

Christian Ethics, Pt. 3: Steadfastness, Separation, and Sacrifice

Scripture: Hebrews 13:7–14

Code: 1641

INTRODUCTION

I have read some commentaries that say the 13th chapter of Hebrews may have been written by someone other than the one who wrote the first twelve chapters. They conclude that the final chapter was written apart from the rest of the book and added on at a later date. My opinion is that the thirteenth chapter is very important to the entire letter and serves as a climax. I believe that the author needed to close his letter with principles that would explain his Jewish readers' obligation to the Lord. God, who never changes, has always expected certain conduct from His children. Although keeping His standards do not save a person, or cause God to like him better, they are still very important.

A Jewish believer might have concluded, "Since Israel is not a national witness anymore and we've been replaced by the church, the pressure is off--let's live it up! We don't need to obey God's commandments, which once identified us as His people for the benefit of the watching nations. " But through chapter 13 the Holy Spirit says, "No. You are a part of the church, which is made up of Jew and Gentile. The standards aren't lessened at all; God still expects you to behave in such a way that men "may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). Although the nation Israel is no longer a witnessing servant (Isa. 43:10), the Jews and Gentiles within the body of the church are individual witnesses. For that reason, the moral standards of God are still applicable. Abiding by ethical principles for Christian living establish a credible testimony of the church before the world.

REVIEW

I. THE ETHICS (vv. 1-19)

A. In Relation to Others (vv. 1-3)

1. Sustained Love (vv. 1-2)
2. Sympathy (v. 3)

B. In Relation to Ourselves (vv. 4-9)

1. Sexual Purity (v. 4)
2. Satisfaction (vv. 5-6)
3. Steadfastness (vv. 7-9)

In relation to ourselves, God desires that we be steadfast. Verse 9 says, "Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with foods, which have not profited them that have been occupied with them. " In other words, the author of Hebrews is saying, "Don't be bound by legalism. External ceremonial standards are no substitute for moral standards. Let your life be founded upon grace, not on external law. Superficial ceremonial laws concerning food, clothes, and holy days have not benefited those who observe them. "

a. The Examples (vv. 7-8)"Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their manner of life: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever. "The author of Hebrews tells his readers to consider their spiritual fathers, who were instructing them and had remained faithful. Jesus Christ, their spiritual

Creator, didn't change either. Those examples serve as the basis on which the author can challenge his readers not to change. b. The Exhortation (v. 9)1) Avoiding False Doctrine (v. 9a)"Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. "The Greek word for "carried about" means "removed. " One of Satan's most subtle attacks on the Christian is to remove him from sound doctrine. He leads people into doctrine that is as changeable as the wind. It is sad to see a person who has made a profession of faith in Christ led into false doctrine. Such a person is rendered ineffective for service, and will experience a loss of joy now, and a loss of reward in the future. I had a mother come to me once with tears in her eyes. She said that her husband and son, who had made commitments to Christ and had been in the church most of their lives, had been dragged into a cult. As a result, they lost all contact with the truth of God. That is typically how Satan operates. Let's examine some Scriptures supporting that:a) Acts 20:29-32--Paul was saying farewell to some elders from Ephesus, a city where he had spent three years teaching day after day. Although he had generously given of himself in sharing the truth with the Ephesian church, that was no protection from the false teaching that would later influence them: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves [false teachers] enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch, and remember, that for the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. " The Word of God is our only protection. Evidently, the church of Ephesus didn't stand upon it, for it eventually went out of existence--partially as a result of false teaching. b) Romans 16:17-18--"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own body, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the innocent. " Satan constantly infiltrates the church with false teachers who are in it for the money. c) 2 Corinthians 11:13-15--"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works. " People say, "That preacher can't be all bad; he talks about Christ and seems to believe in Him. " Of course! If he came along and told you he was a believer in Buddha, you wouldn't listen to him!d) Colossians 2:4, 8--"And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. . . . Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. " Don't be deceived by philosophies that can draw you away from the truth. e) 1 John 4:1--"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. "f) Jude 3-4--"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. "g) Galatians 5:1--"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage [legalism]. " Paul wanted the Galatians to abide by the moral standards of Christianity, rather than the ceremonies of Judaism, which were no longer applicable. h) Ephesians 4:11-14--False teaching is a very serious problem that Christians should be prepared to encounter. The greatest battle that we fight in Christianity is the doctrinal purity of the church. From a church's doctrinal foundation springs every other issue. If we do not have pure doctrine, we run into terrible problems. For that reason, God gave the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we

henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive" (4:12-14). The Greek word for "sleight" refers to casting loaded dice. To combat such satanic strategy, the church must be spiritually mature, or its members will be tossed around by false doctrine.

