

WitnessKit 3

God and Religions

Integrating the Worldviews of the Old and New
Testaments,

Guided by the Book

Letter to the Hebrews

Class 26

Hebrews Chapter II—Directions
for Practical Living

I Thessalonians 5:21-22

But examine everything carefully;
hold fast to that which is good.
Abstain from every form of evil.

The Directions for Practical Living



Instructions found in Hebrews chapter 13 are good advice under any circumstance. We realize the importance of these directions when we remember that the church was facing serious persecution when the Letter to the Hebrews was written.

These are *“Do these things no matter what”* kinds of instructions.

We can persevere under difficult circumstances

Practical Directions

by following the practical directions in Hebrews chapter 13.

1. **Directions for compassion**
2. Directions for moral living
3. Directions for church participation
4. Directions for attitude adjustment.

Directions for compassion

Hebrews 13

- Chapter 13
- ¹ Let brotherly love continue. ² Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels. ³ Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.

Matthew 24:12



“And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s (*agâpē*-)love will grow cold.”

Love is not optional for Christians.

Brotherly love (*phileō*) is a choice we must make, no matter what. *Agâpē*-love is altruistic and so is brotherly love.

Matthew 24:12

We can think of several potential hindrances to brotherly love:

- persecution,
- lawlessness,
- the cares and worries of life, and
- the deceitfulness of riches,
- extreme busyness.

Love is at the top of the list of directions for practical living.

The Letter to the Hebrews



The theme of the entire book of Hebrews is
“Persevere in Faith!”

The final chapter gives practical advice for that purpose. The directions in chapter 13 cover outward behavior and inward attitudes—under any circumstance.

Christians of those times were facing imprisonment, ostracism, family troubles, financial loss, and even death due to persecution. Sounds like today!

Directions for compassion



Compassion should come from the **heart—from brotherly love**. It is important **not** to allow persecution or anything else to steal your brotherly love. It is important never to allow anything to harden your heart.

Withstanding persecution **requires mental toughness**, but it must **not** produce **heart toughness**.

Directions for compassion

This is particularly difficult when dealing with **fake brothers** such as has been experienced by believers in communist lands.

During the street demonstrations that led up to the fall of the Berlin wall, Christians learned to surround the *agents provocateurs* and hold hands around them, and move them gently over to the police. (The agents were trying to turn the demonstrations into violent confrontations, to give the authorities an excuse to attack.) The book *Candles Behind the Wall* gives an amazing look at the role Christian believers played in keeping the dissolution of the Soviet Empire peaceful.

Directions for compassion



Christians had learned those techniques by their experience of persecution within the churches. When the Soviet Union dissolved, restraint dissolved with it, because the churches had been so wounded as stabilizing influencers for morality—they had been hindered in outreach by severe persecution as well, and people lost their way. The founders of the United States in 1780 viewed two threats to their newly won liberty—either a return to tyranny or mob rule. They were supporters of religious liberty as a bulwark against both threats. Why is that?

Directions for compassion



Mobs don't know how to love. Love builds. Chaos tears down. Tyrants don't know how to love, either. Tyranny stifles goodness.

So it is of the utmost importance that brotherly love should continue during times of distress. It is the hope for the future.

Love requires a moral foundation. Otherwise it becomes selfish rationalization in disguise as love. Love requires transparency—no ulterior motives.

Directions for compassion

Hebrews 13

- Chapter 13
- ¹ Let brotherly love continue. ² Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels. ³ Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.

Directions for compassion



Compassion includes looking out for others. **Showing hospitality** was a way of providing a safe harbor for travelers who might be harmed if they camped out. God may have divine appointments, or even angelic messengers for you, when you provide for the needs of others.

This is a risk when persecution is normal. The Soviet Union made it illegal for churches to help the poor, for instance.

Directions for compassion



In the occupied Netherlands during WW2, Corrie Ten Boom and her family were caught and sent to concentration camps for helping Jews, because of the treachery of an informer pretending to seek their help.

