who are suffering in our marriage relationship, pure love. And in contrast we are not to love money. Verse 5. Let your way of life be free from the love of money.

If you want to love, love people, not money. God created material things not to be loved but to be used. God created people to be loved.

It's unfortunate that the order is reversed in this wicked world, that people use others for their own ends and love material things. But here is the contrast. Love people, verse 2, verse 3, verse 4, and don't love material things, verse 5. Be content with what you have.

God will provide all your need. Be content with what you have and then you will be happy and use what you have to be hospitable to others, to help others. Don't get so attached to material things.

Here is the result of the new covenant. When Jesus came to Zacchaeus's house and saw his changed attitude to money he said salvation has come to this house. Here is one of the clearest evidences of coming to the new covenant.

A love of people and a freedom from attachment to material things. We look today at Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 5. Let your way of life be free from the love of money, being content with what you have. He doesn't just say that you should not love money, for that is a matter of the heart.

Whether a man loves money or not is something that is hidden in the heart and a man can conceal it very cleverly. But here the exaltation goes beyond the attitude of the heart towards money and the attitude of the mind. It goes to the outward expression of that attitude in our way of life, in the way we spend our money, in the way we look at material things.

Let your way of life, the way you conduct yourselves, your way of life, let it be free from the love of money. Let not the factor of money and accumulating possessions enter into your philosophy of life. On the other hand be content with what you have.

When we love money we shall find it very difficult to love the brothers, because we shall become stingy in our hospitality, we shall not share the good things God has given us with others in need, and being miserly our own life will become miserable, wrapped up in ourselves and useless to God and man. And so this is an exaltation for our own good. If you say you have come under the new covenant, here is one of the evidences, one of the clearest evidences, your attitude to money will change.

It is definitely one of the clearest evidences of a man's genuine conversion, that his attitude to money changes. He is no longer grasping, grabbing for material things, but quite willing to give, believing the word of Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Then he finds it quite a joy to be hospitable, quite a joy to share with those who are in need out of the good things God has given him, and no longer pursuing after the wealth of the world, no longer disappointed if he doesn't get an increment or doesn't get a promotion in his job.

These things matter nothing to him. What he is concerned about is that he increases from one degree of glory to another. That is what is his concern.

And so let your way of life be free from the love of money. Dear friend, examine your attitude to money. Have you been freed from the love of money? Is your way of life, the way you live in your home, the way you make decisions concerning your job and various other things, is it free from the love of money? Can people see when they look at your life that you are not in the rat race for money then, and in the rat race for material things? Then alone can you say that you are beginning to taste something of the new covenant.

To say that we have come to Christ and we are free from the law and under grace should produce some of these results. A contentment with what we have, with our appointed lot. Why? Because God himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

And in the original Greek from which this is translated, there are three negatives that precede the verb. So we could read it like this, I will not, I will not, I will not leave you or forsake you. That is the whole trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit saying, I will not, I will not, I will not leave you or forsake you.

And the word forsake here is exactly the same word that we find in Matthew 27, 46, when Jesus said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He was forsaken on the cross because he took our sins, so that we might never taste of that hell. For what is hell? To be forsaken of God, that is hell. That is what Jesus tasted when he hung on the cross of Calvary.

And he tasted it that we might never taste it, never for a single moment in our life here on earth, but that God's presence will be with us. He has said that, but like every other promise in the Bible, it's not automatic. For we are told in many of the exhortations that we have read in the book of Hebrews to see to it that we don't fall away from God.

God has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you, but we ourselves can leave him and forsake him. We mustn't forget that. But if we stay close to him, his promise is true.

He will never leave us nor forsake us. Therefore, we can boldly say, the Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid.

What shall man do to me? Isaiah 8 verse 12 and 13 is paraphrased in the living Bible as, if you fear God, you need fear nothing else. This is so true. When we fear people, it's because we don't fear God enough.

