

## THROUGH THE BIBLE

### HEBREWS 12-13

A city slicker, on a business trip, was driving through the countryside where he ran his car into a ditch.

About that time, a farmer and his horse trotted by.

The businessman asked the farmer if he could pull his car out of the ditch. He said "Ole Buddy" would be happy to help, and hitched his horse up to the car.

After fastening the harness, the farmer yelled, "pull Nellie, pull!" The horse didn't flinch. Next the farmer screamed, "pull, Daisy, pull!" Not a budge. Again the farmer barked "pull, Coco, pull" The horse stood still.

Finally, the farmer spoke softly, "pull, Buddy, pull" And immediately Buddy pulled the car out of the ditch.

Of course, the stranger was astonished at the farmer's weird behavior. Three times he called his horse by the wrong name. *He asked the farmer why...*

He replied, "Well, ole Buddy is blind, and he's got a lazy streak. If he'd thought he was the only horse pulling he wouldn't even have tried." And this is the approach the author of Hebrews has with his readers.

He's encouraging these Jewish believers to walk by faith - and he wants them to know they're not alone.

Chapter 11 shows how all of Israel's heroes won God's approval - not by works, but by faith. The author wants them to know they're not the first to live by faith.

Chapter 12 begins, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...”

*Now who are these witnesses?* Obviously, it’s the men and women of faith spoken of in chapter 11.

Some folks interpret this verse to mean that people in heaven are looking down on us to cheer us on - the spirit of some dead saint may be looking over your shoulder. *Not so!* Citizens of heaven have far more to interest them than us... *They’re at the feet of Jesus, they’re praising the King, beholding the glories of God!*

The people of faith who lived before us are witnesses - not because they’re now witnessing - but because they have left behind a witness.

The record of their lives - their memories - witness to us that it can be done! If they were able to hold fast to their faith in a fallen world - then you and I can too!

In light of their witness, “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”

Here again the Christian life is referred to as a race.

This is a common analogy in the NT. The Christian life is like a footrace - *but not a sprint - a marathon.*

Some Christians are quick out of the blocks. They give their lives to Jesus, and they’re fired up to serve Him. But they don’t make it through the first turn before they run out of steam. God isn’t interested in *flash in the pan* Christians. He wants us to run with endurance.

In Christopher Columbus' logbooks there were days when his only entries were the two words, "Sailed On."

The key to the Christian life is to keep sailing - press on - never give up. You'll arrive at your destination only if you keep sailing. There's no telling what wonderful blessings and treasures you'll discover if you "sail on."

We're to run our race with endurance - but if you've seen marathon runners you know how they're dressed.

You'll never see a competitive runner in a trench coat, or long pants, or army boots. You would never see them with a backpack, or keys in their shorts.

No, a racer gets rid of every weight - all the excess baggage! Their clothes are lightweight, wind-resistant - designed to allow the greatest range of movement.

Greek athletes use to compete naked. Every racer was literally a streaker. Athletes look for every edge.

The same should be said of a Christian. Lay aside "*the sin which so easily ensnares*" you. The ensnaring sin is the specific sin that causes you the most trouble.

We're not all vulnerable to the same temptations.

For one person the snare that trips them up is alcohol - for someone else it's anger, or gossip, or lust.

Like an athlete shedding his warm-ups, let's unsnap and throw off our nagging sin. Whatever it takes...do it!

**Repent** and tell God you're willing to change...

**Rearrange** what you can control to avoid the trap...

**Renew** your thoughts in that area of your life...

**Recruit** the Lord's help and the power of His Spirit.

We need to shed the sins that easily ensnare us - but in addition, we need to **“lay aside every weight.”**

There are issues in life that no one would call *“sinful.”* There's nothing evil about them per se, but they still distract us from our goal. They're **“weights.”** They drag us down. They divert our eyes from Jesus.