- The New Testament mentions various individuals who were a danger to believers at that time, with the warning to watch out for them.

Directions for compassion



- ❑ Balancing risks and needs is not always easy in a persecution situation. Pray hard.
- ❑ Even if you face this kind of problem, don't let it steal your love for others. Pray for their eyes to be opened to truth, as part of loving them.
- ❑ The world is in a moral fog at present. A moral fog can steal brotherly love. Ask God for clarity in all things.

We can be compassionate in our time by increasing awareness of

Religious Persecution in the world today:

1. Persecution of Christians in the modern world
2. Persecution of Jews in the modern world
3. Institutionalized persecution of Muslims and others due to violence in Islam
4. Institutionalized persecution due to Marxism.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Christians in the modern world

Compassion includes remembering those who are suffering for the faith, as though you are suffering along with them.

Right now, all over the world, Christians are suffering for their faith. In the regional disruption since 9-11, many Christians in the Middle East have become refugees.

The relinquishing of authority to Fatah and Hamas in the Palestinian areas has brought suffering to Christians there.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Christians in the modern world

The easy times have been over for Christians in communist nations for 100 years. We owe them our prayers and concern.

Even places like Nicaragua persecuted Christians under Marxist leaders—and have re-elected them now. Christians were driven from their homes with nothing but one suitcase during the 1970s.

Several Latin American nations have recently chosen Marxism. We don't always receive adequate information from those places.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Christians in the modern world

Human rights organizations are often silent about closed regimes. They tend to get data from the easy places, and give the really difficult ones a free pass.

Even formerly communist nations are often suspicious of “uncontrolled religious groups” and may suppress independent churches. The KGB did not fade into oblivion—pray for its new form to respect Christianity.

In Sudan, Christians are taken captive as slaves by Arabs in the north.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Jews in the modern world

In addition, we should remember Jewish people over the world who are suffering for their faith. Violence against Jews in Europe is on the rise as militant Islam gains numbers.

This form of anti-Semitism often relates to Israel's right to exist, since Islam claims Jerusalem as its second most holy site, and since much of the Qur'an is hostile toward Jews. Islamic beliefs about the end times are hostile toward Jews as well.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Jews in the modern world



The location of petroleum deposits in Islamic nations **biases political decisions** all over the world. That bias may influence the kind of information published in official journals. Good information may be hard to find.

From that bias, denial of Israel's legitimacy sometimes results, since institutional Islam denies Israel's legitimacy.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Jews in the modern world

Disbelief in the Bible can reduce compassion for Israel.

- ▣ The Bible presents history plus promises from God supporting their right to the land.
- ▣ Israeli return to the land fulfills promises in the Bible.
- ▣ People should view these fulfilled promises **as historic support** for their rights.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Jews in the modern world

Denial of Israel's right to exist is inexcusable.

- The return to Israel and re-founding of the nation are perfectly legitimate under international law.
- No other nation in the world is treated as having no rights.
- They are the only nation in the Middle East with both representative government and the rule of law. We NEED Israel to be there and to be safe.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Jews in the modern world

Israel itself is under constant attack by rockets from neighboring militants, and under threat of nuclear strike by Iran.

Iran's oil wealth supplies the weapons to Israel's neighbors—both Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

Even Turkey is starting to align with Iran.

The Wiki leaks are heightening tensions in the Middle East. Instability is increasing all over the world in response to such events.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Jews in the modern world

The Arab spring, with good intentions, has dissolved into persecution and hostility and warfare. Both Christians and Jews are facing increased hostility in the Middle East, and are in grave danger.

The stability of the major powers is being challenged by events, and the challenges are not going away.

God has Israel's survival in mind, always. He wants us to care about these things.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Jews in the modern world

God sees Israel as the flock of His people, and Himself as their Shepherd.

He many times in Biblical history has delivered them from enemies when they were outnumbered.

