

LESSON 13

CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS

A combination of treatise, homily, and epistle, Hebrews is unique in the New Testament. The ending contains the characteristics of a first-century epistle, but it is also a “peroration,” in which the writer summarized his arguments and appealed to the emotions. There is no reason to believe that this chapter was added by a later writer.

This kind of conclusion, in the ancient world, appealed to readers to obey the message. The author achieved this by remembering afflicted Christians, past leaders, and Christ’s suffering (vv. 3, 7, 12). The well-designed conclusion warned of outside dangers, such as those from companions “who serve[d] the tabernacle” but had no part in the new heavenly fellowship (v. 10). The mention of these items refreshed the readers’ memory concerning significant things and summarized the main points.

In concluding his presentation, the author encouraged various aspects of congregational and individual work, such as hospitality, prison ministry, stewardship, service, submission to church leaders, and prayer. He made a final plea to “leave the camp” of Judaism and even asked the recipients to bear with him “word of exhortation” (13:13, 22). The author insisted that service to God demands offering and helping others. These brethren had already demonstrated such care (6:10).

REMEMBER TO LOVE (13:1–6)

Jesus made His people into true brothers and sisters by the example of His love for them, which helped to develop love among them (Jn. 13:34, 35). These Hebrews who were now brothers in Christ had brotherly love, but they were to work at its continuation.

1. Why was the admonition to love in verse 1 especially important for the early Christians?
2. How much and in what ways did those of the Middle East value hospitality?

3. Why is sexual immorality condemned, apart from its being a sin?
4. What problem is shared by sexual immorality and greed (v. 5)?
5. What are the implications of God's being our "helper" (v. 6)?

**RECALL FORMER LEADERS
AND OUR HIGH PRIEST (13:7–16)**

The writer urged his readers to honor and imitate their leaders in the church by holding before them three injunctions: to "keep on remembering" their former leaders, to think carefully about how these exemplary leaders had lived, and to imitate their faith.

6. What are some advantages of remembering past church leaders?
7. How are we to understand verse 8 in light of the context of verse 7 about church leaders who have died?
8. If Jesus does not change, what does that imply about His church?
9. In what ways does Jesus parallel the bull from the Day of Atonement (vv. 11–13)?
10. What kind of sacrifices did the early Christians make (v. 15)?

**REMAIN UNDER THE CURRENT LEADERS
AND IN PRAYER FOR OTHERS (13:17–19)**

After discussing the unchanging nature of Jesus Christ and the need to hold firmly to Christian doctrine, the writer returned to the topic of leaders. He refocused on our responsibilities to church leaders. They have a sacred trust to guide others toward the heavenly goal. At the same time, we have a responsibility to help them in their task.

11. What are some practical reasons for obeying the elders of the local church?
12. What two things were the readers called to do (vv. 18, 19)?

**REACH UP TO GOD
AND OUT TO BRETHREN (13:20–25)**

What are the final words that the writer of Hebrews gave to his readers? He had brought them through a deep and thorough study of the difference between the old law and the new and living law. Now it was time to say farewell to them. He closed with praise, exhortation, and rejoicing.

13. What is the significance of God's being called "the God of peace" in verse 20?

14. How is the main theme of Hebrews reiterated in verse 20?