

May All Who Come Behind Us Find Us Faithful
Hebrews 13

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Text Introduction: My title today is “May All Who Come Behind Us Find us Faithful.” You may recognize those words from the song. Steve Green sang this song when he was with us a few weeks ago.

The book of Hebrews is written by an anonymous writer, at least to us. The recipients no doubt knew who the author was. The author wrote out of an extreme concern that the recipients of this letter were on the verge of shrinking back in their faith. The concern was not one of losing their salvation, recognized by him and us to be impossible, but rather one of losing their faithfulness to the call. In short, the concern was that they might not finish what they started. In a sense the writer encouraged them to make sure that all who would come behind them would find them faithful.

When we arrive at Hebrews 13, the writer of Hebrews has spent 12 chapters building his case that turning back would be foolish. The basic argument has been that Jesus is better. Jesus is better than the angels, Moses, Joshua, the Mosaic Law, the Old Testament sacrificial system. He calls them to endure. That call to endure has culminated in the eleventh chapter with examples of the enduring faith of their Old Testament heroes. In chapter 12, the author points to Jesus, as the ultimate example and continues to bring this message to a climactic conclusion. Some might even say that chapter 13 is just the postscript, but I would strongly disagree. In chapter 13, we discover some mighty principles for finishing well.

Text: Let brotherly love continue. ²Don't neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it. ³Remember the prisoners, as though you were in prison with them, and the mistreated, as though you yourselves were suffering bodily. ⁴Marriage must be respected by all, and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge immoral people and adulterers. ⁵Your life should be free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for He Himself has said, I will never leave you or forsake you. ⁶Therefore, we may boldly say:

The Lord is my helper;
I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?

⁷Remember your leaders who have spoken God's word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. ⁹Don't be led astray by various kinds of strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be established by grace and not by foods, since those involved in them have not benefited. ¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle do not have a right to eat. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the most holy place by the high priest as a sin offering are burned outside the camp. ¹²Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the gate, so that He might sanctify the people by His own blood. ¹³Let us then go to Him outside the camp, bearing His disgrace. ¹⁴For we do not have an enduring city here; instead, we seek the one to come. ¹⁵Therefore, through Him let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips that confess His name. ¹⁶Don't neglect to do what is good and to share, for God is pleased with such sacrifices. ¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to them, for

they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. ¹⁸ Pray for us; for we are convinced that we have a clear conscience, wanting to conduct ourselves honorably in everything. ¹⁹ And I especially urge you to pray that I may be restored to you very soon.

²⁰ Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus—the great Shepherd of the sheep—with the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹ equip you with all that is good to do His will, working in us what is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. Glory belongs to Him forever and ever. Amen.

²² Brothers, I urge you to receive this message of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³ Be aware that our brother Timothy has been released. If he comes soon enough, he will be with me when I see you. ²⁴ Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who are from Italy greet you. ²⁵ Grace be with all of you.

Introduction: A few weeks ago I made a passing comment that I hardly ever go to movies or watch movies. That comment prompted a fair question, “So what kind of movies do you like?” I like movies like “Rocky.” I do admit that there was a diminishing return the higher in the sequels. By the time we got to Rocky V the movie was barely watchable. But, one scene in Rocky V is memorable. The plot of Rocky V brings Rocky to a street fight with the newly crowned and former protégé of Rocky, Tommy Gunn. Gunn knocks Rocky down and (finally, here is the good part) Rocky begins to have flashbacks of his old trainer, Mickey. Among the many things he hears in these flashbacks, Rocky hears Mickey say to him when he wanted to stop, “I didn’t hear no bell.” In other words, fight until you hear the bell.

I asked Bro. Luther “Why do you think you made it so long?” You heard his answer, and from a practical standpoint, I know there is truth in what he said. However, there are other spiritual principles that are important to note that he is too humble to say. So, we will let Hebrews 13 show us. The goal is not to show how Bro. Luther endured for 50 years in ministry in one church. The goal is that we would run well.

I am reading a new book from Dr. Jimmy Draper, retired pastor and retired President of Lifeway. His title captures my attention. He titled these memoirs, *Don’t Quit Before You Finish*. His book and this sermon don’t mean that you cannot retire. Rather, we think spiritually today. How do you finish? **How do you endure?** We see at least these five principles for finishing strong in Hebrews 13.

- **Exemplary in Personal Life**

There are five specific areas that the author mentioned in verses 1-5, with a word of continued explanation in verses 6 and 7.

1. Love for all people.
2. Hospitality—We might say love in action.
3. Empathy to those who are sufferings.

These seem to point to public life, but the next two areas deal with a person’s most private life.

4. Purity in Marriage relationship.

5. Integrity in Money Management—We might say “Manage your money; don’t let money manage you.”

- **Established in the Precepts of the Faith**

We do this by remembering the lessons of our teachers. We do this by remembering Jesus. He does not change. If He is unchanging, then His ways are unchanging. We cannot afford to be led away by various teachings.

- **Eyes on the Prize of Eternal Life**

We see this in verse 14. We keep looking heavenward.

The story is told of years ago a retiring missionary couple returning from decades of service. On their ship home was the President Teddy Roosevelt returning from a big game hunting trip. Everyone wanted to talk to the President. The missionary couple, known by no one, suffered in obscurity. When the ship docked, a huge welcoming party was there to greet the President. No one was there to greet the missionary couple. Now in their small apartment, the husband could not get this off of his mind. He felt slighted not so much by people, but by God, Himself. Here this couple had given their lives for Him, but for what reward? This went on for a few days. Finally, the man went to his bedroom and talked to God about the matter. Soon, he got up and everything was different about his countenance. His wife inquired, “What made the difference?” Her husband said, “It was as though the Lord said to me, ‘You’re not home yet!’”

A contemporary musical group, Building 429, sings:

All I know is I’m not home yet
This is not where I belong
Take this world and give me Jesus
This is not where I belong

- **Engaged in Praise in both word and deed**

We see this in verse 15 and 16. Praise is sometimes in word. Praise is sometimes in deed. Romans 12:1-2 come to mind. What is true worship? “Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

The Hebrews had knowledge and experience with the Old Testament sacrificial system. The author is presenting a better system of sacrifice.

- **Equipped with Power not of yourself**

Verses 20 and 21 bring this letter to a close. There is a reminder that ultimately Jesus is working in us, empowering us, equipping us to do His will.

Remember the words from Mickey to Rocky. "I didn't hear no bell." We might even change those words to "We haven't heard the trumpet yet!"