He wants them and us to trust Him and to turn to Him for help.

His promise to bless those who bless them holds true.

Directions for compassion: Persecution of Jews in the modern world

As believers in His word, and as those who believe in representative government, we owe Israel our solidarity. We, too, are outnumbered in this world. We, too, are the flock of God's people. We, too, experience persecution.

These things are all matters for prayer and concern, and sometimes for speaking up.

We should remember people in other faiths who suffer as well. We should love them and desire what is in their eternal best interest.

Persecution in Today's World

The two institutionalized sources of enormous persecution in this world are

- **Marxism** wherever communism is in power, and
- **Militant Islam** which persecutes people of other faiths **and people of its own faith** who search for truth outside its boundaries.
- Both of these forms tend to persecute their own people as well as outsiders, enforcing “**voting with the feet**” with the death penalty.

Compassion = The eternal best interest

For people entrapped in Islam and in Marxism, their eternal best interest is served by providing a way out of those ideologies.

For those who wish to help them, courageous faith is a non-negotiable requirement.

- Walking in true fellowship with God is also required, so that His guidance and protection are available. Knowledge of the risk is required.
- This is the opposite of hate, and is evidence of *agape*-love.

Muslim Persecution of Christians by Robert Spencer

<http://www.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=34882>

FrontPageMagazine.com | Friday, May 15, 2009

“‘I fear the extinction of Christianity in Iraq and the Middle East,’ said the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Baghdad, Jean Benjamin Sleiman, as Pope Benedict XVI visited that troubled region this week. The Lebanese Christian columnist Sarkis Naoum added: ‘Unless there is a turn toward secularism in the Arab world, I don’t think there is a future for Christians here.’ In 1909, the Middle East was **20 percent Christian**; one hundred years later, that percentage has fallen to **five percent**.”

Compassion: Islam is in a special category.

Much of the persecution of Christians and of Jews in this world is due to violence in Islam.

Much of the extremism in Islam is due to the leadership's efforts to translate the warfare of earlier times, then used to spread Islam, into the modern world. Because their view of God is that He is primarily will rather than goodness, they establish ideas about right and wrong using Muhammad's life as the example, and his life was filled with warfare.

Compassion: Islam is in a special category.



Violence in Islam victimizes everyone, including Muslims. The violence of extremists causes those who are non-violent to face a stigma, and the violence of extremists also threatens the safety of the non-violent. It is a no-win situation.

Postmodernism



Remember the two sources of organized persecution in the modern world? –Militant Islam and Marxism.

If a Postmodernist secularism becomes the norm in the secular world, it is **helpless** to stop militant Islam **or** militant Marxism.

Directions for Compassion



It is helpless—because it adopts cultural-Marxist thinking.

Postmodernism will surrender to group morals or to Marxist rhetoric. It will allow militant Islam to create growing islands of terror within secular communities, where Shari'a is law. It will allow militant Communism to intimidate its way to success.

Directions for Compassion

So we are facing enormous challenges. It is like being below sea level, trying to hold back the sea, while earthen levies fail and a hurricane blows in from the Gulf. Why?

1. because the popular and politically-correct worldviews are so predominantly on the wrong side of the issues, and
2. because the people who have helpful worldviews **don't realize the problem** we face.

Directions for Compassion



The composite secular-religious worldview—holding to individual equality and moral universals—has sustained Western Civilization.

That composite worldview has produced the last 200 years of freedom in the West.

That worldview is being lost in the cultural relativism of Postmodernism.

Directions for Compassion

The only possible set of ideas that can stop the collapse are found in a Biblical worldview—because a **Biblical worldview has a basis** for moral universals.

Directions for Compassion



To return to such a worldview, Biblical apologetics
MUST BE LEARNED.

The concept of moral universals
places individuals as equals before the law.
Freedom hangs suspended in the balance
from this concept.