The Childishness of the Church

The church of Jesus Christ today often tends to follow every new wave that comes along. That reminds me of little kids. Babies crawl along the floor and put about everything they can find into their mouths. They don't have any idea of what is supposed to go in their mouth and what isn't. If you allowed a child of three to arrange his own diet, he'd be dead by the time he was five--he'd be sweetened to death! Children have no ability to discern what is good. That's exactly the problem in the church today. Because of a lack of solid doctrinal teaching, it is massively populated by babes who swallow everybody's teaching without the maturity to discern whether or not it is accurate. To make matters worse, some pastors only go as far as to tell their people what is good and what is bad without ever giving them the principles they need to make appropriate decisions independently of him. We need not only to tell people what to avoid, but to teach them principles that will help them to make up their own minds about various issues. Unless a church has a solid doctrinal foundation, Satan can move in and lead people into error.

Hopefully, however, the spiritual babes in a church will grow into spiritual adults. First John 2:12-14 records the life cycle of spiritual growth: "I write unto you, little children [Gk. *teknia* = 'children' of God in the general sense], because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (v. 12). In verses 13-14, John splits the children of God into three categories:

1. Spiritual Fathers

Verse 13 says, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. . . . " A spiritual father has a depth of knowledge about God. He understands something of the Lord's unfathomable character.

2. Spiritual Young Men

To the less spiritually mature, the Apostle said, ". . . I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. . . . I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (vv. 13-14).

The only way to overcome the wicked one is by having the Word of God abide in you. That is the most effective weapon you have when confronting the false doctrine of Satan, who operates as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). I don't think the devil is busy at the local bar; the lust of the flesh will cause enough trouble on its own. Rather, Satan operates in the area of religion. He is the evil influence behind false teachers. However, it is not until you grow in the knowledge of Scripture to the stature of a young man, that you can overcome his deceit. The ones who are vulnerable to false doctrine are. . .

3. Spiritual Children

In verse 13, John said, ". . . I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. " The Greek word for "children" in this verse is *paidia*. It designates a spiritual babe as distinguished from the term *teknia*, which refers to all Christians. The only thing a little one really knows is his dependence on the Father. His is the simple trust of Romans 8:15 that addresses God as, "Abba, Father. " Unfortunately, there are some Christians who never learn any more than that.

But young men know more than that. They have grown to the level where false doctrine is not a problem. When you were saved, you overcame the world. As you grow into a young man, you are able to overcome the devil. But there's one thing you will never overcome on earth: the flesh. Every Christian must wait for the glorification of his body in order to overcome that.

2) Acknowledging True Nourishment (v. 9b)". . . For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with foods, which have not profited them that have been occupied with them. "a) The

Ineffectiveness of Food The writer of Hebrews tells his readers, "Don't get dragged off into false doctrine. Rather, be nourished in sound doctrine." The Word of God is the key to living the Christian life. Now that Christ has fulfilled the Old Covenant and established the New Covenant, spirituality doesn't revolve around ceremonial and dietary laws. Since the Israelites were used to such rituals, it was difficult for Jewish people to stop practicing them. (1) 1 Corinthians 8:8--"But food commendeth us not to God; for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse." In other words, God does not care about the diet you're on for religious reasons. (2) 1 Timothy 4:3-5--In the last days, there will be false teachers "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by them who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused, if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." That's why we pray before we eat. There are clearly no more dietary laws, since Paul says that "nothing is to be refused." (3) Acts 10:13, 15--In a vision, Peter saw both clean and unclean animals in a sheet and heard the divine instructions, ". . . Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. . . . What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." (4) Romans 14:17--"For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Don't listen to anyone who promotes the error that certain foods please God and others don't. That is not so. Christianity has rendered all dietary practices inconsequential for one's spiritual life. b) The Effectiveness of Faith On the other hand, God is concerned about the grace in your heart that is established by diligently studying and applying Scripture. (1) 1 Corinthians 15:58--"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." I think everyone respects a person with convictions, who is steadfast and unmovable. Those qualities are absolutely essential in the Christian life. (2) Colossians 1:23--". . . continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard" (3) 2 Peter 3:17-18--Don't let anyone drag you off into a false system--no matter what the pressure is like. Peter wrote this to Jewish believers who were under the pressure of false teachers: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. . . ." You are of no use to God unless you are doctrinally solid--you owe that to yourself and to God. To be led astray is tragic. Finally, let us examine the believer's ethics. . .

