

The Letter to the Hebrews

Lesson 7

Hebrews 12:4– Hebrews 13:24

Why did the Lord test the heroes of the faith? Why does He test everyone who calls Him Lord? These questions come to mind when we see the author reminding the Jews in the church that they "have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood."

Hebrews 12: ⁴You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; ⁵and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; ⁶FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." ⁷It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? ⁸But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, that we may share His holiness. ¹¹All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Yes, they lost their property and possessions because of their faith in the Lord Jesus, but none of them had shed blood for their faith, at least not yet! The word "yet" is important because it implies that many whom the writer is addressing will shed their blood for their faith. Why did the Lord test Abraham by telling him to offer his only son as a sacrifice? Was it not to prove that the Lord would provide? Why did the Lord test Moses with all the earthly glory of Egypt? Was it not to prove to him that the Lord had summoned him to a greater calling and a greater purpose? Every hero of the faith was tested by the Lord to prove his faithfulness in the Lord so He might share His holiness with them. The Lord provided testing for discipline. Do not confuse the word "discipline" with the word "punishment." In the Scriptures, to discipline means to train. All testing from the Lord occurs for the purpose of training his followers. Also, according to the proverb used in this passage, the testing of the Lord shows His wonderful love.

Proverbs 3:11-12 *My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD, Or loathe His reproof, ¹² For whom the LORD loves He reproves, Even as a father, the son in whom he delights.*

Practical advice

When He brings a test, learn all its lessons to aid you in the faithful service of the Lord.

Hebrews 12:12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Practical advice

When others are tested, help them, for this may be your test of faithfulness from the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14 Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

Practical advice

Search for peace with everyone and also seek holiness - two important signs of a relationship with the Lord.

Hebrews 12:15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; **16** that *there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.* **17** For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

A root of bitterness can be seen in the vivid picture displayed in Deuteronomy.

Deut. 29:17-18 "Moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which they had with them); **18** lest there shall be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; lest there shall be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood.

This root of bitterness brings only poison, remorse, affliction, and suffering. When it comes, it comes quickly, springing up to stir up trouble and it often draws a believer into defilement. After selling his birthright for a meal, Esau begged his father for a blessing but received only a curse. Esau missed the grace of God because of the attitude in his heart.

Practical advice

Handle correctly and immediately all bitterness when it comes into your life - keeping all concerned in the grace of God.

Hebrews 12:18 For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, **19** and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which *sound was such that* those who heard begged that no further word should be spoken to them. **20** For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED." **21** And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling." **22** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, **23** to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, **24** and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

Some will seek the blessing of the Lord in tears just as Esau did with his father Isaac as he lay dying on his bed, but it will be too late for the blessing. Only a curse will come. The writer refers to both Exodus and Deuteronomy as he warns the Jews in the church.

Exodus 19:12-13 "And you shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. **13**'No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain."

Deut. 9:19 "For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was wrathful against you in order to destroy you, but the LORD listened to me that time also.

The mountain that Moses climbed was forbidden ground for all mankind and beasts in the days of the wilderness journey. Only Moses was allowed to ascend the mountain, and then only when he had been summoned by the Lord. Anyone who touched the mountain would die immediately; it was part of the Old Covenant, the old law. But the mountain of the New Covenant is not forbidden ground; it is available to all who call upon the Lord as Savior. In Hebrews 1 the writer says:

Hebrews 1:3-4 **3**And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; **4**having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

If the Lord is better than all the angels, surely the blood of the Lord that was shed on the cross is better than the blood that was shed by Abel. Yes, the blood of Abel still speaks from the ground a warning to those who will not trust in the Lord, but the blood of the Lord paid the price for the penalty of sin for all those who will put their trust in Him.

Practical advice

Do not fear the old ways of the Old Covenant, but trust in the New Covenant which is far superior.

Hebrews 12:25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *shall we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven. **26**And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN." **27**And this expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. **28**Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; **29**for our God is a consuming fire.