Directions for Compassion

- Modernism accepted moral universals in an enlightenment ethic, but **without a basis for them.**
- Postmodernism has kicked the supports out from under modernism in all but the physical sciences.

Directions for Compassion

- The Biblical worldview **has a basis** for moral universals.
- The Biblical worldview has to be perceived as true **or at least reasonable**, or there will be no going back to a belief in universals. A Biblical worldview needs to be **respected** in the culture at large.
- Only Biblical apologetics can open up that possibility.

Directions for Compassion

- Even a small number of people can bring the world back from the brink, if God helps them.
“The LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few.”—I Samuel 14:6.
- Existentialist Christianity, without a Biblical worldview, is just as postmodern as academia. Existentialist **faith-in-a-truth-vacuum** won't work. We have to go back to truth.
- Even if we fail to bring the world back from the brink, apologetics has the potential to reach a “remnant.”

Directions for Compassion



God wants to save the world from destruction for the purpose of saving individuals for eternity. The remnant of “teachable and reachable people” matters tremendously to Him.

The Bible account of Noah’s ark says even one faithful man is vitally important to God.

Compassion requires that we communicate to people what they really need—not just what they want to hear.

In the meantime...

We have to go about our
everyday lives, and live for God.
Back to Hebrews chapter 13...

We can persevere under difficult circumstances

Practical Directions

by following the practical directions in Hebrews chapter 13.

1. Directions for compassion
2. **Directions for moral living**
3. Directions for church participation
4. Directions for attitude adjustment.

Directions for moral living

Hebrews 13

⁴ Marriage *is* honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. ⁵ *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."* ⁶ So we may boldly say: *"The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*

Directions for moral living



Persevering under persecution requires not giving in to the world's way of coping—especially when the world's way includes immorality or materialism or collapsing from family trouble—including intimidation by an unbelieving spouse.

The apostle Peter dealt with such issues in more detail in the Letter of First Peter.

A time of persecution stresses a marriage. The Christian must persevere in doing what is right.

Directions for moral living



The future of the world is always at stake. Only strong families can build a safe and happy childhood for their children. Only children with a solid foundation in ideas and strategies for good can grow up to build a future that will last.

A postmodern world, that has abandoned belief in truth, cannot give the next generation a foundation that will last.

Directions for moral living



Persecution causes fear or anger as natural responses.

People react to fear by seeking an escape, and sometimes that escape can be sinful.

A new believer with an unbelieving spouse might fear the threat of divorce, or the aftermath of divorce, or he might be tempted to covet a better spouse. Or she might fear being forced into a remarriage after such a divorce.

Directions for moral living

Hebrews 13 says, instead,
to face the fear with the Lord's help.
He will never leave you or forsake you.
That includes a situation where an
unbelieving spouse does.

Directions for moral living

- ❑ My opinion is that this passage covers difficult situations such as this one, but without spelling it all out...
- ❑ If an unbelieving spouse divorced a new believer, (as the innocent party) the believer might also have little choice about remarriage. The author of Hebrews reminds them that marriage is honorable, whereas **living with someone without marriage is not.**
- ❑ (I Corinthians 7:9-17)

Directions for moral living

- We live during a time where marriage faces many stresses from a culture that has lost perspective.
- We are on the threshold of an era when the next generation will be **so secularized** that they will have no clue about a Biblical view of marriage. The secular world gives them an ugly caricature of Biblical marriage.

Directions for moral living

- We must consider the Scriptures carefully and respond to all difficulties in a kind manner that encourages righteousness.
- One non-negotiable principle is “holding marriage in honor.”

Directions for moral living



A Biblical worldview is good for marriage, because God demands that a husband and wife love each other.

I Thessalonians 4:3-8 gives clear directions about marital relationships. “³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ...

Directions for moral living

...⁶ that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. ⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.” (NKJV)

Directions for moral living

Hebrews 13

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?"* (NASB)

Directions for moral living



A new believer may face the loss of income or home due to persecution. Or he may face job discrimination. He may face job loss or imprisonment.

