

# Hebrews 13: Stir Each Other Up

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December 28, 2014

*Exhortation: Live out Christ under persecution (13:1-6).*

In difficult circumstances, the temptation to live carelessly and selfishly is strong. First, the people needed to remember their brothers and sisters in Christ (13:1). They were not alone suffering for their faith in Christ; other believers were being persecuted, and they were to show them hospitality as they traveled through (13:2). Additionally, they were not to abandon or forsake their brothers and sisters who were in prison, but to continue to aid and encourage them as long as they had physical life (13:3; cf. 10:24-25; 12:12-14).

Facing potential death each day might tempt one to think that purity was insignificant. Quite the contrary, a pure and faithful marriage relationship was something to be honored and upheld, because God would judge those who violated the marriage covenant (13:4).

Furthermore, even in poverty and persecution, the readers must remember that they are members of a heavenly city (cf. 12:28; Phil 3:20-21). Their contentment comes from the fact that God has promised never to abandon them (13:5). This promise inspires boldness even in the face of persecution (13:6; cf. Ps 118:6).

*Exhortation: Let us go to Jesus outside the camp (13:7-17).*

The boldness that comes from knowing that God will always be with us motivates us to continue on in faith in Jesus Christ. As their leaders had persevered in faith through persecution, so should their followers (13:7). Times change, leaders may come and go, but Jesus Christ, the object of their faith never changes (13:8). Anyone teaching something besides faith in Jesus Christ was not to be followed, because salvation is only by God's grace, and not because of one's works (13:9).

Furthermore, the dietary restrictions of Judaism and the meat consecrated to God at the temple altar are of no spiritual benefit because we worship God at a spiritual altar, one at which Levitical priests have no right to minister (13:10). When a sin offering was made, the priest who offered that sacrifice was allowed to take that meat and eat it. However, if it was his own sin offering, or a sin offering for the entire nation, the priest could not eat it, because it represented his own sin. Instead, it was taken outside the camp and burned (13:11). Jesus, the sin offering for the whole world, was taken outside the city of Jerusalem and crucified in order to sanctify mankind through his death (13:12). Therefore, the readers should not be ashamed of Jesus Christ, but go "outside the camp" and bear his reproach, because this world is not home. Rather, we seek an eternal and enduring city (13:13), and that desire cannot be satisfied on this earth (13:14). Because of Jesus Christ's person and work, we no longer offer animal sacrifices; rather, we offer up sacrifices of praise to God by acknowledging him and what he has done for us (13:15). Our kindness and love for one another is actually a sacrifice of love to God as well (13:16). Therefore, we ought to obey and submit to the spiritual leaders that God had placed over them. These leaders had the God-ordained job of caring for their souls, and the readers were to conduct themselves so that would be a joyful responsibility (13:17).

*Closing instructions, benediction, and greetings (13:18-25)*

In closing, the author and those with him request prayer (13:18-19). In the midst of persecution, uncertainty, and difficulty, the God who gives peace is the readers' comfort. The

Father demonstrated his power by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, and the Son, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, demonstrates his power by giving his life to become the mediator of the eternal covenant (13:20). The writer prays that God would equip the readers so they can do his will, and through the cross work of Jesus Christ, be pleasing to God (13:21).

The writer acknowledges that he has been direct and forceful in dealing with his readers, and he asks for understanding and patience (13:22). Timothy has been released from prison, and the writer looks forward to the reunion (13:23). Finally, in closing, the writer sends greetings from his companions (13:24) and a final benediction (13:25).

### *To Think About:*

What is the lie we tell ourselves when we fail to show hospitality to Christian brothers and sisters? When we are sexually immoral? When we are greedy and discontent?

What is the significance of going outside the city of Jerusalem? Does this analogy have any application to us today?

What are the spiritual sacrifices that we offer to God now? How can we offer those sacrifices?

### *Praying through epistle of Hebrews:*

**For my own heart:** to live in love, purity, and contentment (13:1-5)

**For my brothers and sisters in Christ:** to equip us with everything good to do his will (13:21)

**For my church:** that WBC would not be led away by false teaching (13:9)