When we fear circumstances, disease, our enemies and other things, it's because we don't fear God. When we fear that we may become poor and be poverty stricken, it's because we don't fear God. If we really feared God, we would fear nothing else because God would always be on our side.

God would come down to help us. The Lord is my helper. We can boldly say that, not with hesitation.

We can boldly say, the Lord is my helper. I don't fear anything. No man can do anything to me.

No demon in hell can do anything to me because the Lord is on my side. If God be for us, who can be against us? And all those who humble themselves can say that. The proud cannot say it because the Bible says in 1 Peter 5, verse 5, that God resists the proud.

They cannot say, if God be for us, because God is not for them, He is against them. But those who humble themselves and are poor in spirit, God is on their side and He gives them grace. They can say, if God be for us, who can be against us? God's desire is that we may live a life on earth of perfect contentment, never fearing anything, never fearing poverty or any lack because God Himself has promised to supply all our needs.

In verse 7 we come to another of those brief exhortations. Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, and considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faith. We have been told in Hebrews 11 to imitate the faith of many of these men that we read of--Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, etc.--but these men are dead and gone.

But then God has also given us living examples in our life on earth, real men of God who live by faith. And it says, remember them, those who led you. How wonderful it is when Christians have leaders who are men of faith, who can say to those whom they shepherd, follow me.

It's very unfortunate when a Christian leader or preacher has to say, don't look at me, but look at Jesus. Don't look at my example. That's pathetic, because if the gospel has done something in that person's life, he should be able to say, like Paul, follow me as I follow Christ.

Look at my example. That's what every Christian leader and preacher should be able to say. That's what Paul expected.

That's what the apostles expected. And it says here, remember those who led you, such men who spoke the word of God to you, but not only spoke the word of God, but you could see the outcome of their way of

life, as it says here. You saw the result that that word had produced in their own life.

You saw how their family lives were transformed. You saw how their inner life was transformed. You saw how their whole attitude to people was transformed.

Many other things. See the result that the word of God produced in them, then imitate their faith. Don't blindly follow a preacher just because he is very eloquent and very capable.

If you see that it has not produced in his life humility and love and purity, it's no use following him. If a preacher loves money, what's the use following the word of God he preaches? It says here, consider the outcome of their way of life and look for those in whom the word of God has produced godliness, and imitate their faith. And he goes on in verse eight.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. What He has done for them, He will do for you. This is the point.

What Jesus has done for those leaders. Verse seven. He will do for you because Jesus is the same today and forever.

Those leaders and teachers have gone, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. We can look at the life of the apostle Paul and admire it, but it's not enough to admire it, we have to follow it. Because what Jesus did for Paul, He can do for us.

What Jesus did for Peter and John and those early Christians, He can do for us because He is the same yesterday, today and forever. This new covenant brings us into a direct relationship with Jesus Christ Himself, who is the mediator of this covenant. That's the relationship that Paul had and Peter had.

And what God has done for them, He can do for you. And that's why we have encouragement that Jesus Christ does not change. He is the same and He can do exactly the same for us if we believe.

We turn again to Hebrews chapter 13, verse seven. Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, and considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes, and forever.

Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited. In verses seven and nine we see a contrast between those whom we should follow and those whom we should not follow, those teachings that we should follow and those teachings that we should not follow. And in between those two verses we have this wonderful and well-known verse, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Now we must remember that verse in its context. In verse seven we are told to follow those who spoke to us the word of God, considering the outcome of their life. In other words, by their fruits you shall know them.

When Jesus spoke about false prophets in Matthew 7, verse 15, he said in the next verse, Matthew 7, 16, that by their fruits you will know them, because a good tree brings forth good fruit and a bad tree brings forth bad fruit. And that's why we are told not just to hear what a man teaches, but to consider the result of his life. What is the end of his life? What is this word which he preaches produced in his life? How is his

family relationship? Are his children brought up in the fear of God? These are the things I must see.

