

## Hebrews Chapter 13A

Ten Months ago we began our journey through this wonderful book of Hebrews. From the very first verse the Author has magnificently portrayed the glory and the majesty of Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God.

Chapter after chapter the essential truths of the person and work of Christ have been displayed before our eyes like the brilliance of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks.

- The opening verses of the Book actually reminded me of the grand finale with one burst of light exploding after another in split second succession.

Jesus is the Eternal Son of God, The Heir of all things, the creator of the world, the radiance of the glory of God; And because he clearly displays in all of the divine attributes he is called the exact imprint of God's nature.

It was evident from the first four verses of the book that Jesus Christ is the main character. With each passing chapter the author solidifies his case for the deity and supremacy of Christ and the eternal value of His Saving Work.

- Chapter 2. Although He is the Eternal Son of God He was made a little lower than the angels for the purpose of suffering death.
- Chapter 4 He was tempted in every way like US, BUT unlike us He remained sinless.
- Chapter 5 Jesus is a declared to be Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.
- Chapter 7 We find great comfort in the fact that Jesus is the guarantor of a better covenant built upon better promises.
- Chapter 9 The sacrifice of Jesus Christ obtained eternal redemption for God's chosen people effectively cleansing OUR guilty consciences.

The Theology contained in this book of Hebrews is magnificent. The clarity with which the person and work of Jesus Christ are presented are absolutely stunning.

- The Eternal Son of God humbled himself, taking on human flesh, he was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death.
- Offering himself before the Father as the one and only atoning sacrifice for sin, and in doing so, He perfected forever those who are being sanctified.
- Because he is risen from the dead, because lives forever at the right hand of God he is able to save completely, save to the uttermost all those who draw near to God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them.

NOW as we arrive at Chapter 13 a dramatic change takes place. As you will see we will move from Foundation to Fruit, from Doctrine to Duty, from Principles to Practice; From Belief to Behavior.

- After establishing the theological foundation of the New Covenant the author begins to build UPON that foundation with a series of practical commands directed at those who believe.

You may have noticed as Jason read the scripture for us, these commands come in rapid succession like the trigger of a Thompson Sub-machine gun firing off one imperative after another. **1 Let brotherly love continue 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, 3 Remember those who are in prison, 4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, 5 Keep your life free from love of money,**

I think it is important that we understand the pattern that we see here in the book of Hebrews is not unique to this book. Many of the other Epistles follow the same format, establishing sound doctrine FIRST and then addressing behavior.

- In the book of Romans Paul takes the first 11 chapters to lay out the doctrine of Salvation and then in chapter 12 he says:

Romans 12:1 **I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**

- Paul does the same thing in Ephesians. He spends the first 3 chapters teaching sound doctrine and then in Chapter 4 he moves on to duty.

Ephesians 4:1 **I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,**

As we look at this series of commands it is important that we understand: The imperatives of the New Covenant are not like the commands of the Old Covenant.

- In the Old Testament God commanded Israel to walk but they had no legs.
- In the New Covenant God commands, us to fly and by his grace he gives us wings.

Expounding upon the doctrines of Grace before giving believers a whole list of commands tells us that it is only by grace that man has any hope of living in a manner that is pleasing to God.

- Before I can love my brother God simply MUST give me a new heart!
- By God's grace I am a new creature in Christ, and that same grace moves me to do the good works he has prepared for me to do.

Over the next two weeks we will be considering FIVE Commands that are contained within the first 6 verses and we will break those five commands into two categories.

1. A love that God loves, Exhortations to express Brotherly Love (Today)
2. A love that God hates, Exhortations toward Personal Purity (Next week)
  - The Love that God loves here in the context of Hebrews 13 is "Brotherly Love."

## Brotherly Love:

13: 1 **Let brotherly love continue.**

- Listen, THE primary moral standard and essential evidence of a LIFE that has been born of God is love. You will find this throughout the entire New Testament and it all begins with the words of Jesus himself in John 13:

John 13: 34 **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

- The testimony of God's saving grace in the lives of the redeemed should be evident to "All People" by the love that we have for one another.

The Greek language in which the New Testament was written has 5 different words for love. The particular word that is used in Heb 13 is "Philadelphia."

