Hebrews 13:1-25

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Hebrews 13:1–25*** (ESV)  
**1** Let brotherly love continue. **2** Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. **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. **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. **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?”* **7** Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. **8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. **9** Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. **10** We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. **11** For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. **12** So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. **13** Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. **14** For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. **15** Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. **16** Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. **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. **18** 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.

**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 that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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

1. Why is brotherly love in the faith important at this specific time (based on prior context)?

Being persecuted by their former leaders in faith most likely caused many divisions amongst those with faith. For those who remained with faith in Yeshua, their bond must now be stronger than ever before.

1. Who do you think the “strangers” are from Heb 13:2? What are the implications for us today?

The strangers could possibly be non-believers who live in proximity to those being written to, but they could also possibly be migrant believers who are traveling to and from specific regions of the world. They need the love and support from fellow believers, no matter where they came from. They could have even been believers who were imprisoned for their faith that they did not personally know.

For us today, it is an admonition to be kind and loving to all, even those who are total strangers. This takes effort. Especially in a culture where “personal distance” is the norm.

1. Where else in scripture has hospitality led to an interaction with a divine being?

Genesis 18 – Abraham serves YHWH and two others.

Genesis 19 – Lot served the two angels of YHWH, giving them shelter and unleavened bread!

Matthew 25 – When we serve others, we serve Yeshua.

1. What is the other equally plausible translation of “angel” and how might that change our understanding of Heb 13:2? For examples, look at Mark 1:2-4, Luke 7:24, Luke 9:51-52, James 2:25.

***Mark 1:2–4*** (ESV)  
**2** As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send **my messenger** before your face, who will prepare your way, **3** the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’ ” **4** **John appeared**, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

***Luke 7:18–24*** (ESV)  
**18** **The disciples of John** reported all these things to him. And John, **19 calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord,** saying, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” …  
**24** When **John’s messengers** had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

***Luke 9:51–52*** (ESV)  
**51** When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. **52** And **he sent messengers** ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him.

***James 2:25*** (ESV)  
**25** And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received **the messengers** and sent them out by another way?

***Joshua 2:1*** (ESV)  
**1** And Joshua the son of Nun **sent two men** secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.

The Greek **angelos** (as well as the Hebrew **mal’ak**) simply means “*messenger*”. Sometimes a messenger from God is a divine being, but other times it is simply person sent by God (or sent by someone else).

The author could simply be saying that sometimes God sends people into our lives for a purpose, so we should treat all people with love since they could be sent from God to us for a particular purpose.

1. Consider “the body” spoken about in Heb. 13:3 as well as the call to reach out to those in prison. What “body” is he referring to here and what specific type of prisoner is the author calling for us to care for?

The author says the readers “also are in the body”, implying that the prisoners are part of the same body. This seems to refer the “body of the Messiah”, indicating that the prisoners were believers and most likely in prison as a direct result of their faith. The community is being called to remember them by bringing them food, water, clothing, etc. If provisions weren’t brought to prisoners, they received nothing, so it was important that these believers were still taken care of despite their imprisonment. This isn’t to say that we shouldn’t reach out to people in prison that are there due to their crimes, but this is specifically tailored to those who are in jail because of their faith.

1. Heb 13:3 says “let marriage be held in honor among all.” Why? Is this just about maintaining sexual purity or is he speaking to the value of marriage itself? Consider 1 Tim 4:1-4 and 1 Cor 7:1. How do you reconcile this with Paul’s comments in 1 Cor 7:25-40?

***1 Timothy 4:1–4*** (ESV)  
**1** Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, **2** through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, **3** **who forbid marriage** and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. **4** **For everything created by God is good**, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,

***1 Corinthians 7:1*** (ESV)  
**1** Now concerning the matters **about which you wrote**: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”

The Corinthians has apparently written to Paul stating it was good to abstain from sexual relations (even for those who were married). Paul counters that in the remainder of the chapter. In Ephesus also, where Timothy was ministering, there was clearly some false teaching that forbid marriage. So here in Hebrews it seems too that apparently there was either some false teaching or at least a perception among some people that it was more spiritual to be celibate. Both Paul and the author of Hebrews counter that deception with the truth. God created marriage. It is good. Let marriage be held in honor among all. One is not more spiritual, either in marriage or in singleness.

***1 Corinthians 7:25–40*** (ESV)  
**25** Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. **26** I think that **in view of the present distress** it is good for a person to remain as he is. **27** Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. **28** But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. **29** This is what I mean, brothers: t**he appointed time has grown very short**. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, **30** and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, **31** and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. **For the present form of this world is passing away. 32 I want you to be free from anxieties.** The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. **33** But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, **34** and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. **35** I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. **36** If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. **37** But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. **38** So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better. **39** A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. **40** Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

Remember that this chapter was written to counter their erroneous statement that is was better not to have sexual relations, even in marriage. Paul says that is not the case, and talks about why. But he also says in this last part of the chapter that are in fact some good reasons not to marry due to the time of distress they were currently living in. The context of this passage is dealing with the stress, anxiety and uncertainty of the times dealing with increasing persecution, and the added complication that being married brings to this. It is not about marriage in general, but about being married “**in view of the present distress**”. (Also note that there is much ambiguity in 1 Cor 7. It is not clear if this is about a man and his fiancé or about a father and his virgin daughter.)

