

Hebrews 13:8-9 Commentary

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Swindoll's Chart](#), [Interesting Pictorial Chart of Hebrews](#), [Another Chart](#)

The Epistle to the Hebrews				
INSTRUCTION Hebrews 1-10:18			EXHORTATION Hebrews 10:19-13:25	
Superior Person of Christ Hebrews 1:1-4:13	Superior Priest in Christ Hebrews 4:14-10:18			Superior Life In Christ Hebrews 10:19-13:25
BETTER THAN PERSON Hebrews 1:1-4:13	BETTER PRIESTHOOD Heb 4:14-7:28	BETTER COVENANT Heb 8:1-13	BETTER SACRIFICE Heb 9:1-10:18	BETTER LIFE
MAJESTY OF CHRIST	MINISTRY OF CHRIST			MINISTERS FOR CHRIST
DOCTRINE			DUTY	

DATE WRITTEN:

ca. 64-68AD

See [ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"](#)
(See also [MacArthur's Introduction to Hebrews](#))

Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#)

Hebrews 13:8 **Jesus Christ** is the **same** yesterday and **today** and **forever** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [lesous Christos echthes kai semeron o autos, kai eis tous aionas.](#)

Amplified: Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is [always] the same, yesterday, today, [yes] and forever (to the ages).
([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Jesus Christ is always the same, yesterday, today and for ever. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: Jesus is Messiah, yesterday and today the same, and forever. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

Young's Literal: Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day the same, and to the ages;

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY AND TODAY, YES AND FOREVER: lesous Christos echthes (chthes) kai semeron o autos kai eis tous aionas:

- He 1:12-note; Psalms 90:2,4; 102:27,28; 103:17; Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; Malachi 3:6; John 8:56, 57, 58; James 1:17-note; Revelation 1:4-note, Re 1:8-note, Re 1:11-note, Re 1:17-note, Re 1:18-note)

Context: Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. (He 13:7)

Steven Cole has the following note on this section...

I confess that the first twenty or so times that I read our text, it seemed to me to be a disjointed, random bunch of verses. I could not see any unified theme. But the more I meditated on these verses, I came to see that there is a common theme, namely, the danger of false teaching and the true antidote to it, namely, the person and work of Jesus Christ. The author was concerned that his readers would be "carried away by varied and strange teachings" (He 13:9), including returning to Judaism. So he calls them to remember the godly teachers who had spoken the word of God to them (He 13:7). Even though these men had now died, Jesus Christ, whom they preached, is the same yesterday, today, and forever (He 13:8). His grace (He 13:9) and His sacrificial death on the cross (He 13:10, 11, 12) are at the center of sound doctrine. Jesus and His death on the cross have become our altar, which supercedes and replaces the Jewish altar in the temple. Therefore, we must turn our backs on Judaism and every other religion and hold firmly to Christ and the cross (He 13:13). If such faith leads to hardship, rejection, persecution, or even death, keep in mind that we are not living for rewards in this life, but for the reward He has promised us in heaven (He 13:14). That is the flow of thought here, as I understand it. He is saying,

To avoid being carried away by false teaching, imitate the faith of godly leaders and hold firmly to the centrality of Jesus Christ, His sacrificial death, and the promise of heaven...

... He 13:8 seems out of context, but I believe the author put it here in a somewhat abrupt manner to make a point: A. Godly teachers come and go, but Jesus Christ remains the same forever (He 13:8). That is the point when the verse is joined to the previous context. Sometimes people become so enamored with some godly man or his teaching that they are devastated when that man dies. The author is not diminishing the value of sound teachers, but he is saying that after the teachers die, Jesus Christ remains solid, steady, and unchanging. He 13:8 also relates to the following context, in the sense that the unchanging Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for our sins is the perpetual antidote to false teaching. "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1Co 2:2)

was the sum and substance of Paul's teaching. That must be our focus, also. In Hebrews 1, the author cited from Psalm 102 some verses that referred to God, but he applies them to Jesus Christ. In contrast to the earth and the heavens, he states (He 1:11, 12-note)

"They will perish, but You remain; and they all will become old like a garment, and like a mantle You will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed, but You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end."

F. F. Bruce (Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews [Eerdmans], p. 395) points out other instances of words that were originally addressed to the God of Israel, but are "taken over and applied to Jesus without any sense of incongruity." He adds (pp. 395-396),

Yesterday Jesus "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death" (He 5:7-note); **today** He represents His people in the presence of God, a high priest who is able to sympathize with them in their weakness, because He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (He 4:15-note); **for ever** He lives, this same Jesus, "to make intercession for them" (He 7:25-note). His help, His grace, His power, His guidance are permanently at His people's disposal; why then should they lose heart? ([The Antidote to False Teaching](#))

Jesus Christ is the same - Praise God that some things (Some One) do not change. We should take care **to remember... and imitate their faith** which was in the unchanging Jesus. Let us fix our eyes on the unchanging Solid Rock, Jesus (Click for Scripture chain & chart on Christ as the Rock/Stone - would make a great Sunday School series)...

