

We have concluded the warnings the author wrote to the Hebrew church. He assumes that they are going to stand firm and not give in to fear. He expects them to follow the example of those heroes of faith and face what is coming with faith in God and perseverance. In this last chapter, he moves on from that topic to give them a list of instructions, or we could say reminders, that describe a godly life. These instructions are one argument for the influence of the Apostle Paul on the letter. In several of Paul's letters there are lists like this one in their closing remarks (Romans 12:9-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22; 1 Corinthians 16:13-14; Colossians 4:2-6; also see 1 Timothy 5). While we know that we are saved by grace and not by obedience to a set of rules, these guidelines help us discern whether or not we are walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). They remind us of the way we should be representing Jesus to the world. They warn us when we are slipping away from our walk with Christ. While there could be an entire sermon on each of these admonitions, I'm going to try to cover them in just a couple of sermons.

The common practice of Greek writing is to put the most important item first. ¹ *Let brotherly love continue.* Hebrews 13:1 I'm sure most of you are aware that the greatest joys and greatest anguish in life come from those who are closest to you. We experience this with family, friends, and fellow believers. That is because our hearts go out to them and we expect the most from them. Because of that closeness, we have a great desire for unity. We naturally want to share the same thoughts and beliefs. But when there are differences, we can sometimes become defensive. We try to convince the other person to see things the way we do so our unity can be restored. The other party may become defensive. Then the conflict escalates as each side tries to convince the other that they are right. When it becomes emotional, it's time to back off and save the relationship (Titus 3:2).

This happens when we try to win a family member to Christ and they are resistant. We have to learn to wait on God's timing to maintain the relationship without compromising our beliefs. We have to establish boundaries in love and in hope that, with prayer, the opportunity will come at some later time. This requires compassion and trust in the Lord. Apostle Paul admonished us ¹⁸ *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.* Romans 12:18 The other person may break off the relationship because you will not give up your faith in Christ, but so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all (Mark 9:50) and strive for restoration (2 Corinthians 5:18).

When it comes to the body of Christ, we often desire that, in our interpretation of Scripture, others believe the same as we do. When it comes to the essentials of who Jesus is and what He has done for us, we cannot walk together unless we agree (Amos 3:3). But when it comes to peripheral doctrines such as end time scenarios, denominational nuances, and those things not pertaining to salvation, we are bound to have differences. We may support different parachurch ministries while other believers have reservations about them. These minor issues should never cause us to have any less love for one another. They should not cause us to break fellowship with others. If

Commented [PW1]: Romans 12:9-21 (ESV)

- ⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.
¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.
¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.
¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.
¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.
¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.
¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.
¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.
¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.
¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.
¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."
²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."
²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Commented [PW2]: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 (ESV)

- ¹² We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,
¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.
¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all ... [1]

Commented [PW3]: 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (ESV)

- ¹³ Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.
¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love.

Commented [PW4]: Colossians 4:2-6 (ESV)

- ² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.
³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ... [2]

Commented [PW5]: Galatians 5:25 (ESV)

- ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Commented [PW6]: Titus 3:2 (ESV)

- ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Commented [PW7]: Mark 9:50 (ESV)

- ⁵⁰ Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Commented [PW8]: 2 Corinthians 5:18 (ESV)

- ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

Commented [PW9]: Amos 3:3 (ESV)

- ³ "Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?"

the other party has trusted Jesus as their Savior and knows that salvation is only a work of grace received by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), they are your brother or sister. You should continue to love them as a family member. Remember, they are a part of the body of Christ. The humble attitude is to consider that the day may come when you find that it was your opinion that was wrong. When we stand before the Lord, imagine how many minor doctrines we will discover we misunderstood.

This does not mean we avoid discussing these issues or avoid looking at the differences. We should do so with an open mind to the Scriptures others share to defend their view. We should try to understand why the other person sees that doctrine differently, even if we don't agree. Keep the emotion down and always be respectful (1 Peter 3:15).

