

Hebrews

Hebrews 13:1-6 – Christian Character - Part 2

April 18, 2010

I. Christian Character

- A. **Hebrews 13:1-6** . . . Let love of the brethren continue. [2] Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. [3] Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. [4] Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. [5] Make 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," [6] so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"
- B. Last Sunday we jumped to verse 4 of this portion because once I decided what to teach on verse 4, it became apparent there would not be enough time to teach on any of the other verses. Today, we are going to look at verses 1-3 and 5-6.
- C. Prayer

II. The Christian's Character Is Marked by Love

- A. The Christian's character is marked by love for each other – **Hebrews 13:1** . . . Let love of the brethren continue.
 - 1. A Saying too often true: To dwell with the saints above, that will be glory. To dwell with the saints below, that's a different story.
 - 2. As is often the case in marriage, so it is in the church. When we first become Christians and become part of a local body of believers, we are eager to love the brethren. But time and reality tends to work against our zeal for love and turn it into something less than love.
 - 3. Therefore, a lasting love for each other within the church is built, first and foremost on the first and great commandment which calls us to love God with all our being, and then to love those near us as we love ourselves.
 - a. **Mark 12:29-31** . . . Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; [30] and you shall **love the Lord your God with all** your heart, and with all your

soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' [31]
The **second** is this, '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**' There is no other commandment greater than these.

- b. God, speaking through Peter puts it a bit differently when He points out that love for others comes from a purified heart, mind, mouth, and life. **I Peter 1:22-23** . . . Since you have in obedience to the truth **purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren**, fervently love one another from the heart, [23] for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.
4. God, in **I John** makes it clear that failure to love those near us is, first of all, proof we are not yet saved, and secondly, it is proof we don't love God.
 - a. **I John 3:14-18** . . . We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. [15] Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. [16] We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. [17] But 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? [18] Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.
 - b. **I John 4:7-8, 20-21** . . . Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. [8] The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. [20] If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. [21] And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.
5. God, in His word, contrasts love and hate. He does not contrast love with less love or with a failure to love as we should, as if what we are doing is loving our neighbor but just not as much as we ought. The point is, in God's language, we either love or we don't – and if God gauges our love this way, we are wise to gauge it this way too if we are going to love as He says we are to love.
 - a. **I John 2:9-11** . . . The one who says he is in the Light and yet **hates** his brother is in the darkness until now. [10] The one

who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. [11] But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

- b. Selfishness is seeking our good at the expense of another or others – including God. We may be selfish and yet do loving things for those near us. However, doing loving things does not make us loving if the loving things we do are consistently limited by our selfishness so that along side our loving actions there is this glaring and repeated action of selfishness.
 - c. Therefore, it isn't love verses less love, it is love verses hate.
 - 6. The love we have for each other in the church and in the home is one of the most significant proofs we belong to Christ / are a Christian.
 - a. **John 13:35 . . . By this all men will know** that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
 - 7. Finally, God calls each of us to promote love within the church so we increase the probability that we won't forget or neglect this great quality of church life.
 - a. **Hebrews 10:24 . . .** and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.
- B. The Christian's character is marked by love for strangers – **Hebrews 13:2 . . .** Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.
- 1. The only scripture reference we know of that refers to entertaining angels unawares has to do with Abraham feeding three men (who turned out to be angels) who came from God and who after dinner gave Abraham the promise of a son.
 - a. **Genesis 18:1-3 . . .** Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. [2] When 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, [3] and said, "My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. (Birth of Isaac Promised)
 - 2. Jesus told a story about the final judgment where the difference between those who were accepted in His kingdom and those who

weren't was feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, **showing hospitality to strangers**, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and visiting those in prison.