Yesterday - The day of the apostles

Today - The day of the writing of the letter to the Hebrews

Forever - Throughout eternity (this includes yesterday and today!)

Jesus is worthy of our total commitment of faith... so like the leaders who we have watched for years, observing their faith as manifest by their conduct, let us fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1Pe 1:13-note). Believers today have access to the same grace that today that these suffering believers did at the time of writing of the epistle of Hebrews.

Jesus is the unchanging Rock (note), the immutable Hope (1Ti 1:1), the same Firm Foundation today that He was yesterday and He will still be the same tomorrow when you trust Him.

The faith we are to imitate is faith in future grace, not just past grace. We are to imitate the faith that the living Jesus who helped yesterday will help today and tomorrow.

Though human leaders pass from the scene, Jesus Christ is "the same" (He 1:12-note) **yesterday** (in which God spoke through prophets, Heb 1:1-note), **today** (in context, as God summons us to enter His rest through faith, He 3:7-note, He 3:13-note; He 4:7-note), and **forever** (Heb 1:8-note; He 7:17-note, He 7:21-note, He 7:24-note, He 7:28-note). Christ the Immutable One is our sure anchor amid waves of suffering, affliction and uncertainty (He 6:19-note).

Jesus Christ is "**Alpha and Omega**" (Re 1:11-note), the beginning and the end. Jesus Created all things in the past (Col 1:16), is now continually "upholding all things" today (Heb 1:3-note), and will one day "make all things new" in the future (Rev 21:5-note). Praise and glory and honor to Jesus Christ, the eternal Creator, the living Lord, and our soon coming King of kings (Re 19:16-note)

Spurgeon - Jesus Christ is the same now as He was in times gone by. He is the same today as He was from old eternity. Before all worlds, He planned our salvation; He entered into covenant with His Father to undertake it. His delights were with the sons of men in prospect, and now today He is as steadfast to that covenant as ever. He will not lose those who were then given to Him, nor will He fail or be discouraged until every stipulation of that covenant shall be fulfilled. Whatever was in the heart of Christ before the stars began to shine, that same infinite love is there today. Jesus is the same today as He was when He was here on earth. I have seen men change. A little frost turns the green forest to bronze, and every leaf forsakes its hold, and yields to the winter's blast. So fade our friends, and the most attached adherents drop away from us in the time of trial; but Jesus is to us what he always was.

I CAN'T CHANGE JESUS - Bill Irwin, a friend of mine who is blind, has a talking computer he uses to study the Bible. He's had a few chuckles over some of the pronunciations. "For a long time," Bill says, "the computer pronounced Holy Bible as 'holly bibble' until I figured out how to modify it."

But there was one thing Bill couldn't change. The computer uses the Spanish pronunciation for Jesus Christ—HEYsus Krist. "The programmer is Hispanic," Bill told me with a smile, "and he made sure that HEYsus Krist cannot be altered."

I like that. It reminds me that among the things in life that can be changed to suit my taste, one remains tamper-resistant—I can't change Jesus.

When life is unsettled, I gain great comfort from the Bible's affirmation that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). But the statement is also a stern rebuke to my tendency to try to modify the words and character of Christ when I don't like what He says. How easy it is to forget that I came to Christ longing for Him to transform me, not the other way around!

Praise God that His Word and His love are perfect and unchanging. And praise Him too that in His love He is working to change me (Mt. 5:48-note; Ro 5:3-note, Ro 5:4, 5-note).— by David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father!
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.
—Chisholm © Renewal 1951 Hope Publishing Company

**In a world of constant change,
you can trust the unchanging Christ.**

OUR CHANGING WORLD - Change is one thing we can be sure of in this life. Our relationships change as we move to new places, experience illness, and ultimately face death. Even the cells in our bodies are always in the process of change. When cells wear out, most are replaced by new ones. This is especially noticeable with our skin—we shed and regrow outer skin cells about every 27 days.

Yes, change is the one certainty in our world. Henry Lyte's melancholy line in his hymn "Abide With Me" is true: "Change and decay in all around I see." But the hymn immediately adds, "O Thou who changest not, abide with me!"

By faith in Jesus Christ we can have a relationship with the unchanging God, who says of Himself in Malachi 3:6, "I am the Lord, I do not change." We can depend on God to be the same forever, as the psalmist says (Psalm 102:27). Hebrews 13:8 adds this reassuring testimony: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." He is our firm foundation, who can give us confidence and security in this changing world.

