

**Hebrews 13:5-9**  
**“Being content in a chaotic world”**

**I. Introduction**

**II. Vs. 5-6 New circumstances by JOY**

**III. Vs. 7-9 Don't covet their position, imitate their faith**

**I. Introduction**

As noted last week the author follows the New Testament letters format of **doctrinal then duty, position before practice**. The final chapter being that duty and practice of **“Faith that Functions”** an exhortation directed at the church. Last week we noted in the first 4 verses the concise purpose or witness of the church, **“Let brotherly love continue”** as it was to be visible in three social arenas: **strangers, the suffering and marriage**. Applying: **Sympathy, Empathy and Harmony**. Now we take up the next 5 verses (5-9) as we see how the church needs to behave in society, namely **without covetousness, being content with their possessions and position**. There are two primary areas in which a person deals with covetousness:

1. **Possessions**
2. **Position**

**II. Vs. 5-6 New circumstances by JOY**

Vs. 5-6 **The first examination as it deals with covetousness in verses 5-6 is in the area of possessions**. There is today a danger of materialism but that is not the only thing that we can covet as we can along with desiring more possessions also desire a better position. I suppose that the recipients of this letter would be naturally susceptible to such covetousness as they were undergoing severe persecution and would long to be out of it through a change of circumstances. I believe that the context of this letter goes far beyond the current of “keeping up with the Joneses” as I don't believe they were concerned with such. Theirs was not a desire to be like the world but a desire to avoid the harsh persecution and the constant thought that if their position or possessions were different they could avoid their current situation. **But in general the exhortation remains the same and that is in believing that be content or full of joy we need to have more than what God has already granted us**. It is easy to fall into this trap of covetousness instead of lusting after more of His love or becoming greedy for His grace. God in His wisdom by way of our transformation has caused the follower of Christ to be radically different with regards to our happiness as it is far more secure that the unbelievers happiness which is based upon favorable circumstance: **God does not create joy by new circumstance He creates new circumstances by JOY!** He transforms our hearts which makes it unnecessary for removing us from our adverse situations and circumstances. Our happiness, if you will, isn't as fickle as our feelings it has the security of God's presence in the midst of our turmoil! This isn't the Christian's “vow of poverty” and you won't find such a thing anywhere in the New Testament. Our poverty would be another's riches and it is clear that God has allowed differing levels of prosperity among His children. In these two verses the writer reveals three things that we will need to examine: **The exhortation, The reason and The consequences.**

- A. **The exhortation**: “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have.” The word “**conduct**” was originally translated into English in 1611 by the word “**conversation**” and at the time the meaning in English had a broader meaning to include “**manor of life** or **behavior**” hence the interpretation “**conduct**”. The Greek word “**without covetousness**” is a phrase that means “**without the fondness for silver**” as the exhortation is against coveting the love of money. The word “**content**” means “**to be possessed with unfailing strength**”. The

thought is that **the believer should be satisfied with that which God has provided that meets our needs instead of striving for that which feeds our desires.** The word “content” **means more than the believer being** “satisfied” as **it refers to Christian being dependent upon the Holy Spirit and therefore independent of favorable outward circumstances.** The phrase “with such things as you have” in the Greek means “the things which are currently around you” and refers to the circumstances you find yourself in. The exhortation is plain for the believer: **Don’t let your life be consumed with the pursuit of financial gain as a means of escaping unfavorable circumstances and situations instead depend upon the Holy Spirit to strength you through your present circumstances.** Admittedly such an exhortation, **apart from the reason,** falls into the category of “**easy for you to say**”.

