

Jesus and the Christian Walk



SAB
PM

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 12:1–13:19.

MEMORY VERSE: “As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses¹ around us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination² the race that lies before us” (Hebrews 12:1, TEV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: The book of Hebrews deals with heavenly things. But Hebrews also touches on some very earthly things.

WHEN QUEEN VICTORIA WAS A CHILD, she did not know she would soon become queen of England. Her teachers tried to prepare Victoria for her future work. But they could not inspire her. Victoria just did not take her studies seriously. Finally, her teachers decided to tell her that one day she would become queen. When she heard this, Victoria quietly said, “Then I will be good.” She realized she had inherited³ this important responsibility. This realization greatly influenced her to change her actions for the better.

Jesus has paid the greatest sacrifice for us. Now He serves as our High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary. So the promise of heaven is ours. These wonderful truths should inspire us to be better Christians.

¹witnesses—the people listed in Hebrews 11 who experienced God’s great love and who had great faith in God no matter what happened to them.

²determination—great firmness in doing what you need to do.

³inherited—to have received something from your parents when they died. Victoria’s father was king. When he died, she inherited the throne.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: In what ways are we “strangers and pilgrims”⁴ on the earth? What does Hebrews say about the danger of backsliding? How are Christians to relate to society? How can we be protected against some of the more common sins and temptations?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 20.

SUN STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS.

What two words in Hebrews 11:13 describe God’s faithful people? What do these two words make us think about? Why are these two words good descriptions of Christians on earth? Also read Job 8:9; Ecclesiastes 1:14; and James 4:14. In what ways should we not be strangers and pilgrims?

Pilgrims are people who leave their homes to go on a journey. They sometimes even leave their countries. They leave their normal activities, their families, and friends. They leave to go to a special place where they think they will learn more about God. They are willing to accept hardships to reach this place.

But a pilgrimage⁵ often is about salvation by works.⁶ Hebrews is not talking about salvation by works. Hebrews is talking about a different kind of pilgrim and a different kind of pilgrimage. These pilgrims are not trying to find salvation. Salvation has found them in the person of Jesus. He “was once offered to accept the sins of all people”

(Hebrews 9:28). He “obtained [got] eternal⁷ salvation” for them (Hebrews 9:12, TEV). He now appears “in the presence of God” (Hebrews 9:24) for them. The pilgrims’ journey is not to find salvation. They already have salvation. Instead, they follow Jesus wherever He asks them to go, because they already have salvation.

Read Hebrews 9:12, 24-26, 28. What steps are in these verses that tell us what Jesus has done and is doing for us now? Why is salvation by works not a part of these steps?

MON CHRISTIANS AND THEIR LORD.

Why does Hebrews deal so strongly with backsliding?⁸ Hebrews 6:4-9; Hebrews 10:26-29; Hebrews 12:25. What do these verses have in common?

In Hebrews 6:4-6; Hebrews 10:26-31; and Hebrews 12:15-17, 25-29, Paul talks about the same thing. He is concerned that church members may

⁴pilgrims—wanderers. Christians are wanderers on earth until called home to heaven when Jesus comes again.

⁵pilgrimage—the journey of a pilgrim.

⁶salvation by works—believing that what you do will save you from sin.

⁷eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

⁸backsliding—leaving God.

fall away and not repent.⁹ In strong words, Paul challenges church members to follow Jesus. Paul warns them very clearly about the danger of backsliding. William Johnsson has pointed out that all these verses have five things in common: (1) privileges,¹⁰ (2) offense (sin), (3) result, (4) judgment, and (5) reasons for God's punishment. The author of Hebrews "seems to speak about a stubborn refusal to accept the gospel. It is not just a slow falling away from God or neglect of God. In all these verses, Paul gives the most serious warnings in the entire New Testament. . . . He describes acts of open refusal, of bold rebellion against Jesus as Lord. In these verses, there is no suggestion of a sin of omission¹¹ or weakness. . . . Hebrews honors the Cross with words of praise. Hebrews shows the unlimited¹² greatness of the Cross. For these reasons, Hebrews must point out that refusing Jesus is horrible." —Adapted from *In Absolute Confidence*, pp. 143, 145–148.