We creatures, caught up in the swirling tide of time, can rest our souls on the everlasting arms, which will never let us go.— by Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day,
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see—
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!
—Lyte

**To face life's changes,
look to the unchanging God.**

See related resource: God's great attribute of His unchangeable, immutable character

Hebrews 13:9 Do not be **carried away** by **varied** and **strange teachings**; for it is **good** for the **heart** to be **strengthened** by **grace**, not by **foods**, **through which those** who were **so occupied** were not **benefited** (**NASB: Lockman**)

Greek: [didachais poikilais kai xenais me parapheresthe \(2PPPM\) kalon gar chariti bebaiousthai \(PPN\) ten kardia, ou bromasin, en ois ouk ophetheesan \(3PAPI\) oi peripatountes. \(PAPMPN\)](#)

Amplified: Do not be carried about by different and varied and alien teachings; for it is good for the heart to be established and ennobled and strengthened by means of grace (God's favor and spiritual blessing) and not [to be devoted to] foods [rules of diet and ritualistic meals], which bring no [spiritual] benefit or profit to those who

observe them. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Barclay: Do not let yourselves be carried away by subtle and strange teachings, for it is a fine thing to have your heart made strong by grace not by the eating of different kinds of food, for they never did any good to those who took that line of conduct. ([Westminster Press](#))

NLT: So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your strength comes from God's grace, not from rules about food, which don't help those who follow them. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Do not be swept off your feet by various peculiar teachings. Spiritual stability depends on the grace of God, and not on rules of diet - which after all have not spiritually benefited those who have made a speciality of that kind of thing. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: Stop being carried away with variegated teachings and teachings foreign to Christianity in that they come from the pagan religions, for it is good when the heart is established by grace, not with foods, by means of which they who ordered their behavior in their sphere were not profited. ([Erdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

Young's Literal: with teachings manifold and strange be not carried about, for it is good that by grace the heart be confirmed, not with meats, in which they who were occupied were not profited;

DO NOT BE CARRIED AWAY BY VARIED AND STRANGE TEACHINGS: *didachais poikilais kai xenais me parapherethe* (2PPPM):

- Matthew 24:4,24; Acts 20:30; Romans 16:17,18; 2Corinthians 11:11, 12, 13, 14, 15; Galatians 1:6, 7, 8, 9; Ephesians 4:14; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 2:4,8; 2Thessalonians 2:2; 1Timothy 4:1, 2, 3; 6:3, 4, 5,20; 1John 4:1; Jude 1:3

Spurgeon - Jesus Christ is the same today as He was yesterday in the teachings of His Word. They tell us in these times that the improvements of the age require improvements in theology. I have heard it said that the way Luther preached would not suit this age. We are too polite! The style of preaching, they say, that was in John Bunyan's day is not the style now. True, they honor these men. They are like the Pharisees; they build the tombs of the prophets that their fathers killed, and so confess that they are their fathers' sons, and like their parents (Luke 11:47). And men who stand up to preach as those men did, with honest tongues, and do not know how to use polished courtly phrases, are as much condemned now as those men were in their time. They say the world is marching on, and the gospel must march on too. No, the old gospel is the same. Not one of her stakes must be removed; not one of her cords must be loosened. "Hold fast to the pattern of sound words that you heard from me in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 1:13). Theology has nothing new in it except that which is false. The Lord Jesus Christ was the perfect revelation of God. He was the express image of the Father's person, and the brightness of his glory. In previous ages, God had spoken to us by His prophets; but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son. Now as to that which was a complete revelation, it is blasphemous to suppose that there can be any more revealed than has been made known in the person and work of Jesus Christ the Son of God. He is God's ultimatum; last of all, He sends His Son (Mark 12:6).

Do not be carried away ([3911](#)) (**paraphero** from **para** = past, by , beyond + **phero** = bring, bear) is literally to bear or lead along and so means to be carried off as by the force of the wind or a stream of water, but in this passage referring to figuratively being led away from the path of truth. The idea is that of misleading someone from the true or right way and thus leading them astray. The **present imperative** with a negative indicates that some of his readers were already being led astray by the erroneous teachings. The thrust of this command is "Stop being carried away." As Vincent observes "The present tense indicates a present and active danger."

Paraphero is used 4 times in the NT - Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:42; Heb. 13:9; Jude 1:12

Why not? Because of the truth of God the Son's attribute of immutability. He is the immutable, unchangeable anchor of our souls -- stop letting other "isms" carry you away.

The readers were tempted to go back to Jewish legalistic practices of keeping strict dietary laws. See Col 2:23 (in context of Col 2:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, Mt 15:9, Mk 7:7, Ep 4:14)

Varied ([4164](#)) (**poikilos**) means existence in various kinds or modes, diversified, manifold, variegated, many colored. **Poikilos** was used to describe the skin of a leopard, the different-colored veining of marble or an embroidered robe and thence passes into the meaning of changeful, diversified, applied to the changing months or the variations of a strain of music.