C. In Relation to God (vv. 10-16)

1. Separation (vv. 10-14)

a. Explained (vv. 10-11) "We have an altar, of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp." (1) The Altar--The Possibilities Investigated Some say this altar refers to a literal altar. Therefore, many Christian churches believe they should have the New Testament counterpart to the Old Testament altar. But that can't be the kind of altar that the writer is referring to. The descriptive elements of eating and offering animal sacrifices do not even fit with the suggestion of a communion table. How could you have a communion table that you couldn't eat from? That doesn't make sense. Others say it refers to a heavenly altar, such as the one indicated in Revelation 6:9. But that doesn't make any sense either. How could those two verses have anything to do with the altar in heaven, where there is no eating or offering of animal sacrifices? Still others say that the altar refers to Christ. If that is so, mentioning those who "have no right to eat" would contradict Jesus' invitation to "eat" of Him in John 6:53: ". . . Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." (2) The Analogy--The Principle Identified I think the weight of the evidence is on another viewpoint: The altar is an analogy of separation. A Christian's obligation to God is to be separated from the world unto Him. I believe that the analogy was drawn from the literal altar of sacrifice in the Judaistic system. It is an illustration that the author's Jewish readers could identify with. From that altar, the priests had no right to eat of

the sin offering that was made on the Day of Atonement. However, the priests were allowed to eat what was left of the other kinds of offerings. But in the sin offering, the blood of the slain animal was sprinkled in the Holy of Holies on the Mercy Seat, and the carcass was taken outside the camp and burned. The writer is giving them an analogy that demonstrates their need to be separated from the world's system.

b. Exemplified (v. 12)"Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. "In the Old Testament, the Israelites took the bodies of the sin offerings outside the camp. They wanted the offerings to be as far away as possible from them. The Judaistic system didn't want Jesus either. He suffered outside the gate of Jerusalem when He was crucified. And, as the ultimate sin offering, He sanctified the people with His own blood, perfectly fulfilling the Old Testament picture. The Old Testament picture (the sin offering) and its fulfillment (Christ) were rejected, although for different reasons. The people wanted no part of either one. Jesus was despised, betrayed, arrested, mocked, beaten, and killed like a common criminal. He accepted every bit of it so that He could shed His blood on the behalf of all men. Hebrews 9:22 says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. The Old Testament sin offering was a shame to the people and they put it outside the camp. Jesus bore the people's reproach, yet they put Him out, not knowing that He was the true sin offering.

c. Exhorted (vv. 13-14)"Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. "The author of Hebrews might have also had in mind Israel's rejection of God in worshiping the golden calf. As a result, the Tabernacle of God's presence was moved outside the camp. Therefore, when anyone wanted to approach God, he had to go outside the camp of Israel (Ex. 33:7). God set Himself apart from the disobedient nation and said, "If you come to Me, you must separate yourself from the world's system. " I believe that is exactly what God is saying today: If you're going to come to Him, you are going to have to come out from the world's system, like the faithful Israelites did from the rest of the camp. So, whether the Old Testament sin offering refers to Christ or to the Tabernacle, the message is the same: Separate yourself from unrighteousness. The practical point is that you and I must be willing to go out from the world's system and bear the shame that both the sin offering and Christ Himself bore. According to Hebrews 11:26, Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. " Similarly, the writer of Hebrews is saying that we ought to consider the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures of the world. The sin offering contained the feature of separation. Christ was separated from sinful man. Therefore, we are to be separated as well.