I like how Ravi Zacharias defines a *“legitimate pleasure.”* He says it's **“something that refreshes along the journey without distracting from your ultimate goal.”**

A weight is just the opposite. It might refresh and produce pleasure - but in doing so, it's a distraction.

**“Weights”** are unnecessary baggage.

If you travel a lot you learn that your enjoyment of the trip is direct proportion to how light you can pack.

Try navigating an airport lugging a lot of luggage and its torture. And this is the key to living a victorious and vital Christian life - *down-size!* Cull away the fluff.

Ask yourself, **“What activities, or commitments, or pastimes suck up my energy and resources without directing me or others to Jesus?... Where do I invest time without gaining a godly reward?... When it comes to spiritual growth what's slowing me down, and getting in my way?”** Find the weights - then lay them aside.

Here's how you walk by faith... lay aside weights and ensnaring sins, keep on keeping on, and stay focused on Jesus. Verse 2, **“looking unto Jesus, the author and**

finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

After reading all the examples of faith in Chapter 11 we were impressed, but the greatest example of enduring faith by far was that the faith of Jesus!

He “*endured the cross*” - and all its pain - *the nails, the rejection, the scourging, the agony, the separation.*

All the while He “*despise the shame.*” *The cross was designed for criminals, not the Son of God.*

And He did it “*for the joy set before Him.*” Here’s what motivated Jesus - *the joy of pleasing God and the joy of saving you.* Faith enabled Jesus to keep His eyes on the *joy ahead* of Him, not the *pain around* Him.

It reminds me of a famous track meet that took place on August 7, 1954. The world’s best two milers squared off in what was touted as “*The Miracle Mile.*”

John Landy and Roger Bannister were neck-n-neck as the runners turned down the final backstretch.

Landy had a small lead, but as they rounded the final turn the crowd let out an enormous roar. Landy could no longer hear Bannister’s foot strike the ground behind him, which caused him to make a fatal mistake. He turned his head to look back. And as soon as he did, Roger Bannister initiated his kick, passing Landy, and eventually beating him by 5 yards.

In the midst of a trial, a difficulty, a persecution - the worse move to make is to look back to the world you left behind. Keep your eyes squarely on Jesus – fixed on the joy that will ultimately be yours if you follow Him!

Verse 3, “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.” *Consider Jesus!*

This is the theme of the book of Hebrews. We’ve considered Him in multiple ways - *His deity, His humanity, His rest, His priesthood, His sacrifice*. But here we’re encouraged to consider *His endurance*.

Standing before the angry Jews they shouted, “Crucify Him! His blood be on us and on our children.”

Jesus was tortured and executed at the hands of a bloodthirsty mob, yet He never *gave up or caved in... now what is it that God has asked us to endure?*

The author reminds us in verse 4, “You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”

The Hebrew believers were sulking in self-pity.

Perhaps they’d been ostracized socially, or penalized financially, but no one had been brutalized physically.

No one had been sawn in two, or beheaded, or nailed to a cross. The writer tells his readers to keep it in perspective. Other people of faith had endured far more than they had - yet still demonstrated great faith.

And this could also be said of us. We think we’re candidates for martyrdom because we were snubbed in the break room, or not invited to the office party.

Get a grip! The persecution we suffer in America is trivial in comparison to *what’s been or could be!*

Verse 5, “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons...” Here he quotes Proverbs 3:11-12, “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”

There are times when a dad has to take his son to the woodshed - discipline is necessary. And the same is true of our heavenly Father. His kids need to be spanked! You don't make *disciples* without *discipline*.

Sometimes God's discipline is **corrective**. God corrected Jonah by turning him into a fish sandwich...

Discipline can also be **directive**. It steers us from going down the wrong path. Balaam would've taken a wrong fork if the angel hadn't stopped his burro...

At other times discipline is **preventive**. Paul's thorn in the flesh kept him from getting the big head...

And finally, discipline is **instructive**. It teaches new lessons. Job's hardships revealed truths about God.