Poikilos - 10 times in the NT - Matt. 4:24; Mk. 1:34; Lk. 4:40; 2 Tim. 3:6; Tit. 3:3; Heb. 2:4; 13:9; Jas. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:6; 4:10

Strange (3581) (**xenos** - cp *xenophobia* = fear of strangers) means not being previously known and hence unheard of and unfamiliar, foreign, alien, surprising or strange. Robertson says *xenos* can convey the sense of unheard of. He goes on to add that...

The new is not always wrong any more than the old is always right (Mt 13:52). But the air was already full of new and strange teachings that fascinated many by their very novelty. The warning here is always needed. (Cf. Gal. 1:6, 7, 8, 9; 2Ti 3:16)

Xenos - 14 times in the NT - Mt 25:35, 38, 43, 44; 27:7; Acts 17:18, 21; Ro 16:23; Ep 2:12, 19; He 11:13; Heb 13:9; 1Pe 4:12; 3Jn 1:5

Vincent - These teachings were **various** as contrasted with the one teaching of the gospel; they were **strange** as they differed from that teaching.

Teachings (1322) (**didache** from **didasko** = to give instruction in a formal or informal setting with the highest possible development of the pupil as the goal; English = didactic = intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive) is a noun which describes the activity of teaching (instruction). **See studies on related words - Teach** (teaching, taught) (1321) **didasko** and **Teaching** (instruction) (1319) **didaskalia**. In the passive sense **didache** speaks of the content of what is taught or the doctrine. **Didache** or "the teaching" was that instruction which elucidated the meaning of the facts which were proclaimed. The idea of *didache* then is to impart knowledge to or instruct someone, for example in how to do something, etc. **Teaching** or **doctrine** is that which communicates to another the knowledge of that which heretofore that person was ignorant or ill informed, in the present context diverse, foreign (to the Bible) instruction.

Didache - 30 times in the NT - Matt. 7:28; 16:12; 22:33; Mk. 1:22, 27; 4:2; 11:18; 12:38; Lk. 4:32; Jn. 7:16f; 18:19; Acts 2:42; 5:28; 13:12; 17:19; Rom. 6:17; 16:17; 1 Co. 14:6, 26; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9; Heb. 6:2; 13:9; 2 Jn. 1:9f; Rev. 2:14f, 24

Wuest writes that these **varied and strange teachings** "refer to the various phases of one radical error; the denial of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of His Messianic sacrifice as superseding Judaism. ([Hebrews - Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

Matthew Poole comments that "the doctrine of Christ being immutable, it is necessary to exhort his subjects from deserting it, which the apostle does here; that they should not be wheeling or whirling about with an unstable and inconstant motion of judgment, faith, and practice concerning such human doctrines which are vain rules to lead one to God, such as are different in nature from Christ, one and the same rule, and those very numerous and various, strange and untrue, taught by false apostles and teachers, taken out of Gentilism (secular teaching) and Judaism, and added to the Gospel by them, as necessary, together with Christ, to justification and salvation (see Mt 15:9 2Co 11:3 Eph 4:14 2Th 2:10, 12 1Ti 4:1, 2, 3 2Ti 4:3, 4 2Pe 2:1, 18, 19 Jude 1:12. (Matthew Poole's Commentary on the New Testament)

The doctrine of **Immutability** (He 13:8) teaches us that at the heart of an ever-changing universe & various winds of doctrine is an unchanging God. "He is the still point in a turning world."

**Change and decay in all around I see,
O Thou Who changest not, abide with me.**

DON'T BE FOOLED - People don't like to be fooled, but it happens so often that it might seem as if they do.

Far too many people fall for crooked schemes that cost them money, endanger their health, or waste their time.

It happens to elderly people when they trust the friendly, persuasive person who comes to the door selling a too-good-to-be-true product. It happens when a shyster tells a couple that he's from the bank, and they need to withdraw money and give it to him to fix a bank error. It happens when a person with health problems buys hundreds of dollars' worth of bogus medicine.

It can happen to us too—in spiritual matters. We can be fooled by deceitful presentations that make guarantees far beyond what God has clearly promised. But this isn't anything new. Paul warned about this kind of deception in Colossians 2:8-note.

So, how do you protect yourself from those who make religious claims that God's Word does not support? By being "rooted and built up in [Christ Jesus] and established in the faith, as you have been taught" (Col 2:7-note).

Whether listening to a salesperson or to a preacher, be discerning. Don't be fooled. — by Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright](#)

Christ is all we need, His truth complete—
The world will try to add, subtract, distort;
Cling to what you know, and trust God's Word,
Don't let yourself believe a false report.
—Carbaugh

**Feeding on God's truth
will keep you from swallowing a lie.**

SPIRITUAL JUNK FOOD - In many countries, childhood obesity is at an all-time high. A major culprit in such unhealthy weight gain is poor eating habits and junk food.

