

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 199

Hebrews 13

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The final chapter of the book of Hebrews combines pastoral encouragement for believers under stress and reminders about the superiority of Jesus against what their persecutors were offering. This episode wraps up our book study by highlighting how the writer blends his final appeal for faithfulness with encouragement for both the laity and the leadership in troublesome times.

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 199: Hebrews chapter 13. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how're you doing this week?

**MH:** Oh, busy. Maybe a little more harried than usual. Lots of stuff to do. Some of it we'll actually mention here. I'm beginning prep for the conference and whatnot. Just a little bit more harried than usual.

**TS:** Is there ever a time where you don't do anything, like where you actually just go on vacation and do nothing, or do you always fill your time with doing something?

**MH:** I can't remember ever doing nothing. [laughter] If nothing pops into my head, I guess the answer is no!

**TS:** I can imagine your brain would explode if it just got quiet and still. You'd probably get scared.

**MH:** I probably would. That would just be too unnerving.

**TS:** I have a hard time going to sleep because my mind is racing. It's hard to shut my brain down. Do you have that problem?

**MH:** I don't. It's like, "Well, I'm done now." [laughs]

**TS:** You get it all out during the day and then you can go to sleep because you've accomplished so much. Me, on the other hand, I'm just coming up with ideas and thinking all the time so it's hard to go to sleep.

**MH:** For me, that's usually when I'm in the shower or driving or something like that. Not so much at night, which is good.

**TS:** Well, that's good. And the pot of coffee a day for me probably doesn't help. The caffeine situation probably does not help me, which I know you don't have the coffee problem. But tea has lots of caffeine. I don't know how much tea you consume in the day, but I have a caffeine problem, Mike.

**MH:** Well, I guess I'm not real surprised. I'm good for four or five cups of tea a day, but it's nowhere near the caffeine content that I'm sure you're consuming.

**TS:** I try to shut it down early afternoon because I know how long it takes to metabolize. That's part of our problem at night—all that stuff. Anyhooo...

**MH:** [laughing] Enough with the medical report!

**TS:** Right! Mike, I want to remind everybody that this is the last episode of Hebrews. We want to ask people to email me their questions about the book of Hebrews specifically. I've already received lots of questions, but we've still got a couple weeks before that episode airs. So send me your questions at [treystricklin@gmail.com](mailto:treystricklin@gmail.com). Also, we want to remind people to go get their tickets to the Spokane Washington Naked Bible Seminar—a 3-day event that you'll be doing in Spokane March 2-4. You can get those tickets at [www.drms.com](http://www.drms.com). Look for the Spokane event.

**MH:** Yep. The right-hand side is where the calendar is, and everything is set up.

**TS:** Well, Mike, any final thoughts as we wrap up the book of Hebrews here?

**MH:** Boy, yeah—it is close! 199 and Hebrews 13, so we are done after today, other than the Q&A. I've actually gotten some email correspondence of appreciation. No haters thus far. But just about the emphasis on believing loyalty... For some reason, that is sort of striking a nerve with a number of people. I think going through Hebrews and, as it turns out, having that be kind of a drum that we're beating with some regularity... I think that's been useful.

**TS:** Yeah, I couldn't agree more. I think it's been a great book and I'm excited to see what the next book is that we'll cover. After this episode, we'll have our 200th episode. I can't believe it's our 200th! It's a milestone. Then we'll have a Hebrews Q&A and the other Q&A and then a couple of interviews and single topics. So we're probably looking at about April, I'm going to say, before we start to vote on the next book that we're going to cover. So we've got some time before we get into another book.

**MH:** Yeah, it'll be interesting. We'll come up with... We'll use some of the old ones that people voted on and toss in a new one or two and just see where people

land. Who knows? [laughs] I didn't expect Hebrews this time around. We got a clear direction there. So who knows what it'll be next time?

**TS:** It's been a good one, though. I'm glad they chose it.

5:00

**MH:** Yep. Well, let's jump into Hebrews 13 and wrap up the book here. It's a bit of a shorter chapter. There's some elements of summation and recap and clean-up that the writer is doing here, but there are a few other things that are— I don't know if I want to say "new," but little excurses that he takes that are going to be worth commenting on and talking about.

As we start, since it's not too long, I'm just going to read through the chapter and then we'll go back and jump into the first verse. So all this we've had said about remaining in the faith, keep believing, don't give up (again, the persecution context), he really starts to get more pastoral, I think, in this chapter. But we're just going to read through the whole thing and then jump back and camp at a few places. So he writes:

**Let brotherly love continue. <sup>2</sup> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. <sup>3</sup> Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. <sup>4</sup> Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. <sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> So we can confidently say,**

**"The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear;  
what can man do to me?"**

**<sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own**

**blood. <sup>13</sup> Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. <sup>14</sup> For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. <sup>15</sup> Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. <sup>16</sup> Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.**

**<sup>17</sup> 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.**

**<sup>18</sup> Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. <sup>19</sup> I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.**

**<sup>20</sup> 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, <sup>21</sup> 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.**

