The Church in the Book of Acts was a Living Body led by the Holy Spirit. It came to Greece and became a philosophy. It came to Italy and became an insitution It came to Europe and became a culture. It came to America and became a business. All the different countries got away from the Living Body led by the Holy Spirit, thus prostituting the Church of Jesus Christ.

(I have paraphrased this.)

A thought taken from the video The Last Reformation.

Prayer Study #523

HEBREWS 13

First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia 31069

As we conclude the book of Hebrews with this last chapter, let us go back to some of the main points of the entire book. First, it was, according to Finis Dake, meant "to present Jesus Christ as God, and as better than all men and angels; to prove Judaism and the law have come to an end; to confirm Jewish Christians in the faith, and to set forth new covenant doctrines of all men."

Dake goes on to argue for Paul's authorship of the epistle. He believes that the thoughts and reasonings expressed are like Paul's in other letters. If there is a difference in style, he says it is because Luke took the Hebrew that Paul wrote and translated it into Greek. Peter confirms that Paul wrote an epistle to the Jews (2nd Peter 3:15-16). Over one hundred writers in both Greek and Latin from 70 to 730 AD say Paul wrote it, as did the Council of Laodicea (363 AD), the council of Carthage (370 AD), and the Syrian churches (370 AD). Eusebius, the father of church history, said that Paul wrote the Hebrews epistle but left his name off so that the Jews who hated him would receive it more favorably. Many believe that Hebrews was part of the Galatian's letter, and indeed Paul speaks of Galatians as a large letter (Hebews 6:11). The book speaks much of the abolishment of the old covenant and the anticipate visit of the author, both themes of Paul in his letters. The book was written from Italy where Paul was imprisoned in 68 AD, but expected to be

released. Paul was the only New Testament writer who requested prayer for himself in his epistles (Hebrews 13:18, 2nd Thessalonians 3:1, Romans 15:30, 2nd Corinthians 1:11, Ephesians 6:19, Philippians 1:19, Colossians 4:3, Philemon 2:2). No other writer mentions *Brother* Timothy throughout his epistles (Hebrews 13:23). All of these point to Paul as the author of this wonderful book.

The Changeless Christ and the Marks of the Christian Life

13 *Let love of your fellow believers continue.*
2 *Do not neglect to extend hospitality to strangers [especially among the family of believers—being friendly, cordial, and gracious, sharing the comforts of your home and doing your part generously], for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.* ***3*** *Remember those who are in prison, as if you were their fellow prisoner, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body [and subject to physical suffering].* ***4*** *Marriage is to be held in honor among all [that is, regarded as something of great value], and the marriage bed undefiled [by immorality or by any sexual sin]; for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.* ***5*** *Let your character [your moral essence, your inner nature] be free from the love of money [shun greed—be financially ethical], being content with what you have; for He has said, "I will never [under any*

circumstances] desert you [nor give you up nor leave you without support, nor will I in any degree leave you helpless], nor will I forsake or let you down or relax My hold on you [assuredly not]!” ***6*** *So we take comfort and are encouraged and confidently say,*
“The Lord is my Helper [in time of need], I will not be afraid.
What will man do to me?”

There are at least 14 commands for living the Christian life:

a. *Let brotherly love continue* (Hebrews 13:1)
b. *Forget not to entertain strangers* (Hebrews 13:2)
c. *Remember those in bonds* (Hebrews 13:3)
d. *Remember the suffering* (Hebrews 13:3)
e. *Be without covetousness* (Hebrews 13:5)
f. *Be content in life* Hebrews 13:5)
g. *Remember your rulers* (Hebrews 13:7)
h. *Be not changeable from sound doctrine* (Hebrews 13:9)
i. *Follow Christ’s example* (Hebrews 13:13)
j. *Offer the sacrifice of praise* (Hebrews 13:15)
k. *Forget not to do good* (Hebrews 13:16)
l. *Forget not to fellowship* (Hebrews 13:16)
m. *Obey your rulers* (Hebrews 13:17)
n. *Salute your rulers* (Hebrews 13:24

There are 104 appearances of angels to men and women of the Bible. Some experienced the visitation of angels only once. John encountered 52 angels in Revelation. Angels are active on the earth today, and they still appear to men and women.

Verse 6 is a beautiful verse that we need to write on our hearts in preparation for the days ahead. John Phillips comments on this verse: "The Hebrews were facing persecution from family, friend, and foe alike. God was using that very persecution to separate the wheat from the chaff, those who were drawing back from those determined to press on at all costs. What needed was courage, courage born of a dynamic faith in the Lord Himself, courage before which the fear of man would melt as the snow before the noonday sun. Men can be cruel, and the fear of man is a real snare for the soul. None of us can say for sure how he would react when faced with torture, prison, and the stake. But God gives grace to help in time of need."

The Leaders and the Leader

7 *Remember your leaders [for it was they] who brought you the word of God; and consider the result of their conduct [the outcome of their godly lives], and imitate their faith [their*

conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things, the Provider of eternal salvation through Christ, and imitate their reliance on God with absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness].

Barclay says about real Christian leaders, not hirelings that are in the ministry because of money or fame or power or control: "The duty of real leaders is not so much to talk to men and women about Christ as to show them Christ in their own lives. People listen not so much to what they are saying as to what they are….They show others how to live and are prepared to show them how to die."

The Unchangeable Christ

8 *Jesus Christ is [eternally changeless, always] the same yesterday and today and forever.*

For me, this is one of the most important verses in the Bible. Jesus is the Pattern Son, and we are to follow His example, and the way taught to His disciples. If Jesus healed through them yesterday, He is certainly able to heal through us today, and not only today but forever, and He is certainly able to meet today every need that we have.