The term junk food refers to items that taste good but lack nutritional value and are often very high in calories and fat. Chips, soft drinks, candy bars, cookies, and many meals purchased at fast-food restaurants fit these criteria.

To be spiritually healthy, we have to avoid “spiritual junk food” as well. Some religious teachers proclaim “a different gospel” (Gal 1:6), ranging from health-and-wealth to a counterfeit spirituality. And some Christian music and books also contain false teaching. Taking in this kind of “food” may seem to satisfy spiritual hunger, but it will not lead to spiritual health.

Hebrews warns us: “Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace” (Heb. 13:9). False teaching is detrimental to our health and is not profitable, because it cannot cleanse from sin nor give power for spiritual growth. But biblical content that is based upon grace and truth does both.

Avoid “spiritual junk food” and instead feast on God’s Word to promote your spiritual health. — by Dennis Fisher [Our Daily Bread](#).
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To walk close by Your side, my dear Savior,
To be led by You, doing each task,
To feast richly on grace at Your table,
And to know You is all that I ask.
—Somerville

Steven Cole makes the critically important point that...

False teaching is a perpetual danger for God’s people. The author warns, “Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings” (He 13:9).

We live in a day when evangelical Christians minimize the importance of sound doctrine and even speak against it as something that divides us and goes against Christ’s commands to love one another. The emphasis today is on coming together where we can agree, rather than dividing over doctrines where we disagree. To say, “I’m right and you’re wrong” over doctrinal matters smacks of pride and intolerance. It will earn you the unwelcome labels of “fundamentalist” or “separatist.” The concept that any religious teaching may be universally true or false runs counter to the modern mindset.

We view religious or spiritual views as a matter of preference, not of truth. Pastor Leith Anderson told of a visitor to his church who said that he liked Reformed Theology, the inerrancy of Scripture—and reincarnation. Although Anderson explained that reincarnation is unbiblical, the man didn’t alter his theology (cited in Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* [Crossway Books], pp. 175-176). Truth was reduced to personal preference: “I like vanilla, you like chocolate. But neither is right or wrong.”

A 1991 George Barna survey found that only 23 percent of evangelical Christians expressed a strong belief in absolute truth. Among the American public the number jumped to 28 percent! (Cited by James Dobson, Dec., 1991 newsletter.) If only one-fourth of evangelicals hold a strong belief in absolute truth, then the idea of avoiding false teaching is not going to be of much concern. But the New Testament is filled with warnings against false doctrine. Jesus warned, “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Mt. 7:15-note). Paul warned the Ephesian elders to be on guard for savage wolves, and then added (Acts 20:30), “and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse

things, to draw away the disciples after them." He warned the Galatians about men who were preaching a false gospel (Gal. 1:6, 7, 8, 9). In Colossians, he warned against being taken captive by philosophy and those who imposed rules about food and drink and the observance of certain days (Col 2:8-note, Col 2:16-note). His pastoral letters frequently mention sound doctrine and warn against false teaching (1Ti 1:6, 7; 4:1, 2, 3; 6:3, 4, 5; 2Ti 2:16, 17, 18-note, 2Ti 2:25-note; 3:6-9; 4:3, 4; Titus 1:10, 11-note, Titus 1:12, 13-note, Titus 1:14, 15-note, Titus 1:16-note). (See also, 2Pe 2:1, 2f-note; 1Jn 2:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26; 3:7; 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; 2Jn 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; Jude; Rev 2:1f-[note](#), Re 3:1f-[note](#).)

Although the Hebrews knew exactly what the author was referring to in our text, we do not. It may have been Jewish regulations about clean or unclean foods, or some Jewish sacrificial ceremony, such as eating the Passover lamb, that was supposed to have benefited the partakers. The force of the imperative indicates that some were already being carried away with this teaching and needed to stop. Perhaps it was the same thing that the author referred to in Hebrews 9:9, 10, where he said that various sacrifices offered could not make the worshiper perfect in conscience, "since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation."

John Owen (An Exposition of Hebrews [The National Foundation for Christian Education], p. 436) points out that the Jews put so much weight on these foods because they were associated with the Jewish altar. Taking them away declared that their altar, which was the center of their religion, was of no more use. The Judaizing Christians thought that somehow the use of such food had a place in establishing or confirming the heart, perhaps even in the matter of salvation. But such practices were of no benefit because they pulled the Jews away from the only means of salvation, namely, God's grace in Christ.