1) The Responsibility (v. 13a)"Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him outside the camp. . . "a) 2 Corinthians 6:14-17--Paul mentions that concept in some detail: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial [Satan]? Or what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate "b) 1 John 2:15--People have asked me if I believe in biblical separation. I do simply because the Bible tells us, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world " The world's system is opposed to God and controlled by Satan (Eph. 2:2). The system the Jewish readers of this letter were involved in was Judaism. The writer wanted them to leave the practices of Judaism behind and come to full faith in Christianity, where those practices had been fulfilled. The moment that Jesus Christ died on the cross, Judaism ceased to exist as a way to God. It fell into the category of worldliness with other forms of religious self-effort. Therefore, he says, "Get out of the system of legalism and ceremonialism; come outside the Judaistic camp to Christ. "2) The Reproach (v. 13b)". . . bearing His reproach. "Identifying with Christ means that we will have to suffer. As Christians who have separated from the world's system and turned to God, we will bear varying degrees of reproach:a) Luke 9:23--"And [Jesus] said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. " That means a

Christian should be willing to bear the reproach of Christ. Like Him, we should not identify with the world's system. However, when we interact with it, we do so for the sake of confrontation; not communion. b) 2 Timothy 3:12--The only people who identify with Jesus Christ are those who are willing to count the cost. Paul tells us that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Many Christians don't live godly lives and therefore aren't persecuted. They never come apart from the world's system. c) Philippians 2:17--The Apostle Paul knew what it was to live apart from the world, and yet lead people to Christ. He went to the sinner, but never joined in his sin. Paul was willing to make sacrifices for the salvation of others. He told the Philippians, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." d) Philippians 3:10--Paul strove to know "the fellowship of [Christ's] sufferings" Paul was willing to sacrificially experience the sufferings of Christ, having left the system behind (vv. 4-7). e) 1 Corinthians 4:10-13--Sarcastically addressing the pompous Corinthians, Paul said, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are being ostracized and persecuted--because it was a small price to pay for the glory that awaited them. If a man is not willing to be separated from the world unto God, Jesus said he is not worthy to be His disciple (Mt. 10:37-38). There were many who gave excuses about why they couldn't follow Him. One man claimed that he had to bury his father. Another was not willing to leave his parents (Lk. 9:59-62).

Scripture demonstrates that identifying with the system is foolish:

1. The World Is Passing Away

"And the world passeth away, and the lust of it; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 Jn. 2:17).

2. The World Is Controlled by Satan

". . . the whole world lieth in the wicked one" (1 Jn. 5:19).

3. The World Is Worthless Compared to Heaven

As a Christian, you look forward "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4). What would you want with the trinkets of the world? There's nothing that this world has to offer you that's even worth grasping.

4. The World Will Be Judged

"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). You don't want to be a part of the world because it's going to be condemned.

Besides the separation that is necessary for us to have in relation to God, there must also be.

2. Sacrifice (vv. 15-16)

a. By Word (v. 15)"By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. "1) The MeaningThe sacrificial system was important to a Jewish person. So when he came into the New Covenant, he would want to know if there were any more sacrifices to be made. The kind of sacrifice God desires is no longer animals or barley; He seeks the praise of our lips. The phrase "by Him" indicates that there is only one way to God--Jesus Christ. Can you offer an acceptable sacrifice to God apart from Christ? No. We cannot enter His presence any other way (Jn. 14:6). The believer as a New Testament priest (1 Pet. 2:9) is to offer praise to God as his sacrifice. What comes out of your lips toward God? Do you ever get under such pressure that you start getting angry with God?2) The MessageLet me give you an idea of what to say to God when you want to praise Him: "I will extol Thee, my God, O king, and I will bless Thy name forever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name forever and ever. Great is the +LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honor of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of Thy awe-inspiring acts; and I will declare Thy greatness. . . . The LORD is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Thy works shall praise Thee, O LORD; and Thy saints shall bless Thee.