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

That's the end of the letter. It's pretty obvious that he strikes a pastoral tone here, which you'd expect for the end of the letter—the end of the whole thing after he's really been into a lot of deep content, in terms of what he wanted to cover here. So you have the first six verses here, and the tone is really obvious: "Let brotherly love continue." Well, why would he even mention that? Again, it's because of what he just got done saying in the 12th chapter: "Let brotherly love continue." The context, of course, is encouraging mutual support in the face of persecution, so as to help believers (people in the community) endure (that is, keep believing). But the whole section here is just sort of peppered with pastoral sorts of encouragement. Just to read through it quickly:

**Let brotherly love continue. <sup>2</sup> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. <sup>3</sup> Remember those who**

**are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. <sup>4</sup> Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. <sup>5</sup> 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.”**

And then he goes on to quote from the Old Testament:

**“The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear;  
what can man do to me?”**

10:00

All of these exhortations, in general, are about the community life and, really, things that would either threaten the solidarity of the community, threaten the testimony of the community, and in some cases, it's aimed at getting the people within the community to not surrender their faith (that familiar idea that we've seen so many times going up to this chapter). Lane has a nice summary here. I'm going to read a little excerpt from his commentary, which is the *Word Biblical Commentary*. He says:

An appeal for fraternal love (v 1), hospitality (v 2), identification with those imprisoned and mistreated (v 3), indifference to earthly possessions (v 5), and confidence in the presence of hostility (v 6) evokes the exemplary stance that the community had assumed under harsh circumstances in the past (10:32–34). Concurrently, it reiterates and gives specification to the exhortation to love and good works in 10:24...

It is important to appreciate that this was something new. In the second half of the second century the satirist Lucian of Samosata explained to a correspondent, Cronius, that the relationship among Christians is unusual; they are to regard one another as “brothers.” He illustrates his point by calling attention to the Christian attitude toward material possessions and grounds in the teaching of Jesus their willingness to share what they own with one another:

“Moreover, their original lawgiver persuaded them that they should be like brothers to one another... Therefore, they despise all things equally, and view them as common property, accepting such teachings by tradition and without any precise belief (*Peregrinus* 13).”

Lucian’s remarks indicate that an educated person in the second century was quite unprepared for the Christian notion of *φιλadelphία* [“brotherly love”] expressed in the admonition, “Keep on loving each other as brothers.” The expansion of the term to include men and women beyond the immediate family

was considered ludicrous. Ironically, Lucian's choice of the Christian attitude toward personal property to illustrate Jesus' teaching is insightful. It is precisely a willingness to share possessions unselfishly that is characteristic of the relationship among members of the same family. New perspectives concerning familial relationships will inevitably have implications for attitudes toward personal wealth (cf. 13:5).

Basically, what he's saying is that to the people of this time period kind of looking at Christian behavior, they thought it was a little bizarre because they engaged in behavior that was typically reserved for immediate family members, and they widened it to non-family members in their community. They detached themselves from interest in personal property and possessions so that they could share with fellow believers in the community, which is exactly what Hebrews is saying here. People looked at that at the time and thought, "That's just crazy!" It's not like everybody's dressing in white sheets and selling everything off and going to the top of the mountain and waiting for the Lord (for the next Harold Camping experiment). That isn't the point. That's not why it was weird. It was weird because you treated non-family members the way you would treat family—your close relatives, your immediate family. That just wasn't normal. But within the Christian community, it was normal. And if we're paying attention here to what the writer of Hebrews is saying, that ought to be normal! That ought to be the way that things are done.

So back in verse 1, he begins with this brotherly love.

**Let brotherly love continue.**

"Continue" means they've already been doing it. This isn't anything new to the Christian community. "Let brotherly love continue." The context is this mutual support in the face of persecution. You can imagine some of the issues here. What if you had believers falter? It's kind of interesting... I mention in the intro that I have my hand in a lot of projects. One of them is my next round of FringePop filming. One of the things we want to focus on is attached to the Nicene Creed. (We'll just leave it at that.) If you actually go look at the canons of Nicea (the decisions that were offered), it's striking how many of them are... There's a good 3, 4, or maybe 5 that have something to do with, "What do we do with Christian brethren who gave up the faith in the face of persecution? Or even less than that, out of convenience. How do we treat them? What do we do with them?" And you can imagine, here in the context of Hebrew (this is centuries earlier than Nicea, obviously), you're going to have the same kinds of issues.

15:00

What the writer wants to continue is brotherly love. If you stick with it, even if you have moments of weakness or whatever... If you really bail, if you really surrender the faith, if you really go back to Torah or nothing at all, then it's really difficult for you to come back to the gospel, having once abandoned it. But let's

say that happened to somebody. Let's say they came back to the faith, or let's say they had some other lapse that was lesser, but still would have been something that would have been frowned upon by the community. The writer here is saying, "Look, let brotherly love continue. You've got to stick together in these things." The opposite would be looking for occasions to pick at each other or looking for occasions to fault one another. It's precisely the opposite of what he wants them to do. And then he says:

**<sup>2</sup>Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.**

This shows a little bit about... Broadly, it's like, "Hey, don't refuse hospitality to someone because you never know." There's that feeling to it. He's drawing on obviously Old Testament precedent. The immediate referent here is going to be Genesis 18 and 19, where you have the Lord and two angels show up. They appear as men to Abraham and Sarah. It's a very familiar story. He had no idea... In fact, if you read through Genesis 18, Abraham has an inkling of who he's talking to, but we only find out from the writer of Genesis that the other two were angels when you get to chapter 19, and Abraham is not in that scene. It has this feel that he didn't know until after the fact.