Hebrews 6:4-6 presents great challenges. Why? Hebrews seems to teach that someone who has once known the power and greatness of God's salvation but who turns away can never again be saved. But the story of the prodigal¹³ son suggests, that in contrast,¹⁴ God

calls backsliders to return to Him (Luke 15:11-32).

We need to understand that it is not possible to turn people back to repentance¹⁵ as long as they continue in their bold and open sin against Jesus. The Bible often shows God pleading with people who have left Him to return to Him. He will pardon and cleanse them, but only if they turn away from their sin. If someone remains in sin and refuses to change, even God cannot bring that person back (Matthew 24:37-39). Freedom of choice carries serious results.

What hope can you give someone who is struggling because a loved one has walked away from God? What other verses can you find that help us to understand Hebrews 6:4-6 in light of the great Bible truth that God calls people to return to Him?

TUE CHRISTIANS AND SOCIETY.

Hebrews focuses on Jesus and His work in the heavenly sanctuary. The assurance,¹⁶ the hope, and the promises we have through Jesus' death and high-priestly ministry (work) naturally influence how we live and how we

⁹repent—to be sorry for your sins and to want to stop sinning.

¹⁰privileges—special benefits.

¹¹sin of omission—something we do not do that we know we should do.

¹²unlimited—having no limits.

¹³prodigal—spending too much money; wasteful.

¹⁴in contrast—showing how things are different.

¹⁵repentance—being sorry for your sins, and turning away from your sins.

¹⁶assurance—the promise and hope of salvation.

treat other people. The list of people in Hebrews 11 shows just how much faith influences personal lives and actions.



Faith saved Moses from death when he was just a baby (Hebrews 11:23).

What does Paul tell the people to do? Hebrews 12:14; Hebrews 13:1-5, 16, 17. What kind of personal relationships is he talking about in these verses?

Notice how Hebrews 12:14 and some of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount are the same. According to Matthew 5:9, Christians should not quarrel, fight, or go to war. They are to try to make peace. They are to serve their society and work to improve society. Matthew 5:9 teaches us to be involved. We still are strangers and pilgrims on earth. But while we are on earth, we need to make life on earth better.

Paul also talks about hospitality.¹⁷ We are not limited to giving hospitality to

church members only. Christians also are to help people who are not popular, such as prisoners, people who are addicted to drugs, and people who have AIDS. To help people who are not popular means to spend time with them. This is exactly what Jesus did when He was on earth.



God calls us to help people who are not popular.

Read Hebrews 13:16 again. The word translated “communicate” comes from a Greek word that has the meaning of “fellowship,” “close personal relationship,” and “sharing.” Paul calls these things that he asks us to do “sacrifices.” What idea does that give us? How does that idea fit in with the theme of Hebrews? Why do these things require a “sacrifice” on our part?

WED THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some [people]

¹⁷hospitality—making people welcome in your home or church.

are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer” (Hebrews 10:25, TEV).

Hebrews 10:19-25 gives a great example of how Jesus’ work in heaven as our High Priest should have an influence on earth.

Hebrews 10:19-21 focuses on Jesus in heaven. These verses show what He has done to help us reach the Father.

Hebrews 10:22, 23 says that because of what Jesus has done, our hearts can be changed. Our hearts are changed because we have assurance through Jesus when we remain faithful.

Hebrews 10:24, 25 says that because of Jesus we can live a new life. In this new life, we help other people. We share with other people what Jesus has given us.

How do the following verses help us to understand the work of a Christian community?

Hebrews 12:15 _____

Hebrews 13:1-3 _____

Hebrews 13:7, 17 _____

Hebrews 13:9 _____

Hebrews 13:18 _____

The Christian church is the same as a family. Already in New Testament times, Christians called one another sisters and brothers. They formed the “household of God” (Ephesians 2:19), God’s family. Family members take care of one another, encourage one another, and sometimes even confront¹⁸ one another so they can become better Christians.

We need one another. Jesus has established His church so we could have friends, develop our spiritual gifts, work together, and meet Jesus as a church group when He returns.

