

Hebrews

Chapter 13:1-6

November 26, 1995

- **Hebrews Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Christ is greater than the prophets and the angels.
- Chapter 2 Christ's message is greater than the angel's.
- Chapter 3 Christ is greater than Moses.
- Chapter 4 Christ is greater than Joshua and His rest is superior.
- Chapter 5 Christ's High Priesthood is greater than the Aaronic Priesthood.
- Chapter 6 God's faithfulness to Abraham and his seed is confirmed by an oath.
- Chapter 7 Christ is a Priest in the order of Melchizedek and Christ is greater than Abraham.
- Chapter 8 Christ is Mediator of a new covenant.
- Chapter 9 Christ offered a better sacrifice at a better sanctuary.
- Chapter 10 Christ's sacrifice was offered only once and then He sat down.
- Chapter 11 The just have always lived by faith.
- Chapter 12 God disciplines His sons who are citizens of the New Jerusalem.
- Chapter 13 Give thanks, do not forget to do good, and share.

- **Introduction & Review**

The author has just given them as stern of a warning as we have yet seen; God is a consuming fire and all disobedience will receive its just reward. He is trying to warn those who would abandon their ground of confidence by returning to the lesser things. Perhaps the recipients thought that this was a small matter but the author understood that these are no small things if they alter our grounds of confidence from one of grace to one of works.

As is customary with many epistles, when concluding the letter, the author gives a large number of imperatives that may cover a myriad of topics. Despite their brief treatment by the author, these are terrific truths to be revealed and obeyed.

- **Exposition**

Hebrews 13:1-6

1 Let brotherly love continue.

- Despite the hardship of persecution that many of the recipients were facing, they are instructed to demonstrate brotherly love. The hardships and trials were not an excuse to abandon love, they were required all the more because of them. Too frequently we think that our difficult circumstances give us the right to be less than gracious or courteous to our friends, family or neighbors.
- Notice that loving our brother is not something that we do occasionally. The Thessalonians were known for their love for the brethren. 1 Thess 4:9-12. Here we have an encouragement to love more and more. Then he goes on to give concrete examples of how they were to love. First, they were to lead quiet lives. This is easily summed up by minding your own business. Each family has matters that they should pertain to and others should not interfere. Secondly, work with their own hands, that is, they were to tend to their work diligently not meddling in the labors of others.
- But, the question still remains, exactly what is love for the brethren? We have a perfect example from Christ Himself (1 John 3:10-23). Here we see a number of points regarding the love of the brethren. First we see that the love of the brethren is a mark of a true believer. We know that we have passed from death to life by our love for the brethren. If you don't crave or prefer Christian fellowship, then it may be an indication that you aren't a true believer. We know what true love is by observing the life of Christ. He laid down His life for sinners-not the holy and righteous-but sinners. He gave up His equality with God so that He could die for sinners. He rose from the dead so that they could rise as well.
- When it comes to loving the brethren, very seldom do we think of the law. The law may appear harsh and unloving but Christ has taught us just the opposite. Christ summarized the entire law into two commandments (Matt. 22:34-40), Love God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. If we go one step further, the entire law may be summarized into one command-love. Love for the brethren is to treat them *lawfully* from the heart. That is, to do right in the eyes of God toward our brethren.

2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.

- This is another example of how we can love the brethren, to open our homes and share a meal with them. But this commandment even goes further in that the instruction is not only to the brethren but to *strangers*.
- The primary emphasis is the entertaining of strangers unknowingly. The point of this instruction is not for us to try to figure out which ones are angels and which ones aren't. The point of the teaching is that it shouldn't matter. Because we are offering hospitality so frequently, there is a possibility that we may entertain strangers. The emphasis is on the frequency and the motivation. This is most likely what happened with Manoah, the father of Samson (Judges 13:1-25), with Gideon (Judges 6:11-27) and possibly Abraham as well.
- There are circumstances where we should not offer hospitality. Two good examples would be a brother who is in unrepentant sin and the second is a person who is preaching a false gospel. Cf. 1 Cor. 5, 2 John.

3 Remember the prisoners as if chained with them -- those who are mistreated -- since you yourselves are in the body also.

- There are at least two levels at which this instruction should be understood. There were probably many Christians during the time of the writing of the book who had been wrongly imprisoned or mistreated and the brothers were told not to forget them but to be share in their suffering. Again, as we have said many times, the collection of saints into a particular fellowship (like EEF) is not simply a gathering of individuals. We are a body and we are to begin thinking like a body. When one part of the body is in pain the other parts are as well. When one part rejoices, the other parts rejoice as well. This is a hard thing to do. We all have responsibilities and obligations. All of these also have priorities. But we should not be focused on one thing that we forsake the others. Christians are to be balanced.
- If our head, Christ, considers that a glass of water given to the needy is as though it were given to Him, this means that He is not ashamed to associate with this body. How much less should we be ashamed to carry the burdens of the body?

4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

- This is probably one of the greatest problems that our society has today-a low view of marriage. Marriage is a solemn covenant before God, and today, our society thinks nothing of breaking it. The sexual relationship between a husband and his wife is to be pure and should be honored by all. God created marriage, He created the sexual relationship and expected it not to be defiled. A low view of marriage will yield a low view of society and children. The societies of the world cannot function properly without depending on healthy marriages. In this country a man is worthy of death for betraying his country but is considered simply careless if he betrays his wife.

5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (NKJV)

- Historically this has been a perfect verse to take out of context. Note the context of Deut. 31:1-6. The words, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" are the encouraging words given to a conquering army poised to invade Canaan. These verses here applied to the Christians, are to receive the same kind of encouragement as we are a conquering, confident, advancing army.
- One major problem with advancing armies is that victories breed arrogance. Given that our Lord is over all rule and authority in heaven and earth, there are certainly victories that are won in the church. However, with those victories comes the temptation to think that somehow those victories are the result of our unique ability. When the Jews were prepared to enter into the land that the Lord had promised to them, they were sternly warned not to forget the Lord. The reason for this is that He had promised them victory, He had promised them vineyards that they did not plant, herds of animals that they did not tend, and drink from wells that they did not dig. With all of this success and the fruit of success it is easy to forget God. Obedience to the Lord will usually bring about external blessings. But these blessings are exactly what can tempt us to forget God unless we are equipped with the Word of God.