How is his relationship with his co-workers? Does he love money? Has he forsaken the love of money? Does he love hospitality? Does he love his fellow believers? Is he humble? Consider the outcome of their way of life, then follow them. In contrast, don't follow these varied and strange teachings that some people may bring to you even from the Bible, verse 9, if it has not profited them. It has not benefited those who are occupied with those teachings.

Then we are not to follow their example. Our heart must be strengthened by grace, verse 9, not by these varied and strange teachings of people that have not produced any result in their own life. And even they may talk about grace, but that is a false grace which has not transformed their own life.

So we are not just to listen to a preacher and consider whether his doctrine is correct, whether he dots his I's and crosses his T's, but we are to consider his life. By their fruits you shall know them, not by their words. The kingdom of God is not in word but in power.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Don't follow those people who teach that Jesus Christ has changed, that what he did for the apostles he can't do for you because that was a special time. There are people who teach this, that Jesus Christ did certain things that we read in the New Testament, but he can't do them today.

These are the people who teach that Jesus Christ has changed. No, he has not changed. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

And if he led people into a life of victory over sin in the first century, he can do it today. If he led Paul into a life where he could say, I'm conscious of nothing against myself, 1 Corinthians 4, verse 4, he can lead us into such a life. If he could lead John into a life where John could say in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 5, he who abides in him does not sin, then he can lead us also into such a life.

Yes, 1 John 3, 6, that can be our experience too. No one who abides in him sins. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

So don't be carried away by strange doctrines even if they have been your tradition for many years. Has it profited those who preach them to you? Don't be occupied with various types of foods, various types of doctrines if they don't lead the preachers of those doctrines into a godly life. Then in verse 10 following, he speaks again about the contrast between law and grace.

We have an altar, and that is the cross, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. Those who want to live under the law and be occupied with earthly rituals have no right to come and partake of this, the dying of Jesus. We read in 2 Corinthians 4.10 about this altar.

We are to bear in our body the of Jesus. Our body is to be on this altar with Jesus every day, for Jesus said, If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily. This is the altar that we partake of, the dying of Jesus.

Those who are living under the law and living with certain rituals and obedience to certain external rituals can't partake of this. For the bodies of those animals, verse 11, whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. So also Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

Jesus' body was given up to God completely. He was completely outside the religious camp of His day all through His life. The religious camp of His day would have nothing to do with Jesus.

Physically He went outside the gate of Jerusalem and died on the cross. All through His earthly life He was outside the religious camp of the Pharisees and the scribes and the Sadducees, and His body was, as it were, a burnt offering to God, just like it says in verse 11. The animals whose blood is brought into the holy place, their bodies are burnt outside the camp.

Jesus offered up His body, as we read in Hebrews 10, as a burnt offering to His father continuously. What did that mean? That means in that body He never did His own will. His own will was burnt up as an offering to the father, not My will.

That was burnt up, and His body did the will of the father. That is the meaning of Jesus going outside the camp to sanctify the people. He has made a way for us thereby where we can also follow Him, identified with Him.

We offer up our body also as a living sacrifice, giving up our own will, so that in this body our own will is never done. Then we can say that our body is also on the altar as a sacrifice to God. That is why it says in verse 13, Let us also go to Him outside the camp.

Remember, the camp that Jesus went outside was not the heathen camp, but the religious camp. It was not the Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus Christ, but the scribes and Pharisees. It was not Pilate and Herod who wanted Him killed, but Annas and Caiaphas, the leaders of the only true religion on earth in Jesus' day.

And so it is today. Many who call themselves Christians, we shall have to go outside the camp from that which is a mere religion of form, without real godliness inside. Many today have a form of godliness, and we are told in II Timothy 3.5 to avoid such people who have a mere form but no inner power.