So there's that as a reason why you should be hospitable. But if we read verse 2 right after verse 1, it's a general truism. You're supposed to be hospitable to strangers. It's a way of expressing the kind of brotherly love he wants in the first verse, because you also don't know whether they're believers or not. And if they're not believers, well, that's good because then you can show them how believers behave by showing hospitality. So it's not just sort of a random "Hey, let's stick in a thought about angels here." It's consistent with what it follows and what's going to be said later on.

There are other instances besides Genesis 18 and 19 that he might be thinking of. We're familiar with these. There are people in the Old Testament that run into angels or the angel of the Lord and they don't know quite what's going on or what they're dealing with. You have Gideon in Judges 6, and you've got Samson's parents in Judges 13. One of the more striking ones is actually outside the Protestant canon, and that's the book of Tobit, which they were probably familiar with because they're familiar with the Septuagint. I still think what the writer of Hebrews is angling for here is Genesis 18 and 19, in my opinion, but in Tobit you have sort of a famous episode where you have a person, Tobias, who is the son of Tobit, being accompanied by an angel on a mission or task and doesn't know it until the very end. You even have this ironic scene where the angel bids Tobias and companion a good trip, like, "Maybe an angel will greet you on the way and you'll have a safe trip." Well, he is one! It's a humorous sort of thing. So they might have been thinking of that, but I think probably the best bet is typically Genesis 18-19.

Let's go down to verse 4. We're just going to hit some things as we go through the passage. We're not going to comment on everything. Again, this is our typical approach: whatever seems to be interesting or worth commenting on. We have a comment here that is interesting, and I think that it's worth bringing up in light of a lot of the content we've talked about before in the whole book about salvation by faith and believing loyalty and whatnot. We get to verse 4 and it says:

**<sup>4</sup> Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.**

20:00

You're going to have some people... Last episode (chapter 12) we had certain things said in the chapter that people are going to hop on. They're going to say, "Look at this behavior. Surely this has something to do with salvation"—making moral behavior part of salvation. It's usually unintentionally because that's just sort of the way we're tuned to think by preaching we've heard. Or something a little bit more sinister is that you've got a redefining of the gospel with intent behind it. But here's another one of these, "Surely the writer wouldn't bring this up unless it has something to do with salvation. You would assume that the judgment he's talking about here has something to do with the person's eternal destiny." The passage never says that. Of course God is going to judge sin! "Be sure your sin will find you out," and that kind of thing. Of course God is going to judge sin—unbelievers and believers alike! But sexual morality isn't the gospel. It's not an element... It's not a component of the recipe (if we can say that) for eternal life. The recipe for eternal life is *believe*. Believe the gospel. Salvation is based upon not what you or what you abstain from, but on what someone else did for you—namely, Jesus on the cross. So yes, God will judge sin. You will reap what you sow. There are consequences for sin. But the comment here is more about the consequences. It's not about moral achievement unto salvation. Again, we get caught in this trap because of the way we hear some of these things preached, and I think it's just another reminder. Of course God is going to take sin seriously. Of course we should live a holy life. We should not be bad testimonies and self-destructive and flipping God off with the way that we live. We should live a holy life out of gratitude for what has been done for us, and to avoid self-destruction and destroying the lives of others. There are lots of reasons why we should live a certain way. One of those is not so that we achieve enough merit to qualify for salvation. That's just not the gospel.

**...let the marriage bed be undefiled...**

Another thing I think is worth mentioning here: The point of the statement is to remain faithful to your spouse, as opposed to an endorsement of, "Hey, do anything you want in bed with your spouse!" I've never actually heard people in a sermon take it that way, but I've kind of heard it in conversation. 1 Corinthians 7



is actually more appropriate for a conversation about that sort of thing. You can go look up the passage (I'm not going to read it here). But the point here is not just sort of this endorsement of whatever you're curious about. Look, remain faithful to your spouse. Be faithful. Verse 5:

**<sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> So we can confidently say,**

**"The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear;  
what can man do to me?"**

This is very germane to the context of what he's been talking about, especially the situation that a lot of them are in. Why get into money and being content? Why get into being faithful to your spouse, and so on and so forth? You want to honor the Lord with your ethic, with your behavior, not to pile up brownie points of merit so that you'll qualify for salvation. You'll want to do this for the sake of the community, so that the community isn't struggling with sin within the community and then fighting with each other about what to do about this or that. Again, you want to do it for the sake of the community and for the sake of gratitude for what the Lord has done for you—all these things we've mentioned before. This one gets into that, and in a more practical way (because it just applies more broadly), make sure you share what you have. It's a simple idea. He's not saying it to make sure that Christians don't have too much fun. "Free your life from the love of money... we don't want you to have too much fun!" No. It's really not even to prevent excess. "Don't earn too much." It's not even that. Really, the point is, don't rely on your own resources, and make sure that you share your resources. Be willing to part with what you have for the good of other believers. Because some of them, frankly, are just going to need it. You go back to chapter 10 and earlier places in the epistle, and they have suffered loss. They've had their property taken. There are other references to different kinds of persecution. Some of them are just going to need what you have, and you ought not give it a second thought. You ought not love it too much that you hang onto it at the expense of someone else—of another believer. That's really what he's getting at. It's not some sort of diatribe.