- B. **The reason:** “For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.” The reason the follower of Christ can have this perspective and heed this exhortation is because of what the writer says here: “For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.” The phrase “For He Himself has said” tells us that the following promise and guarantee was spoken directly by God! The Greek word for “leave” is not the usual word for leave instead it is **preceded by two negatives** which in the Greek **don’t** make a positive but instead further strengthens the negative of the Greek word that means **to loosen or let slip.** This promise in the Greek is: **“I will not, I will not ever cease to sustain you and uphold you!”** The word “forsake” is also preceded by three negatives and is a word that means to reject or be helpless or abandoned or left destitute or to let one down. This is a triple assurance that says: **“I will not, not ever, no never, let you down, leave you you destitute or abandoned.”** Or God promises to rescue us when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances.
- C. **The consequences:** “So we may boldly say: The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” The consequences of the above promise are found in Psalm 118:6 where we can say as the Greek says for the word “boldly” or we can say courageously “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” When the first word is “Lord” the last word “man” has no has nothing to cause us fear. The point the writer is making is NOT that there is something wrong with prosperity but instead that we must learn to be content with what God has given: **Contentment is not in having what you want; it is wanting only what you have.** The secret is not in trying to define the “standard of living” but as the author writes, coming to the personal realization that Jesus will **“never leave you or forsake you”** and this has nothing to do with a dollar amount! **The promise of God is that He is our great and unending resource and will never fail us.** The strongest negative in the New Testament that is a positive is that: **“I will never, never, ever, under any circumstances, leave you or forsake you.”** The Apostle Paul said it best in Romans 8:31 **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** We already have the greatest resource anyone could ever want, “The Lord”! There is that wonderful story in Genesis 14:23 when Abraham returned from battle with the five kings, having recovered the wealth of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which had been taken by the invading armies. Abraham brought this wealth back to the king of Sodom, who offered him a great reward. But Abraham said, **“I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’-- h”** Abraham was saying, **“I will only take what God is content to give me. I don't want riches from any other source.”** That is the attitude that the author of Hebrews is saying these followers of Jesus needed to adopt, **“If God grants me increase, fine; I'll take it. But I am not going to struggle after it. This is not my goal. I will not make the increase of money my purpose for living, for I am content with what I have.”** Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:6-7 **“godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out”** This kind of contentment causes the believer to not only be content

*nothing out.* This kind of contentment causes the believer to not only be content but also, uncritical to those who have been granted by God to have more possessions. We won't be judging those who have more than we have, instead we will be thankful for what God has granted them and content with what God has granted.

### III. Vs. 7-9 Don't covet their position, imitate their faith

Vs. 7-9 **The second area that we deal with the covetousness is in the area of position.**

The exhortation is to remember how those leaders who have died lived and spoke the word of God to them. Verse 8 This verse is commonly translated out of context but doctrinally correct. Yes, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever but what is at issue is not the unchangeableness of Jesus but rather the faith of those who had held of to Jesus as the Messiah even at the cost of their own life.

The body of Christ is full of diversity and as Paul would write in Romans 12:4-8 that, "***we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.***" There need's to be diversity without division as we are inter connected to each other by the gifts that God has given to each believer.

**The first thing we discover is that there is a structure of leadership within this body.**

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. Verse 17 we remind us to, "*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*" The writer says that the readers were to "remember the lives of those who poured the word of God into you, who they lived their lives among you." ***Don't covet their position, imitate their faith!*** That's the context of the statement about Jesus Christ as being the same yesterday and today and forever. What Jesus was to people who went before us is tremendous encouragement for us today as those saints went through like trials. It is this changeless Jesus that those who went before us found as the great refuge for believers in a changing world. It wasn't the "***powerful faith***" of the Luther's, Wesley's, and Moody's, it was the ordinary faith in a "***power filled God***" that made all the difference. Life in the body of Christ also involves a simplicity of belief.

The final warning in covetousness is with teaching and to be taking captive by strange teaching that would bolster or benefit someone's adherence to it. The word here is "*stop being carried away*" by false teaching that apparently emphasized external religious activity. Theses religious teaching of works seemed to offer to those under going persecution a "technique" or practice that they could do to change their situation. It appears many of these were tied to dietary restrictions that some taught had spiritual value. Over the course of church history, we have seen these fades come and go such as "*as giving up meat for Lent, burning candles for certain observances, counting beads in the rosary*". Through this letter the writer told us again and again that such biblical observances were shadows pointing towards the substance in Christ and that the shadows had no real value other than that.