

Hebrews 13:15-25 – New Sacrifices

The glorious book of Hebrews comes to a close with today's passage. Hebrews is unique in its discussion of Jesus as our great high priest. It alone speaks of how Jesus' once for all, one and only sacrifice alone can take away sins. The sacrifices under the Mosaic law were shadows, copies and patterns of the reality to come. Paul often closed his letters by mentioning people by name as well as mentioning places by name. The author of Hebrews only mentioned Timothy by name. He also only mentioned Italy by name. We will not say goodbye to Hebrews today because Hebrews demands a review of its themes and doctrines.

Read Hebrews 13:15-19.

Verse 10 stated that "we have an altar". In verse 15, instead of offering sacrifices under the Mosaic covenant, what types of sacrifices were the recipients of the letter of Hebrews exhorted to offer? How is the sacrifice of praise to God described? (13:15)

In verse 16, what sacrifices should we offer which are pleasing to God? BDAG says that "share what you have" in this context means "attitude of good will that manifests an interest in a close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism". (13:16)

In verse 17, what is the exhortation? The original word for "submit" is only used once in the NT. BDAG says it means "to yield to someone's authority, yield, give way, submit". Why should we obey and submit to our leaders? What happens when people don't obey their spiritual leaders? (13:17)

The author himself was a leader in the church. What did the author request for himself in verse 18? What is the significance of the author saying that he had a clear conscience and always desired to act honorably? (13:18)

In verse 19, what was the author's desire which he wanted to happen sooner rather than later? BDAG says that "restored" means "to return someone to a former place or relationship, bring back, give back, restore". Some commentators recommend not speculating about where the author was and why he needed to be restored. (13:19)

Read Hebrews 13:20-25.

Verse 20 is one long subject. The verb to this sentence comes at the beginning of verse 21. How was God described in verse 20? How was Jesus described? (13:20)

The verb of the sentence that began in verse 20 is “equip”. The main structure of the sentence is “may God equip you”. The verb is in the optative mood and according to Blass Debrunner Funk (section 384) expresses an attainable wish. What does the author desire God to equip them to do? (13:21)

In verse 22 the author said that he had written to them briefly. This is one of the longer letters in the NT. One could debate that point but it is clear that the author had many more things he wanted to say to them. See Hebrews 9:5. Concerned for how his letter would be received, what did the author exhort the recipients to do? BDAG says the word “bear with” generally means “to regard with tolerance, endure, bear with, put up with”. In this context BDAG says it means to “listen patiently”. What things in the letter might have tested the recipients? (13:22)

In verse 23, what news was there about Timothy? It is probably wise not to speculate about his “release”. According to BDAG the word “release” could mean release from imprisonment or it may simply mean that he was just released from an obligation or task. What was the author’s plans if Timothy came soon? (13:23)

Whom were the recipients of the letter told to greet? Who sent their greetings to the recipients of the letter? BDAG refers to “those from Italy” as the Italians and further says “who could be inside as well as outside Italy”. Either way, this greeting only makes sense if the recipients, the author or both had ties to Italy. Notice that he did not say Rome. (13:24)

How did the letter end? “Grace be with you” is how Paul ended Colossians, and 1 & 2 Timothy. He ended Titus with “Grace be with you all”. This was not an uncommon greeting in the early church and is not strong evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews. (13:25)

What is your takeaway from the book of Hebrews?