Here's the bottom line when it comes to swats on the bottom... God is a good Dad who faithfully disciplines his kids. *He corrects, directs, prevents, and instructs.*

Verse 7, “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.” When hardships come our way we feel as if God has abandoned us - He doesn't really love us - *but the exact opposite is true.*

God's discipline is proof of His love!



“Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?” My dad always told me before he spanked me, “Son, this is going to hurt me more than it hurts you!” I never believed him until I became a dad.

It’s a wise son who respects and submits to a dad who disciplines him appropriately. It’s a fool who bucks.

“For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Ask a child three minutes after he was spanked, if he enjoyed it - and he’ll say “no!” But ask him thirty years afterwards. He’s probably gained an appreciation.

So it is with God’s discipline. The hardships and pain He allows us to taste has to be measured by it’s long term effect - not the immediate sting and discomfort.

He tells us in verse 12, “Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.” Don’t get bent out of shape when God spans you. It means you’re His kid - you’ll survive... *just don’t get bitter!*

Verse 14, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled...” When God disciplines us, we need to guard against bitterness.



*Bitterness towards God...* but we're more prone to become bitter towards the means of His discipline. The person or the situation God uses to get our attention.

Notice, bitterness is the result of *“falling short of God's grace.”* When you *know grace* - love you don't deserve - then you can't help but to *show grace*.

I have a friend who struggled for years with bitter feelings toward the woman who murdered her mom.

She thought she'd made progress until she saw a woman at work who looked like her mom's murderer.

The mere sight of this woman triggered all sorts of bitter feelings. To make matters worse the woman's office was four doors down, so she saw her constantly. My friend knew she had to overcome this bitterness.

One day she approached the woman, and the two women introduced themselves. When my friend heard the woman's name, she was stunned. It was *“Grace”*...

That's when the Holy Spirit spoke to her - the key to overcoming bitter feelings is to recall God's grace toward you. *Folks who know grace will show grace.*

When we realize all God choses to forgive to show us love - then how can we withhold love from others.

From then on whenever my friend saw *“Grace”* she was reminded of the power of God's amazing grace!

Verse 16, *“lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he*

sought it diligently with tears.” It was Esau’s resentment toward Jacob’s thievery that made his repentance impossible.

Esau was certainly a victim of Jacob’s treachery.

Jacob caught his big brother when he was famished, and traded him a bowl of stew for his birthright. Later, Jacob conned his father into confirming the ruse. Esau never got over the bitterness. *He stewed over the stew.*

But here’s the point, bitterness is like an offensive lineman - *bitterness is a blocker.* It impedes God’s work in your life. As long as you’re preoccupied with the other guy’s crimes you’ll never deal with your own. You can’t *repent to God* - when you *resent someone else.*

In the last half of chapter 12 the author of Hebrews sums up the theme of the entire book. Through Jesus God has made a New Covenant with His people that replaced the Old Covenant He made through Moses.

A better way has been established for man to relate to God. There’s no reason these Jewish believers should retreat backwards to the confines of Judaism.

Jesus is better than Judaism in every respect.

And to illustrate the superiority of Jesus and the New Covenant over Moses and the Old Covenant - the writer now compares the two mountains from which the covenants were handed down. The Old Covenant came from Mount Sinai in the wilderness. The New Covenant came from Mount Zion, or from heaven itself.

Verse 18, “For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word

should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.")

And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") When God met with the Hebrew people at Mount Sinai the manifestations of His presence were frightful, and scary, and terrifying.

God wanted to communicate His holiness.

To come to God is never a trivial matter. Worshipping God isn't like eating off the everyday dishes. It's like sitting down at a place setting of expensive china.

Neither man nor beast was allowed to touch God's holy mountain, or else they would be struck dead.

The point being that under the Old Covenant God was restricted. There was no access, no assurance. The people, even Moses, stood trembling before God.

Under the Old Covenant the Hebrews cried for a mediator - a man to approach God on their behalf - but even Moses was fearful to stand before the holy God.