The Wrong and the Right Sacrifice

9 *Do not be carried away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be established and strengthened by grace and not by foods [rules of diet and ritualistic meals], which bring no benefit or spiritual growth to those who observe them.* ***10*** *We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle (sacred tent) have no right to eat.* ***11*** *For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp.* ***12*** *Therefore Jesus also suffered and died outside the [city] gate so that He might sanctify and set apart for God as holy the people [who believe] through [the shedding of] His own blood.* ***13*** *So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His contempt [the disgrace and shame that He had to suffer].* ***14*** *For here we have no lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.****15*** *Through Him, therefore, let us at all times offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of lips that thankfully acknowledge and confess and glorify His name.* ***16*** *Do not neglect to do good, to contribute [to the needy of the church as an expression of fellowship], for such sacrifices are always pleasing to God.*

Obviously some wrong teaching had gotten into the Body of Believers to whom Hebrews was written. We see this happening so much today because people think they are smarter than the Word of God. I have heard, in the last five years or so, some of the most ridiculous, totally non-scriptural teachings I have ever heard. These include things such as we have to adhere to the Jewish dietary laws and celebrate the Jewish rituals, Paul was a false teacher, there are many ways to heaven besides through the blood of Jesus, grace allows us to live and do whatever our flesh nature wants to do because grace forgives us anyway, etc. Derek Prince said that the greatest problem in the Last Days would be deception. People who believe these things are being deceived. The way to escape deception is to go by the Word of God. The Old Testament is very important for us to study. Without it we could not understand the New Testament completely. But we are under a New Covenant, not the law. We must crucify the flesh and
walk in the Spirit in obedience to the Word so that we will not be carried about by every wind of doctrine. No food can bring Christ into us or can stop Christ from coming in, and Christ enters us only through the grace of God

and the baptism into His blood by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was crucified outside the gates of the city and numbered with the criminals. We too must severe ourselves from the world and be willing to bear His reproach and humiliation.

As Christians we can offer continual praise and thanks to God and even the sacrifice of praise when we don't feel like praising Him. We offer to Him public confessions of our faith in Christ, and we can offer acts of kindness to our neighbors, remembering that Jesus said, ***"Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brothers, you have done it unto me"*** (Matthew 25:40b).

Obedience and Prayer

17 *Obey your [spiritual] leaders and submit to them [recognizing their authority over you], for they are keeping watch over your souls and continually guarding your spiritual welfare as those who will give an account [of their stewardship of you]. Let them do this with joy and not with grief and groans, for this would be of no benefit to you.*
18 *Keep praying for us, for we are convinced that we have a good conscience, seeking to conduct ourselves honorably [that is, with moral courage and personal integrity] in all things.* ***19*** *And I urge all of you to pray*

earnestly, so that I may be restored to you soon.

This generation hates authority, perhaps because they have encountered so much wrong authority and have seen so many spiritual leaders fall into immorality of all kinds. Yet proper spiritual authority is an umbrella of protection over you, and if you are submitted to proper spiritual authority, the darts of the enemy will not penetrate that umbrella.

Having a good conscience is such a blessing. I believe a good conscience keeps us from being distracted from the Word of God.

Apparently the writer was personally known by these people he was writing to. In fact, I would assume that he had even lived among them. I think his asking for prayer is a sign that he is also a humble man.

Benediction

20 *Now may the God of peace [the source of serenity and spiritual well-being] who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood that sealed and ratified the eternal covenant,* ***21*** *equip you with every good thing to carry out His will and strengthen you [making you complete and perfect as you ought to be],*

accomplishing in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.
22 *I call on you, brothers and sisters, listen [patiently] to this message of exhortation and encouragement, for I have written to you briefly.* ***23*** *Notice that our brother Timothy has been released [from prison]. If he comes soon, I will see you [along with him].* ***24*** *Give our greetings to all of your [spiritual] leaders and to all of the saints (God's people). Those [Christians] from Italy send you their greetings.*
25 *Grace be with you all.*

Father God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is a God who brings peace and love to His children. This is so unlike Allah or any of the other false gods in the world today.

In John 10:11, Jesus calls Himself, the Good Shepherd. What did the Good Shepherd do? He gave His life for the sheep. Here in Hebrews 13: 20, He is referred to as "*the Great Shepherd*." In Psalm 24, He is called the Chief Shepherd. He died on the cross as the Good Shepherd. He is the Great Shepherd today, and He is coming for His sheep as the Chief Shepherd.

Apparently Timothy himself had been in prison. Some even think that Timothy is the

one who wrote this epistle, and perhaps we will never know until we get to heaven. Nevertheless, I am more convinced than ever that Paul wrote this epistle. In fact, verse 23 seems to be proof that Timothy did not write this epistle. We do know that it was written from Italy, and Paul happened to be in Italy during this time.

LOVE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD
Benjie Gaither, Jeffrey Silvey, Kim Edwin Williams

We're as different as night and day
We're the same in different ways
And it's true, just look at me and you
We can change the way we are
The power lives inside our hearts
We can be anything we wanna be
If coal can turn to diamonds
And sand can turn to pearls
If a worm can turn into a butterfly
Then love can turn the world
Oh, love can turn the world
The God who made you made us all
Big and little, short and tall
And that's fine 'cause it takes all kinds
If He had made us all alike
It sure would be boring life
But He knew what little time could do
If coal can turn to diamonds
And sand can turn to pearls
If a worm can turn into a butterfly
Then love can turn the world
Oh, love can turn the world