The main point to note here is that Satan has always infiltrated the church with false teaching that invariably dilutes or digresses from God's grace in Jesus Christ. If we buy into the modern idea that doctrinal truth is a personal preference of minimal importance, we join these early Hebrews, in danger of being "carried away by varied and strange teaching." To deny the vital importance of sound doctrine makes us prime targets for the enemy's attacks. ([The Antidote to False Teaching](#))

FOR IT IS GOOD FOR THE HEART TO BE STRENGTHENED BY GRACE, NOT BY FOODS: kalon gar chariti bebaiousthai (PPN) ten kardia ou bromasin:

- Acts 20:32; 2Corinthians 1:21; Galatians 6:1; 2Thessalonians 2:17; 2Timothy 2:1,2-note) (Not by foods - He 9:9,10-note; Lev 11:1-47; Dt 14:3-21; Acts 10:14, 15, 16; Romans 14:2,6,17; 1Co 6:13; 8:8; Col 2:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23-note; 1Ti 4:3, 4, 5; Titus 1:14,15-note)

For - a term of explanation.

Commenting on the phrase **it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace**, Pastor Cole writes that "Invariably, false teaching goes astray on the doctrine of God's grace. The error of the Judaizers, whom Paul confronted in Galatians, was to add the need to be circumcised to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone. They could have argued that circumcision was a God-given command that predated the law. But Paul said that to add circumcision or anything else to the gospel of God's grace is to incur eternal damnation (Gal. 1:6-9-**note**)! To add human works or merit or indulgences or penance to Christ's death on the cross as necessary for salvation is to commit the Galatian heresy. As the Reformers clearly taught, we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. We dare not add human works to God's all-sufficient grace. But this idea of works salvation is ingrained in the fallen human heart. I've talked with people who have sat under my preaching for months, and when I ask them why God should let them into heaven, they reply, "Well, I've always tried to be a good person and not hurt anyone." God's grace means that He chose us totally apart from and in spite of anything in us (Rom. 11:5-6-**note**). Even saving faith is His gift (Phil. 1:29-**note**). As Paul wrote (Eph. 2:8-9-**note**), "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." So all of our salvation, including our faith, is God's gift according to His unmerited favor. Thus the author shows the centrality of Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death by showing that He is unchanged and that His grace is at the heart of sound doctrine. ([The Antidote to False Teaching](#))

To speak metaphorically, believers should eat "grace flakes" for breakfast, not special "mystery" diets that claim to increase one's "spirituality". In the year 2008, there is a movement in evangelicalism which seems to me to be a bit on the mystical/experiential side and is wanting for the plumbline of sound doctrine. Be wary when you hear teaching that emphasizes feelings over sound doctrine! On the other hand, orthodoxy is far from being dull, drab or dead, and indeed should be the exact opposite. Let our Christian faith be like one news station advertises "Fair and balanced"!

Poole comments that this grace reflects "the free love of God put out in Christ, for regeneration and preservation of souls unto life eternal, carried in the simple doctrine of Christ, which is always the same, 2Th 2:16, 17 1Pe 5:10-**note** (Ibid)

Good (2570)(**kalos**) describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, providing some special or superior benefit. **Kalos** is good with emphasis on that which is beautiful, handsome, excellent, surpassing, precious, commendable, admirable. **Kalos** describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good and/or that which provides some special or superior benefit. In **classical Greek kalos** was originally used to describe that which outwardly beautiful. Other secular uses of **kalos** referred to the usefulness of something such as a **fair** haven, a **fair** wind or that which was auspicious such as sacrifices. **Kalos** referred to that which was "morally beautiful" or noble and hence virtue was called "the good" (to kalon). The New Testament uses of **kalos** are similar to the secular Greek -- outwardly fair, as the stones of the temple (Lk 21:5); well adapted to its purpose, as salt ("salt is **good**" Mk 9:50); competent for an office, as deacons ("**good** servant of Christ Jesus" 1Ti 4:6); a steward ("serving one another, as **good** stewards of the manifold grace of God", 1Pe 4:10-note); a **good** soldier (2Ti 2:3-note); expedient, wholesome ("it is **better** for you to enter life crippled" Mk 9:43, 45, 47); morally good, noble, as works ("Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your **good** works" Mt 5:16-note); conscience ("we are sure that we have a **good** conscience", He 13:18-note). The phrase *it is good*, i.e., a good or proper thing ("It is **good** not to eat meat or to drink wine",

Heart (2588)(**kardia**) does not refer to the physical organ but is always used figuratively in Scripture to refer to the seat and center of human life. The heart is the center of the personality, and it controls the intellect, emotions, and will. No outward obedience is of the slightest value unless the heart turns to God.

