

Cornerstone Community Church

Jen Kramer

May 5, 2022

## Hebrews 13

Good morning/evening, sisters! Hasn't this study of Hebrews been a really great time of delving into God's Word and learning from and supporting one another? Praise God for His goodness and leading! We've come to our final lesson in Hebrews on chapter 13, where the author sums up what he's been telling us throughout Hebrews. He's brought us through a number of Old Testament scriptures to show us how Jesus is better than anyone or anything that has come before. He's shown us how the Old Testament has *pointed* to Jesus—and the New Covenant He brought—throughout Jewish history. With this, he has encouraged us to endure in the faith that Jesus gives, keeping our eyes on Christ and imitating those whose faith endured to the end. Now, at the beginning of chapter 13, the author is honing in a little more on what we need to do with this knowledge.

### New Covenant Contentment

In his first paragraph, the author of Hebrews addresses different areas in which we need to love. He tells us to continue loving the brethren—fellow Christians—to love strangers—whether believers or unbelievers—prisoners and the ill-treated, and to honor marriage. Then he warns us not to love money—but notice he qualifies this with “being content with what you have” (verse 5b). The love of money he refers to isn't just about loving money. Money itself is amoral. It isn't a bad thing, nor is it a sin to have it. It's about *why* you love money, and if you love it more than what should be our real priority. The Bible gets to the heart of things, and this is a great example. The real issue behind loving money is that we want it so we can obtain more stuff, because we're focused on what we *don't* have. We've let it become an encumbrance, like we talked about in the last chapter. Instead, we are to focus on what we have, and to be content with it.

Now those of us who have a bent toward doing things out of duty are going to think, [disappointed] “Yeah, okay, I have to be content with what I have...” but sisters, that is *not* where the author is going with this. Just exactly what is it that we have?

Verse 5-6 continue: “...for He Himself [God] has said, ‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,’ so that we confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?’”

First I want to address verse 5. If you got through Day 2, Question 4 of the lesson, you'll have seen that the quote in the Greek of “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,” is incredibly emphatic. It's as though God is saying, “I will never, never desert you, and I will never, never, never abandon you.” 5 times He says this is something He won't do.

Sisters, is God faithful? Is this something we should know anyway by His character? Yet God still takes the time to address this specifically and emphatically. Have you ever been afraid of abandonment? Sisters, God will NEVER leave His children.

Cornerstone Community Church

Jen Kramer

May 5, 2022

Now I want to take you back to where the author of Hebrews quotes this from: turn to Deuteronomy 31:6-8. The context here is that Moses is addressing all Israel for the last time before God takes him up to heaven. This is just before they will enter the promised land to conquer it—without Moses—and Moses tells them that the Lord is going to go before them and destroy their enemies, delivering those enemies to Israel. Then Moses says to Israel in verse 6: “‘Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them [them being their enemies], for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.’ Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. The Lord is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.’”

Notice it’s repeated here, too. When the Bible repeats something, you know it’s important.

So sisters, what do we have? We have a God who will do whatever it takes to fulfill His promise to lead His children into the promised land—into what He has ultimately promised: His promised rest, as the author of Hebrews talked about in Chapter 3, quoted from Psalm 95. Who is the one doing the work? Is it Israel? Is it Joshua? No, it’s God. God will go before you (Deuteronomy 31:8); He will do the work in you—like Philippians 2:13 says, “to will and to work for His good pleasure”—and He will bring you to completion (Philippians 1:6). It’s all God.

Now let’s go back. In quick summary, the author of Hebrews just said to be content with what we have, for God Himself said He will never leave us—NEVER—(and continues in verse 6) “so *that* we **confidently** say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?’” This is a quote from Psalm 118. Turn there with me for a moment, because this is a really great parallel passage to what the author has been saying throughout Hebrews. Psalm 118.

This psalm is a song with some recurring refrains. Rather than read the whole thing to you, I’ll string together some verses to give you the context. We’ll start with verse 1: “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

I’m sure you’ve heard that before. Let’s skip down to verse 4:

“Oh let those who fear the Lord say,  
‘His lovingkindness is everlasting.’  
From my distress I called upon the Lord;  
The Lord answered me and set me in a large place.  
The Lord is for me; I will not fear;  
What can man do to me?”

*Cornerstone Community Church*

*Jen Kramer*

*May 5, 2022*

That last was verse 6, where Hebrews quoted from. Continuing to verse 7:

“The Lord is for me among those who help me;  
Therefore I will look with satisfaction on those who hate me.  
It is better to take refuge in the Lord  
Than to trust in princes.  
All nations surrounded me;  
In the name of the Lord I will surely cut them off.”

