

Heeding the heavenly voice

A. Heeding the law of love, and our leaders [13:1-17]

13:1-3 In which directions should response to divine love extend? (Rom.12:10; Gal.6:10)

[1] [13:1,2] The character of the precepts suggests that the society to which they were addressed consisted of wealthy and influential members. The two special illustrations of the practical exhibition of 'love to the brethren' point to services which such persons especially could render; and the temptations of a similar class to luxury and love of money. **Brooke Foss Westcott**, *Hebrews* p. 431

[2] [13:1] Among the Jews Abraham was regarded as outstanding for his hospitality as for his other virtues; a true son of Abraham must be hospitable too. In the New Testament hospitality is incumbent on all Christians, and Christian leaders in particular must be "given to hospitality" (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). Christians travelling from one place to another on business would be specially glad of hospitality from fellow-Christians. Inns throughout the Roman Empire were places of doubtful repute, as the reader of Petronius and Apuleius is well aware, and would provide very uncongenial company for Christians. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 389

[3] [13:1-3] The vulnerability that goes with the truly hospitable nature is never fully obviated by the adoption of precautionary measures; nonetheless, Christians should continue to be of all people the most hospitable. **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes**, *Hebrews* p. 564

[4] [13:3] A capacity for putting oneself in another's place and exercising imaginative sympathy is part of true charity. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 391

13:4-6 Observe the connection between the 7th and 10th commandments (Acts 17:21)

[5] [13:5-6] The adjective which our author uses here, meaning "free from love of money", occurs in one other place in the New Testament, where it is laid down that a "bishop" or leader in a Christian church must be "no lover of money" (1 Tim. 3:3);

"Forget not hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares"

"for the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs" (1 Tim. 6:10, RSV). **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 393

[6] [13:5,6] And this accords perfectly with the injunction now added by our author: *be content with what you have*. The avaricious man is never content: ungenerous and grasping, he always wants more and is always afraid of losing what he has.

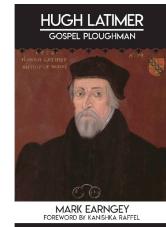
How different from the serenity of the true Christian who knows that, having Christ, he lacks nothing that is essential for his well-being (cf. Ps. 23:1). Paul, destitute of worldly possessions, sublimely speaks of himself "as having nothing and yet possessing everything" (2 Cor. 6:10). "I have learned," he assures his friends in Philippi, "in whatever state I am, to be content" (Phil. 4:11). His is the true imitation of the Master, who on earth had no place of his own where he might rest his head (Mt. 8:20), who taught that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk. 12:15), and who advised his disciples to lay up treasure for themselves in heaven rather than on earth (Mt. 6:19f.) – in other words, though poor in the eyes of men, to be "rich toward God" (Lk. 12:21). We are made rich, indeed, by the poverty which he embraced for our sakes in the incarnation and at the cross (2 Cor. 8:9), and having the assurance that our God will supply our every need "according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" we can find no excuse for discontent (Phil. 4:19). **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes**, *Hebrews* p. 567

13:7-9a,17 What type of leaders should the Hebrews honour?

[7] [13:8] Less defensible, though understandable in the light of the christological debates of the period, is the interpretation of this verse by the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries in an ontological manner. **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes**, *Hebrews* p. 571

[8] [13:17] The section began with a reference to leaders of the Church, and so it closes. The Hebrews have been charged to remember and imitate those who have passed away (v.7); now they are charged to obey and yield themselves to those who are still over them. This duty rests upon the most solemn nature of the relation in which they stand to them. **Brooke Foss Westcott**, *Hebrews* p. 446

[9] [13:17] I would wish that clergymen – the curates, parsons, and vicars, the bishops, and all other spiritual persons – would learn this lesson by these poor shepherds; which is this, to abide by their flocks and by their sheep, to tarry amongst them, to be careful over them, not to run hither and thither after their own pleasure, but to tarry by their benefices and feed their sheep with the food of God's Word, and to keep hospitality, and so to feed them both soul and body. **Hugh Latimer**, *Works* II p. 119f



13:9b,10 What may have been the 'various and strange doctrines'?

[10] [13:9] The unchangeableness of Christ calls up in contrast the variety of human doctrines. The faith of the Christian is in a Person and not in doctrines about Him. **B.F. Westcott**, *Hebrews* p. 437

Do we prefer 'humdrum' pastors, or 'new flavours'?