With all the terror that Mount Sinai held for the Israelites in the wilderness, Mount Zion holds the most dreadful terrors of all for the world. For those who stayed away from Mount Sinai, the danger was not near, but when the Lord returns to Mount Zion, the whole world is near the danger of His terror. No one who has rejected the Lord will escape the fire of God. Through Haggai, the Lord says:

Haggai 2:6 *"For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.*

Practical advice

The day will come when only the faithful will survive the wrath of the Lord. All enemies will be vanquished from the presence of the Lord and all that remains will be the faithful believers.

Hebrews 13:1 Let love of the brethren continue. **2** Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. **3** Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. **4** Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the *marriage* bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. **5** Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," **6** so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?"

Practical advice

- Love those who love the Lord.
- Care for strangers; they might be a test from the Lord.
- Do not forget about those who are in prison for their faith.
- Marriage is sacred before God; let no one harm the institution of marriage or couples in a marriage.
- Be content with the provisions of the Lord; He is the provider and He will make sure that every need is met.

Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. **8** Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. **9** Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited. **10** We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

Practical advice

- Watch the ministers who have been tested by the Lord and found faithful; follow their footsteps.
- The Lord never changes His mind; His message never changes.
- The promise of the Old Covenant is fulfilled and obsolete in the course of God's plan; the New Covenant is now in effect.

Hebrews 13: ¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹²Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³Hence, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come. ¹⁵Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. ¹⁶And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased. ¹⁷Obey your leaders, and submit *to them*; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

An interesting fact is brought to light in this passage about Temple sacrifice. While the instruction is clear in the Mosaic Law, we fail to notice its importance. According to Exodus 29:14, Exodus 32:26-27, Leviticus 4:12-13, Leviticus 4:21, and Leviticus 16:27 the skin, dung, and flesh were to be burned outside the city or camp. Therefore, in the Levitical sacrifice, the entire animal was never offered for the atonement of sin. Only a certain portion of the animal was used for that purpose. But the Lord, in making a full atonement for sin, offered His entire self on the cross, outside the camp of the Israelites, so He could bear the guilt of all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike.

Practical advice

- Jews must leave the old camp of the Mosaic way and go out to the camp of the New Covenant.
- Praise the Lord continually with words.
- Always do what is good for others.
- Always share with others.
- Follow the true spiritual leaders; one day they will render an accounting on your behalf, whether good or bad.

Hebrews 13: ¹⁸Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. ¹⁹And I urge *you* all the more to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

In closing the letter, the author asks for prayer on his behalf and on behalf of those with him. Could it be that the writer is aware that some things have been said about him that would damage his reputation with the people? Could it be that this writer is hampered in some way, possibly in prison for his faith, and cannot be with the Jews to whom he is writing? Whatever the case, prayer for himself is paramount in the mind of the author.

Hebrews 13: ²⁰Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, ²¹equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be the glory* forever and ever. Amen.

As one of the most beautiful prayers and doxologies in the Scripture, this text holds great assurances for the Jewish believer. It is a compilation of thoughts from the Old

Covenant brought forward to the New Covenant. God is the God of peace and all peace can come only from God. God is the God who raised Jesus from the dead. While this is the only place in Hebrews where the resurrection is directly addressed, it is often implied within the letter. The Lord's blood provides not only the eternal covenant, but all that is needed to live under the covenant. The Lord has not provided all that we need and then left us to our own doing; rather, He is actively working in our lives, for our good and for our blessing.

Hebrews 13:22 But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. **23** Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you. **24** Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

The author of this letter is waiting for Timothy to come to him. He has heard that Timothy has been released from some kind of prison. If Paul is the author of this letter, it could be that Timothy was imprisoned on his way to take Paul his cloak and the parchments as found in 2 Timothy 4:11 and 21. Paul had requested these items from his Roman jail cell. It could be that Paul is out of prison now and waiting for Timothy to come and lead him to the recipients of this letter. Whatever the case, and whoever the writer is, he is waiting on the arrival of Timothy to accompany him to the church where this letter is to be sent first.