Directions for moral living



Materialism makes **fear of loss** an operative principle. That leaves people open to manipulation by others. Does God want us to be intimidated or manipulated by other people? No.

Does He want us to focus all our time and energies on financial success? No.

Does He want fear to silence us from speaking about Him? No.

Directions for moral living



So what is the solution?

“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’⁶ So we may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”

Directions for moral living



People living under persecution for their faith are not in a safe little cocoon due to God's help—at least not on this side of eternity. They experience situations with **all kinds of difficulty**. They have to trust God on a moment by moment basis **and do the right thing**, allowing Him to work behind the scenes as He sees best.

Directions for moral living



There is a **fellowship of Jesus' sufferings** that potentially comforts suffering due to persecution—Philippians 3.

We should seek Christ's fellowship during the easy times so we will know how to find it when the difficult times arrive.

Directions for moral living



When Jesus says “I will never leave you or forsake you,” the word never means the promise covers the entire range of meaning of the words. So let us look at the words in more detail.

The verse is quoting Deuteronomy 31:6, so we can look at the entire range of meaning for the Greek words and the Hebrew words that are being quoted.

Directions for moral living

Jesus says *“I will never send you back.
I will never give you up.
I will never leave you.
I will never let you sink.
I will never fail to uphold you.
I will never turn loose of you.
I will never abandon you.
I will never leave you helpless.
I will never leave you behind.”*

Directions for moral living

These are eternal promises.

They reach past death itself.

You can count on them forever.

We can persevere under difficult circumstances

Practical Directions

by following the practical directions in Hebrews chapter 13.

1. Directions for compassion
2. Directions for moral living
3. **Directions for church participation**
4. Directions for attitude adjustment.

Directions for church participation

Hebrews 13

7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct.

Directions for church participation

- Recognize the good examples and follow them. Notice the outcome of people's conduct. Build your faith by exercising it. Pay attention to honorable, wise leaders who teach the word of God faithfully, and follow their example.
- People are human and prone to error. Don't follow a bad example. Follow the good examples.
- Especially follow Christ's example!

Hebrews 13

- ⁸ Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- ⁹ Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For *it is* good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

Directions for church participation

- ❑ Focus on Jesus Christ. Stay true to true doctrine.
- ❑ Here we have possibly a gentle reference to controversy over the Old Testament dietary laws—and how for Jewish Christians to apply them.
- ❑ The focus is to be on grace, not foods.
- ❑ Major issues, such as moral universals, are more important than detailed rules.

Directions for church participation



- We have freedom of conscience, and should not allow details to divide people—so much as is possible for our part.
- Other Scriptures encourage us to curtail our freedoms for the good of others, if necessary. If others exclude us, we are not to allow that to damage our integrity.
- We are to place the eternal well-being of other people above our own comfort.

Directions for church participation



- ❑ In the 1700s a missionary movement began, reaching out to the whole world. The missionaries learned that they had to adopt the dietary practices and clothing styles and hair styles of the people they wanted to reach, so that they did not seem so terribly different.
- ❑ The New Testament encourages that kind of approach, so that the dietary laws of the Old Testament, which are very healthful and right, became less important than outreach.

Directions for church participation



- ❑ What was the basis for that kind of flexible decision-making? It was based on God's love for people. With the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, Christians could reach beyond their safe zone and could proclaim the truth of God's word to anyone.
- ❑ They had to follow moral universals, and stick with them, even if they adapted their diet toward outreach.

Directions for church participation

- ❑ Obeying the dietary laws is not legalism, unless it divides you from people you need to reach.
- ❑ Breaking the dietary laws is not wrong if doing so allows you to reach more people.
- ❑ If you want to reach people who follow the dietary laws, it is right to follow them yourself—at least in the spirit of the laws.
- ❑ Because this book is the *Letter to the Hebrews*, it gently speaks to these matters.
- ❑ Solidarity with people you care about is a good thing.