This is sort of a pet-peeve of mine, but people will take statements like this and Acts 2 and they'll say, "This is an endorsement of socialism or communism, or it's a jab against capitalism—having over a certain amount." It's not that at all. The writer is not thinking about political theories about wealth-creation or self-reliance or empowering the state over the individual. It's just not in the picture at all. It's much more practical. The point is love for those in the community, because they're just going to need it. You're going to have people who need what you have, and you're the stop-gap for them, the times being what they are and the

25:00

circumstances we're all in. Don't get so attached to these things. And then, even more so, don't rely on them, even for yourself, because the Lord has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." "What can man do to me?" This is why he quotes these Old Testament passages. Don't get too attached to them yourself because the tables could be turned, and then you would be the one in need. You never know because of times being what they were in the epistle and the context of what he's writing. Verse 7:

**<sup>7</sup>Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.**

What's interesting here, at least to my eye, is it doesn't say "consider their way of life." It says, "consider the outcome of their way of life." There are a couple possibilities here, and I think they're all interesting, as far as what might be going on here—what might be what the writer is angling for here. The word is ἐκβασις, which can really be translated to go on one of three trajectories. These are all from BDAG.

1. It can refer to the end-point of a duration, like the end of a process or the end of something that's been ongoing. If you look at it that way, then the writer would be saying, "Consider how their life ended" (your leaders). "Consider how your leaders' life ended." In other words, they remained in faith, and therefore, imitate their faith. That could be what his point is.
2. It could be referring to the specific outcome of an event or state of being. If that's what we're supposed to think, then essentially what the writer is saying with respect to your leaders is, "Consider how their situation turned out." In other words, consider how God met their needs—the outcome of it. They endured, they kept the faith, and the Lord delivered them. Consider how their situation turned out, and therefore, imitate their faith. Imitate them.
3. It could refer to the way out, specifically, of some difficulty—the actual way out. If that's what we're supposed to think about here, the writer would be saying, "Consider what the solution that God provided was. Think about how God got them out of that situation. Consider the things that used to deliver them. And then imitate their faith, realizing that God can do the same for you."

My guess is we don't have to land any one place here—that all of these things are in play—but I just thought it was interesting that he doesn't say, "consider their way of life." It says, "consider the *outcome* of their way of life." So either it points to a happy ending (and God was in that and God can do the same thing for you), or it could be a terrible ending. Maybe they died under persecution, but they never recanted. They never gave up the faith. He's already talked previously

in the letter (especially Hebrews 11) that what's awaiting them is far superior to the life they had here. So it could be any of these things. It's just kind of interesting language and an interesting way of expressing that.

Let's go down to verse 9. Here he gets into some familiar territory.

**<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> We have an altar from which those who serve the tent [probably a reference to priests] have no right to eat.**

We're on the Lord's side here. We're on the side of the work of Christ. We're on the cross side here. And if you're doing that other thing over there (that Torah stuff or some ritualistic dependence), then you're just not on the right side. We have our own altar here—the one that was the cross—from which those who are serving in the tent doing the Torah stuff thinking they're going to merit salvation... They don't have a right to eat from our altar. He's using the language of sacrifice here.

**<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. <sup>13</sup> Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.**

30:00

Our own altar is out there. It's outside the camp. It's something totally, utterly different than the Torah-language here. There's some discussion here among commentators about "diverse strange teachings." If you take the line there in verse 9 and sort of consider it with the next three verses (10, 11, and 12), you get some pretty clear Torah/tabernacle/sacrificial kind of language that hearkens back to the Old Testament. It seems to be speaking pretty clearly of Judaizing. The stuff that shows up in verses 10, 11, and 12 is really too specific to Judaism for that not to be the case. Some argue that at least this verse might be about something outside Judaism like asceticism—something non-Jewish. Verse 9 could be (diverse, strange teachings), but it's the concatenation of verse 9 with 10-12 and all this pretty clear Judaism stuff that makes most commentators gravitate toward the idea that he's really targeting the Judaizing/Judaistic element that they're having to contend with.

Luke Timothy Johnson has a little excerpt here that I want to share with you. I think it's worth reading and pointing out. He writes:

But what sort of teachings are these, and who is propagating them? This historical judgment is made difficult by the multitude of possibilities. The only specific detail provided is the noun *brōma* in the plural (“foods”), which I have translated as “dietary laws” [that’s the way he translates it in his commentary] because of the context of “teaching” and because the author speaks of some “walking” (*peripatein*) in them. A concern for dietary rules—together with mention of those who worship in the tent (*skēnē*)—suggests that some form of contemporary Jewish practice and ideology is enticing some of the hearers.