Hebrews 13:25 Grace be with you all.

The last verse of the letter to the Hebrews is extremely similar to the endings of many of the letters in the New Testament. The following represents all the occurrences of some form of "grace ... be with you" in the New Testament.

Romans 16:20 <u>The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.</u>	2 Thes. 3:18 <u>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.</u>
1 Cor. 16:23 <u>The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.</u>	1 Tim. 6:21 <u>Grace be with you.</u>
2 Cor. 13:14 <u>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.</u>	2 Tim. 4:22 <u>Grace be with you.</u>
Galatians 6:18 <u>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.</u>	Titus 3:15 <u>Grace be with you all.</u>
Philip. 4:23 <u>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.</u>	Philemon 1:25 <u>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.</u>
Col. 4:18 <u>I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.</u>	Hebrews 13:25 <u>Grace be with you all.</u>
1 Thes. 5:28 <u>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.</u>	Rev. 22:21 <u>The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.</u>

There are fourteen references in all with twelve of them attributed to Paul. Hebrews is anonymous, and the Revelation belongs to John. No other book in the New Testament ends with this logo. Only Ephesians is missing from this list of Paul's letters, yet it does end with a similar logo.

Ephes. 6:24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible.

Much of the language in the letter to the Hebrews is grammatically different from Paul's other letters. If Paul was the author of the letter to the Hebrews, is there a

reason for the difference in his grammar within the original text? Paul was a learned man who spoke Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. His thirteen letters to the Gentile churches were written in a Greek grammar style for clarity. In the same way, when writing to the Hebrew speaking Jews, he would have written in their language following their grammatical style for clarity.

Some contend that Paul is not the author of this letter because of the following internal evidence.

Hebrews 2:3-4 *how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, ⁴God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.*

Opponents of Paul's authorship use this verse to assume that the writer was a second generation Christian needing to be assured by the eyewitnesses of the first generation Christians.

- "Those who heard" is the first generation.
- "It was confirmed to us" is the second generation.

With this in mind, the opponents of Paul's authorship stress the fact that Paul claimed to have seen Christ personally and received his message directly from Him.

1 Cor. 15:8 *and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.*

Galatians 1:11 *For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.*

Galatians 1:12 *For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Opponents also interpret Hebrews 2:4 as follows: "God also bearing witness with them (those who heard directly from the Lord), both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." In 2 Corinthians 12:12, Paul uses the same words as He says that he performed "signs and wonders and miracles" and calls them "the signs of a true apostle." Their summation is that Paul was a first generation Christian and the writer of Hebrews was a second generation Christian.

By using the context of the same verses we might confirm that Paul was the author. The 1st Corinthian passage is a reference to the Damascus Road encounter with the Lord, who had already ascended into heaven at that time; therefore, Paul's receiving of the message directly from the Lord was not referring to the instruction from the Lord while He was on earth but after He was in heaven.

Paul was a first century Christian but he was not a first generation Christian. Paul was definitely an eyewitness of the Lord, but not a believer in his role as a Pharisee of the Pharisees. First generation Christians were all the disciples and apostles who believed and followed the Lord while he was here on earth.

Once Paul turned to the Lord, the message that he preached was confirmed by those who heard the Lord personally before His crucifixion and during the forty days on earth after the resurrection. Therefore, the same texts that could lead away from Paul's being the author also lead to Paul's authorship of Hebrews.

The 2nd Corinthian passage is a defense of Paul's apostleship. The problem people in the Corinthian church were trying to pull away from the direction of Paul's leadership. Since Paul performed all the signs and wonders as only the other 11 apostles could do, he is defending his position as the apostle out of season.

The conclusion which we think is best supported, both from internal and external evidence, is that Paul was its author.

Amidst the conflict of authorship, the letter still ends with the words "Grace be with you all." We might interpret its meaning as follows:

May the graciousness of God divinely influence your heart and be reflected in your daily life.