We can persevere under difficult circumstances

Practical Directions

by following the practical directions in Hebrews chapter 13.

1. Directions for compassion
2. Directions for moral living
3. Directions for church participation
4. **Directions for attitude adjustment.**

Directions for attitude adjustment— when facing ostracism. Hebrews 13

¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

Directions for attitude adjustment.



- If we have to experience social ostracism, these verses tell us how to cope. Jesus Christ knows what we are experiencing.
- The *Letter to the Hebrews* faces that issue in a particular setting, but the issue is universal. The setting:
- Originally, Christians were accepted within Judaism, and during Jesus' time on earth were almost all Jewish.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

- Gradually, after the Day of Pentecost and especially after Gentiles started coming into the church, the two groups became exclusive toward each other. God did not want it to be that way, according to Ephesians chapter 2.

Directions for attitude adjustment.



- ❑ New Christian believers from among the Jews might face ostracism for their beliefs. Being rejected by family and friends really can hurt.
- ❑ They might not be allowed to participate in **temple sacrifices** at that time, or family events.
- ❑ New believers today **from many different backgrounds** may experience similar conflicts—**even over issues like changing denominations within Christianity.**

Directions for attitude adjustment.



If it is necessary to face the hurt of family rejection for your faith, the right thing is to persevere in faith, realizing that Jesus has gone through that before you—realizing the privilege you have, in your security in Christ. It is important to keep eternity in mind. We have a place where we will belong forever—even if we experience rejection here and now.

Jesus can **give** you love for them that will be stronger than the rejection.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

This kind of hurt is a different hurt than facing physical persecution. Because it involves someone you really care about, the pain is deeply felt.

It is not too difficult for God, though. It is a cause for grief, but not for hopeless grief, because God can change situations and people's hearts. Life is not static, and it goes on forever. This kind of trouble is temporary. It may find a good resolution in this life. If not, it will certainly find a good resolution in eternity.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

Hebrews 13

¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

Spiritual nourishment



- Ephesians 5:29 says Jesus Christ nourishes and cherishes the church. We have spiritual nourishment from Him that is better spiritual food than the rituals of the temple—or the family festivals that we may not be able to enjoy. We should seek His nourishment.
- We should take all our hurts to Jesus Christ in prayer, with the intention of forgiving those who hurt us and of interceding for them.

Directions for attitude adjustment. Coping Mechanism:

- ❑ The source of conflict in this instance was **not** about the validity of believing in a Messiah. It was about who the real Messiah is.
- ❑ That is a **truth** matter, **not** an **opinion** matter. It requires a search for truth.
- ❑ A difference of opinion about it should **not** interfere with our loving concern for one another.

Directions for attitude adjustment: Separating Fact from Opinion.

- We have mentioned before that the idea of the Suffering Messiah who would take away the sins of the people is found in the Hebrew Scriptures, in Isaiah 52 and 53.
- The last few verses of Isaiah 52 show that the passage is talking about Messiah as God's Servant, rather than the nation Israel as is sometimes the case, because both entities are mentioned together.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

Isaiah 52:¹³ Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. ¹⁴ Just as many were astonished at you (God's people who returned to the land after the nation seemed lost to captivity), So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men; ¹⁵ * **So shall He sprinkle many nations.** Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider. (NKJV)

- *This refers to the sprinkling of the blood of atonement to take away sins.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

- Isaiah 53:4 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

- Isaiah 53:8-10 For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. ⁹ And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor *was any* deceit in His mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days... (NKJV)

Directions for attitude adjustment.