We are to follow Jesus, and in following Jesus that will take us outside the camp of much that is called Christianity today, which has a form without obedience and power. We are to follow Jesus, give our body up completely to God outside the religious camp, bearing His reproach, being willing to suffer shame and ridicule and persecution even from professing Christians, because we want to follow Jesus. We want never to do our own will in our own bodies.

Our bodies are burnt offering to God. We want to do the will of God alone, and we are pilgrims here on earth. We do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.

We are not seeking to build a kingdom for ourselves here in this world. Many Christian groups and organizations are building their own kingdom, but we have no kingdom to build here, nothing for ourselves. We are willing to give up reputation, rights, honor, everything and go outside the camp, forsaken, persecuted, misunderstood, maligned, criticized, called heretics and even called demon-possessed by people who have no understanding of the truth, like Jesus was.

And we seek to build a church. It is the church of Jesus Christ that is going to remain forever, and we have no interest in building anything here. We do not have a lasting city here.

We are not seeking to build something that will bring us the acclaim of men here on this earth, but we are seeking to build that which will remain forever, the city which is to come. We want to have a part in that,

and if we want to have a part in that, it becomes essential, like it was with Jesus Himself, that we go outside the camp, outside the camp of compromising, half-hearted, lukewarm Christians, and build the true church of God, built on obedience to the word of God. That is the rock, as Jesus said, and that is the city that will remain when all else is shaken and crumbles to the dust in the final day.

May God give us grace to go unto Jesus outside the camp, bearing His reproach. We come now to Hebrews 13. We have spoken in the previous verses of our going outside the camp unto Him, bearing His reproach.

Verse 13. Through Him, then, that is, through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our mediator, the one mediator between God and men, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. He has already spoken of the sacrifice of the body of the animals whose blood was offered.

Their body is being burned outside the camp, verse 11, and Jesus let His body be given up outside the camp. We are to follow in His footsteps. We are to offer up our body as a living sacrifice.

This is the sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But also here is another sacrifice of praise, verse 15, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. We praise God with lips.

We worship God by the offering of our bodies. This is our spiritual service of worship. But we also worship God by opening our mouths and thanking Him with our lips in every circumstance.

It says in verse 15, continually, When I give thanks to God for everything, then I am expressing my submission to God in everything. That means I have no complaints about God's dealings with me. God may deprive me of anything, take away something from me, not give me something I want, or whatever it is.

I have no complaints. I give thanks continually to God for everything that it pleases Him to send into my life. We are told in 1 Thessalonians 5.18, In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

God's will for us is that we might give thanks in everything, for this is the expression of our submission to God. No one can say that Jesus Christ is Lord of his life if he is not willing to give thanks in every circumstance. We are to give thanks, we are told in Ephesians 5.19, for all things, for all things and in all things, giving thanks to God.

This is a sacrifice of praise that is acceptable to Him. We no longer want our own way. We are also to offer the sacrifice of doing good and sharing what we have with others.

Being freed from the love of money, as we saw in verse 5, now we use the material things that God has given us for the good of others, and we share with others what God has given to us. This is another way that we offer a sacrifice that will please God. What are the sacrifices under the new covenant? A broken and a contrite heart, Psalm 51.17. Our bodies a living sacrifice, Romans 12.1. Giving thanks at all times, in every circumstance, even when it causes us pain, Hebrews 13.15. And sharing the good things that we have with others, and doing good to others in every way that we can, Hebrews 13.16. These are the sacrifices of the new covenant.

We don't come with bulls and goats, we don't just put some money in the offering box, but these are the sacrifices that we are to present to God. Then only God is well pleased. We are not to relieve ourselves of this responsibility by merely putting a money in the offering box in the church.

These are the sacrifices with which God is well pleased. In verse 17, we are told, given another exhortation, to obey our leaders. We are not only to obey God, we are to obey the leaders God places over us in the church, just like children are to obey their parents.

Children are not just to say, well, I only obey God. Yes, if you obey God, you'll obey your parents. Likewise with servants, they are not just to say, I'll only obey God.

