

## Remember them

*Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*  
*Hebrews 13:4*

This final chapter of this epistle contains a number of exhortations and reminders for our Christian life. Those in this verse promote a healthy emphasis for the discipline of our thoughts, to remember especially them that are in bonds and those suffering adversity. The first category obviously is part of the second, since being bound is a form of adversity, but the second more broadly includes many others. In both cases, there is a similarly specific requirement of how to remember them, and that is through personal identification. An apparent difficulty with the first command is that we may not have ever been bound, so how could we identify with their situation? In the more general second command, the writer explains the connection – appealing to the unity of the body of Christ. In I Corinthians 12:26, the apostle Paul uses the metaphor of the body to emphasize the need for empathy: “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” Within our natural body, when one member is in adversity, the rest of the body in some manner suffers with it. We all know this from the experience of physical infirmities. In a similar manner, as spiritual members of the body of Christ, we are exhorted here to remember that we are one with the suffering member, and that should cause us to share, at least in concern, for that one. We may not have personally experienced their particular adversity, but we ought, as we remember them in our prayers and concern, attempt to identify with them.

We may in some ways be able to reach towards empathy in the general matter of adversity. However, in the former case of being bound, most of us in America are more challenged to imagine the state of being bound with our brethren abroad, who are bound for their faith, whether literally in a jail cell, or practically in the life restrictions and hardships placed upon them by persecution. Yet in many places of our world, our brethren suffer bondage without our remembrance of them. The distance between us or the lack of communication about their circumstances may be a factor, but it is not an excuse in the face of this clear exhortation. While not typically announced in the popular communications realm, there are avenues available for us to be informed. Whether we are aware or not, as the body of Christ we are bound with them, as this verse tells us. Let us resolve to be more cognizant of this fact, and train our minds to care for the whole body of Christ.