

MARK TWO: GUARDING AGAINST STRANGE TEACHING HEBREWS 13:09–16

Introduction

What are the supreme marks of Christian conduct? The second mark is guarding against strange doctrines or teachings.

- I. The strange teachings or doctrines (vv. 9-11).
- II. The true doctrine or teaching (v. 12).
- III. The duty of believers (vv. 13-16).

I. *Hebrews 13:09–11 False Teaching*

The strange teachings or doctrine. Note: there was not just one strange teaching in the church, but several had seeped into the church. Four things are said about strange teachings.

1. Strange teachings carry people away from the grace of God (v. 9). “Carried away” (parapheresthe) means to be carried past or astray. To be carried away from the grace of God is the most dangerous thing that can happen to a person, for it is the grace of God that saves a person. A person can become acceptable to God only if he approaches God through God’s grace.
2. Strange teachings stress ritual over grace (v. 9). Some of the Hebrew believers had returned to approaching God through some ritual involving food. Just what the ritual was is not known today. Absolutely nothing is said about it other than what is said here. But what is said is a clear message to us: we must establish and strengthen our hearts with God’s grace and not with the ritual of food. Some people have always tried to make themselves more pure and more acceptable to God...
 - by abstaining from certain foods and drink.
 - by eating certain foods on certain days.

The application of this point is even much broader to believers. It applies to all rituals and ceremonies of religion. No ritual or ceremony makes a person pure and acceptable to God. Rituals and ceremonies are only physical substances. No matter what they are — rituals of food, circumcision, baptism, church membership, confirmation — they are all external and perishing. This is not to say that ritual and ceremony are not helpful in reminding us of our life and walk with the Lord. They are, and they are very, very helpful. But the teaching of Scripture is that rituals and ceremonies do not make us inwardly pure and acceptable to God. God does not accept and transform us because of some physical or material or external thing or act. Any doctrine that claims this, that some physical and external ritual can cleanse a man inwardly and make him acceptable to God, is a strange and false doctrine.

It is not even logically true. Any thinking and honest person knows that an external and physical substance can never enter the heart of man and transform man into an eternal being. If a person's heart is to be transformed so that it can become acceptable to God and live forever, it has to be transformed by God Himself — by His wonderful grace.

3. Strange teachings do not profit the person who follows them (v. 9). A person may be sincere, as sincere as he can be, in following the false teaching, but it does him no good whatsoever. It does not make him pure, holy, clean, righteous or acceptable to God. In fact, ritual and ceremony can do great harm to a person. How? It can cause a person to focus and depend upon the ritual and ceremony instead of Christ. It is Christ who cleanses us and makes us acceptable to God. Therefore, rituals and ceremonies are to help us remember Jesus Christ and to focus upon His great sacrifice and salvation. If we begin to look at the ritual as making us pure and acceptable, then we are misusing the ritual. We are practicing strange doctrine and moving away from Christ who is the grace of God. The strange doctrine harms us; it does not profit us at all.
4. Strange teachings are based upon the wrong sacrifice (v. 10-11). Note that the writer to the Hebrews says “we have an altar.” He is identifying himself with the Jewish nation and with his Jewish readers and their religion. He is saying, “We as Jews have an altar where sacrifice was made for sins.” He lists three facts about the Jewish sacrifice:

⇒ The priests had no right to eat the meat of the sacrifice.

⇒ The blood of the sacrifice was carried into the sanctuary of the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the mercy seat. Remember: the Holy of Holies symbolized the very presence of God and the sacrificial blood pictured the blood of the Saviour who was to die for the sins of men.

⇒ The bodies of the sacrificed animals were taken outside of the camp and burned.

Now, what is the point of these facts? The point is this: no sacrifice, not even the sacrifice of the old covenant, can make a person pure and acceptable to God. Any teaching that says the blood of an animal can make a person acceptable to God is *strange* and false teaching. Man is sinful and imperfect, and he can never live with a perfect God unless a substitute steps forth and bears the judgment for his sins. There just is no other way man can ever be freed from his sin unless someone takes them off of him and suffers the judgment for them. Then and only then can man stand before God free of sin, perfect and righteous.

But no animal can do that. An animal is not a man. If there is to be a substitute to bear man's sins, the substitute has to be a man and he has to be the ideal and perfect man. Only an ideal and perfect man can be acceptable to God and only the ideal can stand as the pattern man who can cover all men of all generations.

This is why an animal sacrifice is totally unacceptable to God. Therefore, any doctrine that is based upon any sacrifice other than the sacrifice of the Son of God is strange. It is false.

Gal 1:6-9 *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*

Col 2:8 *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

1 Tim 4:1-3 *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.*

2 John 1:7-11 *Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.*

Rom 16:17-18 *I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.*

2 Cor 11:13-15 *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.*

Eph 4:14 *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*

2 Tim 3:13 *While evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

Titus 1:10 *For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.*

1 John 2:18-19 *Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*

1 John 4:2-3 *This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

2 John 1:7 *Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

Rev 18:23 *The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.*

II. **Hebrews 13:12** *Jesus Christ and His Death*

The true teaching or doctrine. Jesus Christ is the only perfect sacrifice for man's sins. He alone is the Ideal and Perfect Man. He is the only person who has ever lived upon earth who has...

- lived a sinless and perfect life.
- secured a perfect righteousness.
- become the Perfect and Ideal Man.

Therefore, Jesus Christ alone could become the Perfect and Ideal Sacrifice for man's sins. The only question was, would He? Would He be willing to take all the sins of men and bear the guilt and punishment for them? Yes! The glorious answer is "Yes!" Both He and God the Father love us — love us so much that they purposed through all eternity that Christ would come to earth and make the perfect sacrifice for us.

