

Hebrews 13:10-16
October 16, 2016

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

The writer of Hebrews is wrapping up his exhortations in this final chapter. As a refresher, his audience is made up of believers, young Jewish Christians who made a commitment to Christ, but are now tempted to go back to Judaism. So in his closing remarks, he reminds them of the key differences involved in spiritual worship, and then he wraps up his letter with his prayer for them.

Transition: *I believe all of us CAN encourage our fellow believers who are down BY remembering additional SUGGESTIONS offered by this author.* Let's look for ways that we can make a meaningful contribution toward strengthening and encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Heb 13:10-16] **Sharing in Spiritual Worship**

V.10:

- We have an altar [does not suggest a material altar on earth, for that would contradict the whole message of the epistle. In the Old Testament sanctuary, the brazen altar was the place for offering blood sacrifices, and the golden altar before the veil was the place for burning incense, a picture of prayer ascending to God (Ps. 141:2)] from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

V.11:

- The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp

V.12:

- And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

V.13:

- Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

V.14:

- For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

V.15:

- Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.

V.16:

- And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.10-14: According to these verses, who experienced social rejection? [Jesus!]

Q: Let's see if we can do a compare/contrast how sins were atoned for under the Old Covenant vs under the New Covenant:

- Brazen altar for offering blood sacrifices vs our “altar” is in heaven, i.e. Jesus! [We may set aside places in our church buildings and call them altars; but they are really not altars in the biblical sense. Why? Because Christ’s sacrifice has already been made, once and for all]
- Blood of animals were sacrificed vs Jesus’s blood was sacrificed.
- Once the blood was shed, the sin offering was taken outside the camp and burned completely (Lev. 16:27) vs Jesus Christ, our perfect sin offering, suffered and died “outside the gate” of Jerusalem.
- The temple is not an “enduring city,” vs our “temple” is eternal
- Priests offered incense as a pleasing aroma to God vs through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name

Q: Why do you think the author suggested that we should “share in the disgrace He bore? [We should not hesitate to share in **the disgrace He bore** (cf. 12:2) by abandoning **the camp** of Judaism and identifying with Him. All true Christians must go out to Him, spiritually speaking, to the place of reproach and rejection. “Why stay in Jerusalem when it is not your city?” asked the writer. “Why identify with the Old Covenant Law when it has been done away with in Christ?”]

Q: What does it look like to “continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise?” [Let people engage]

Q V.16: The author shares a benediction for his fellow believers. What do you see? [Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. X-REF Prov 3:27]

Q: How intentional are we in doing good and sharing with others? [It appears that doing good and sharing with others should be our default setting.]

LOOK:

God considers the praises of our lips and the good we do for others as a “sacrifice pleasing to Him.” Let’s abide by the corollary passage, Prov 3:27, that we should not withhold good, especially for those who are discouraged, when it’s in our power to act. The undercurrent needs to be brotherly love.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 329-330). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Submitting to Spiritual Leadership (Heb. 13:17, 24)

Three times the writer used the designation, “Them that have the rule over you.” The phrase refers to the spiritual leaders of the local assemblies. The church is an organism, but it is also an organization. If an organism is not organized, it will die! Wherever Paul went, he founded local churches and ordained qualified believers to lead them (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). “Saints ... bishops [elders], and deacons” (Phil. 1:1) summarize the membership and leadership of the New Testament churches.

Obey them (v. 17). When a servant of God is in the will of God, teaching the Word of God, the people of God should submit and obey. This does not mean that pastors should be dictators. “Neither [be] lords over God’s heritage” (1 Peter 5:3). Some church members have a flippant attitude toward pastoral authority, and this is dangerous. One day every pastor will have to give an account of his ministry to the Lord, and he wants to be able to do it with joy. A disobedient Christian will find on that day that the results of disobedience are unprofitable, not for the pastor, but for himself.

Quite frankly, it is much easier to “win souls” than it is to “watch for souls” (see Ezek. 3:16–21). The larger a church grows, the more difficult it becomes to care for the sheep. Sad to say, there are some ministers whose only work is to preach and “run the program”; they have no desire to minister to the souls placed in their care. Some are even “hirelings” who work only for money, and who run away when danger is near (John 10:11–14). However, when a shepherd is faithful to watch for souls, it is important that the sheep obey him.

Greet them (v. 24). The Jews used to greet each other with “Shalom—peace!” The Greeks often greeted one another with “Grace!” Paul combined these two and greeted the saints with, “Grace and peace be unto you!” (1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; and all his epistles except 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. When Paul wrote to pastors, he greeted them with, “Grace, *mercy*, and peace.” I wonder why?)

Of course, the writer of the Hebrew epistle was sending his personal greetings to the leaders of the church; but this is a good example for all of us to follow. *Every Christian should be on speaking terms with his pastor.* Never allow any “root of bitterness” to grow up in your heart (Heb. 12:15) because it will only poison you and hurt the whole church.

