

The author concludes his letter with a series of short exhortations – divided into three sections – which all flow directly out of his command in 12:28 to *“...serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (KJV) or *“let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe”* (ESV).

The admonitions found in Hebrews 13 unpack what it means to serve and to please God in three areas:

1. Expressions of Love within the Body of Christ: 13:1 – 6
2. Submission to Leaders over the Body of Christ: 13:7 – 19
3. Provision for Acceptance in the Presence of Christ: 13:20 – 25

Practical Expressions of Love

1. **Hospitality toward displaced strangers:** 13:2

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers...”

2. **Solidarity with persecuted believers:** 13:3

“Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them...”

The reference is to those who have been deprived of their freedom because of their faith in Jesus Christ and have been imprisoned. “Remember” does not merely mean to think of them, but to be intentional in actions toward them that will relieve their emotional suffering if not their physical suffering: communicating with them, interceding in prayer for them

“[Remember] them that suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body”

Those suffering adversity who were physically tortured for their faith, thus the reference to “in the body.” “Body” is not used in the spiritual sense of “the body of Christ,” but very much in the sense of the physical body. The exhortation is for believers to “feel the pains” (the literal meaning of “compassion”) of the torture of those who were tortured.

Pink also suggests that the author has in view the close family relations of those who are imprisoned who suffer the adversity of their absence and the grief of their imprisonment.

3. **Purity in a culture of promiscuity:** 13:4

“Marriage is honorable in all...”

Marriage is honorable because it has been instituted by God for the mutual society of the man and woman so that they are not alone; for the procreation of children; and to keep oneself undefiled in sexual union.

Sexual union is undefiled when it is consummated between a man and a woman who have committed themselves solely to one another in covenant relationship sealed by sacrificial love and not fleeting feelings.

“...but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

The *whoremonger* (Greek: pornos) is the person who sells themselves for sex and has come to mean the person from whom sex has no meaning outside of what can personally be gained from it. The *adulterer* is the person who is faithfulness to the covenant to which he or she is obligated. The word is frequently used to describe the apostate who is unfaithful to the covenant he entered with God (see James 4:4).

Such unfaithfulness is the special object of the judgment of God, a warning that follows closely from 12:29 – “For our God is a consuming fire.”

4. **Contentment when possessions are plundered:** 13:5-6

*“Let your conversation be without **covetousness**...”*

These Hebrew Christians were having their material possessions confiscated and their livelihoods taken from them (10:34; compare 1 Timothy 6:6-10).

The exhortation here is to trust to the goodness of a sovereign God under the pain of material deprivation. The danger we must guard against is the belief that we have it within our own power to sustain our lives (Matthew 6:27 in the context of 6:19-34). Such a sinful attitude will lead to covetousness – a discontentment with that which God has apportioned to us which is nothing less than a betrayal of our trust in him, denying that it is God alone who can sustain my life. This covetousness manifests itself in “distrustful anxiety.” “Covetousness and discontent proceed from unbelief.” (Pink)

*“...**be content** with such things as you have...”*

The antidote to covetousness is contentment: “...a gracious disposedness of mind of mind, arising solely from trust in and satisfaction with God alone, against all other things whatever appear to be evil” (John Owen).

“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

My contentment under deprivation is rooted in the promise first given to Joshua in Joshua 1:5 that the Lord God himself will be our supply. *“Having thee I all possess.”* (John Ryland, 1777)

“So that we may boldly say, ‘The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.’”
13:6

The author quotes Psalm 118:6 which expresses the firm conviction of all those in Scripture who faced persecution, deprivation and hardship at the hands of ungodly enemies (Genesis 22:8; 1 Samuel 14:6; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Romans 8:31).