The bottom line is that Heb 13:3 is similar to I Tim 4:3 and I Cor 7:1 is that the author is seems to be countering some false teaching of the day that elevated the spiritual status of one who does not marry. This belief eventually developed into the ascetic movement which claimed it was more spiritual to deny one’s self of any pleasure. And out that the monastic movement was formed.

1. Heb 13:5 admonishes us to keep our lives “free from the love of money” and to be content with what we have. How have you found this to be difficult in our world today? Why is this admonition linked to the next phrase “for he said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”? On the surface, although a true and encouraging statement, it seems somewhat unrelated. Look at Joshua 1:3-9, which is being quoted in this verse

***Joshua 1:3–9*** (ESV)  
**3** Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon **I have given to you, just as I promised** to Moses. **4** From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. **5** No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. **I will not leave you or forsake you.** **6** **Be strong and courageous**, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. **7** Only **be strong and very courageous**, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. **8** This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. **9** Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and courageous**. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, **for YHWH your God is with you** wherever you go.”

The author points back to Joshua, showing how God was faithful in fulfilling his promise. He provided everything they needed, just as he promised he would! He told them to be strong and courageous because He was with them.  **He is all they need, and he will never leave them! The same holds true for the Hebrews (and for us)!**

Our world breeds discontent. Advertising is geared toward making us want things. Money is the ticket to getting them. It is VERY hard to keep that balance. However God blesses us, we should be content.

He is more important that anything the world has to offer. And He will never leave us. We have ALL we need in Him, and no fear of ever loosing that.

1. In Heb. 13:6, the author references Psalm 118:6. Read Psalm 118 and discuss why this is such an ideal psalm for the author to reference. If you were a Messianic believer during this time, which verse of Psalm 118 would stick out to you?

***Psalm 118*** (ESV)  
**1** Oh give thanks to YHWH, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! **2** Let Israel say, “His steadfast love endures forever.” **3** Let the house of Aaron say, “His steadfast love endures forever.” **4** Let those who fear YHWH say, “His steadfast love endures forever.” **5** Out of my distress I called on YHWH; YHWH answered me and set me free. **6** **YHWH is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?** **7** YHWH is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. **8** It is better to take refuge in YHWH than to trust in man. **9** It is better to take refuge in YHWH than to trust in princes. **10** All nations surrounded me; in the name of YHWH I cut them off! **11** They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of YHWH I cut them off! **12** They surrounded me like bees; they went out like a fire among thorns; in the name of YHWH I cut them off! **13** I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but YHWH helped me. **14** YHWH is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. **15** Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: “The right hand of YHWH does valiantly, **16** the right hand of YHWH exalts, the right hand of YHWH does valiantly!” **17** I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of YHWH. **18** YHWH has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death. **19** Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to YHWH. **20** This is the gate of YHWH; the righteous shall enter through it. **21** I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. **22** The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. **23** This is YHWH’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. **24** This is the day that YHWH has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. **25** Save us, we pray, YHWH! YHWH, we pray, give us success! **26** Blessed is he who comes in the name of YHWH! We bless you from the house of YHWH. **27** YHWH is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar! **28** You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you. **29** Oh give thanks to YHWH, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

This Psalm was often read at Sukkot. It proclaimed the coming Messiah. And they knew that! The author is reminding them that they have now experienced the Messiah. They have witnessed the promise being fulfilled.

This entire psalm is about YHWH protecting and keeping those safe who have faith in Him. Despite being rejected, attacked, and struck down, YHWH is the giver of life, salvation, and protection.

**What can man do to them?   
God will protect them as they embrace the Messiah sent for their salvation!**

1. Heb 13:7 is scary verse We are spiritual leaders. What is this saying to us?

We had better be living lives that are worthy of emulation! People will look to us as an example. They should be able to do this, according to Scripture. The outcome of our lives (the fruit) should be all the proof needed for others to desire to imitate our faith!

1. Yeshua is the same yesterday, today, and forever. But what is the context of this verse? What it the purpose of the stating this truth at this point?

It seems to introduce the next thought. There are always diverse and strange teachings. Don’t be carried away by the doctrine of the day. Yeshua is the same yesterday today and forever. Stay with his words.

1. Heb. 13:9, there is a reference to people who seem to be basing their spiritual identity upon their “devotion to foods” rather than upon God’s grace. What may be the context of this? Why does the food they are devoted to not benefit them?

There are “diverse and strange” teachings going around… These new teachings are not consistent with those of Yeshua who never changes. They somehow involve food. Perhaps regarding fasting, or abstaining from foods that are considered extravagant. This would make sense in view of the growing ascetic movement. Whatever the teaching, it seems that some people were trying to make this an identifying feature that somehow measured the spirituality of a person. They were relying on this rather than the grace of God.