- a. **Matthew 25:34-40** . . . "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; [36] naked, 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] "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.'
3. The importance of hospitality as a visible and consistent practice of the church is stated in these following ways.
 - a. In **Romans 12:13b**, God says to practice (*pursue*) hospitality.
 - b. In **I Peter 4:9**, God says to be hospitable to one another without complaint.
 - c. In **I Timothy 3:2-7** and **Titus 1:7-9**, God says that an overseer or elder must be **hospitable**.
 - d. And in **I Timothy 5:9-10** . . . God says that one of the prerequisites a widow must meet before the church takes on her support is that she has had to show hospitality to strangers.
- C. The Christian's character is marked by love for prisoners and the ill-treated (persecuted) – **Hebrews 13:3** . . . Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.
 1. The prisoners referred to here were not criminals, but Christians being persecuted for their faith in Christ. And the ill-treated were Christians experiencing less severe forms of persecution. Look back to **Hebrews 10:32-34** . . . But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, [33] partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches

and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. [34] For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

2. We Christians are to show sympathy to those in trouble. This is one of the ways we demonstrate our love for one another, stand with one another, and manifest to the world that we are a family who, as a family, belong to Christ.
 - a. Tertullian in The Apology writes: "If there happen to be any in the mines (Roman mines – like being sent to Siberia), or banished to the islands, or shut up in prisons for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God's Church, they become the nurslings of the church (their confession)."
 - b. By the beginning of the fourth century, Christians became so known for helping each other while in Roman jails that the Emperor Licinius passed legislation decreeing that no one was to show kindness by supplying food or other aid to those suffering in prison. And if a prisoner was starving, no one was to show him mercy. If anyone did, they were to receive the same fate as the one being punished.

D. The Christian's character is marked by freedom from the love of money. For the Christian, love of money or dependence on money is to be replaced by love for God and faith in God as his provider – with the added quality of a settled contentment with what he has – **Hebrews 13:5-6** . . . Make 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," [6] so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"

1. First of all, love of money is a sure sign of unbelief or distrust of God.
2. To love money is to look to or depend on it for the three essential things we ought to look to God for: provision, protection, happiness. Let me give you some examples of this by breaking down these three categories into sub-categories:
 - a. Provide
 - (1) excess in food, shelter, clothing, and transportation,
 - (2) security against present want or future need via income, insurance, savings, investments, valuable possessions,

- b. Protect
 - (1) from too much suffering by bringing relief from hardship or consequences of sin,
 - (2) from sickness or shorter life in spite of other behaviors that ought to bring illness and a shorter life,
 - c. Happiness
 - (1) purchasing comfort in life,
 - (2) excess in entertainment, toys, self-pleasing possessions, sports activities, hobbies,
 - (3) purchasing things that dull our senses to pain which out to be dealt with through repentance and the pursuit of godliness,
- 3. When we love money, we are worshiping a false god, storing treasure on earth – which cannot be taken with us into eternity, despising or hating God, and nurturing covetousness.
 - a. **Matthew 6:19-24** . . . "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. [20] "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; [21] for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [22] "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. [23] "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! [24] "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.
 - b. According to **Colossians 3:5**, greed is equal to or amounts to idolatry. And **I Timothy 6:9-10** . . . But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. [10] For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
- 4. Two primary ways to free ourselves from the love of money:
 - a. **Faith** in God as our provider and protector: **Hebrews 13:5-6** . . . Make 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," [6] so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"

b. **Contentment** with God's provision.

(1) **I Timothy 6:6-8** . . . But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. [7] For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. [8] If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

(2) **Philippians 4:12-13** . . . I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. [13] I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

5. Does this mean we no longer have to work in order to provide for our family? NO! Note: **I Timothy 5:8** . . . But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

III. Conclusion

- A. What are we here for? Ourselves? God? Others? Who ascends to the top of your list of reasons for being here? If it is God, these verses make perfect sense – for they call us to love those near us, whether a brother or sister in Christ or a stranger in need of hospitality. And the last two verses warn us against loving money, for an ungodly view of money is like a chain that yanks us back to being here for ourselves.
- B. Therefore, may we remember why God created us, and may we love as we are loved. And may our love be such an example to those who observe our lives that they can easily conclude we are Christ-ones.