

The Pursuit of Hospitality – *Rom 12:13*

Introduction – Throughout the New Testament we see that we are now called brothers and sisters in Christ. This is not simply a matter of sharing similar beliefs or having joined some fraternal club. We have been adopted into the family of God (Eph 1:5, 2:13), and Jesus is our elder Brother (Heb 2:11). The terms “brethren,” “brother,” or “sister” show up in the NT over 250 times, as in 1 Pet 2:17, “love the brotherhood.” This is the new commandment that Jesus gave to His disciples (John 13:34-35). Practical love of one another includes many things. Central to love for one another is the pursuit of hospitality.

Flowing From Efficacious Love (Rom 12:1-13) – The commands of vv9-13 are applications of the more general command of 12:1-2. We are commanded, “*therefore*” in v1, that is, in light of all that God has done for us which Paul has explained in great detail in Chapters 1-11. We are commanded to love God (vv1-2) and equipped by His grace (vv3-8) to love one another (vv9-13).

Unhypocritical Love – Our love is to reflect the grace/love of God towards us (v9) and requires us to strive after a long list of “one another”s (vv9-13).

Given to (v13) – Some translations have “practicing” but the idea is stronger – “pursuing.” Other times this word is used we are told to “pursue righteousness” (1 Tim 6:11), “pursue the good” (1 Thess 5:15), and “pursue peace” (1 Pet 3:11). The word is used of Paul, that he “pursued/persecuted” the Christians even to foreign cities (Acts 26:11). The idea is one of strong initiation and effort to bring about the thing one is “given to.”

Without Grumbling (1 Pet 3:9) – In this passage we looked at last week, Peter exhorts the pursuit of hospitality to be done without grumbling. He understands that it is hard, sacrificial work and that it will cost some of your most treasured possessions: your time, your money, your food, your privacy. Our flesh will be tempted to grumble because our flesh wants to serve “me.”

Unexpected Blessings (Heb 13:1-2) – Of course, there is blessing in obedience for all who do follow Christ, unexpected and often subversive blessings both to the guest and to the host – because we are imitating Jesus in this.

Trinitarian Hospitality and Practical Concerns – The gospel can be understood as the inclusion of sinners by the redeeming work of Christ into the fellowship and hospitality of the three Persons of the Triune God. This helps us as we consider several practical aspects and concerns about pursuing hospitality.

A Home of Hospitality – We can only give what we have. First we must cultivate a hospitable attitude in our homes with our spouses, our children, our siblings; in other words, the “one another”s of love always start with those closest to you.

An Expectation of Hospitality (2 Kings 4:10) – This passage was used by the Jews and later by the early church, creating a tradition of “being ready” for unexpected guests. If God has called us to hospitality, we should be in the habit of being ready for guests He will send.

Start Simple – Flowing out of what is naturally happening in the home, hospitality should not (at least always) be an elegant feast. The point is blessing, but it is a simple-blessing.

Bless Your Guests – On the other hand, it is a special time for your guests. What have you found out about your guest beforehand (if possible)? Wine, flowers, singing, storytelling, and simple games all add to the (simple) festivities. Guests should also bless their hosts when possible with thoughtful gifts or helps; and while you are invited to “make yourself at home,” be careful not to “make yourself at home” too much.

Wise Boundaries – There are strangers and then there are strangers. God is not requiring of us to forget our other duties (to care for, protect, and provide for our own, for instance). One idea to keep in mind is the more risk one has in a particular hospitality opportunity, the more public that hospitality should be and the more other people should be involved.

Mind Your Manners – Manners are simply love in the trifles. Only then are you a blessing to have over or to have others over. Don’t arrive too early. Don’t stay too late or too long. Children, learn to listen to and enjoy the adult conversation.

A Family Event – And it is a family event. Taught rightly, the whole family begins to understand and apply mercy, kindness, generosity, longsuffering, not as lofty ethereal principles, but as expressions of incarnational, hands-on love. Let me repeat myself: hospitality is not a chick-thing; it’s not “Mom’s” thing either. It’s Jesus’ thing.

The Subversive Theme – Keeping this in mind helps us to pursue hospitality. We should be expecting God to do far more for our guests and even for us. This is motivating when you are cleaning, preparing, serving, and sacrificing in the mundane ways that hospitality requires. Someone once said, “*The front door of the home is the side door of the church.*”

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those of the household of faith.” – Gal 6:10