1. Note the words, "Jesus also suffered outside the city gate." Under the Old Testament or covenant, the sacrificial animals were burned outside and away from the camp. This shows how perfectly Jesus Christ fulfilled the type and symbol of the Lamb of God. Jesus Christ was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem and away from the temple just as the animals suffered outside the camp. Jesus Christ was the Perfect Sacrifice, fulfilling the sacrificial type perfectly.
2. Note why Jesus Christ died for us: "to make the people holy through His own blood." The phrase "*make the people holy*" means to set apart and separate. Jesus Christ died for us that He might make us holy — set us apart and separate us unto God. He is the Perfect Sacrifice; it is His blood and His blood alone that purifies us and makes

us acceptable to God. God cannot accept any sacrifice other than the sacrifice of the Ideal and Perfect Man. And no man can live a perfect life unless he has the very nature of God Himself. This is the reason that Jesus Christ Himself, the very Son of God, is our Saviour. He and He alone has the nature of God; therefore, He alone could live the perfect and ideal life and make the perfect sacrifice for our sins. This is the true doctrine. It is the doctrine that must be taught. All other doctrines are strange teachings; all other doctrines must be guarded against.

Rom 5:9 *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace*

Col 1:14 *In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Heb 9:12-14 *He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Rev 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

Rev 5:9 *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

III. Hebrews 13:13–16 Believers' Duty

The duty of believers. How can a believer guard against strange teachings? How can he protect himself? How can he be absolutely sure that he will never be carried away by strange doctrines? He must do four things.

1. The believer must go out to Christ and bear His disgrace (v. 13). A person cannot stay in his old religion and become pure and acceptable to God. A person must *come*

out of his old religion and *go forth* to Christ — go forth to the cross. He must face the cross of Jesus Christ and accept the abuse of it. That is, he must confess...

- that his own religion and righteousness amounts to nothing before God.
- that his sins caused Christ to have to die.
- that he as a man cannot make a sacrifice big enough or worthy enough for God to accept.
- that the blood of Jesus Christ alone can make him acceptable to God.

Very simply, a person must confess that he is a sinner and that Jesus Christ alone can save him, and he must go forth to Christ and live for Him. The person must be willing to bear any disgrace that might be cast his way because he has accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour. A person must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Christ. Going forth to Christ and bearing His disgrace daily will keep a person from being carried away by strange doctrines.

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

John 12:32 *“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”*

Rom 3:23-25 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.*

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

1 Tim 4:10 *(And for this we labour and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially of those who believe.*

Heb 11:26 *He [Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.*

1 Pet 4:14 *If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

2. The believer must seek an enduring city, that is, the heavenly city which is eternal (v. 14). The *enduring city* of heaven is in contrast to the earthly city of Jerusalem which was the centre of Jewish religion and life. Jerusalem is the greatest city in the world

to the Jews. But no matter how great an earthly city is, it is only temporal; it fades and passes away. And this means something critical: everything within the city — including its religion, rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices — all of it fades and passes away. No earthly city and no earthly religion continues. Therefore, believers must keep their eyes on the heavenly city which is to come, for only the heavenly city is eternal and permanent. It alone will endure forever and ever; earthly cities will not.

Thought 1. How attached to the world we become! How many hate to leave the cities of their birth and of their earthly home? How many shrink from leaving the cities of this earth and departing for the next world? How tragic, for there is an enduring city — an eternal city that shall last forever and ever — and every human being could move into that city and live forever. Yet they will not. They could, but so many refuse. They prefer to hang on to the cities of this World.

Heb 11:10 *For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

Heb 11:16 *Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

Heb 12:22 *But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly.*

Heb 13:14 *For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

2 Pet 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

Rev 21:2 *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

3. The believer must offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually (v. 15). But note how: *by Christ*. God deserves praise, but nothing — not even praise — is accepted by God unless it is offered through Christ. A person cannot approach God through any other sacrifice, person or religion — not even to praise Him — not if the person wants his offering to be accepted by God. God accepts no praise by any way other than through the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

1 Tim 2:5 *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Heb 8:6 *But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.*

Heb 9:24 *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

1 John 2:1 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

Psa 107:22 *Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.*

Psa 116:17 *I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the Lord.*

4. The believer must do good and give sacrificially (v. 16). Oliver Greene has an excellent comment on this point that is worthy of our attention.

“You will notice that there are three sacrifices that please God, and we should not fail to offer these sacrifices continually: First, confessing His name; second, living a holy life, doing good; third, giving to those who are in need, sharing our blessings with those less fortunate than we. He is a hypocrite who praises God with the lips but not by a holy life, a life of faith, sharing blessings with others. Such a person may put on a convincing outward show, but God looks upon the heart.”

“There are so many things we can share with others — it may be only a kind word or a smile from a heart of love and understanding, it may be a glass of cold water given in the name of Jesus. It may be a gift — large or small — if we are able to help with the necessities of life — food or a pair of shoes for a needy child. There are so many ways by which we can share our blessings with those who are less fortunate. Most of us need not look long or far until we find someone who is less fortunate than we are. It is so easy to overlook opportunities to serve, honour and praise God by helping others.”

“God is well pleased with such offerings and sacrifices, whether in deed or word, if we do what we do in the name of Jesus and to the glory of God; and it will bring reward at the end of life's journey” (The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, p. 593f).

Mat 5:16 *“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

1 Tim 6:18 *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

Titus 2:7 *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.*

Heb 10:24 *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

James 2:17-18 *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.*

1 Pet 2:12 *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

Ps.34:14 *Turn from evil and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

Psa 37:3 *Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.*

Luke 6:35 *But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.*

Heb 13:16 *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

James 4:17 *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.*

Mat 9:37-38 *Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

John 4:35-36 *Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. (Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ■*