

**Text: Hebrews 13**

*1Let love of the brethren continue.(Hebrews 13:1)*

**22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)**

**14We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:14-16)**

In this last chapter of Hebrews, the author has essentially moved from deep theological considerations to shorter, almost miscellaneous exhortations. The first of these is to love one another. As we have discussed before, the foremost part of the fruit of the Spirit is love, and John goes further to say that we are to look for the presence of love for fellow believers as evidence of the Spirit being present and at work in our lives. (“**Examine yourselves...**” **2 Corinthians 13:5**)

*2Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:2)*

**17But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:17-18)**

**25And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" 27And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 28And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE." 29But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. 31"And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32"Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33"But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 34and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35"On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' 36"Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" 37And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same." (Luke 10:25-37)**

This exhortation is, in a sense, simply an expansion of the first. The Biblical concept of love is not simply a “warm fuzzy feeling,” but rather something that translates into action. The passage in John illustrates this, stating that without action, love is absent.

Regarding the statement about entertaining angels, some have attempted to “over-theologize” this to make it to mean entertaining Christian brethren traveling *incognito*. This defies common sense, however, and also the clear teaching of Scripture that angels have in the past visited men in the form of men. Consider Abraham and Lot. While it can be argued that Abraham immediately knew that he was being visited by the LORD and His angels, Lot certainly did not comprehend this at first.

**1Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. 2When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, 3and said, "My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. 4"Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; 5and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant." And they said, "So do, as you have said." (Genesis 18:1-5)**

1Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. 2And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." They said however, "No, but we shall spend the night in the square." 3Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. **(Genesis 19:1-3)**

*3Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. (Hebrews 13:3)*

31"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32"All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' 37"Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40"Then the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' 41"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; 42for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' 44"Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' 45"Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." **(Matthew 25:31-46)**

Most of the commentary I have read on this suggests that the author is specifically referring to those Christians that are imprisoned for their faith, especially since it refers to us being part of the same body as these prisoners. For us today it is unconscionable that Christians would be imprisoned for their faith, though I fear that such a day may be coming, and we must be prepared. Also, let us not neglect visiting prisoners in general, as the harvest among those incarcerated is indeed great, and we all know that these men have no hope of "rehabilitation" unless they are made new creations in Christ Jesus.

*4Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. (Hebrews 13:4)*

**24For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)**

**9Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)**

I have made the mistake before of trying to answer a skeptic's question about the rightness or wrongness of fornication by quoting Scriptures condemning it. This person responded that the Greek *porneia*, which Biblical scholars often interpret to mean "fornication," is really a more general term "sexual immorality;" in fact, the NIV renders it this way. He further added that fornication by women appears to be condemned in the Old Testament, but not men (this is untrue). My response to this was that if adultery and homosexuality are referred to individually by separate terms, what is left except fornication? This, still, did not convince. Later, I tried a different mode of argument, which received no response. Look at Genesis 2:24. It commands the man and wife to be "one flesh." We know from the New Testament (**1 Corinthians 6:16**) that this refers to the sexual union, lest we try to somehow "spiritualize" this term. Think of it this way: God commanded the husband and wife to engage in such a union; he gave that command to no others. He did not say "among the many options available for sexual relationships, the marital bond between a man and a woman is a good one." No, He established the norm for sex when He said the man and wife "shall become one flesh." Any sexual relationship—or any desire for such a relationship (**Matthew 5:28**)—that is outside of this falls short of God's standard, and is therefore sin.

*5Make sure that your character is 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," 6so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?" (Hebrews 13:5-6)*

**19And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)**

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

**1Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)**

*9"But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. 10"The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11"When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. 12"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. 13"You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Mark 13:9-13)*

Most of the commentaries I have read here say that this refers to those saints that have already gone on to be with Him. Indeed, this is a good admonition. Considering the Mark passage, it is those that endured all the way to the end that we know most assuredly were born of Him, and therefore are the examples to follow. Moreover, it is lamentable that in our day we only read the writings of our contemporary Christian leaders; C.S. Lewis said that he only knew how to withstand the questions and temptations of his day by reading "old books." In spite of our insistence that we live in a "new" day with different temptations and challenges than previous times, the Bible teaches that "**there is nothing new under the Sun.**" (Ecclesiastes 1:9) God's Word never changes and, absent the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, neither does human nature. We would do well to study and imitate those saints that have gone before us, as well as those present that clearly strive to imitate our Lord and Savior.

*8Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)*

**2fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)**

Still, despite having some good human examples, we must always look to Christ first of all as our only perfect example.

*9Do 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. 10We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. 11For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. 12Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. (Hebrews 13:9-13)*

*13'Now if the whole congregation of Israel commits error and the matter escapes the notice of the assembly, and they commit any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and they become guilty; 14when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the assembly shall offer a bull of the herd for a sin offering and bring it before the tent of meeting. 15'Then the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be slain before the LORD. 16'Then the anointed priest is to bring some of the blood of the bull to the tent of meeting; 17and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil. 18'He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar which is before the LORD in the tent of meeting; and all the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering which is at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 19'He shall remove all its fat from it and offer it up in smoke on the altar. 20'He shall also do with the bull just as he did with the bull of the sin offering; thus he shall do with it So the priest shall make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven. 21'Then he is to bring out the bull to a place outside the camp and burn it as he burned the first bull; it is the sin offering for the assembly. (Leviticus 4:13-21)*

*8The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, 9which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, 10since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. 11But when Christ*

**appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:8-14)**

**20"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Galatians 2:20)**

Here the author is, for the sake of the Jewish Christians reading this who will understand it, further illustrating that Jesus serves quite perfectly as a sin offering by and beyond Old Testament standards. He further reminds us that we must all take up our crosses and follow Christ. (**Matthew 16:24**)

*14For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. (Hebrews 13:14)*

**17Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. 18For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, 19whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. 20For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:17-21)**

Love for the things of the world is incompatible with love for and service to Christ. In a materialistic society such as ours in which even the church has largely fallen into the sin of materialism, we would do well to learn to eschew the pursuit of wealth and instead pursue Godliness through obedience to Christ.

*15Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. 16And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Hebrews 13:15-16)*

**25But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. 26If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. 27Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:25-27)**

Once again, a reminder that **"faith, if it has no works, is dead."** (James 2:17)

*17Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. (Hebrews 13:17)*

**5For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, 6namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. 7For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (Titus 1:5-9)**

**29But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)**

Think about this: if we truly held ourselves to Biblical standards when selecting overseers, many of the problems in churches we now have would not exist. We are to choose those that have truly denied themselves to follow Christ (**Matthew 16:24**), and hold themselves to preaching the Word, not the ideas of men. We are to obey these leaders, since they are Christ's undershepherds—as one writer I enjoy noted, "we are to have one Senior Pastor: Jesus Christ." This command, however, does not eliminate our responsibility

to study and know the Word for ourselves. Although the Bible contains commands to obey both earthly church leaders and civil leaders (**Titus 3:1**), if the commands of these men contradict the teaching of Scripture God's commands must prevail.

*18Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. 19And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner.*

*20Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, 21equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. 22But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. 23Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you. 24Greet all of your leaders and all the saints Those from Italy greet you. 25Grace be with you all. (Hebrews 13:18-25)*

**Updated 25 February 2007**