[11] [13:17] There would always be a tendency throughout the churches for visitors who came purveying new and esoteric doctrines to be regarded as much more attractive and interesting personalities than the rather humdrum local leaders, who never taught anything new, but were content with the conservative line of apostolic tradition. Nevertheless it was those local leaders, and not the purveyors of strange teaching, who had a real concern for the welfare of the church and a sense of their accountability to God in this respect. If the discharge of their responsibility and the ultimate rendering of their account were made a burden to them, the resultant disadvantage would fall on those who were led as well as on the leaders. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 408

The Epistle to the Hebrews
F. F. BRUCE

13:11-13 Is 'outside the camp' automatically profane? (12:16; Haggai 2:10-14)

[12] [13:13] The bodies of Nadab and Abihu were carried outside the camp after they were burned as a result of offering "strange fire" (Lev. 24:14,23); Miriam had to spend the seven days of her leprosy "shut up without the camp" (Num. 12:14f). The scapegoat (although the precise phrase is not used in connection with it) was taken as far outside the camp as possible, laden with the sins of the people (Lev. 16:20-22). **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 403

[13] [13:12-14] How extraordinary, indeed shocking, to the Hebrew mind, to be told that he did this *in order to sanctify the people through his own blood*, precisely on this unsanctified territory! The very concept must have seemed self-contradictory. The location of Calvary was one of defilement, not sanctification. But the presence of God's Holy One (Heb. 7:26; Acts 2:27) made holy what was previously unholy and introduced a completely new perspective. **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes**, *Hebrews* p. 579

13:14-16 Since 'we have no continuing city' what should be the 'normal' life of believers? (Rom.12:1,2; Isaiah 53:12)

[14] [13:10,11] Christians had none of the visible apparatus which in those days was habitually associated with religion and worship – no sacred buildings, no altars, no sacrificing priest. Their pagan neighbors thought they had no god, and called them atheists; their Jewish neighbors too might criticize them for having no visible means of spiritual support. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 400

[15] [13:14] In any case, the security of earthly cities, establishments, and institutions, however religious they may be, is illusory. The history of Judaism had already shown that even Jerusalem, the city of God, and its magnificent temple dedicated to the glory and worship of God, were destructible; and soon it would prove again, with the approach of A.D. 70, the transitoriness of the restored city and temple. It is imperative, therefore, that these Hebrew Christians, tempted as they are to insulate themselves



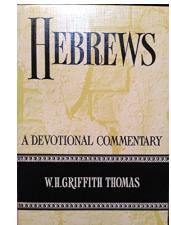
from the reproach and the reality of the cross "outside the gate" by retreating to the traditional respectability and apparent solidity of a system which Christ's coming had rendered obsolete, should learn that *here*, in the present world order, *we have no lasting city*. **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes**, *Hebrews* p. 580

[16] [13:15] *A Call to Praise* – This is one of the three sacrifices of the New Testament which the believer in Christ can offer (v.16; Rom 12:1). These have been aptly described as the Christian's person, purse (American *pocket-book*), and praise, or to put it otherwise: himself, his substance, and his songs. But why should praise be called sacrifice? A sacrifice is something that costs, and it would seem as though praise could not be described in this way. Perhaps, however, it refers to the testimony of those early Christians when their witness of Christ by word was indeed

"costly," sometimes to the extent of persecution and death. But even for us it is essential to keep in mind that true praise will always be far more than the expression of words. It will involve a genuineness of utterance, "The fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hos. 14:2). Here comes the last occasion of the characteristic phrase "let us," which is found twelve times in this Epistle, all of them possessing special point and force. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On* p.179

B. Heeding the call to holiness, wholeness [13:18-25]

13:18,19,22,23 What have some concluded from these verses?



13:20,21 Upon what is our connection with the 'God of peace' contingent? (Phil.4:6-9; Isaiah 32:15-18)

[17] [13:20,21] This is the only reference to our Lord's resurrection in the epistle; elsewhere the emphasis is on His exaltation to the right hand of God, in keeping with the exegesis of Ps. 110:1,4, and the exposition of Jesus' high priesthood. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 411

13:24,25 Just as peace is no automatic blessing, so grace, though assuredly a gift, must be grasped. How? (vv.7,17)

[18] [13:22-25] And so we come to the close of this wonderful Epistle, with its rich, deep, full teaching for the Christian life. The word "Hebrew" is said to mean "one who has crossed over," and the Jews, as represented by their forefather Abraham, and as exemplified in their own national life, may be said to have had a threefold crossing over: the Euphrates, the Red Sea, and the Jordan. The first means that the old life had gone. The second, that the new life was possible. The third, that the new life was to be lived. Spiritually this suggests for the Christian that we are to

remember "old things are passed away, behold all things have become new." We are to "Draw near," and "draw not back," but "delight ourselves with fatness." Five words may perhaps sum up the entire Epistle from the standpoint of Christian life and duty. We are to enter, to experience, to enjoy, to exult, and to extol. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On* p.183

Hebrews: Our most complete portrait of Christ

The personal Messiah is presented in the Epistle with singular completeness of portraiture. In no other Book of the New Testament is shewn with equal fulness of delineation; and each trait is connected with some preparatory sign in the Old Testament. In Him, as has been already indicated in part (Additional Note on 2:13), 1. The Divine Son, 2. The Divine King, 3. The manifestation of God, 4. The Priest-King 5. The true Man, are perfectly united. He is all, satisfying every hope and every claim, without change or loss. **Brooke Foss Westcott**, *Hebrews* p. 491