



Let Love Continue

Series: Hebrews – An Anchor for the Soul

Hebrews 13:1-6

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Read passage and pray

-Intro: After reading the beginning of chapter 13 it might be easy to think that the pastor just goes off and starts with these exhortations and is out of sync with the rest of the book. It would be easy to think that he is choppy in his thoughts and what does this have to do with what he has just said to the church. But---not so fast! Think about it for a minute. The truth of Christ requires something of us. The truths that we find in Hebrews demand something from us. Think of some of these truths. Christ is the radiance of God's glory and the exact imprint of His nature and after making purification for our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Father. Christ is the founder of our salvation and He is superior and yet, He is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. Christ is our sinless Great High Priest whose priesthood is superior and eternal and in that He sympathizes with our weaknesses and gives us confidence to draw near. He gives us grace and mercy and we are to hold fast to Him. The New Covenant in His blood is superior to the Old Covenant and He is our perfect sacrifice that we needed to be redeemed and purified and have eternal life in the presence of God. And His sacrifice was once and for all and we, His children, have been sanctified through His offering of His body and blood. In Christ, we have the full assurance of faith and we can, with confidence, draw near with a true heart. And we are to hold fast our confession of hope in Him. Christ is the author and perfecter of our faith in which we persevere to the end and we are not to grow weary but we are to strive for peace and for the holiness without which no one will see Him. In Christ we have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken and so we are to be grateful and offer God acceptable worship and service with reverence and awe. Our God is a consuming fire.

-You see, these truths must go beyond academic knowledge. These truths demand from us our obedience. If these truths of Christ are really true, and they are, then they demand our obedience. And if we really grasp these truths our hearts will be overflowing with love for Christ and what He has done in our place. And if we love Christ then we will obey Him and walk as He walked. Jesus said that if we love Him we will obey His commands.

-Truth of Christ demands holy conduct--- ***"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."*** (1 Peter 1:14–19, ESV)

-Truth of Christ demands lives of holiness and godliness--- ***"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!"*** (2 Peter 3:11–12, ESV)

-So the pastor of Hebrews is not going off on a tangent but is going to the response demanded by these truths---obedience. And what follows in chapter 13 is some of the applications that the author of Hebrews gives to the church that these truths of Christ in Hebrews demands. And the pastor knows that if the church truly knows Christ, they won't fall away from Him but they will apply His commands to daily life and live them and walk as Christ walked. That's what true saving faith does. And our reality is that these truths demand the same thing from us today. So let's dig in.

1 – Keep Loving One Another (1)

-“*Let brotherly love continue.*” (Hebrews 13:1, ESV)

-The first thing he tells the church is to let brotherly love continue. Literally he is telling them to keep loving one another as fellow believers. The pastor wants brotherly love to continue which means that they had already been doing this. They were loving one another. They were family brought together by the blood of Christ. They were brothers and sisters, the children of God in a very real way. They were enduring persecution together and caring for one another. Their love for one another was real.

-But the reality of persecution and trials can bring two opposite responses. One is that you draw nearer to Christ and each other. You trust and rely on Christ who is sovereign over all and you remain steadfast and committed. And the opposite response is the temptation to fall away and run back to the old. We know that some in this church were tempted to revert back to Judaism because of persecution. They were tempted to leave Christ and go back to the old way of life because it was easy. The easy way is often the selfish way. And the result of this could easily cause division and lack of love between the members of this church. So the pastor exhorts them to let this love continue.

-The pastor knows that if we are going to obey Christ then we must love one another because it is commanded of us.

- “*Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*” (Romans 12:10, ESV)

- “*Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,*” (1 Thessalonians 4:9, ESV)

- *"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart," (1 Peter 1:22, ESV)*

- *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God." (1 John 4:7, ESV)*

-The pastor understands that we are commanded to love one another and that our loving one another is rooted in God's love to us and he is calling his church to this. But the love he is calling the church to is not just some sentiment. This love is not just some mushy feeling or emotion. This love is not tolerance, which according to Paul is just pride and hatred. This love is not just in words because words are cheap. The love he is calling the church to is real care and concern. This love is rooted in the fact that in the church they are really brothers and sisters---and that is not just sentiment but objective fact in Christ. This love is a desire to climb into each others souls and rejoice with each other and weep with each other and care for each other's needs. This is a love that is patient and kind and does not envy or boast. This is a love that is not arrogant or rude. This is a love that loves the soul in a real way and does not tolerate sin. This is a love that does not insist on its own way and is not irritable or resentful. This is a love that does not rejoice in wrongdoing, that does not tolerate sin but rejoices in the truth. This love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things and fights for what is right. This kind of love never ends and the church lives by this principle.

-This is a love that overflows out of a relationship with God in Christ and is how the church is to live. This is a love that pleases God. This love is a distinguishing mark of a true believer and it always results in an attitude of love that expresses itself in action. And the author takes us there next.