Yet look at how different the attitude is under the New Covenant, verse 22, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel." This all speaks of access and openness!

Under the New Covenant we're registered citizens of heaven. We have membership! We can come to the city of God where men are made just and perfect.

Where Jesus is our Mediator, and we've been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus - we're cleansed.

Abel's blood cried out from the ground for vengeance, but Jesus' blood cries out for forgiveness, and mercy, and reconciliation, and peace, and love...

Verse 25 tells us, "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth..."

When God spoke from Mount Sinai the ground literally rumbled. God's presence shook the mountain.

No one was able to escape His voice and authority.

The same is true today. God's voice still speaks in the NC, and no one can escape His overtures of love.

"But now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain."

The Old Covenant began with a shaking, whereas the New Covenant will end with a giant shaking. The New Covenant culminates with a universal shake-up.

Under the Old Covenant one mountain shook, but as the Age Of Grace concludes, the whole universe gets knocked off its foundation! Revelation forecasts the

cataclysmic judgments that will rock our world in the last days. Everything man-made will be destroyed.

When the smoke clears all that's left standing will be God, His truth, and the folks who have followed Jesus.

The Bible tells us continents will crack, ecosystems will shatter, mountains will split, buildings will buckle, governments will topple, financial markets will fold.

Even religious systems and traditions will be put out of business – *all that can be shaken will be shaken!*

This is why it's foolish to put your trust in anything labeled “made on earth.” Put your trust in God!

Eleven millionaires went down with the Titanic. One that survived said he left \$300,000 worth of money, jewelry, and securities in his cabin. Later he said, “At the time, the money seemed a mockery. I picked up three oranges instead.” When God rocks this world, man-made values and treasures will seem like a joke!

Verse 28, “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” Live for the oranges - for the things that will help your faith survive until the shaking stops.

The chapter closes by reminding us, “For our God is a consuming fire.” God hasn't changed. He's still holy, and fiery, and unapproachable on our own - *but the terms of our relationship with Him have changed!*

In Christ rather than scorch us, the holy fire melts us, and warms us, and lights our path. In Christ we have a new Covenant with God that we hold on to *by faith!*

With the conclusion of chapter 12 the doctrinal section of the book of Hebrews ends. In chapter 13 the author now deals with some practical matters...

Verse 1, **“Let brotherly love continue.”** *All good things shouldn't come to an end, especially “brotherly love!”*

**“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”**

I heard of Dodie, a schoolteacher who drove across country one summer. She was rounding a curve on I-5, outside of Sacramento, when her water pump blew.

Dodie was alone and afraid. She prayed, **“Please God, send me an angel... preferably one with mechanical experience.”** Within four minutes, a big Harley motorcycle pulled up - ridden by a huge man with long hair, a black beard, and tattooed arms.

Without looking at Dodie he went to work. She never said a word. She was too intimidated, especially when she read the words on the back of his jacket, **“Hell's Angels - California.”** When the man finished, Dodie told him thanks. He looked her in the eye and said, **“Don't judge a book by its cover. You may never know who you're talking to.”** Then he left as quickly as he'd come.

*An angel? Perhaps! The point of verse 2 is that you never know. Angels travel incognito. The hitchhiker, the clerk at the drive-thru, the custodian... better be nice, even the Hell's Angel could actually be God's angel!*

Verse 3, **“Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the body also.”** When you entered the



Roman prison system they shut the door behind you, and forgot you existed. You didn't eat or have clothes, unless friends on the outside came to your aid.

Likewise, there are believers tonight in countries hostile to the cause of Christ, who have been jailed for their faith, and exist in the worst possible conditions.

They need our prayers and support.

Verse 4, “**Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**” The word translated “*bed*” can be rendered “**sexual intercourse.**” Remember, sex is God's idea. He created sex - and not just for *procreation*, but *pleasure*.

And to maximize and protect that pleasure He restricted sexual intimacy to the marriage relationship.

To one man and one woman in a life-long covenant.