Brotherly love means we care for one another like a family. When there is an illness, it is as if an immediate family member is ill. If there is a need, we should desire to meet it. This is an area where we could use a lot of improvement. Some of you are exemplary in caring for others in the body of believers. Many of us tend to focus on our own little world. It's a big family and we have to prioritize according to the leading of the Holy Spirit, but the main issue is our heart. We must guard ourselves from selfishness (James 3:16). Loving one another is one of the most repeated commands in the New Testament (1 John 3:11; 1 Peter 1:22; Romans 13:8a; John 13:35).

² *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* Hebrews 13:2 The Greek here is *philozenia* meaning "loving strangers." The New Testament times had few inns and most that did exist were filthy or were brothels, so when believers traveled, they needed a place to stay. In the Old Testament Abraham invited three men for a meal only to discover that two were angels and the Lord (Genesis 18:1-2). Lot took in those two angels that came to Sodom to protect them from the citizens of that city (Genesis 19:1-3). Later he realized they were angels who had come to protect him. Our sister Jan had an encounter with a person who later seemed unexplainable except as an angel. We can show hospitality by inviting guests at our church to lunch. Coincidentally, Mariko and I had guests this entire week. Wouldn't it be something to find out you had an angel over for a meal! Since angels are sent to aid those who are heirs of salvation, you are the one who will end up with a blessing (Matthew 10:42).

The spirit behind this admonition is to be open and empathetic to the needs of others around us. While I don't encourage giving to every person with a sign on a street corner, we need to stay open to those tugs of the Holy Spirit. My wife and I will often invite Japanese tourists over as a gesture of kindness. It often leads to an opportunity to share the gospel with them. Hospitality is an expression of the fruit of the Spirit referred to as kindness (Galatians 5:22). Apostle Peter gives the same admonition, but adds that we should show that hospitality without grumbling (1 Peter 4:9).

Perhaps the greatest reason to be hospitable to others is found in what Jesus taught.

³⁵ *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was*

Commented [PW10]: Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Commented [PW11]: 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Commented [PW12]: James 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

Commented [PW13]: 1 John 3:11 (ESV)

¹¹ For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

Commented [PW14]: 1 Peter 1:22 (ESV)

²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

Commented [PW15]: Romans 13:8 (ESV)

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other,

Commented [PW16]: John 13:35 (ESV)

³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Commented [PW17]: Genesis 18:2-3 (ESV)

² He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth

³ and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.

Commented [PW18]: Genesis 19:1-3 (ESV)

¹ The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth

² and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square."

³ But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

Commented [PW19]: Matthew 10:42 (ESV)

⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

Commented [PW20]: Galatians 5:22 (ESV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Commented [PW21]: 1 Peter 4:9 (ESV)

⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

a stranger and you welcomed me, Matthew 25:35 Jesus was teaching that when we stand before Him as judge, He will tell those who He does not know to depart from Him for they refused to feed, clothe, and welcome Him when He was a stranger. Those who are being judged ask when they refused to help Him. He tells them that whenever they did it to the least, they did it to Him. But to those who did help others, He tells them that He considers their kindness as having been done for Him personally. That is even a greater motivation than entertaining an angel! If you want to serve Christ, serve those in need around you.

³ *Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.* Hebrews 13:3 This is the natural outworking of the first two admonitions but it came with an extra risk. When the letter was written, some believers were imprisoned for refusing to acknowledge Caesar as lord. Rome did not feed prisoners. Loved ones or friends were expected to bring them their needs for survival. To remember them did not only mean to pray for them, but to go and bring them their needs. You could end up in prison with them as one of those people who would only call Jesus "Lord." While we rarely find ourselves put in danger of imprisonment, this is telling us to be willing to suffer loss for standing in Christian love with those who are attacked.