Can we be more specific? Does concern for dietary regulations here stand as synecdoche for a commitment to the covenant of law? [In other words, is Paul taking this one element and expanding it out to the whole Torah?] We know that disputes over the eating of certain foods divided some early Christian communities with Jewish membership (see Mark 7:1–8; Acts 10:1–11:30; 1 Cor 8–10; Rom 14:1–23; Rev 2:14, 20). Or does “foods” here have specific reference to the sharing of food offered in sacrifice (see Lev 3:1–17; 7:11–21; Ezek 44:30–31)? Paul uses language similar to this in 1 Cor 9:13: “Do you not know that those who perform the temple service eat what belongs to the temple, and those who minister at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?” Our author also continues, “We have an altar from which those who worship in the tent have no right to eat” (Heb 13:10).

Johnson's point here is that maybe it was a specific element of Torah, maybe it's just Torah in general (we don't really know), but he gives the possibilities there. It has a very Judaistic flavor because of verses 10-12, even though the comment in verse 9 could include Gentiles or something else like that. I tend to land with the majority here—that what happens in verses 10-12 really orients our mind intentionally to having a problem with certain elements of Judaizing—trying to draw people back into the pre-cross or non-cross position of Judaism.

This is a familiar issue. I think what we need to think a little bit more about is what this sort of thing meant to the audience. We look at this and it's like, "Good grief, who cares what the Judaizers would say? Let them just take their ball and go home. Why would this even attract or trouble people who had embraced the cross?" If they run into people who are insisting on all this Torah stuff (and the implication is it's for salvation or it's the way of salvation), why would that even trouble them? Well, if they came out of that context, then what they are not doing—the things they are rejecting in favor of clinging to the cross event... They're being told that these things are actually the tickets to eternal life. If you grew up with that, it might be that it does trouble you because it's like, "What if I'm wrong? What if these things really are the tickets to eternal life and I'm cut off from them and I'm deliberately not doing these things? I'm deliberately forsaking what Moses taught." All these kinds of thoughts.

35:00

For those of you who might remember your History of Civ. class or maybe you put a little study into Church History... To me, this is sort of akin to the medieval Catholic Church, where they would excommunicate people all the time. They would put whole nations under what was called "interdict." If the king didn't do what the pope wanted, he would put his country under interdict. That means everybody in your country is excommunicated. You are cut off from things like communion, the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist. There were cases where they couldn't even get married. And you say, "Who gives a rip?" Well, they naturally gave a rip because in the Catholic Church, marriage was a sacrament. The Eucharist was certainly an issue. You couldn't get your kids baptized. Basically, if you were put under interdict, you were cut off from the means of grace. That was how it was used in medieval times—as a political tool that the church wielded rather effectively in a number of contexts (some pretty famous historical episodes). If you're putting yourself out there as the source of grace—the means of grace—and then you cut people off from those things, you're not going to do mass for them anymore. Your priests aren't going to do baptisms in that country anymore. The people are effectively cut off from heaven. They are cut off from eternal life. If they buy into that system, you're basically toast. You don't really have an alternative, because the church is telling you, "If you want eternal life, these are the things you have to do, and we're the ones who do them. We're the only ones that are authorized to do them. So when we say 'jump,' you should say 'how high?' otherwise you're just cut off!"

The situation is kind of akin to the Judaizing threat. If you came from this sort of background where, "We're Jews. We're elect. We have circumcision. We have the Torah. We have this, that, and the other thing that we're supposed to do now to honor the true God." If you have some of those people coming back to you and telling you, "Look, if you don't get rid of this Jesus thing and you don't come back to this, you're done, because we are God's people. We are Yahweh's people. This is what your Old Testament is about. If you're not part of us, you're not going to be with the Lord when you die. This is salvation right here." Again, if you grew up with that and were used to that, it's going to have meaning. It is going to be a serious thing to think about. You are going to sort of check your thoughts to make sure you're making the right decision. It was a serious sort of thing, and the writer of Hebrews is trying to remind them *again*.

He's just spent twelve chapters talking about the superiority of Christ and how the Old Testament leads to Christ—how what God was doing in the Old Testament led up to this point—this person, this sacrifice. He's gotten into the logic and rationale of why it's superior. He has even referenced the historical events of the cross and the resurrection to validate it. He spent twelve whole chapters telling them that what they have is so much better, because he needs to do that. Not only do they have enemies of different varieties, they've got one special sort of problem going on here—this Judaizing element trying to get them to give up their faith and come back to a merit-based system of Torah. If that was their original context, you'd better believe that's going to be a troubling conversation or thing to

think about for a lot of them. So he keeps returning to these points, and here he does it again in the last chapter.

When you get to verse 14, even what follows smacks of this Torah stuff. He reminds them that we don't have anything here that's going to be eternal.

**<sup>14</sup>For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. <sup>15</sup>Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.**

Interesting that he goes back to the Name Theology. "If you want to acknowledge that the name of the Most High, you're with us. You're not doing the Torah stuff. You're with Jesus."

