

Our author is writing to believers in Jesus who have come out of the Judaistic legalism of Old Testament rites, rituals, and sacrifices which he has told them cannot perfect them (7:18-19; 10:1). Instead, they must look to Jesus as the once and final sacrifice for their sins (9:24 – 28; 10:12 – 13) and as their high priest and mediator who has consecrated a new and living way into the presence of God (10:19 – 21; 4:14 – 16; 7:23 – 28; 8:1 – 2)

The Jewish believers are under pressure from the synagogue leaders to deny their faith in Christ and return to the legalistic system. What our author has done from the beginning of the letter is hold up examples of faithfulness to these believers as an encouragement for them to hold fast to the faith and not draw back to perdition. The contrast is between those who “**draw back to perdition**” (10:39) through the legalistic rituals of the old covenant, and those who “**draw nigh to God**” (7:19) through the “new and living way” opened for us by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus (4:14-16; 6:19-20; 10:19-20).

These examples are presented in the form of an ever-tightening circle:

- The outer rim is the broadest of this circle and highlights the faithfulness of the holy angels, Moses, Aaron, Melchizedek, and the prophets. Each of these examples is contrasted with Jesus whom the author sets forth as superior to the examples he is holding up (chapters 1 – 7).
- The next rim of the circle tightens with highlights of the faithfulness of key figures from the Old Testament, beginning with Abel and concluding with a summary of the faithful exploits of the judges, kings, and prophets (Hebrews 11).
- The final and tightest rim of the circle highlights – not the faithfulness of the men and women his readers only know from history – but the men whom they knew and know personally, men who had spoken to them the word of God (13:7) and were presently speaking to them the word of God (13:17 -19).
  - “*Whose **faith** follow (imitate)*”  
They were to imitate **the faith** (the doctrine and the faithfulness of their leaders) which their leaders held to even when faced with giving their lives for the gospel. The author most likely has James (Acts 12) and Stephen (Acts 7) in view here.
  - “*Considering the end of their way of life*”  
God ultimately delivered their leaders from their trials and persecutions, and God will ultimately deliver them if they will not cast away their confidence, diligently hope to the end, and not draw back (6:11 – 12; 10:23, 35 – 39)

But our author is not exhorting his readers to follow their leaders only because of their godly lives which produced the faithfulness which caused them to endure.

He wants his readers attention is to be focused on **the teaching** (“*whose **faith** follow*”) of these men, not only the men themselves. Only insofar as these men were faithful to communicate the word which was spoken to them by the Lord himself (2:3) are they worthy to be imitated. The next two verses bear this out.

***“Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today, and forever.”*** (v. 8)

The author is not merely giving to us a brief statement related to the immutability of Christ. He is pointing his readers to the unchangeableness of “the word which was spoken by the Lord and confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (namely, the Apostles: Hebrews 2:3).

He gives them this exhortation because false teachers had infiltrated the church with a false gospel based in the old legalistic system of rites, rituals, and sacrifices which came to an end with the once and final sacrifice of the Lord Jesus (see Galatians 1:6 – 9; 2 Peter 2:1 – 3; Jude 4).

***“Be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines.”*** (v. 9)

The “*divers and strange doctrines (teachings)*” are in direct contrast to “*the word spoken by the Lord.*” These are teaching derived from the Old Testament law which ended with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Galatians 5:1; Romans 10:4).

“*Carried away*” is the same image used by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:14 when he warns against being “*carried about with every wind of doctrine.*” Note how Paul describes the men who are propagating this false gospel:

- “the sleight of me”
- “cunning craftiness”
- “lying in wait to deceive”

Contrast the deceitful practices of the false teachers with the open and truthful practices of Paul and the other apostles in 1 Thessalonians 2:3 – 6:

- “not of deceit”
- “nor of uncleanness”
- “nor of guile”
- “not as pleasing men, but God”
- “no flattering words”
- “no cloak of covetousness” (cp. Hebrews 13:5a; 2 Peter 2:3)

Compare 1 Corinthians 2:1 – 5; 2 Corinthians 4:1 – 5)

***“...the heart is established with grace; not with meats...”*** (v. 9)

The meats, or foods, referred to here are the “meats and drinks” (9:9-10) of the old covenant rituals which cannot make perfect the conscience of the one who ritually eats them. Only the grace offered in the once and final sacrifice of Christ can “purge your conscience from dead works” (9:14). They were in force for “the time then present” (9:9), but they were never intended to provide the permanent and final remedy for sin (10:1 – 4, 14).

In verses 10 – 16, the author will take up the contrast between the altar where these non-perfecting meats were offered which cannot perfect the conscience, and the altar upon which Christ was sacrificed from which those who believe on him eat as we bear his reproach outside the camp.

***“...which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.”*** (v. 9)

Compare Hebrews 4:2; 7:18 – 19