



HEBREWS 13 (THE MESSAGE)

Stay on good terms with each other, held together by love. Be ready with a meal or a bed when it's needed. Why, some have extended hospitality to angels without ever knowing it! Regard prisoners as if you were in prison with them. Look on victims of abuse as if what happened to them had happened to you. Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex.

⁵⁻⁶ Don't be obsessed with getting more material things. Be relaxed with what you have. Since God assured us, "I'll never let you down, never walk off and leave you," we can boldly quote,

God is there, ready to help;

I'm fearless no matter what.

Who or what can get to me?

⁷⁻⁸ Appreciate your pastoral leaders who gave you the Word of God. Take a good look at the way they live, and let their faithfulness instruct you, as well as their truthfulness. There should be a consistency that runs through us all. For Jesus doesn't change—yesterday, today, tomorrow, he's always totally himself.

⁹ Don't be lured away from him by the latest speculations about him. The grace of Christ is the only good ground for life. Products named after Christ don't seem to do much for those who buy them.

¹⁰⁻¹² The altar from which God gives us the gift of himself is not for exploitation by insiders who grab and loot. In the old system, the animals are killed and the bodies disposed of outside the camp. The blood is then brought inside to the altar as a sacrifice for sin. It's the same with Jesus. He was crucified outside the city gates—that is where he poured out the sacrificial blood that was brought to

God's altar to cleanse his people.

¹³⁻¹⁵ So let's go outside, where Jesus is, where the action is—not trying to be privileged insiders, but taking our share in the abuse of Jesus. This “insider world” is not our home. We have our eyes peeled for the City about to come. Let's take our place outside with Jesus, no longer pouring out the sacrificial blood of animals but pouring out sacrificial praises from our lips to God in Jesus' name.

¹⁶ Make sure you don't take things for granted and go slack in working for the common good; share what you have with others. God takes particular pleasure in acts of worship—a different kind of “sacrifice”—that take place in kitchen and workplace and on the streets.

¹⁷ Be responsive to your pastoral leaders. Listen to their counsel. They are alert to the condition of your lives and work under the strict supervision of God. Contribute to the joy of their leadership, not its drudgery. Why would you want to make things harder for them?

¹⁸⁻²¹ Pray for us. We have no doubts about what we're doing or why, but it's hard going and we need your prayers. All we care about is living well before God. Pray that we may be together soon.

May God, who puts all things together,
makes all things whole,

Who made a lasting mark through the sacrifice of Jesus,
the sacrifice of blood that sealed the eternal covenant,

Who led Jesus, our Great Shepherd,
up and alive from the dead,

Now put you together, provide you
with everything you need to please him,

Make us into what gives him most pleasure,
by means of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Messiah.

All glory to Jesus forever and always!

Oh, yes, yes, yes.

²²⁻²³ Friends, please take what I've written most seriously. I've kept this as brief as possible; I haven't piled on a lot of extras. You'll be glad to know that Timothy has been let out of prison. If he leaves soon, I'll come with him and get to see you myself.

²⁴ Say hello to your pastoral leaders and all the congregations. Everyone here in Italy wants to be remembered to you.

²⁵ Grace be with you, every one.

QUESTIONS.

Feel free to talk through some or all of these questions

- 1.) What sticks out to you in the verses above? What encourages you? Challenges you?
- 2.) What encourages you in chapter 13? What challenges you?
- 3.) What does this chapter tell you about God?
- 4.) As we come to the last chapter, what is one thing you will take away from this journey through Hebrews?

TAKE TEN:

- How did you see God work in your life this week?
- What has God been teaching you in His Word?
- What kind of conversations are you having with your pre-Christian friends?
- What good can you do around here? (in your life/circumstance)
- How can we help you in prayer and what do you want us to ask you about next week?

Whenever you read the Bible, ask yourself these three questions:

1. What does this tell you about God?
2. What does this tell you about yourself and the world?
3. How is this going to change who you are and how you live?