While it is true that each member of a local body has an important ministry to perform, it is also true that God has ordained spiritual leaders in the church. I have been privileged to preach in many churches in America, and I have noticed that where the people permit the pastors (elders) to lead, there is usually blessing and growth. I am not talking about highhanded, egotistical dictatorship, but true spiritual leadership. This is God’s pattern for the church.

Sharing in Spiritual Worship (Heb. 13:10–16, 18–19)

While it is true that a New Covenant Christian is not involved in the ceremonies and furnishings of an earthly tabernacle or temple, it is not true that he is deprived of the blessings that they typify. A Jew under the Old Covenant could point to the temple, but a Christian has a heavenly sanctuary that can never be destroyed. The Jews were proud of the city of Jerusalem; but a

Christian has an eternal city, the New Jerusalem. For each of an Old Testament believer's temporary earthly items, a New Covenant believer has a heavenly and eternal counterpart.

"We have an altar" (Heb. 13:10) does not suggest a material altar on earth, for that would contradict the whole message of the epistle. In the Old Testament sanctuary, the brazen altar was the place for offering blood sacrifices, and the golden altar before the veil was the place for burning incense, a picture of prayer ascending to God (Ps. 141:2). A New Covenant Christian's altar is Jesus Christ; for it is *through Him* that we offer our "spiritual sacrifices" to God (Heb. 13:15; 1 Peter 2:5). We may set aside places in our church buildings and call them altars; but they are really not altars in the biblical sense. Why? Because Christ's sacrifice has already been made, once and for all; and the gifts that we bring to God are acceptable, not because of any earthly altar, but because of a heavenly altar, Jesus Christ.

The emphasis in this section is on separation from dead religion and identification with the Lord Jesus Christ in His reproach. The image comes from the Day of Atonement. The sin offering was taken outside the camp and burned completely (Lev. 16:27). Jesus Christ, our perfect sin offering, suffered and died "outside the gate" of Jerusalem. All true Christians must go out to Him, spiritually speaking, to the place of reproach and rejection. "Why stay in Jerusalem when it is not your city?" asked the writer. "Why identify with the Old Covenant Law when it has been done away with in Christ?"

The readers of this epistle were looking for a way to continue as Christians while escaping the persecution that would come from unbelieving Jews. "It cannot be done," the writer stated in so many words. "Jerusalem is doomed. Get out of the Jewish religious system and identify with the Saviour who died for you." There can be no room for compromise.

The writer named two of the "spiritual sacrifices" that we offer as Christians (Heb. 13:15–16). Note that the word "spiritual" is not in contrast to "material," because material gifts can be accepted as spiritual sacrifices (see Phil. 4:10–20). The word "spiritual" means "spiritual in character, to be used by the Spirit for spiritual purposes." A believer's body, presented to God, is a spiritual sacrifice (Rom. 12:1–2).

The first spiritual sacrifice is *continual praise to God* (Heb. 13:15). The words of praise from our lips, coming from our hearts, is like beautiful fruit laid on the altar. How easy it is for suffering saints to complain, but how important it is for them to give thanks to God.

The second spiritual sacrifice is *good works of sharing* (Heb. 13:16). This would certainly include the hospitality mentioned in Hebrews 13:2, as well as the ministry to prisoners in Hebrews 13:3. "Doing good" can cover a multitude of ministries: sharing food with the needy; transporting people to and from church or other places; sharing money; perhaps just being a helpful neighbor. I once had the privilege of seeing a man come to Christ because I helped him mow his lawn after his own mower broke.

Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, p. 812). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

13:10–14. If those who hawked "strange teachings" tended to idealize the wilderness experience and the tabernacle, the writer's words now make a special point. A Christian has a special **altar** (probably a figure of speech for the sacrifice of Christ) from which he derives spiritual sustenance. **Those who minister at the tabernacle** were not entitled to partake of that

kind of spiritual food. If some people preferred a desert way of life and considered themselves “servants” of the ancient tabernacle they were, the writer pointed out, debarred from Christian privileges. Under the old institution the **blood** from sacrifices made on the Day of Atonement was brought **into the most holy place, but the bodies** were **burned outside the camp** (v. 11), a location deemed unholy in the years of the wilderness sojourn. But **Jesus also suffered outside the city gate** (i.e., outside Jerusalem), but the effect of His sacrifice was **to make the people holy**. Far from association with Him being unholy, as some unbelieving Jews regarded it, the readers were in fact “holy” (or sanctified; cf. 2:11; 10:10, 14) and should not hesitate to share in **the disgrace He bore** (cf. 12:2) by abandoning **the camp** of Judaism and identifying with Him. If the readers actually were acquainted with sectarian encampments in their region this exhortation would have had special force. The readers’ true home was no camp or city that then existed, but **the city that is to come** (cf. 11:10, 16; 12:22).

13:15–16. No blood sacrifices were needed in the light of Jesus’ death, but to **offer ... praise** and **to do good and to share with others** were indeed **sacrifices** that **God** desired (cf. 10:25).