2 – Love Expressed (2-3)

-Love is expressed in Hospitality (2)--- “*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*” (Hebrews 13:2, ESV)

-In the Ancient Near East, hospitality was crucial. The inns were known for immorality and danger. These were not places that travelling Christians wanted to stay. So they trusted and relied on other Christians to open their homes to them. Many Christians had suffered being kicked out of their families and considered outcasts by society because of their faith and they needed the hospitality of other Christians. This hospitality was very important and Christians took the responsibility of opening their homes very seriously.

-And the pastor tells his hearers to not neglect this---that means to remember to do it. He knew that if the Christian got wrapped up in himself and the trials and persecution that it would be easy to forget others and their needs. Isn't that true. If we are going through a trial or our circumstances are hard, we can become so inwardly focused that we forget to love others. But this pastor doesn't want that to happen to this church. Think about the reality of what happens when people come into your home and share even something as simple as a meal. The reality is that is when you really get to know someone. The fellowship that is shared is real and it creates bonds that result in real love for each other. It demonstrates love that expects nothing in return. So much today things are done with an expectation of something in return. That's not the kind of love that the children of God is called to express. Love others as God has loved you. We have nothing to give in return so we love others the same way. This hospitality in the home is also a great place where the good news of the love of Christ can be shared with those that desperately need Him.

-And the author tells his hearers that in loving like this they may have entertained angels unawares. He is probably alluding to Abraham in Genesis 18 when the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre. Seeing three strangers, of which one was the angel of the Lord and the other two angels, Abraham rushed from his tent and provided for them and was hospitable. The pastor's point is not to be hospitable just for the

chance of seeing an angel but the point is that the people who we show hospitality too just might be messengers of God sent to us and in that bring a greater blessing than they receive from us. There just may be more to the people that we meet than meets the eye and there may be a work of God going on that the angels wonder at and rejoice to see.

-So as it regards hospitality here are some probing questions for us. How many people could describe the inside of our home? How many people have we sought to minister to simply because they are brothers and sisters in Christ? Are we interested in others need of support and encouragement?

-Love is expressed in Remembering those in prison and the mistreated (3)--- "*Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.*" (Hebrews 13:3, ESV)

-The pastor tells his hearers to remember those in prison and those who are mistreated. There were those who had been imprisoned for their faith. There were those that had been mistreated for their faith. We have seen in Hebrews those who experienced this. In these times the prisoners would rely on family and friends to bring meals and to provide for their needs. They were not able to provide for themselves nor to meet with their brothers and sisters in Christ so the need for visits and provision was real. Some that were mistreated had joyfully endured the plundering of their property and were in need.

-It is so easy to forget those that are not around---out of sight out of mind. But the pastor calls them to more than just remembering them, he calls them to action in an intimate way---remember them as though in prison with them. This is not just sentiment or word but action. He is calling his hearers to put themselves in their brothers and sisters situation and act accordingly. He calls them to remember those who are mistreated since they also are in the body. This is not referring to the body of Christ but to realize that they are human and the exact same things can happen to them. He is calling for real love that bears each other's burdens. He is calling for intense identification with each other. This is how brotherly love is expressed in real

ways. This is how Christ identified with us. He stepped out of heaven and took the form of man and was obedient to death on a cross in our place because He loved us. Always remember His work for us rooted in love for us and the Father.

-Now for us, we may not know many people that have been imprisoned or mistreated like this for their faith. But one way we can love like this is to remember those who are not able to be here. We have members of the family of God that can't be here even though they would love to be. We have those in the nursing homes and the shut-ins that would desperately love a visit, some support and some encouragement. They are still a part of the body of Christ and so want to be identified as such and have that connection. What are we doing to remember them? Something as simple as a card, a visit, a meal could go a long way in ministering to them and showing them brotherly love. What are we going to do as the family of God for them?

-Love is Expressed in Purity (4)--- "*Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.*" (Hebrews 13:4, ESV)

-How did he get here we may ask? Love is to be expressed in the home and honoring marriage in purity is to love your spouse with whom you are one flesh. And for all to refrain from sexual immorality expresses brotherly love.

- "*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:3–8, ESV)

-So the pastor tells us to let marriage be held in honor among all. Jews and Christians regarded marriage as a part of God's design for humanity and it was viewed as an

honorable way of life. The term honored means of exceptional value or highly prized. Marriage was to be honored by all---those married and those not. Why? Marriage is to be honored because it is an institution and gift designed by God. Marriage is the first institution established by God and it is the basic building block of the church and society. Husbands and wives are in covenant with God and each other and hold a precious trust before Him and the church. God is honored when married couples honor the vows they made to Him and when all Christians honor marriage.

-The pastor also tells his hearers to let the marriage be undefiled---ie, no sexual infidelity. This church lived in a depraved society that was full of sexual perversion and indulgence just like ours today. To remain pure in the midst of this was to be distinguished and different. Scripture strongly denounces sexual immorality and as the children of God, we are called to refrain. To say that the marriage bed is not to be defiled is to demand that the sexual integrity of the marriage relationship is to be preserved. And the presupposition is that sexual relations within marriage are acceptable to God and His design but those outside marriage are not. Illicit sex profanes what God has made holy. The church can't participate in it nor can the church tolerate it. This is consistent with the pursuit of holiness which acknowledges the awesome and holy character of God. God is honored when single and married individuals keep the marriage bed pure through self-control and godly restraint.