The Benham brothers had a show on HGTV about restoring homes. When they would not declare homosexuality was honorable and support gay marriage, their show was cancelled. Now another couple is being attacked because the pastor of the church they attend preached that homosexuality was sin. The couple in the show never declined to work for a gay couple or made any personal statements about homosexuality. It was just the media going after Christians for not agreeing with them on this issue. The Benham brothers did interviews standing with the couple and explaining to anyone who would listen that Biblical guidelines were for our good so that our lives could be blessed. We don't hate people, but we won't back down from the declaration of the Word. Sin is sin, whether it is lying, adultery, or homosexuality. Calling sin a sin is considered by many to be hate speech. The thought police are ready to destroy a person's livelihood for not agreeing with them. Before long they'll be digging through pastors' sermons to find out if we believe Romans chapter one and fining us for not agreeing with the culture. We need to stand together for truth (John 16:2).

We are to also remember those who are mistreated. That covers a lot of territory. Throughout the Scriptures, the God of the Bible is for the poor, the helpless, the widow, the orphan, and those with disabilities. James calls helping widows and orphans "true religion" (James 1:27). God is with the hurting and the weak, and with those who cry out to Him for justice. Since we are His children, we should have the same heart. I've caught flack before for telling an employer he was being cruel to his employee who was simply doing the right thing. I've given some stern looks to young people who were being cruel to someone because of their appearance. Stand with the mistreated. That is God's heart. And when you stand up for them and help them, the Lord considers it done to Him personally.

Commented [PW22]: John 16:2 (ESV)

² They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.

Commented [PW23]: James 1:27 (ESV)

²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

⁴ Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Hebrews 13:4 God has given us the sacred institution of marriage. The lifelong union of one man and one woman is the foundation of a healthy society, for it is the bedrock of a stable home, and stable homes make up healthy cities, which make up strong nations. When marriage crumbles, society will eventually break down. It happened in Rome. It is happening in America. I love to hear people applaud when a couple tells how long they have been married. We applaud because we all know that usually takes hard work and sacrifice to make it through the differences and difficulties of life. The applause is an expression of the honor of marriage. How many of you have been married for more than 40 years?

Please don't be under condemnation if you failed (Romans 8:1). There are biblical reasons for divorce. We fail, but we get back up and grow in Christ and learn to die to ourselves. We should not excuse divorce, but neither should we condemn those who have divorced unless we want our own lives judged as harshly, for the measure you use to others will be measured out to you (Matthew 7:2). All sin is rebellion against God. Because we have failed doesn't mean we quit and remain under condemnation (Romans 8:1). That is where Satan would like to keep us. We repent and move on, determined that by the grace of God we will not fail again.

Next to financial stresses, unfaithfulness is high on the list of the causes of divorce. That is what the author is referring to when he writes that the marriage bed should be undefiled. It is very hard for a relationship to recover from adultery. I've seen a few recover by the grace of God, but it is rare. When trust is broken it is very hard to restore. I've seen a spouse realize their mistake and try to return only to find out it was too late. The author says God has promised to judge the sexually immoral and adulterer. That is not only because the actions violate God's will for us, but also because it takes advantage of others for our own personal satisfaction.

I've seen men forsake their families for a fling, and rarely do those flings last long. **Imagination is something that must be brought under submission to the Holy Spirit.** God has given human beings a sexual drive. It is to be enjoyed within the confines of marriage. But when we remove God's boundaries, we find it destructive to our homes and our own souls (1 Corinthians 6:18). Those passions unrestrained can become a god that is more like a slave driving task master than a god of pleasure (John 8:34). To think adultery will not be judged is to ignore the judgment we already see in broken homes, discouraged lives, children that are insecure, and damaged churches. These are the devastating consequences God is warning us about, not to mention the judgment to come (Ephesians 5:5-6).