Skipping down to verse 13:

“You pushed me violently so that I was falling,  
But the Lord helped me.  
The Lord is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation.  
The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous;  
The right hand of the Lord is exalted;”

Skipping down to verse 17:

“I will not die, but live,  
And tell of the works of the Lord.  
The Lord has disciplined me severely,  
But He has not given me over to death.”

You remember what we just learned about the Lord’s discipline?

Continuing in verse 19, it says:

“Open to me the gates of righteousness;  
I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the Lord.”

Notice the believer’s assurance of salvation and praise for it.

Skipping down to verse 21:

“I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me,  
And You have become my salvation.  
The stone which the builders rejected  
Has become the chief corner stone.  
This is the Lord’s doing;  
It is marvelous in our eyes.  
This is the day which the Lord has made;  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

And the psalm continues on in thanksgiving and praise of our great God. There are a number of quotes in that psalm I’m sure you recognize—this last section is an important messianic text also mentioned in Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10,

Cornerstone Community Church

Jen Kramer

May 5, 2022

11; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20; and 1 Peter 2:4–7. The number of times it's reference kinda gives you an idea of the importance.

It's no coincidence the author of Hebrews quotes this psalm in particular. Did you notice a number of themes in this psalm that we just went through in Hebrews? Turning our eyes to God; praising Him; looking to Him for our help, and to do the work in us and for us; placing our fear and trust in Him alone so that man's feeble power pales in comparison; focusing on God's salvation and praising Him for it; witnessing God's work in our lives to others; going through the Lord's discipline, since He reproves those He loves to help us live in righteousness; assurance of salvation; that Christ is the cornerstone of our faith; that God is the one who has made everything to work this way; and that we can rejoice in the day because God Himself has made it.

Sisters, *that* is what we have in Christ.

And if the Jews (or Hebrews) were looking for it even before Christ came with His message, it was *there!* And they didn't see it. Sisters, are we blinded by what the world puts in front of us? Do we intentionally look for Jesus, and for God's work in our everyday lives? He's there. You want to know what it looks like to have a relationship with Him? It's in looking for Him in each moment, and talking to Him through it. Consulting Him when we do the next thing—when we wash the dishes, or brush our teeth! He's there every moment—and we need to rely on Him every moment.

If God is the object of our faith, what more do we need?

There's a verse I love back in Lamentations. Everybody quotes Lamentations 3:22-23:  
“The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease,  
For His compassions never fail.  
They are new every morning;  
Great is Your faithfulness.”

But it's the following verse that I really cling to:

“‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul,  
‘Therefore I have hope in Him.’”

I have hope because the Lord—all of who and what He is—is my portion. He's my lot in life, if you will. He is what I have been given. And that is enough. It's more than enough. I didn't earn Him, I don't deserve Him, but praise God, He is mine—and I am His. “The Lord is my portion,” is a phrase I use to remind myself of what I have. It helps me take my thoughts captive in those moments of wayward thinking and refocus on the power, and peace, and pleasure of my great God.

### **New Covenant Standing**

Returning to the author's context, why does He mention to be content here? He just got through telling us different ways to love, right? Well what prevents us from loving?

Cornerstone Community Church

Jen Kramer

May 5, 2022

Are you particularly loving when you're discontent? Why not? Who are you focused on? Yourself.

Our American culture has ingrained in us this idea of rights: there are certain things every human being deserves. Sisters, can you tell me where in the Bible it says God has given us rights? Think about that for a minute. God has given His children promises—and these are privileges He's offered us through His grace, not things we've earned. The whole idea of rights instills in us a nature of entitlement, which is dangerous to our contentment. When God inevitably brings us down a path of discipline (remember, per chapter 12, think pruning) or suffering (think teaching us endurance), we question God's goodness, that He isn't giving us our "rights."

We place ourselves in judgment over God Himself. Just envision that for a moment. God is on His throne of glory in heaven—for those of you who have been going through Revelation with us in church, you should have a good picture of this—and you approach that magnificent throne of unimaginable power and glory before the throng of worshipping saints... and you, with all your "rights," denounce Him. If you don't feel the fear of the Lord make you quake in your boots when you picture that, you need to seriously consider your theology, and maybe even your salvation. God owes you nothing.

Sisters, when we don't like our circumstances, when we grumble and complain, when we get angry about what's happening to us, we need to turn our eyes to Christ, and repent. God has orchestrated your circumstances—and it isn't to punish you, it's to prune you—to build your endurance. God brings His children closer through their trials. Rely on Him; lean on Him; submit to His Word.

When we want to approach God with our rights, what is the truth? In a word, the Gospel. The earth and all that is in it is His. Including us. *We, the created* sinned against *Him, the Creator*, and deserve no good thing. In fact, we deserve eternal punishment. Yet God, in His goodness, love, and grace, *promises* to give His children eternal life—and the gifts that really matter.