-Unless the church is willing and able to be different than the world it lives in, we cannot expect our testimony to be taken seriously. If not, even our own faith is called into question and God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. God's judgment is nothing to be casual about. Everyone will be judged for sexual immorality. Those who truly belong to God will be disciplined and possibly lose reward. Those who adopt these lifestyles and remain unrepentant no matter what they profess with words will suffer ultimate judgment and damnation. We, as Christians, are called to be outrageously pure and holy just as God is holy. We must take this seriously and express brotherly love in this way.

-Love is expressed with Proper Direction (5a)

-“Keep your life free from love of money, (Hebrews 13:5a, ESV)

-Notice that he says keep your life free from the LOVE of money. Money is not the problem but the love and lust for it is the problem. Paul told Timothy that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. It's ok for Christians to have money and wealth but it is not ok for money and wealth to have Christians. It is difficult to have a lot of money and not trust in it. I don't know but I can imagine. Having a past in accounting and finance, I have seen lives destroyed by the pull of money and wealth. And this command is not for just the rich. You can love money and lust after it and trust in it without having it. This command is for the homeless person all the way to Bill Gates which means we all need to hear this (the reality is that we are all rich people).

-To love money and trust in it is to have an attitude with a lack of trust in God's care and provision for His children. Jesus warned against this: "***No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.***" (Matthew 6:24, ESV)

-The pastor knew that those who loved the world would not stand firm in a storm and he knew that those who had a love for wealth would be the first to turn aside from Christ and from loving and caring and serving the church. To love money and be mastered by it will always lead to selfishness and a lack of love and care for others. Think about Demas who, when he fell in love with the world, deserted Paul and the church. Love of money produces a lifeless heart that is enslaved to the world so that one becomes possessed by possessions, comforts, and recreations. It is difficult not to love what you have spent your life and time collecting. And the reality is that you never have enough.

-“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 5:10, ESV)

-Those who love money will never be content, which is why the pastor goes there next.

-Love is expressed with Contentment (5b-6)-- *and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."* "So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"" (Hebrews 13:5b-6, ESV)

-Paul told Timothy to be content with food and clothing---that's it. Scripture tells us to be content with what we have. Discontentment is a sin because discontentment doubts God, His sovereignty, provision and love for His people. And discontentment hinders true brotherly love by being consumed with self. But this pastor tells his hearers to be content because he knows that contentment comes from a heart resting in God no matter what the circumstances. This pastor wants his people to know that contentment is the blessed assurance that God does all things well and is, even now in your circumstances, making all things work together for their ultimate good.

-The pastor knew this would be challenging so he added the reminder that God will never leave them nor forsake them. To know that God is always present with His people transforms our thinking. Here is the engine that drives Christians to both love and holiness. God is always present with us! What else do we need? What can money or this world offer us that compares to this promise? Knowing this we have nothing to fear. That is why the pastor tells his hearers that they can say with confidence that the Lord is their helper. And if that is true then what can man do? God's presence and help is the death nail to discontentment and the fear of man and all that is needed to love one another.

-One commentator said this: "IF God is our helper, then what can man do to us? People can lead us into temptation but if God is my helper I shall not fall and if I stumble He will surely lift me up. People can bring us into trials-they may threaten our temporal peace and prosperity but is not God able to provide for our needs? People may shun us but do we not have the love of God and the family love of the church? People may lock us up and mistreat us but will not God come to find us? Does not God command His people so that they seek us out to give us aid and comfort and joy? What can man do to me if God is my helper?"

-This mindset leads to love and contentment, which is great gain. Paul said that he had learned to be content no matter the circumstance. What was Paul's secret? How do we join him in contentment? By knowing Christ.

- *"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,"*
(Philippians 3:7–10, ESV)

-Where is love and contentment found---in knowing Christ in a real saving way. To count all as rubbish to know Him was the secret of Paul's contentment and it is the same for us today.

-So what do we take away from these exhortations to love today?

6 – Application

-We must know that the only way we can love each other like this is because God first loved us and our love is an overflow of His to us.

- *"We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."* (1 John 4:19–21, ESV)

-He first loved us. Grasp the love of God for you. Zephaniah says that God delights over you, sings and exults over you and quiets you with His love. Ephesians 1 says that He set His love upon you in Christ before the foundation of the world. You are the apple of His eye and you are His inheritance. He loved you and thus, did not withhold His own Son but sent Him to be the propitiation for our sins---that is the definition of love.

-And God never changes and His love for you will never change. Close your eyes and just listen to this promise.

- "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:31–39, ESV)

-Cling to this promise beloved and let your love for each other be rooted in His love to you!

-Pray

-Unbelievers---you don't know this love because you don't know Christ. You don't know true contentment because you don't know Christ. You can today.

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