**<sup>16</sup>Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.**

40:00 This mimics Micah 6:8. The whole point of that passage is not, "Hey, let's make sure we do enough sacrifices and do them right." It's to love mercy, to do justice, to walk humbly with your God. It's really matters of the heart. He has just said in chapter 10 about how the blood of bulls and goats couldn't forgive real, genuine, moral transgressions. By your own system, those things aren't covered, because they were abominations. They were punished with death or exile. Where was the sacrificial benefit there? All these things should be sort of in the mind of the reader, or the mind of the hearer if he/she heard this being taught. The writer is turning the sacrificial language back on its head because he's quoting the Old Testament and he uses the Micah 6:8 idea of, "What God really wants... The sacrifices that really please God are these things: to love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with your God." It's not doing rituals. That's going to dovetail into the whole conversation that they've had about Jesus offering himself as a sacrifice as the superior high priest. "This one is the one you need to align yourself with, and you don't have to worry about other sacrifices." Not only were a lot of them not even any good for certain problems in the Old Testament, not only would you have to keep doing them every day and every week and every... You just keep repeating the process. You keep hitting the reset button. Not only that, but even if you did everything perfectly, it just didn't cover all the bases! How much better do we have it here with one sacrifice, one high priest who is God?

Remember starting back in Hebrews 1 and all the ways that Jesus was described there: the radiance of his glory, the *apogasma* and all that... This one in chapter 10 and the conversation with God—the intertrinitarian conversation agreeing that "I'm going to go become a man and sacrifice myself to accomplish what the law couldn't do." You have all of that, so don't be threatened by this sacrifice talk—this jibber-jabber about ritual. What you have is better than that because the

person in charge of all that in the Old Testament told Jesus, "I've prepared for you a body, now go down and be faithful. Because of your faithfulness, all these other things will be taken care of. This will be the promise of eternal life—through you." And Jesus does that and he sits down at the right hand of God. Mission accomplished. How many times has Hebrews used that phrase? "Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty" and all that sort of stuff. It's done! So we don't want to hear this jibber-jabber about food laws and sacrifices and feasts and festivals—the whole ritual system. He's trying to remind them that what they have is so much better.

In verse 17 he says:

**<sup>17</sup> 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.**

Basically, if you make this hard for your leaders, that doesn't really foster good relationships, does it now? You want them to care for your souls, keep watch over your souls. You want them to enjoy what they do and take joy from it. You don't want it to be a burden. How is that going to help anybody? The term for this submission or obedience language is really about yielding authority—yielding your authority to someone else. Or yielding to someone's authority. "Submit" kind of captures that, but I think it's worth pointing out that it does involve yielding to someone else. Guthrie has a nice little segue here—a summary of this. He writes:

The writer is concerned only about attitudes and mentions two which are complementary to each other—*obey* (*peithesthe*) and *submit* (*hypeikete*), the latter word occurring only here in the New Testament [Hebrews 13]. The function of the leaders is described in general terms as *keeping watch over your souls*. The same verb is used in Ephesians 6:18 in an injunction to keep alert in prayer. The task of the overseers is to maintain constant watch over those committed to their care. This is reminiscent of Paul's care of all the churches (2 Cor. 11:28) and of Peter's injunction to the elders to tend God's flock (1 Pet. 5:2), which is itself reminiscent of the words of Jesus to Peter (John 21:15ff.). It is noticeable that the writer here uses the word for *souls* (*psychai*) to describe people, for this is more vivid than saying 'you'. The office of leader is recognized as one of responsibility, for those who hold such office will be expected to *give account* of their work. It is important to note that those who exercise authority must also accept responsibility for their actions.

45:00

I think all of that's important. We shouldn't read what the writer is saying as sort of like, "I'm saying this just for the people in charge. They'll like that." No, he's not asking people to blindly submit, either. The reason they're supposed to obey their

leaders is because the leaders have care over their souls. If the leaders aren't really caring for their souls, by definition the very logic/rationale for you to yield to their authority goes away. This isn't just about blind obedience, no matter what they're doing or what sort of nonsense they're asking you to do. That's not what it's about. It has context. The context is care for your soul, and that is why you should yield to them. Not only that, but they are going to be held accountable for that by God. It's a request, it's a little bit of an admonition, it's a warning kind of all rolled into one. It's not a command to blindly obey no matter what the guy saying, "I'm you're leader, now listen to me!" is telling you to do. All of these things have context. The author is really not just saying things to say them. He's not just saying things that we ought to take and ignore the context.

Again, I'm harping on this a little bit because let's just face it: there are those out there in leadership (individuals, groups, even movements) that really define your fitness for salvation or for sanctification (salvation would be the worst scenario)... They really define a believer's maturity and fitness and evaluate your whole testimony by how blindly you submit to them. That is not the point. The submission has a context. There will be a price to pay if it's abused. So if you're the one who needs to yield to authority, help your leaders. Help your leaders by holding them accountable. "I'm glad to submit to your authority because I can tell by the way you treat us, by your own testimony, the way you conduct your own life, that you really have care over our souls. You're really concerned about our spiritual well-being. So we will gladly do that. We'll make it a joy for you to be our leader and not a burden—not just nit-pick everything that we may not understand. Because we know you have our best interest in mind and we can tell." But again, hold leadership to the context of what's being said here, for it's not about blindly saying, "Oh that's right, I forgot. You have this title after your name. So even though what you're telling me to do is kind of hair-brained and I can't really see it in scripture, it's coming out of your mouth so I'd better obey." That isn't the point.