- In classical Greek that word was always used for the relationships within the natural family unit.
- You could say that Christianity hijacked the word from classical Greek and expanded it to include the love that exists within the family of believers.
- As members of the family of God, partakers together of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) we share the identifying characteristic of love.
- Not only is love a part of our family identity, it also provides us with assurance of our redemption.

1 John 3: 14 **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.**

When the Author of Hebrews commands believers to: "**Let brotherly love continue**" He indicates that this characteristic of love already exists and that it must continue.

- Brotherly love comes as "standard equipment" in the New Heart and New Spirit that we received from God at our New Birth.
- NOW we are simply commanded to let that love continue.

John MacArthur "Brotherly Love is the natural outflow of the normal Christian life. It cannot be generated by our flesh but it can be stifled as well as nurtured. We are therefore NOT told to make it happen but to LET it continue."

Where does this love originate? From the Holy Spirit who indwells all believers. Romans 5:5 tells us that "**hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.**"

- When we were first born of God we were drawn by the Spirit into fellowship with other believers. The Spirit of God came to dwell within us and the initial fruit of the Spirit was a obvious love for the brethren.
- Peter affirms the fact that brotherly love is a natural results of our redemption.

1 Peter 1: 22 **Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,** 23 **since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;**

- The work of the Holy Spirit revealing the truth of the Gospel, providing grace for repentance and obedience at the time of regeneration results in a sincere brotherly love.

So that we understand, the love described by the word “Philadelphia” is not mere sentimentalism nor is it some superficial Sunday morning affection that lives on the surface.

- Brotherly love is a deep and ongoing concern that displays itself in a practical and even sacrificial commitment to one another.
- We see this in the early church:

Acts 2: 44 **And all who believed were together and had all things in common.** 45 **And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.** 46 **And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,**

In my own family when one of the Parsons’ men has a home improvement project going on all of the Parsons men show up to help. Brotherly love is expressed through a sacrifice of time and energy and an unspoken commitment to love one another in a very practical manner.

- The same should be taking place within the family of God.
- The shared life that is driven by brotherly love is described by the Apostle Paul in this way:

1 Corinthians 12:26 **If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.**

- The spiritual bond of brotherhood creates an empathy in the heart that is accompanied by a resultant action in the lives of the Redeemed
- Without an accompanying action our love is incomplete.

1 John 3: 17 **But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?** 18 **Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.** 19 **By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;**

- The love of God constrains us and our new hearts call for a response of brotherly love. How might that look? Let's read on:

While Hebrews 13:1 speaks of brotherly love in a very general way, Verses 2-3 provide specific directions that fit the context of the book.

- They involve two important avenues for the expression of brotherly love: Hospitality and Sympathy. Let's look first at Hospitality.

Remember the book of Hebrews was written to a body of Hebrews Believers who were living in a time when the persecution of the church was on the rise in the Roman Empire.

- Penned somewhere between 65 and 68 AD the Book of Hebrews comes at the end of emperor Nero's reign.

When persecution arose in a certain city many of the believers were forced to flee their home and run to other cities. Some of those who remained behind were mistreated and imprisoned. NO doubt this is what the writer of Hebrews referred to when he wrote:

Hebrews 10:32 **But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.**

When those early Christians experienced the plundering of their properties and were forced to flee where did they go? Where did they stay?

- Remember this is a time when there were no credit cards, there was no Motel 6 where Tom Bodet would leave the light on for you. The few Inns that existed had bad reputations for prostitution and thievery.
- So when an exiled believer entered into a new city He had to rely on the hospitality of his fellow believers to meet his immediate needs for food and housing.

IN Romans 12 the Apostle Paul writes: 13 **Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.**

- There is a basic understanding behind this verse that recognizes all our possessions belong to the Lord and we are called to be the distributors of His resources.
- Peter addresses the attitude in which our hospitality is to be expressed.

1 Peter 4:9 **Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:**

- Sometimes we grumble because we feel that our house is not clean enough, not good enough to invite guests over. (It will take all week to prepare for guests)

- Our schedules are too busy, our personalities are too different, our kids are too unruly, Maybe THEIR kids are too unruly, our diet too restrictive, they may not like my cooking.
- There are a thousand and one reasons why we CAN'T express hospitality. For most of us we simply like to live in our little cocoons. (Think about it)

We arrive home, the garage door opens and we literally drive into our house without speaking to any of our neighbors.