Sex prior to marriage, **fornication** - sex outside of marriage, **adultery** - these are deviations from God's design, and God will judge those who participate!

But the marriage bed is “*undefiled*” - it's pure! And what goes on under its *sheets* is *sweet* in God's sight.

This verse implies that anything done between a husband and wife in the marriage bed - **anything done that's a loving act, and a giving act, and an agreed upon act - is thus, pleasing and acceptable to God.**

According to WebMD if you want to *relieve stress, lower your blood pressure, boost your immune system, burn calories, reduce your risk of heart attack, improve your*



*mood, relieve minor aches and pains, avoid prostate cancer, and sleep better - have lots of sex.*

Hebrews 13:4 teaches us to *just get married first!*

Sexual intimacy is God's gift - to be enjoyed!

Verse 5, "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have." Rather than breed *resentment*, learn *contentment*. Everyone wants *more*, but the key to happiness is *to want less*.

"For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." The secret to contentment is realizing that **Jesus is enough**. There's not a need I have that can't find fulfillment in Christ. He's all I need and He's always with me. He'll never leave me or forsake me.

Verse 6, "So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" When God Almighty is for us, then who can be against us!

"Remember those who rule over you..." Pray for your spiritual leaders. I appreciate your encouragement, and notes, and especially the paycheck. But trust me, the very best thing you can do for a pastor is pray for him.

Pray for those "Who have spoken the word of God to you..." Here's the logic, *since he speaks to you on behalf of God, then you speak to God on behalf of him*.

The writer of Hebrews says of the pastor, "whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct."

A good leader will make mistakes - he's human - but overall he'll have a good track record. His faith will follow. You'll see his faith in action. And when you see he's following Jesus, it's easier for you to follow him.

Verse 8, never forget, **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”** Jesus never changes.

But let me qualify this statement... This doesn't mean that His ways and methods won't change over time.

*How, where, and when* the Lord works is always changing. Jesus is always up to something new.

This is why it's fun to follow Jesus. It's an adventure. And it requires us to be flexible and adaptable.

What's immutable, or changeless, is Jesus' nature - and the truth He taught - and His love and faithfulness.

Jesus' intentions and motives never change. In that sense, He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And that's why we're told in verse 9, **“Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines.”**

God's truth is not a moving target. Sound doctrine is the same doctrine taught by Jesus, reiterated by Paul, and recorded in Scripture. There's a helpful old adage, **“If it's true it's not new, and if it's new it's not true!”**

“For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.” The legalism of Judaism highlighted different dietary regulations or kosher laws.

*Eat right and you'll go heaven.* But Christ set us free from that sort of thinking... *Eat right or you might get to heaven faster* - but righteousness isn't a matter of what we put in our stomach - it's what God puts in our heart.

These Hebrew believers came out of this sort of bondage. The writer warns them not to go back. The menu for *pleasing God* and *going to heaven* is “*grace.*”

Verse 10, “*We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.*”

These Hebrew believers in Jesus were worried because they'd been ostracized from the Temple and Judaism. They could no longer offer a animal sacrifice.

But the folks who should be worried are those *within the Temple* who were coming to the animal altar. Bulls and goats were inferior sacrifices to the death of Jesus.

It's best to eat *the Bread of Life*, at *the altar of faith*.

“For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.” Study the OT sacrifices and you'll see that they speak clearly of Jesus... *and here's a prophetic detail that foretold the end of Judaism...*

After the animals were sacrificed their carcasses were taken outside the camp of Israel and burned.

This meant that the ultimate end of sin would occur outside the borders of Judaism. This is why, in God's providence, Jesus was crucified north of Jerusalem, outside the city's walls, at a place called, "Golgotha."

The writer concludes, "Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come." The author of Hebrews is encouraging these Jewish believers to leave behind the camp of Judaism.

Since Jesus died outside the boundaries and priestly jurisdiction of Judaism, believers in Jesus should renounce their need for laws and sacrifices and rituals, and rest their faith solely in the finished work of Jesus.