In verse 18, he says:

**<sup>18</sup> Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. <sup>19</sup> I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.**

This language here (and some of what follows)... Actually, here we are at the end of the letter, but if you remember early in the first episode we talked, launching into this... One of the proposed authors is Paul. This is a passage (and a little bit of what follows)... I've mentioned it two or three times going through the book. There are these little things that make people gravitate toward thinking about Paul being the author. I'm not persuaded of that, but I want to bring some of them



up and just talk a little bit about them because you hit this and Paul has written so much in the New Testament that you sort of hear his voice a little bit (and in some of what follows). Yeah, that's true, but it's not that simple. He says:

**<sup>19</sup> I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.**

Right away we think of Paul being in jail. Is that really the context? Luke Timothy Johnson comments here:

50:00

Throughout the composition, the author has used the plural when speaking of himself (see 4:13; 5:11; 6:9) [verse 18: “pray for us” and then he switches in verse 19 to the more personal “I”], and does so again in a request for prayer such as we find also in Rom 15:30; Col 4:3; 1 Thess 5:25; and 2 Thess 3:1. The “us” could include companions of the author, but the immediate shift to the first person singular [verse 19] suggests that the request is for the author himself... Here it clearly implies that the author was formerly part of their community life; thus he was able to recall for them their own earlier experiences and efforts (2:3–4; 6:9–12; 10:32–34).

What Luke Timothy Johnson is saying here is, "Yeah, this sounds kind of Pauline, but because he addresses him in the first person right after this 'we' talk, it's probably somebody who was part of their own community. So can we really say that Paul fits this bill, and what evidence do we have of that?" And, of course, the answer is that we don't really have anything conclusive in that regard. Hagner chimes in here and says:

In light of the author's confidence in being able to visit the readers expressed in verse 23 [we'll get to that in a moment], we probably can rule out imprisonment [so he doesn't think the author himself was in prison], unless he is about to be released. In any case, something still hinders him from coming to the readers, and so he urges them “the more earnestly” to pray for him.

We're going to skip some verses here and go down to verse 22. We'll come back and hit the other ones briefly. But this note here at the end of the epistle... Let me just repeat it for you.

**<sup>18</sup> Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. <sup>19</sup> I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.**

We sort of read imprisonment into that. We read Paul into that. And in what we've looked at so far, it doesn't really say that. It doesn't really have him in jail. We

don't really know. But when you get down to verse 22, it says this. He's writing in the first person again.

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

You could very easily read that and say, "This must be Paul! He must have been in jail. He must have been in jail with Timothy. He's writing from Italy—Rome. There we go!" Let's look at what it actually says.

**<sup>22</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. <sup>23</sup> You should know that our brother Timothy has been released...**

He doesn't actually say that they were together in jail. He just says, "Hey, I heard Timothy got released!"

**...with whom I shall see you if he comes soon.**

That would suggest he's not in jail. That would suggest that he's expecting now that Timothy's been released to meet up with him and then go see the recipients of this letter. That's typically how it's taken—that the writer himself here is not in jail. He knows Timothy... We can't be sure that he knows him personally, but by reputation maybe. It could go either way.

**<sup>24</sup> Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings.**

Maybe he had received a group from Italy who sent greetings. Maybe he's in Italy. We don't actually know. Again, I just wanted to spend a few moments on this because we can't really nail down Paul here, even with the Timothy talk, even with the "Hey, I'm going to come and see you now that Timothy's out of jail." We can't quite really get to this being Paul in prison with Timothy. Frankly, we don't even have a record of Timothy and Paul being in prison together. We do have a reference here that something happened to Timothy, but when it comes to the chronicling of Paul's own life, we don't really get anything that specific. So we can't really nail it down as far as that. So that's more of a point of curiosity.

Now I want to skip back to verse 20.

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**<sup>20</sup> 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, <sup>21</sup> 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.**

This is Luke Timothy Johnson again:

The author's own prayer begins with a wish (in the optative mood *may ... equip*) for his hearers (*hymas*) and extends to include himself as well (*hēmōn*).

For those of you who have a little Greek, optative in New Testament Greek is pretty unusual. There aren't that many of them. It's the mood that expresses a wish or desire. Greek can do that in other ways besides the optative, but specifically, optative forms do this. So he begins his final benediction by expressing a wish here: "May the God of peace equip you..." And then he extends that wish to himself. He includes himself in it.

55:00

**<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus... <sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight...**

So he includes himself in it, too. Now, some commentators have noticed the word "equip" here. It's kind of interesting that he would pick this word, as opposed to something else. Johnson says this:

The verb *katartizein* is not haphazardly selected; the author uses it for the fashioning of the world through God's word in 11:3, and, even more pertinently, for the "fitting" of the Son with a body through which he can do God's will in 10:5. The connection between Jesus and the hearers is thereby once more affirmed...

Let me just stop there. Johnson is saying the author picks this verb ("may the God of peace equip you," do this to you) knowing that their ear would pick up on the fact that he used the same verb to talk about the creation of the world and fitting Jesus with a body—fitting the second Person with a body. And by doing that, he sort of aligns the believers with Jesus and God's creative power—that sort of thing.