Why does the Bible focus on the idea of a Christian community? How has fellowship helped you?

THU SEX AND MONEY.

What two things does Hebrews 13:4, 5 talk about?

In Hebrews 13:4, Paul focuses on the importance and holiness of marriage. He warns against the wrong use of sexual

¹⁸confront—to tell another person that what he or she is doing is wrong. We must always confront someone in a kind, loving way and with much prayer.

powers. “When God’s laws are recognized and obeyed in marriage, marriage is a blessing. Marriage guards the purity and happiness of humanity.¹⁹ Marriage takes care of our social needs. It makes noble the physical, the intellectual (mental), and the moral²⁰ nature.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46. “Fornicators and adulterers” (Hebrews 13:4, NKJV) may describe two different groups. Adulterers are married persons who have a sexual relationship with someone who is not their spouse.²¹ Fornicators may mean people who are not married, but who have sex with another person.



Strong marriages help to make this world a better place.

Another area of temptation has to do with money. What is Paul saying

in Hebrews 9:5 that is so important about how we deal with money and all that we have? How does Hebrews 9:5 help us against being tempted by money and things?

Money and the love of money can do strange things to people. If they are not careful, even Christians can get swept away by what Jesus called “the deceitfulness²² of riches”²³ (Mark 4:19).

Jesus was once asked to do something when two brothers fought for their inheritance.²⁴ He said, “Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed [selfishness]; because your true life is not made up of the things you own, no matter how rich you may be” (Luke 12:15, TEV). We would do well to listen to Jesus’ words. They are true, especially when we like to measure the worth of our lives by how much we have.



Measure your worth by what Jesus has done for you.

¹⁹humanity—all the people of the world.

²⁰moral—having to do with right and wrong.

²¹spouse—the person you are married to.

²²deceitfulness—being full of lies. Many people think they will be happy if they have a lot of money and expensive things. But this is a lie. Money and expensive things cannot make us happy.

²³riches—a lot money and expensive things.

²⁴inheritance—what we receive from our parents when they die.

Read the Bible promise quoted at the end of Hebrews 13:5. How do we understand what the promise means in daily life? It is one thing to quote this promise and say you believe it. But how does our belief in this promise influence how we live in times of trouble and temptation?

FRI **ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Study the life of Paul in Philippians to see how his way of life and teaching follow what he wrote about in this week's lesson.

A man in the army of Alexander the Great²⁵ also was named Alexander. He was accused of being a coward. He was brought before Alexander, who asked his name. The man answered softly, "Alexander." "I cannot hear you," Alexander the Great said. The man again said, a little louder, "Alexander." But Alexander the Great still could not hear the man's name. So the man had to say his name a third time. Then Alexander the Great commanded, "Change your name or change your cowardly actions!"—Adapted.

"All people are made partners of God's salvation on earth. All people hope to share the glories of the kingdom in heaven. All people who hope to share the glories of the kingdom must gather (meet) with Jesus. They are responsible for their own case. They must realize the influence they have on other

people. If they keep their Christian walk, Jesus will give them the hope of glory. And they will love to praise Him. . . . The work of Jesus their Master will be near and dear to them. Jesus' work will be their duty. We will want to promote His work and honor His work by holy living. The angel said: 'Every talent God expects to be used for His cause!' All Christians must go on from strength to strength and use all their powers in God's work."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, 179.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The book of Hebrews deals with deep questions from the birth of Jesus as a human, to His heavenly ministry (work) in our behalf. But Hebrews also is down-to-earth. Why should theology²⁶ influence the way we live?
2. What does Hebrews 12:14 mean? How do we understand Hebrews 12:14 with righteousness (holiness) by faith²⁷ in mind?
3. We are saved only as individuals. But what responsibility does the church have toward the spiritual health of its members?

SUMMARY: This earth is not our final home. But it is where we live now. So God expects us to live according to the way Jesus has shown us.

²⁵Alexander the Great—He lived from 356-323 B.C. He was king of Macedonia.

²⁶theology—the study of God.

²⁷righteousness by faith—the process in which a person receives salvation by faith in Jesus.