Rights are about how we are viewed in man's eyes. Following Christ is having the humility to admit where we stand before God. This is the foundation upon which the rest of our relationship with Christ must be built.

Our culture wants to elevate self-esteem, but the Bible preaches Christ-esteem. We have to be humble, not self-reliant. We have confidence in God, not ourselves. And once we recognize that, true joy and contentment begins.

What we focus on determines our heading. You remember back in chapter 2, where we talked about not drifting? How do we keep from drifting? We keep our eyes fixed on our heading—on Jesus. If your focus is strictly on yourself, you aren't going to be heading toward God. And the longer you keep your focus on other things—not even

Cornerstone Community Church

Jen Kramer

May 5, 2022

necessarily on sins or circumstances, but on encumbrances, like we talked about in chapter 12—the farther your path will take you away from Jesus. This is why it is so important to fix our eyes *continually* on Christ.

So let's just run through this first paragraph in chapter 13 for a moment. The author tells us to love. Sisters, **Who** is love? God is love (1 John 4:8)! Christ is the ultimate example of love to us, and if our focus is fixed on Him, we can share His love with others. Verse 1: with our brethren; verse 2: strangers; verse 3: prisoners and the ill-treated; verse 4: our spouses (we could do a whole series on marriage, couldn't we? But that's not the main point here.) Verse 5: Don't love money, but be content with what you have, because you have God, and He will never leave you. He will go before you, He will do the work in you, and verse 6: if God is helping us, what can *man* do to us?

We have Christ!

Now the author moves on to a new paragraph. In verse 7, the author encourages us again to remain steadfast in our faith, taking the example of those who have gone before us whose faith endured to the end. Verse 8 reminds us God doesn't change, so that—verse 9—we don't get off track with with false teaching. This is almost like his warning back in Chapter 2 to not get off course—to check our heading. Now the second part of verse 9 starts talking about foods, and then verses 10-12 are talking about sacrifices. Why would he go into this here and what does it have to do with what he's been talking about?

Let's not forget our context: don't get off track by strange and varied teachings. The Hebrews were trying to return to the Old Covenant—to the laws and sacrifices. Yet Jesus effected a new and better covenant—not a strange and varied teaching, as the author proved by carrying us through Scripture to show us this was coming all along. The strange and varied teaching would be to try to meld the New Covenant with the Old, or to try to return in any way to the Old Covenant. This is why the author of Hebrews has been spending so much time talking about how Jesus is better! He's better than the angels who delivered messages from God, better than Moses who brought the Law and Scripture, better than the prophets whom God spoke through, better than the old kings who always fell short; and—perhaps the pinnacle—He brings with Him a new and better covenant. He is the exact representation of God Himself. So why would they try to go back?

What was so enticing about the Law and Old Covenant to these Christians? The Old Covenant was supposed to point us toward the coming Messiah. But what did the Pharisees do with it? They turned it into a way to earn salvation—or at least, they made it look that way. God's Word has *always* looked at human hearts, but they turned it toward what they did on the outside. Just do this, this, this, and this, and you will be righteous, they said—because this gave them worth among men.

Cornerstone Community Church

Jen Kramer

May 5, 2022

Sisters, do **we** seek worth among men? Do **we** ever turn God's Word to make it about what we **do**, rather than what's in our heart? Why did **they** miss it? Because they were focused on themselves and their glory, rather than Christ and His glory. Sisters, **don't lose sight of Christ**. Don't turn His Word toward your deeds, but toward your hearts. Seek first His kingdom.

Continuing to verses 10-11, the author states, "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp."

Now the priests were allowed to eat certain parts of most sacrifices. Here, the author brings up how the high priest offered the blood of the sin offering on the altar in the temple, but the body of the animal whose blood it was, had to be burned outside the camp. You'll notice verse 10 starts with "We." Who is this referring to? Not the Old Testament Jews, but Christians under the New Covenant. So in saying, "We have an altar from which *those who serve the tabernacle* have no right to eat," he's talking about the *New Covenant* altar from which the *levitical* priests have no right to eat—because the levitical priests serve the Old Covenant, and our altar is of the New Covenant.

What is this New Covenant altar he's talking about? The heavenly altar that the earthly tabernacle is a shadow of. That is where Jesus offered his blood from the cross in the Holy of Holies before the presence of God under the New Covenant. If you serve the Old Covenant, you have no right to eat of the sacrifice of the New Covenant. This brings up an interesting parallel in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25:

Our context in this passage is Christ speaking to His disciples at the Last Supper... "and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the **new covenant in My blood**; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Jesus said it right there. But the disciples were so blinded by what they expected the Messiah to be that they didn't see it. Their idea of Messiah was what would happen here on earth—never mind what happened in heaven. They missed the bigger picture. This is why it's so important for us to study God's Word *in context* and to read what it's really saying rather than what we want it to say.