Yes, if you obey God, you'll obey your masters. Likewise in the church, we are to obey our leaders. God-appointed leaders in the church are to be obeyed.

We are to submit to them, because if they are truly godly leaders, they keep watch over our souls as those who have to give an account. Yes, leaders have to give an account for those whom they lead to God one day. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Leaders must remember this, that one day we have to give an account to God of those whom we led. So we have to be careful. We have to give an account for them.

We have to keep watch over their souls, otherwise we are not fit to be leaders. We are not fit to be shepherds. We have to give an account for every sheep that God commits to our charge.

And the sheep are to submit to their shepherds, to their earthly leaders in the church. Obey them and submit to them. Then you will obey God.

You cannot say you obey God if you don't obey the leaders God appoints over you. Jesus as a child submitted to imperfect parents, to an imperfect foster father, Joseph, and to an imperfect mother, Mary, because that was God's will for him. We are to obey those whom God places over us and not give occasion for them to have to be grieved at our lack of submission, which leads us into sin.

That would be unprofitable for us, so let's obey this exhortation. And then in the concluding verses, Paul gives the conclusion of whoever has written this letter, we do not know, pray for us for we are sure that we have a good conscience. They were sure that they had a good conscience, those who wrote this letter, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.

Here's a mark of a servant of God. He can say, I'm sure I've got a good conscience and I desire to conduct myself honorably in all things. Oh, that there were more leaders like this.

And I urge you all the more to do this. He says, pray for us that I may be restored to you the sooner, possibly in prison, that he may come out and be able to minister to them again. He needs their prayer and he asks them to pray for him all the more.

Then he gives a benediction, verse 20 and 21. Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant. He comes back to this new covenant sealed with the blood of Jesus, even Jesus, our Lord.

Now may God, the God of peace, equip you in every good thing to do his will. The new covenant is not like the law where I struggle to do God's will, but where God equips me by the power of his Holy Spirit, by the

baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire and the continuous fullness of the spirit to do his will. And he works in me.

This is the new covenant to do that which is pleasing in his sight. It's not my effort, that's law, but it's God working in me to do his will in every area, to do that which is pleasing in his sight. This is grace through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory forever and ever.

Through the Lord Jesus Christ, through the working of the Holy Spirit, God seeks to work within me, to equip me to do his will in every good thing so that there's no area in my life where I have to say that I can't do his will. God is willing to work in me if I have faith. His working is according to my faith.

And this is Paul's prayer. May the God of peace equip you in every good thing to do his will. Let's have faith, dear friends, to believe that God will equip us in every good thing, not just in many good things, but in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever.

And then the concluding remarks. I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. What a powerful word of exhortation it has been as we have gone through this episode.

Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you. It's this verse that indicates that it's possibly Paul that's written this letter, though we cannot say. It's possibly Barnabas, as some people say, but we do not know.

Greet all of your leaders and all the saints, verse 24. Those from Italy, greet you. Grace be with you all.

And thus the writer concludes this tremendous episode that we have looked through in these past months, and I trust with great profit that would lead us into an experiential understanding of this new covenant. Remember what we said in our first study, that the word perfect comes in this episode fourteen times, the word better comes thirteen times. Consider Jesus.

This is the call of the episode. Forever and eternal occurs seventeen times in this episode. The knowledge of the Son of God.

Consider Him, look unto Him, and enter into this new covenant. Having boldness, let us enter into the most holy place, looking at Jesus, our high priest, our forerunner, who came in a flesh like ours, opened a way through His flesh that we might follow Him, and enter into the full blessing of this new covenant, partaking of God's nature, where God is able to work in us like He worked in Jesus, doing all the will of God, so that like Jesus and like Paul we can say when we come to the end of our life, I have glorified God, I've done His will and finished the work He has appointed for us. May God make the message of this episode a reality in our lives.

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