

Hebrews 13:15-28

Final Instructions, Prayer & Close

June 28, 2026

- Today we will conclude our study of the book of Hebrews. I took some time to reflect on the book and wanted to share some of my thoughts.
- Hebrews in my Bible is only 10 pages. It is a short 13 chapters, yet it is deep with theological teaching.
- It is so well written, so well organized, such depth and theological density carefully scripted in every sentence.
- It is a masterpiece of literature that had to take weeks or months to write.
- You can feel the authors conviction, urgent concern for the Hebrew Christians and the love he has for the people.
- He put his heart, mind and soul into making this letter complete, covering every important area of concern to their faith and doctrine of Christian convictions.
- The supremacy of Jesus is the subject of the book.
- It “connects the dots” of the temple, priest and blood of the Law and Old Covenant and the New Covenant with Jesus as our high priest.
- We don’t know the author, but you can see the influence of Paul. You can see his words jump off the pages of the text.
- Faith is the common thread resulting in righteousness from the Old Covenant and the New Covenant
- It covers every relationship we experience in this life. God, His Son and the Spirit, Spouse and Family, Other People, and Material things.
- It is a book of encouragement, instruction, warning and doctrine. It is a necessary book in the canon. Hebrews and the writings of Paul compliment, build and complete God’s redemption story. They plainly reveal the mystery and divine plan God has for man. From the creation of the world in Genesis, to Jesus’ death and resurrection, to the church and instructions to how then shall we live.
- I hope you have enjoyed this study as much as we have and have grown deeper in your knowledge, understanding and relationship with Jesus.

Today we will pick up with the last two of 8 final instructions.

- The authors closing benediction and final greeting.

Remember, the author sets up this last section of his letter in the last two verses of Hebrews 12.

Hebrews 12:28-29 ²⁸Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God **acceptable worship**, with reverence and awe, ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire.

- To you Hebrew Christians who are suffering because of your faith in Jesus, be grateful for we have a “kingdom that cannot be shaken.”
- No city, no temple or no earthly alter can compete with the grace we have in Jesus.
- Let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe.
- He is saying, **“since we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken” let us live in this way.** And he concludes his letter with final instructions. These are not new or additional instructions, but they are specific actions and ways to live in their community. They describe how to live a life reflecting “acceptable worship” in everything they do. It provides clear instructions and answers the question, so then, How are we to live.
- We concluded last week with a challenge in verse 13-14 to “Go to Him.” Verse 13, **“Go to Christ outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured.”** This was not a pleasant ask, but a forbidding challenge. Just as on the Day of Atonement the sin offering was taken outside the gate, away from God’s presence in the temple to be burned completely.
- Jesus was our sin offering, taken outside the city “to sanctify the people through His own blood.” The Hebrew Christians are instructed to “go to Him.” To gain Christ, to share in His suffering and to die to ourselves.
- In verse 14 he says, **“For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.”** – Our hope is NOT in Jerusalem, the temple and the priestly sacrifices. Our hope is in Christ and a city to come.” We studied in Hebrews 11 that by faith Abraham went out to find the promised place of inheritance but was an alien in a foreign land. Verse 10 says, “he was looking for a heavenly city, a city which has no foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” We seek the heavenly city that is to come where Jesus will rule and reign forever.

- The author is calling these Hebrew Christians, challenging them to “go outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured.” He is calling them to pick up their cross and follow Him.
 - In the last two weeks in covering the first 14 verses, we picked up 6 instructions as to how to worship God in our lives.
1. Verse 1, Worship by loving one another
 2. Verse 4, Worship by honoring our marriage
 3. Verse 5, Worship by putting our trust in God, keeping our life free from the love of money
 4. Verse 7, Consider the outcome of the lives of leaders that spoke the word of God to you and imitate their FAITH – It is by faith that we are made righteous. It is by faith that we overcome death. It is by faith that we have a perfect high priest.
 5. Verse 9, Do not be led away by false teaching, but worship Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday and today and forever.
 6. Verse 13, Go to Him. Count the cost and gain Christ.

Today we will pick up at verse 15.

Hebrews 13:15-16 ¹⁵Through Him then let us CONTINUALLY offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, THAT IS, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. ¹⁶Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

- Here in verses 15 and 16 the author instructs us to offer sacrifices. Where the Jew would initially think of the traditional sacrificial offering at the temple, in the author’s final instructions, he describes two sacrifices that are pleasing to God.
- The sacrifice no longer involves the bloodshed of animals, but the Lord desires the “fruit of lips that acknowledge His name and to do good to others sharing what you have.”
- Our worship is to praise and acknowledge His name. Testimony is a central part of our worship service where we proclaim the great things God has done in our lives.
- How often are we to do this? CONTINUALLY. If you feel the Spirit leading you to share a testimony.

- If you feel your heart beating and an urge to stand up. Please add to our worship and give praise to His name.
- You have a safe place to practice testifying to the work God has done in your life in this service.
- So that, your testimony will also be “on your lips continually” sharing the goodness of God in your life in a genuine, authentic and appropriate way with the people you live and work with every day.