They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power" (Ps. 145:1-6, 9-11). Following the theme of praise, Psalms 146-150 all begin with the words "Praise Ye the +LORD. " The praise of your lips is the sacrifice that God desires. 3) The MannerVerse 15 tells us that we are to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually . . . " You say, "But you don't understand my troubles. " No, you don't understand your God. First Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. "Words that please God had better be backed up:b. By Deed (v. 16)"But to do good and share forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. "While you are offering to God verbal sacrifices, be sure that your lips are followed by your life!1) James 1:27--This verse condenses the concept of religion into an economy of words: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. " If you want to live a godly life, go visit some orphans and widows, and keep yourself unspotted from the world's system. In other words, do good by ministering to the needs of others. 2) Isaiah 58:2, 6-7--Everything you do in your Christian life is a sacrifice to God. Have you ever evaluated the quality of what you are giving Him? Do you give Him your best, or are you giving Him that which is left over and of no value to you? (Mal. 1:13-14). Israel was guilty of that: "Yet [My people] seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching God" (v. 2). That was a description of the superficial religious exercises that Israel performed. Verses 6-7 help to reveal the shallowness of their worship: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen--to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" God indicted Israel saying, "Your religion looks good on the surface, but that's not what I'm asking for. Didn't I tell you to clothe the people who are naked, and give food to the hungry? That's what I desire. "3) 1 John 3:18--"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. " God gives principles that are simple but binding. He wants us to be separated from the world and to offer spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving accompanied with good deeds.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Who were the examples of steadfastness that the author of Hebrews told his readers to consider (Heb. 13:7-8)?
2. What is one of Satan's most subtle attacks on the believer?
3. What happens to a Christian who is led into false doctrine?
4. According to Acts 20:29-32, what is a church's protection against false teachers?
5. How did Paul command the Roman Christians to respond to those who cause divisions? Whom do such people serve? How are they able to deceive the innocent (Rom. 16:17-18)?
6. Why did the Apostle John warn us not to naively believe every spiritual teacher who comes along (1 Jn. 4:1)?
7. What is the greatest battle that is fought in Christianity? Why?
8. What gifted men did God give to the church, according to Ephesians 4:11-13? Why? What keeps Christians from being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. . . " (v. 14)?
9. Compare the maturity levels of spiritual fathers, young men, and children, as indicated by 1 John 2:13-14.
10. Why shouldn't we listen to people who claim that certain foods please God? Support your answer with Scripture.
11. What altar did the author of Hebrews apparently have in mind, according to the evidence in verses 10-11 of chapter 13?
12. What was the procedure for dealing with the carcasses of the sin offerings? How was that

analogous to what Jesus did?

13. What does the author's exhortation in verse 13 to go outside the camp to Christ recall from the Old Testament (Ex. 33:7)?

14. Describe the world's system.

15. What does identifying with Christ mean that we will experience to varying degrees? Support your answer with Scripture.

16. Why did the author encourage his readers to pay the price of separation? What are some reasons that identifying with the world's system is foolish?

17. What kind of sacrifice can we offer to God today? How should that be done, regardless of the troubles that may face us?

18. What is another type of sacrifice that pleases God (Heb. 13:16)?

19. What did God indict Israel for, according to Isaiah 58:6-7?

Pondering the Principles

1. How would you evaluate the spiritual maturity of your church? How would you rate your own level of maturity? Spiritually speaking, are you a father, a young man, or a child? What do you need to do to progress in your spiritual life? If you are a "young man" or a "father," are you leading and teaching the believers who are younger in the Lord that you are? If you feel the need for Bible classes, make that suggestion to your pastor or Christian education committee. If you think you are unqualified to teach a class, maybe you can at least help organize it or assist in some other manner.

2. Maybe you have heard the phrase that "Christians are supposed to be in the world, but not of the world." Why do we need to be in touch with the unbelieving world? (1 Cor. 5:9-13; 1 Pet. 3:15-16) At the same time, why can we not participate in the evil deeds of the world? (Eph. 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:11-17) Where do you stand in relation to the world? Are you close enough to befriend the lost and lead them to Christ? However, are you careful enough to help those in need without falling in the quicksand of unrighteousness yourself? Ask God to give you discernment in every situation so that you can effectively reach those who are trapped in the satanic world system without damaging your testimony of godliness.

3. What sacrifices of praise and good deeds have you offered to God this past week? If you are short on sacrifices, praise God right now for who He is, and what He has accomplished on your behalf. Is there some good deed you have wanted to accomplish but kept putting off? Make plans to enable that good intention to become a reality. And remember, ". . . with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16). Take a few moments to commit 1 John 3:18 to memory.

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