John MacArthur - While we often relate **heart** to the emotions (e.g., "He has a broken heart"), the Bible relates it **primarily to the intellect** (e.g., "Out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders," Matt 15:19). That's why you must "watch over your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23-note). In a secondary way, however, **heart** relates to the will and emotions because they are influenced by the intellect. If you are committed to something, it will affect your will, which in turn will affect your emotions." (Drawing Near. Crossway Books)

MacArthur adds that "In most modern cultures, the **heart** is thought of as the seat of emotions and feelings. But most ancients—Hebrews, Greeks, and many others—considered the **heart** to be the center of knowledge, understanding, thinking, and wisdom. The New Testament also uses it in that way. The **heart** was considered to be the seat of the mind and will, and it could be taught what the brain could never know. Emotions and feelings were associated with the intestines, or bowels. ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. 1986. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

To be strengthened - to be stabilized.

Strengthened (950)(**bebaioo** from **bébaios** = sure, fixed, standing firm on the feet, steadfast, maintaining firmness or solidity. In classical Greek from the 5th cent. B.C. **bebaios** acquires the meaning of firm, durable, unshakeable, sure, reliable, certain; and in the legal sphere, valid, legal <> **bebaios** is derived from **baino** = fit to tread on = having a firm foundation) is a verb which means to make sure or certain, to prove valid or reliable or to verify and (in legal language) to guarantee.

Bebaioo describes an increase in inner strength (with passive voice implying from outside source) with the implication that the result is a greater firmness of character or attitude in one's heart.

Bebaioo - 8 uses in the NT - Mk. 16:20; Ro 15:8; 1Co. 1:6, 8; 2Co 1:21; Col 2:7; Heb 2:3; 13:9. Note that at least 5/8 uses of "bebaioo" (confirm, establish, strengthen) are somehow related to a work of God or Christ (see Ro 15:8-note, 1Co 1:8, 2Co 1:21, Col 2:7-note, Heb 13:9) and so too in this verse.

Vincent - There is an emphasis on heart as well as on grace. These strange teachings all emphasised externalism, in contrast with Christianity, which insisted upon the purification of the heart and conscience. The contrast is strongly stated in ch. 9:9, 14, and the Epistle constantly directs the readers to the heart as the true point of contact with God, and the source of all departures from him. See ch. 3:8, 10, 12, 15; 4:7, 12; 8:10; especially 10:22. Hence, the writer says, "it is good that the solid basis of your assurance before God be in the heart, purged from an evil conscience, so that you can draw near to God with a firmly-established confidence, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith": ch. 10:22; comp. 1 Th. 3:13; 2 Tim. 2:22.

Grace (5485)(**charis**) in my opinion is a word that is somewhat difficult to define and any definition I attempt will fall far short of the wealth of meaning found in this great Biblical word! That said, one of the most familiar short definitions of grace is "**God's unmerited favor.**" (Lewis Sperry Chafer). Sadly, the working definition of grace for many believers goes little beyond this basic simple definition.

As **Hampton Keathley** says "

since grace is at the very heart, indeed, it is the very foundation and fountain of true Christianity, we should

have a better grasp of this important word and its truth... Furthermore, the doctrine of God's Grace in Christ is multi-sided. As a doctrine of the Word it touches every area of truth or doctrine in one way or another. Every aspect of doctrine is related to grace. It is no wonder grace is an important word and one that Paul desires to be experienced by all. It is a fountain from which we must all drink deeply, but it is one that runs counter to our own natural tendencies. Rather than drink from God's fountain, we tend to build our own broken cisterns. (Jer 2:13)

A Basic Definition—lexical: The Greek word for grace is charis. Its basic idea is simply "non-meritorious or unearned favor, an unearned gift, a favor or blessings bestowed as a gift, freely and never as merit for work performed."

Expanded Definition—theological: Grace is "that which God does for mankind through His Son, which mankind cannot earn, does not deserve, and will never merit"¹

Grace is all that God freely and non-meritoriously does for man and is free to do for man on the basis of Christ's person and work on the cross. Grace, one might say, is the work of God for man and encompasses everything we receive from God. see [Grace and Peace](#)

I would add given the truth that we begin this race of salvation by grace, run daily by grace and finish by grace, it behooves every Christian runner to understand some of these practical truths about how he or she is enabled to run with endurance the grace race that is set before us.

Someone has devised the following acronym which is not a bad "definition" of grace...

G (God's), **R** (Riches) **A** (At) **C** (Christ's) **E** (Expense)

Grace however is not only God's provision for our **new birth** (past tense salvation [see "Tenses" of Salvation] - positional sanctification) but is His present provision for our **daily salvation** (present tense salvation - experiential or practical or progressive sanctification) in which God's Spirit gradually and progressively sets believers apart more and more unto God and from the power of sin (Ro 6:11-note, Ro 6:12, 13-note), the lure of this evil world system (this "present evil age" Ga 1:4) and the temptations of the devil (Mt 4:1, 13). In other words if one defines grace by its divine "functions", it is first **saving** (regenerating, redeeming) **grace** and then is **sanctifying grace**, grace that provides the inner power for saints to walk in victory over the world, the flesh and the devil.