So many Scriptures in the Old Testament and New Testament encourage us to praise God. – LISTEN TO THESE WITH YOUR HEART.

Psalm 106:1-2 Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!² Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord, or declare all his praise?

I Peter 2:9⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Isaiah 12:4-5 "Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that His name is exalted."

Psalm 145:4-7 "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts."

After Jesus healed the naked demon possessed man on the hill. The man wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus said:

Luke 8:39 "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you."

Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God.

The second instruction included in this sacrifice of praise is given in Hebrews 13:16.

Hebrews 13:16 ¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

What does it mean to do good and to share what you have? I think it goes beyond his instructions given in verse 2 of this chapter that tell us to show hospitality to strangers and remember those who are in prison. I think “doing good” can take many forms. **Philippians 2:4** says “⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

- I think doing good is a posture or having the attitude to always consider the interests of others. If we do not consider the interest of another person, how are we even to know what to do that is good.
- Let me acknowledge something that I have said many times and perhaps you have also said to someone who is in a situation of need. We say, **“let me know if there is anything I can do for you.”**
- Now we shift the burden to them. If someone’s car was broken down, would we be “doing good” if we asked instead,

“Is there anywhere you need to be that I can drive you?” - You could offer to get them an UBER, but how much better if you sacrificed your time and shared 30 minutes or an hour in the car with this person?

- A couple weeks ago Mary Diamond was moving to new home and was in need of help unpacking and setting up her new home. Amy declared, **“We’re coming to help you”** and recruited Corey, Beverly and Julie to come. They unpacked the boxes, set up the kitchen, and organized the pantry.

THAT IS HOW WE WORSHIP. HOW WE DO GOOD AND LOVE ONE ANOTHER. THIS IS ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP AND OUR SCRIPTURE SAYS THIS IS PLEASING TO GOD.

We have received 8 ways to worship with our individual lives. Now the author give us ecclesiastical instruction. Instruction for the church.

Hebrews 13:17 ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- Back in verse 7 it says the leaders are those who spoke the Word of God to you. These would be those who teach the Word of God and have been appointed as Elders in leading the church.
- “Obey your leaders and submit to them.” Peter tells us what this looks like and gives us additional details.

I Peter 5:1-4 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² **shepherd the flock of God that is among you**, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when **the chief Shepherd** appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

- The Elders are responsible for shepherding the flock. To care for the “flock,” the congregation of the church. Not yielding the authority given by God over the people, not doing it for “shameful gain” – such as for prestige, or power or financial gain. Not domineering, but modeling Christ.
- He instructs the congregation to “submit to them” - because the Elders submit to the Chief Shepherd.
- Our text says, “They are keeping watch over your souls.” Keeping watch is the same Greek word as “watchmen” on the city walls. Looking out for danger coming in and watching for problems within. They are not on the wall to be seen and lifted up or to get a great view of the scenery. They are put on the wall to “watch over your souls, **those the leaders will have to give account.**”
- It is a big responsibility to accept the position of leader in the church. I can tell you that each of the Elders at VCC have been assigned members of the church. If you are a member, you should have received an email from an Elder with a request to submit some basic information.

- The Scripture tells us we will be held accountable for your souls. If you don't know who is assigned to you, see one of the elders and we can help you.
- We are accountable to God for shepherding the flock. For every word of counsel we give, every rebuke we offer and every word we teach. Especially to our children. (Mike, Margaret & so many volunteers. I am so pleased with the volunteers and believe our children are being shepherded well and taught the Word of God.)
- Are we presenting the Word of God in a way that is equipping you to go outside the gate? The question for those of us who teach:
 - Are we giving you the tools you need to live out your faith as instructed in this text?
- Verse 17 adds, **“Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”** – Members of the church have the potential to make the leaders glad or to make them groan. Those that follow the teaching of the Word give joy; and those that resist the teaching of the Word cause groaning.
- We can look to some of Paul's letters to the churches in Philippi and Corinth to see the Philippians that accepted his instruction and brought joy and the Corinthians who resisted his instruction made him groan.

Philippians 1:3-5 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.Later in chapter 4 He addressed them “My beloved brethren, my JOY my crown”

2 Corinthians 2:4 For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

- Paul is referring to his “severe letter” or “painful letter” of admonition sent to the Corinthians.
- We are called to submit to our leaders, to heed their instruction or they and their instruction will be of no advantage to us.

Now the author adds to his instruction to Obey your Leaders.

Hebrews 13:18-19 Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. ¹⁹ I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

- Here you can see the humility of our author as he requests the congregation pray for him. He asks them to pray for a “clear conscience” and that he would “desire to act honorably in all things.” A clear conscience and desire to act honorably in all things are paramount to Christian leadership.
- I assure you that WE also desire and need your prayers to know we are doing the right things, to act honorably in all things, for protection from the evil and encouragement. Satan enjoys nothing more than when he is able to take out a pastor, leader or elder of a church.
- On a number of occasions, Bert Keller tells me he is praying for me and I sincerely appreciate all your prayers.
- In verse 19 he expresses his sincere desire for their prayers so they can be together sooner.
- We live in a digital society and communicating through Luep, email or text is convenient, but nothing is better than being together face to face.