- This means that the conflict between new Jewish Christian believers and their families implied in Hebrews 13 was **not** about whether the suffering Messiah would take away sins, but about **whether** Jesus Christ was the real Messiah.
- This remains a matter that we must all seek God's truth about. God wants us to believe the truth—and He has provided enough information to find the truth if we search for it with all our hearts.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

- Because I personally have searched and I am confident that Jesus Christ really is Messiah, I want to encourage others to search for themselves.
- I would never expect anyone to believe the way I do just because I say so. I hope I can be an encouragement to everyone to search for God's truth—and I can suggest some good places to start the search—such as **the Bible**, and also *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

The next verses in Hebrews 13 give directions for 3 activities consistent with faith. Often attitude follows action, but **even if** a good action is a painful sacrifice, go ahead and do the right thing. These are **more important sacrifices than the ones in the temple at that time**.

1. Offer sacrifices of thanksgiving.
2. Offer sacrifices of doing good and sharing.
3. Obey those who are in charge of you.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

Hebrews 13

- ¹⁵ Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name.
- ¹⁶ But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

Hebrews 13

- ¹⁷ Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

- ❑ Verse 17 rules out lawlessness as a response to persecution. We have a responsibility to always do what is right. That includes obedience to authority—so long as the authority is legitimate and the obedience does not require doing something wrong in God's sight.
- ❑ This is especially true when speaking of appropriate religious authority—those who watch over our souls.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

- Obeying proper authority and peaceful resistance of illegitimate authority are two sides of the same coin.
- We have a proper and perfect source of moral principle in our God and His word. He expects us to follow His good principles under all circumstances. We have seen in the 20th century the enormous havoc wreaked by illegitimate totalitarian authorities. It is right to resist evil.

Directions for attitude adjustment.

- II Peter 4:19 Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”

We can persevere under difficult circumstances

Practical Directions

by following the practical directions in Hebrews chapter 13.

1. Directions for compassion
2. Directions for moral living
3. Directions for church participation
4. Directions for attitude adjustment.
5. **Example of kindness in communication.**

Closing Blessings,

Prayer Requests, and News of
the Day

Hebrews 13

- ¹⁸ Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.
- ¹⁹ But I especially urge *you* to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Hebrews 13

- ²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the **everlasting covenant**, ²¹ make you complete in **every** good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13

- ²² And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation (encouragement), for I have written to you in few words.
- ²³ Know that *our* brother Timothy **has been set free**, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.
- ²⁴ Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.
- ²⁵ Grace *be* with you all. Amen. (NKJV)

The Core Issue for Us All:

Decisions Based on Truth

Homework

Closing Bible Verse

Closing Prayer

Hebrews 13

²⁰ Now may the God of peace
who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead,
that great Shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹
make you complete in every good work to do His will,
working in you what is well pleasing in His sight,
through Jesus Christ,
to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

Homework Week 26 Day 1

- Read John chapter 15. Note that the words “takes away” in verse 2 can also be translated “lifts up” as in lifting those branches up to the light so they can become productive. Write down any commands you see in this chapter.
- Write down any principles for productivity you see in this chapter.
- How does this chapter say we can glorify the Father?

Homework Week 26 Day 1

- How does this chapter encourage us to endure under persecution?
- What promises related to the Holy Spirit do you see in this chapter?

Homework Week 26 Day 2

- Read John chapter 16. Why was it to our advantage for Jesus Christ to go back to heaven?
- What principles does this chapter teach us about the work of the Holy Spirit?
- What does this chapter teach about joy and peace?
- What does this chapter say about God's love?
- List any commands you see in this chapter.

Homework Week 26 Day 3

- Read John chapter 17. How does this chapter define eternal life?
- How did Jesus glorify the Father on earth?
Can we glorify Him similarly?
- How did Jesus describe those people the Father gave to Him?

Homework Week 26 Day 3

- What special things did Jesus pray for His followers?
- How did Jesus want us to be sanctified, or set apart as holy?
- How does this prayer describe believers who are alive today?

Homework Week 26 Day 3

- Did Jesus pray specifically for us? What did He pray?
- How long has God the Father loved Jesus the Son?
- What purpose does Jesus express for us in verse 26?