And this applies, not only to Jews, but anyone prone to the entanglements of *performance-based* religion.

Christianity is *faith-based* and *grace-based*. And it's hard to trust in grace, and live by faith, when you're surrounded by a legalistic culture that demands you to do. You'll never get truly free until you leave the camp.

Verse 15, "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." If you live under the New Covenant, but still want to offer a sacrifice - here's one for you... "*the sacrifice of praise*" and thanksgiving.

Jesus did away with any need for animal sacrifices.

Now we offer God a sacrifice whenever we open our hearts and mouth to give thanks and sing His praise!

And here are two other NT sacrifices... “But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Good deeds and generosity are also ways that we can make a sacrifice to the Lord.

If you want to thank God for His grace and His many blessings; then do good and give to God financially.

Verse 17, And “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive...” Today’s church is not only in need of *good leaders*, we’re also in need of *good followers*.

A good follower knows his pastor is human, yet trusts God to work through him. He trusts his wisdom, and embraces his vision. *As long as a leader is biblical in his teaching, moral in his conduct, and ethical in his handling of people and money* - then a good follower sees it as a duty to submit and support his pastor.

It’s been said, “*The person who can’t lead and won’t follow makes a dandy roadblock.*” This is the problem in churches today - the pastor’s path is filled with potholes. Leaders can’t lead, if members won’t follow.

As kids one of our favorite games was “*follow the leader,*” but as adults our attitude shifts. Cynicism make it more difficult to follow the leader. Someone disappoints us. We learn all leaders have clay feet.

But if we’re to please God and be all He wants us to be as a Church this is a game we really need to learn to play and take seriously. As with any army, God has a chain of command. We need to function accordingly.

Realize, it’s not an easy job to be entrusted with spiritual leadership. The writer of Hebrews says that spiritual leaders, “*watch out for your souls, as those who must*

**give account.**” When Calvary Chapel Stone Mountain is called before the judgement seat of Christ the first person to give an account is going to be me!

According to James 3:1, as your teacher I will incur “**a stricter judgment.**” I have a heavy responsibility...

And there’s another reason you should follow the leader - he continues, “**Let them do so (watch out for your souls) with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.**” In other words, you don’t want to make a pastor’s job more stressful than it already is.

It’s not in the church members’ best interests to have a pastor who doesn’t like to come to work.

Trust me, if a pastor gets discouraged - if his heart is not in what he’s doing - he won’t be a very good pastor.

It reminds me of the mom who walked into her son’s room to wake him up for church. She shuck him and said, “**Now come on Johnny. Its Sunday morning. You have to go to church!**” The son rolled over and complained, “**Ah, Mom, do I have to go every Sunday?**”

She replied, “**Of course you do. You’re the pastor!**”

That’s not the kind of attitude a congregation wants to cultivate in their pastor. If a church wants to encourage its pastor, they’re told how in verse 18...

“**Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.**” Again pray for your pastor! His job is to maintain his integrity. Your job is to lift him up in prayer.

“But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.” Apparently, the writer of Hebrews plans to visit this church in the near future.

Finally, the writer closes his thoughts and composes a benediction. Verse 20, “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep...” Pastors are under-shepherds - they serve Jesus, “*the great Shepherd.*”

Now may God, “through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight...” Notice, *we work out what God works in.* But it’s always God who initiates. It’s always all about grace.

Our covenant, our relationship with God, is based on the blood and work of Jesus - not our good works. Our goodness is a by-product of the work He does in us.

This life that we live is lived “through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Verse 22, “And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.” The book of Hebrews was 13 chapters, but compared to what he could’ve written is was a short letter. His subject was infinite - the superiority of Christ!

Verse 23, “Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.

Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.” Apparently, the author of the book of Hebrews had been writing this letter from Rome - probably to the church back in Jerusalem.



Verse 25, "Grace be with you all. Amen."