The connection between Jesus and the hearers is thereby once more affirmed, and is reinforced by the phrase "to do his will in every good thing," for it was said of Jesus that he was given a body precisely "to do your will, O God" (10:7). The

author also made clear in 10:36 that the people of faith needed to have endurance in order to receive the inheritance “by having done the will of God.” The human response of Jesus to God in obedient faith is now to be the response of those “many sons” whom God is “leading (*agagonta*) to glory”

That's the end of the Johnson quote. I like that last line. By using just this one verb, he gets his audience to hear it, to listen to it, and to think about how this one verb choice connects them back to Jesus—connects them back to what Jesus did and how God made for him a body. He did that specifically so that Jesus would be able to accomplish salvation—that he would be faithful and do this thing, this offering of himself, surrendering his life in this body. And so when the writer prays that God would essentially do the same thing for them, it's the idea that God is going to do something to you to enable *you* to be faithful, as well. It just connects them back with Jesus in sort of a... I don't want to say "cryptic," because if you were listening to this in your native language, you're going to pick up on things like this. But to us it's a little cryptic. But he connects them back to Jesus, even in that little prayer about them.

I want to say one last thing before we wrap up here. This reference to Jesus at the end here:

**<sup>20</sup> 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...**

This is just me talking. This is interesting to me because typically when we see this language ("the great shepherd of the sheep"), we see this pastoral scene with little lambs skipping around the field and whatnot. And the shepherd is so gentle and kind. He plays with the lamb a little bit—that sort of thing. This is the kind of thing that goes through our minds. There's that issue, and then just listen to the verse again:

**<sup>20</sup> 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...**

Reading that in English, you might wonder, "Who's the great shepherd—the God of peace, or is it Jesus? Which one does it refer to?" Because in the Old Testament, God does get talked about in this "shepherd" language, but so does the messiah. Which one does it refer to? Its placement here makes it feel a little bit ambiguous, but grammatically it does definitely refer to Jesus because "Lord Jesus" and the word "shepherd" are in the same grammatical case. It's the accusative case in the Greek. So we know specifically he's talking about Jesus, but think about that. God and the messiah get talked about in the same language in the Old Testament. So this is the writer of Hebrews again defining or casting Jesus in these roles—casting him as God, casting him as the messiah.

1:00:00

The other thing is that this language is not intended to be peaceful necessarily, and pastoral. I'm searching for a better word for it, but just this sort of wonderfully happy, kind of relaxed sort of thing. "Shepherd" is a word that was used for kingship in the Old Testament. 2 Samuel 5:2 says:

**<sup>2</sup> In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the LORD said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.'"**

We have the same thing going on in chapter 7, verse 7 of 2 Samuel:

**<sup>7</sup> In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"**

This is God conversing with Nathan or with David through Nathan. Shepherding was one of the metaphors of kingship in the ancient Near East. Hammurabi is referred to as a shepherd of his people. Why am I getting into this? I'm going to post for those who are newsletter subscribers... There's a really interesting article on Psalm 23 called "King Yahweh as the Good Shepherd." The article is really about Psalm 23 and its connections to ancient Near Eastern kingship. Not just a happy little shepherd boy, but a king. It's interesting. I'm going to put that in the shared folder for newsletter subscribers. I think you'll find the article interesting. It's by Beth Tanner.

But here at the end of the letter, this is not just some sort of effort to leave them with a happy thought. When he leaves them with this notion—"the Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep"—he's ending on a note of kingship. Whether they realize it or not, whether they need to beat it in their head... Maybe they do. We've had all this talk about Jesus being the radiance of God's glory and he's seated at the right hand of God and he's the great high priest. He ends the thing by reminding them that he's the king. Who was king in the Old Testament? Well, it was God. Again, God picked human kings at some point and he calls them "shepherds" and there are places where God is spoken of in this kind of way. He wants them to realize that the person who essentially ran the show in the Old Testament (and the Judaizers are consistently trying to get you to go back to that system) has now—just as he did with kings in Israel—transferred his authority to this king. And this king is Jesus. This king is one who laid down his own life for you. So let's not have any talk about going back to the old system. Do you want to obey the king or not? The way we define obedience to King Jesus now is to believe in him—believe the gospel, believe what he has done. That's how we define kingship now. That's really what is at the heart of our faith at this point right now.

So I think it's just kind of an interesting thought for him to—right at the end—lay down and essentially ask his audience (his readers), after going through all this and all the other ways he's talked about Jesus... To essentially remind them, "Do we all know who we're talking about here?" And then he goes into something a little lighter. But this is actually a significant kind of heavy statement. It's a good reminder of who, in fact, this person who laid down his life for you is, and that he's seated at the right hand of God on your behalf.

**TS:** All right, Mike, there we go! I can't think of a better episode 199 than to wrap up the book of Hebrews.

**MH:** Yeah, it was good timing! We'd love to say we planned that. [laughter] But not really. We did not.

**TS:** But it worked out perfectly. That was awesome. We appreciate you taking us through the book of Hebrews. We want to briefly remind everybody to send me those Hebrews questions if you've got any, and also go get your tickets to the Spokane, Washington seminar.

**MH:** Yep. If you can make it, please register.

1:05:00

**TS:** All right, Mike. Another good book! We appreciate it, and we just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.