- We have caller I.D. so that we can filter all of our calls.
- We have video cameras on our doorbells so that we can see who is at the door without actually speaking to them.
- We can spend the whole night on Facebook learning about what's happening with our friends without actually talking to them.
- We can even go to church online and never have to interact with another Christian ever.
- AND somehow we actually think that we experience Biblical fellowship.

Remember what I said earlier this morning: it is only by grace that man has any hope of living in a manner that is pleasing to God.

- The Brotherly love that is expressed through hospitality should be the natural response of a renewed heart.
- Jesus alludes to this when he speaks of the separation of the sheep and the goats:

Matthew 25: 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was 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, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39

And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

- At the end of the age, when all of humanity enters into their final reward, those who are "**Blessed by the Father,**" Those who have been saved by the unmerited favor of God will inherit the Kingdom.
- By grace God made them alive when they were dead in sin and the evidence of that New Birth was seen in the Love that they freely expressed to the least of their brothers.

The brotherly love that is expressed through hospitality is never viewed in the Bible as a burden, on the contrary it is actually seen as a privilege that can result in very interesting benefits.

- The author of Hebrews writes about one of those benefits:

Hebrews 13: 2 **Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.**

- By keeping an open heart and open door policy some believers have unknowingly entertained angels.
- What the author is saying is this: You never know how important or how far-reaching one simple act of hospitality may be.
- Abraham went out of his way to help three men who were passing by his tent. He did not wait to be asked to help instead he volunteered. He actually considered the opportunity to serve someone else to be an honor.

Genesis 18: 2 **He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth** 3 **and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.**

4 **Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree,**  
5 **while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on — since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said."**

- When Abraham volunteered to serve these three strangers he had no idea that two of them were angels and the third was the Lord Himself.
- In reality whenever we express brotherly love in an act of hospitality we are ministering to the Lord himself.

Matthew 25:40 **And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'**

- Employing hospitality to serve the least of our brethren is in reality serving the Lord.

### 3. LAST POINT: Love expressed through Sympathy

Going back to the context and the historical circumstances surrounding the Book of Hebrews I would like to consider the expression of brotherly love that I describe as "Sympathy."

- In the historical context, Not every Believer was able to escape Nero's persecution. Some of them ended up in Prison. So the question that is addressed to the reader is this, "How do we express brotherly love to a fellow believer who is in prison?"

Hebrews 13: 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.**

- The use of the present tense for (MIMNESKO – to remember) told the original readers that they should be continually mindful, always remembering their brothers who are in prison.
- In those days' prisons did not provide "Three hots and a cot." If a prisoner was going to eat, either his friends or family members were required to take him a meal. If he needed to stay warm someone had to take him a blanket.
- Paul writes to Timothy from his prison cell:

2 Timothy 4: 13 **When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.**

When the author says, "**Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them,**"

- He is calling believers everywhere to be "Sympathetic." I want you to be constantly mindful of your brothers in prison as if you were chained to their side, suffering with them.

On Wednesday evening in the simulcast, "The Insanity of God" I was touched by the scene where the leaders of the Underground Church in China asked the question, "Has Christianity spread beyond the borders of China?"

- When Nick Ripken told them all about the suffering of their fellow believers in Somalia, the imprisonment of their brothers and sisters in Russia their reaction was one of sincere brotherly love.
- The Chinese believers that were gathered for that particular retreat made a commitment to get out of bed one hour early every day for the rest of their lives to pray for their persecuted brothers and sisters throughout the world.

WHY would they do that?

Because they had been born of God, By the Grace of God they had become partakers of the divine nature. They were new creatures in Christ. They were Adopted into the family of God and their brothers in Christ were suffering.

- This kind of brotherly love and commitment to the persecuted church is evidence of the New Heart and New Spirit that come from God to at our New Birth.

1 John 3: 16 **By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.**

God has revealed to man the ultimate example of perfect love in this Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.



- We did not merit his love. We were enemies of God. Insolent Lawbreakers, immoral, unholy and unrighteous.
- But in a way that only God could understand, before the foundation of the world HE set his love upon His People.
- And in the fullness of time He sent his Son to purchase their redemption.

Galatians 4:4 **But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.**

- We love because HE first loved us.
- We are united together in one family through adopting grace. Partakers of the Same Spirit, Sharers in the Glory of our risen Savior.

Set up tables for next week