Jews who put their hope in the physical food at the altar will become hungry again. Even Yeshua states this, claiming to be the Bread of Life (John 6:35). This food is not the source of their salvation and in their devotion they have lost sight of the true substance and meaning of the bread of life - Yeshua. As the author stated earlier, these sacrifices could go on forever and they would never truly rid someone of their sins. In order to find righteousness with the Father, devotion to him is priority and not religious rituals or adherence to any of the various teachings re fasting or abstaining from foods.

1. Who does “those who serve the tent” refer to? How was it that they ate from the altar?

Those who serve the tent (tabernacle) were the Levites. They received their portion from what the people offered to God. Either through tithes or through sacrifices, of which they ate a portion.

The sacrifices and offerings were considered “God’s food”, and hence the altar was considered “God’s table”. (For example Num 28:2 and Ezek 44:16)

1. The author is probably referencing the Yom Kippurim sacrifices of Exodus 29:10-14 in Heb. 13:10-13. What two parallels is the author trying to make here?

***Exodus 29:10–14*** (ESV)  
**10** “Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. **11** Then you shall kill the bull before YHWH at the entrance of the tent of meeting, **12** and shall take part of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. **13** And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and burn them on the altar. **14** But the flesh of the bull and its skin and its dung you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

First, the blood of the bull and Yeshua are slaughtered in YHWH’s presence at the altar previously spoken about. This altar (a heavenly altar) is one that the author claims those who serve the tent are not allowed to eat. The altar has blood wiped over the horns and poured into its base when referencing the bull. Similarly, the blood of Yeshua is offered in the heavenly altar for us.

Secondly, the remains of the bull are taken outside of the camp and burned as a sin offering. Yeshua, similarly, was crucified outside of the gate of Jerusalem (the “tent”). The burning of the bull is being compared to the suffering and death of Yeshua when he was crucified.

1. Looking again at Heb 13:10, how is that we have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat? Why is this such a powerful statement with which to be closing this letter to the Hebrew believers?

The priests have no right to partake in Yeshua. They have rejected him as Messiah. Yeshua was the offering to God on our behalf. He was laid on the altar for us. We that “eat of his flesh” and “drink of his blood” are eating of that spiritual altar that gives eternal life.

The priest and religious leaders of the day were persecuting the Hebrew believers, urging them to give up their believe in Yeshua and come back into the traditional fold of religion. The entire letter to the Hebrews has been to give them assurance as to why they should reject this pressure. The conclusion is that these leaders, while they may preside over the earthly altar, have no right to eat of the heavenly altar. The Hebrew believers have been, in a sense, elevated to spiritual position of honor that is greater than that of the religious leaders of the day

1. Given the context of the Hebrew believers, what is the significance of Heb 13:13, “Therefore let us go to him outside the camp, and bear the reproach he endured”? Do we today sometimes still bear a similar kind of reproach from other believers?

Yeshua was rejected by his brothers, specifically the religious leadership. He was taken outside the city and killed. The Hebrew believers are now facing similar persecution, although not to the point of shedding blood. The author is telling them that they do must go outside the camp. They too are being rejected by the religious leadership, and “kicked out” of the community. There is no doubt a degree of shame and humiliation with that, just as Yeshua must have faced. But we should bear that reproach as He did.

1. If we still have an altar, then we must still make sacrifices! Since Yeshua was the one-time sacrifice for our sins, what should we be offering to YHWH at all times? (Heb. 13:15-19).

* Praise to God,
* The fruit of our lips that acknowledge Him
* Doing good
* Sharing what we have

Offering a sacrifice of praise to God, acknowledging his name, obeying and submitting to leadership, and living an honorable life, presumably seeking YHWH and his Son despite the reproach that following him can cause. Obedience to YHWH can cause great division, as we have seen throughout this letter. It can also cause suffering, either physical, emotional, or relational. Still seeking YHWH, loving Him, trusting Him, and acknowledging him despite the hardships will see that you enter his promised rest.

1. Look at Heb 13:2324. What hints do you find here re date and location?

This dates the letter to the lifetime of Timothy, apparently after a time of imprisonment. It seems he was imprisoned with Paul in 58-60 when Philippians was written, and then he ministered in Ephesus for a few years when Paul wrote to him the letters of I and II Timothy. Paul and Peter were killed by Nero in 68, so it’s possible that Timothy could have been imprisoned as well during that time. This would fit with our theory that Hebrews was written just prior to the destruction of the temple, which was in 70.

Those from Italy send their greetings. It would seem that either the letter was written TO ITALY, and the Italian believers living wherever the author was writing from were sending their greetings back home, OR the letter was written FROM ITALY and the Italian believers fellowshipping with the author was sending their greetings to the readers. My guess is that it’s the latter. Since the Hebrew readers seem to feeling strong pressure from the traditional Jewish religious leadership, my best guess is that the readers are in Jerusalem and the author is writing from Rome.

1. We did it! Do you have any final thoughts from Hebrews that you’d like to share?