Grace is the "mace" that allows us to kill the flesh, putting to death the deeds of the flesh by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ro 8:13-note). Don't try to kill the lusts of the flesh with dead works... they effect nothing except possibly a veneer of pride and possibly a transient "cooling" of the passions. Only by grace do we enter. Only by grace do we stand against the enemy our flesh which continuously "strategizes" and wages war against our soul (1Pe 2:11-note, Gal 5:16-note, Ga 5:17-note)

The gravity of grace flows into the humble of heart. James writes that "He (God) gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED (**antitasso** - a frightful picture) TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE (from Pr 3:34)." (Jas 4:6-note)

The stiff necked soul who stands proudly before God receives no benefit from God's grace. Legalism in all forms, including as adherence to external food rules, impedes the flow of grace. As **Wuest** suggests the writer is referring to "the system of ceremonial observances... (which) emphasizes externalism."

R Kent Hughes - Actually, the grace we imbibe comes directly from the cross of Christ, for in v10 the preacher adds, "We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat," referring to the cross because in a Christian context the sacrifice must be on the cross—the sacrificial altar of our faith. Our spiritual food is nothing less than the life of Christ! Therefore, do not get mixed up with strange teaching such as that leading to spiritual diets. Our nourishment comes from grace, which comes directly from the altar—the Cross of Christ. This meal goes to the humble! ([Hughes, R. K. Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul. Volume 1. Crossway Books; Volume 2](#))

A straightforward reading suggests that the writer is making a general reference to the food regulations (clean and unclean) that God had specified to the Moses in the Law (eg, Lev 11:1-3f, 9, 13, 20, 24-note, etc). Earlier our writer had emphasized that the dietary regulations were merely "external" rules "since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation ("to bring matters to a satisfactory state" = introduction of the New Covenant which displaces the Old Covenant). (He 9:10-note).

Jamieson commenting on **not by foods** writes "not with observances of Jewish distinctions between clean and unclean meats, to which ascetic Judaizers added in Christian times the rejection of some meats, and the use of others: noticed also by Paul in 1Co 8:8, 13; 6:13; Ro 14:17-note, an exact parallel to this verse: these are some of the "divers and strange doctrines" of the previous sentence. Christ's body offered once for all for us, is our true spiritual "meat" to "eat" (Heb 13:10-note), "the stay and the staff of

bread" (Isa 3:1-note), the mean of all "grace."

THROUGH WHICH THOSE WHO WERE THUS OCCUPIED WERE NOT BENEFITED: en ois ouk ophetheosan (3PAPI) oi peripatountes (PAPMPN):

Occupied (4043) (**peripateo** from **peri** = about, around + **pateo** = walk, tread) means literally to walk around, to go here and there in walking, to tread all around. To walk about is often used to express habitual practice or general conduct of life (Cp Ro 6:4-note; 2Co 10:3-note; Ep 2:10-note; Col 3:7-note; Col 4:5-note) The present use is figurative referring to how one conduct his or her life (what "occupies" their time).

Not (ou) signifies absolute negation. No exceptions. Not one iota of spiritual benefit, no matter how much more "spiritual" one might "feel"! Feelings are deceiving. Legalism is always vanity and futility like chasing after the wind. Pursue Christ, not the shadows that point to Christ. Ceremonialism and ritualism will always fail edify and build up one's spiritual life (no "strengthening of one's heart" transpires!).

Benefited (5623) (**opheleo** from **ophelos** = increase, profit <> **opheleia** = benefit profit) means to provide assistance, with emphasis upon the resulting benefit, in this case **none!**

Opheleo - 15 times in the NT - Matt. 15:5; 16:26; 27:24; Mk. 5:26; 7:11; 8:36; Lk. 9:25; Jn. 6:63; 12:19; Rom. 2:25; 1 Co. 13:3; 14:6; Gal. 5:2; Heb. 4:2; 13:9

The purpose of ministry is to establish God's people in God's grace, centered in God's Word and empowered by God's Spirit, so that they will not be blown around by every wind of doctrine (Ep 4:11-note, Ep 4:12, 13, 14-note). Undoubtedly, some recipients of this letter were considering going back to Jewish laws governing diet and foods. In this passage the writer gives a clear warning that these dietary regulations would not profit them spiritually because they never profited the Jews spiritually! The dietary laws impressed people, but they were only shadows of the reality that we have in Christ.

Paul encountered similar strange teachings in Colossae where he warned that "These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but **are of no value** against fleshly indulgence. (Colossians 2:23-note, cp Col 2:16, 17-note, Col 2:18, 19-note, Col 2:20, 21, 22-note).

Jamieson on **not profited** writes "namely, in respect to justification, perfect cleansing of the conscience, and sanctification. Compare on "walked," Acts 21:21; namely, with superstitious scrupulosity, as though the worship of God in itself consisted in such legal observances.