Another point I think the author is bringing in here, is that the annual sacrifice for sins served as a reminder to the Jewish people of what was to come. The sacrifices then pointed forward toward Christ as the One who would be our propitiation—to appease God's wrath. Now we don't have to offer sacrifices anymore—but we still need to remember Him. So now, we take communion as our reminder of the New Covenant.

Cornerstone Community Church

Jen Kramer

May 5, 2022

Whereas the old sacrifices pointed forward toward Christ, communion points back to Him. Everything points to Christ.

The author continues in verses 12-14: “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the camp. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.”

Why does the author bring special attention to the fact that Christ’s sacrifice occurred outside the camp? Well what was *inside* the camp? The tabernacle of the Old Covenant. Just as the sacrificed animal’s body was burned outside the camp, Jesus’ suffering and sacrifice took place outside the camp—as yet another fulfilling of how God set forth the earthly copy and shadow of what really took place in heaven.

Sisters, we have to go *outside* the camp—leaving the Old Covenant—in order to follow Christ in the New Covenant. Our earthly, physical sacrifices have no place in the New Covenant, because Christ’s sacrifice paid for it all. He handled it *all*. There is nothing left for us to do to earn salvation or pay for our sins. It’s done. To try to earn our salvation or pay for our sin is to spit upon Christ’s sacrifice as though it weren’t enough.

Consider that for a moment. Christ is better!

We don’t live for the shadow of a city that exists here on earth, but for the heavenly city where we will one day enter the promised rest. Christ is better!

### **New Covenant Sacrifices**

So now that the author has sprinted you through his main points in Hebrews, he sums them all up in an exhortation of what to do with this knowledge in the next four verses: 15-18.

15 and 16 say, “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

I think he phrased it that way to remind the Hebrews that, like David says in Psalm 51:16-17, “For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

God wasn’t and isn’t concerned with the physical sacrifices, except as they pointed and represented what Christ would do and now has done for us. God doesn’t want the blood of animals from us, he wants our hearts. He wants us to be humble enough to rely on Him to do the work in us so we can do good to others, glorifying God, rather



*Cornerstone Community Church*

*Jen Kramer*

*May 5, 2022*

than our own good deeds. Humility leads to contentment, leads to obedience, leads to glorifying God, leads to endurance.

He further exhorts us in verses 17-19, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner.”

It’s important to have humility not just with God, but also with our brethren—especially, as he mentions here, with our spiritual leaders. If God has put our leaders over us—as it says here in verse 17 that they will give an account to God of how they led you—then submitting to them is submitting to God.

I’m not saying our leaders know everything, or even that they’ll always make the right choice. I *am* saying you can trust God. We submit because God is sovereign. If He tells me to submit to my leader, then He knows what those leaders are doing, and He’s going to hold them accountable for it. Vengeance is His, not mine. I am accountable to God for my actions, and God has called me to submit to my spiritual leaders—that includes husbands, by the way (again, that’s a whole other series).

Pray for your spiritual leaders. “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Approach His magnificent throne we talked about earlier with the confidence of Christ’s sacrifice for you. Hebrews 4:16: “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Sisters, when do we have times of need? Is it just when we’re anxious or afraid? Is it just when we’re going through trials and difficulties? No. Every moment of every hour of every day is a time we need God.

*Lord, I need You—Oh I need You.*

*Every hour I need You.*

*My one defense, my righteousness;*

*Oh God, how I need You.*

The Lord is my portion. He is greater than everything else in this life. I can give him every care, every desire, every need. I offer up a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, of a humble heart, and of love for God and others.

I hope you had a chance in Day 5 to go through the meditation on the benediction given in Hebrews 13:20-21.

It says, “Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in

*Cornerstone Community Church*

*Jen Kramer*

*May 5, 2022*

every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

There is so much richness here. There's no coincidence it's our memory verse for this lesson. I won't get it all, but here is some of what I see in these verses.

Let us turn to our God of peace—the One who promises His children eternal rest, and whose peace we can live in even here on earth, because of His great power and love. Jesus died, enacting a New Covenant and inheritance, but God raised Jesus, conquering death, so that we might be raised to new life in Him and His New Covenant. This New Covenant was paid for with Jesus' perfect blood, making true propitiation for the sins of those who love Him—He has drunk every last drop of the wrath of God against us. He shepherds us with a tender, sympathetic heart, knowing what we go through, and His sacrifice brought a New Covenant that—unlike the Old Covenant—is eternal. Jesus is our King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with whom we will reign in eternity because of His good work. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith, and will equip us to do what He has called us to. We can only please Him through the power of His Son. All things point to Him, all things were created through and for Him, and all things glorify Him.

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus*

*Look full in His wonderful face*

*And the things of earth*

*Will grow strangely dim*

*In the light of His glory and grace.*