We now come to the first of two endings. First a benediction or prayer and then final greetings and we will wrap up Hebrews.

- We often close by praying that the main points of the Scripture be received and incorporated into our lives. Listen how the author closes his message, praying for those Hebrew Christians that he is writing.

Hebrews 13:20-21 ²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us^[b] that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

- In this brief prayer, the author targets many themes that have run through his letter.
- “Now may the God of peace.” He is the God of peace because He reconciled us to Himself through the blood of Jesus.

- He is the God of peace because through Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection we are saved from His judgment and wrath.
- He is the God of peace because we have a great shepherd who is our high priest
- He is the God of peace because our debt is paid, we have an eternal covenant sealed with His blood.
- Through His grace, His Word, and His Spirit, we have overcome death and are equipped to do His will. To worship Him through our lives and make sacrifices that are pleasing to Him.
- It is all because of Jesus and may He receive all glory forever.

Final Greetings

Hebrews 13:22-25²²I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.²³You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon.²⁴Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings.²⁵Grace be with all of you.

- After taking them to the theological heights regarding the supremacy of Jesus as their high priest. He ends as a pastor and fellow laborer in real relationship with those he loves.
- He ends with a final pastoral message and appeal. "Brothers," friends whom I care about. I know some of what I have said is hard to hear, but take heed, listen to the words I have written to you.
- Timothy was well known to them and he tells them the encouraging news that Timothy had been released from prison. Apparently, Timothy is expected to come to the author and the two of them will journey together to visit the Hebrew Christians. Timothy was the cohort and ministry partner to Paul, so this provides a strong connection to Paul.
- Greet the Elders and the whole congregation. "Those who come from Italy also send you greetings." The early Christian church was well connected. They had great affection for each other and were unified in their faith. They were part of a larger kingdom facing resistance but growing together across the world.
- Would we be stronger if the global church was more unified in building the kingdom of God?

- He concludes with the salutation, “Grace be with all of you.” The letter ends with where our faith ultimately rests, not in human effort, but in God’s grace.

So What? We have been studying Hebrews for 9 months.

- What have we learned?
- Do we have a better understanding of Hebrews?
- Can we say with greater faith and conviction that we understand God's plan for redemption?
- Has this study inspired or encouraged you?
- How has this study changed you?

Let me recall some of our journey as I close.

- Remember Mitchell's Star Wars opening in chapter 1 verse 1?...Long ago God spoke to our Fathers, the prophets but now He has spoken to us through His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things.
- Jesus is the creator of the world, the radiance of the Glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature and he upholds the universe by the word of His power. **JESUS IS THE CENTER OF OUR STUDY.**
- His work is complete and He is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is our high priest. He is superior to all created beings and is greater than all who have come before Him.
- God bore witness to His divinity by signs and wonders and by the gift of the Holy Spirit given to all who believe. He chose to leave His throne and to leave His glory for a little while to come as a man, to live a perfect life, fulfill the prophecies, suffer and die for our sins outside the gate. He overcame death to become our High Priest and giving eternal life to those who accept His sacrifice and have faith in His resurrection. Hebrews 2:3 says, "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" We won't escape.
- We are to protect and nurture our faith so that we don't drift, doubt, fall away or reject our faith.
- Rejecting Christ and living in willful disobedience offends the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is just and His character requires judgement. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. For our God is a consuming fire.
- It is faith that give us assurance of overcoming death. It is faith that gives us conviction to stand firm in the midst of trials to become sanctified.

- So let us run from every sin that clings to us. Let us run with endurance the life that is set before us.
- We have a kingdom that cannot be shaken!
- Since we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us worship Him in our life and through our life. Let us worship God in every relationship and in everything that we encounter in this life.

A Final Summary of Instructions given to the Hebrews to be lived out in a spirit of worship in our lives.

1. Let us worship by loving one another
2. Let us worship Him by honoring our marriage and in our family.
3. Let us express our worship by putting our faith and trust in God, keeping our lives free from the love of money and material things.
4. Remember those who spoke the Word of God to us and imitate their faith.– Let us be the next generation that continually speaks the Word of God to others.
5. Do not be led away by false teaching. Satan will use every trick in the book to draw us away from the truth and take us down. But we know the truth, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
6. We will “Go to Him.” Count the cost and gain Christ.
7. We will worship Him by making sacrifices of praise to Him. We will let the fruit of our lips declare the excellency of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.
8. Let us worship Him by “doing good to others.” We receive His love, and when we reflect His love to others by caring for them, serving them and loving them, we are His ambassadors.

Lastly, As a congregation we are called to submit to our leaders who watch over us and are accountable for our souls.