The last admonition we will look at today is as helpful to the poor as it is for the wealthy. ⁵ *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."* ⁶ *So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"* Hebrews 13:5-6 Here is another Pauline expression (1 Timothy 6:10). Paul wrote to Timothy that the love of money was the root of all kinds of evil. Note that this is not money itself, but like most

Commented [PW24]: Matthew 7:2 (ESV)

² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

Commented [PW25]: Romans 8:1 (ESV)

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Commented [PW26]: 1 Corinthians 6:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

Commented [PW27]: John 8:34 (ESV)

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

Commented [PW28]: Ephesians 5:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Commented [PW29]: 1 Timothy 6:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

physical things, it is the *love of it* that causes the problem. We can love all kinds of physical things, but the one that seems to be the greatest attraction to the heart of fallen man is the love of money, for with it we can obtain the things of the world. We often think of it as security. That is a lie, for it can be devalued instantly, but we fall for it nevertheless. Jesus warned us of this problem too. In His sermon on the mountain He said we cannot serve (which is to worship) God and money (Matthew 6:24). Or as Bob Dillan sang, "You gotta serve somebody." We were made to worship, and if we don't worship God, we'll find something else to worship, like money.

Money is so tempting an object of worship because it seems so powerful. It has the power to influence people. It can obtain goods. In reality, it is just paper that man has placed his faith in. Sure, it is backed by governments, but governments rise and fall. Confederate currency is only worth something as a collector's item. When Germany was undergoing rapid devaluation of their currency, it took a wheelbarrow of it to buy a loaf of bread. Now we just print bills with bigger denominations. Nations are already setting goals as to when to move to a cashless society where a computer chip replaces currency. India, Australia, Norway, Belgium, and South Korea have set their schedule for conversion to digital money.¹ Some U.S. banks no longer take paper currency. But money is not just paper or coin, it is the value a nation places on a goods and services, regardless if that value is represented by paper or digital bytes. Isn't it fascinating that money will eventually be nothing but a number, a digital record on a computer. That should tell us something about the nature of it. Solomon said wealth has wings and flies away (Proverbs 23:4-5).

Instead of loving money, we are to be content with what we have (Philippians 4:11). Advertisers sure don't like that message. While traveling in the third world, you can see the contented smiles on the faces of hard working farmers who have just enough rice to make it through to the next harvest. They don't have all our advertising feeding their desire for more. Before long the object we prized ends up in the recycle bin as we pay more for the next upgraded gadget. The cell phone phenomenon is amazing, isn't it? Everyone has to have the latest one. Doesn't the one you first bought work? Sure, but it doesn't take 20-megabyte 3D photos, or store enough songs, or whatever the latest one does.

The greatest contentment is found in the Lord's presence in our lives (1 Tim 6:6). If you have Him, you have everything. He will never leave or forsake us! And if He is with you, what can man do to you? They can only do what He allows. You have the greatest body guard and provider anyone can have. The great difference is He knows what to allow you to endure for your good and His eternal glory. We never need to fear.

Here are our first five admonitions: 1. Don't stop expressing brotherly love. 2. Be hospitable to strangers. 3. Remember the prisoner and those who suffer. 4. Honor the sacred union of marriage. 5. Stay free from the love of money by being content with Jesus. We do these things not to be saved, but because we are saved. We must choose to practice these instructions because of the love of Christ in us. God gives us opportunities to live these commands for our good and His glory.

Commented [PW30]: Matthew 6:24 (ESV)

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Commented [PW31]: <http://www.investopedia.com/slide-show/countries-are-going-cashless/>

Commented [PW32]: Proverbs 23:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.

⁵ When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.

Commented [PW33]: Philippians 4:11 (ESV)

¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

Commented [PW34]: 1 Timothy 6:6 (ESV)

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain,

Questions

- 1 Review: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22; 1 Corinthians 16:13-14; Colossians 4:2-6
- 2 How can we live out the first instruction?
- 3 How should we discuss differences?
- 4 How can we practice the second admonition?
- 5 What is the best reason to be hospitable?
- 6 How can we live the third admonition?
- 7 Why is the fourth admonition so important?
- 8 How do we live the fifth admonition?
- 9 How can we find contentment in any circumstance?
- 10 Review these five instructions. Why do we obey them?

Commented [PW35]: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 (ESV)

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¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.
¹⁶ Rejoice always,
¹⁷ pray without ceasing,
¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit.
²⁰ Do not despise prophecies,
²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good.
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Commented [PW36]: 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (ESV)

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Commented [PW37]: Colossians 4:2-6 (ESV)

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