

True Treasure for 2019 (Hebrews 12:28–13:6)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (1/6/2019)

Introduction

1. To begin this new year, we return to Hebrews 13.
 - a. The exhortations of 13:1–17 are not closing comments but guidance for Christ’s priest-kings in offering to God acceptable worship (12:28) in His new covenant temple, the church.
 - b. Acceptable worship centers on continuing brotherly love as instigated under the old covenant (Leviticus 19:18).

The evidence of our love for God (Deuteronomy 6:5) is our love for those who bear His image (1 John 5:1).
 - c. Two great evils that block our ability to love others and show Christ-like compassion to those in need are *moral uncleanness* (v. 4) and *covetousness* (vv. 5, 6). Both of these evils stem from pride and self-centeredness.
2. Brotherly love (v. 1) is opposed by the love of silver (v. 5)—*philadelphia* vs *philargyria*.
 - a. Brotherly love is a *mental state*, not just warm feelings toward a close family member or friend. It involves the desire to render sacrificial obedience to Christ in living out kingdom principles in this fallen world. Brotherly love demonstrates God’s own compassion to those damaged by the evils of sin—suffering and oppression.
 - b. The love of silver (1 Timothy 3:3: “*not a lover of money*”) is also a mental state, not just lusting after money or material wealth. *Covetousness* is defined as an abnormal dissatisfaction with one’s life and possessions—not being content with God’s will.
3. The real issue is what one treasures above all. Worship cannot be acceptable if one does not truly treasure God and Christ above everything else in one’s life.
 - a. There are two prominent errors that many Christians may not realize they commit because they seem correct in one’s relationship with the Lord.
 - 1) Many Christians rely on the Lord to provide what they want or need. They trust the Lord to supply, subtly convincing themselves that God exists solely to make them happy and contented. This group is identified as *consumer* Christians who live for what the Lord does for them.
 - 2) Other Christians see their spiritual value measured by the success (or failure) of their devotion to Christ and His will as evidenced in their participation in the mission. Their devotion and worship reflect the degree of satisfaction with how effective they have been in accomplishing the mission. This group is identified as *servant* Christians who live for what they can do for the Lord.
 - 3) Many church leaders see their mission as transforming the consumer Christians into servants—“moving people from taking to giving . . . or making spectators into participants.”
 - b. The error in the above positions is that they all miss the biblical aim in God’s purpose for saving His people—“Immanuel, God with us.”

I. The Claim (v. 5)

1. Covetousness makes the worship of God an empty ritual because it takes the joy and celebration due to the Lord and transfers them to idols—the things that one substitutes for what only brings true joy, the Lord Himself.
2. Contentment is not in what one possesses but in possessing the Lord in a vital relationship.
 - a. To prove his claim, the apostle loosely cites Joshua 1:5 and 6 (note also Deuteronomy 31:6, 8 and Genesis 28:15).
 Note that one's confidence is not in *what* is promised but *who* is promised—“*I [the LORD] am with you.*”
 - b. The Lord refers to Himself with His covenant name, *Yahweh*. The Lord's covenant binds the believer to Himself with steadfast love and faithfulness. Never forget that the Lord deals with His own according to *His* covenant faithfulness, not the believer's performance or lack of it.

II. The Confidence (v. 6)

1. The promised presence of the Lord is what produces boldness and confidence in the believer. Verse 6 is a quote from Psalm 118:6 (Septuagint), building on verse 5, the Lord is with us and will never leave us.
2. Trust in His promised presence gives the confidence to confess fearlessness in living in a dark and uncertain world—“*what can man do to me?*”
3. Let us carefully examine the sentence, “*The Lord is my helper.*”
 - a. First, the Greek for *Lord* here is *kurios* from *kuros*, which means “supreme.” The emphasis is on His supremacy in authority as sovereign ruler. He cannot be overruled.
 - b. The term used here for *helper* is *boethos* from *boao*, “to cry out,” and *theo*, “to run to” for help (Galatians 4:6).
 - c. The structure of the sentence declares that the sovereign Lord does not simply respond to cries for help—He is Himself the response to their cries.

What Can We Take Away?

1. Every January 1, people make resolutions for the new year. Let us resolve that in 2019 we will make the Lord Himself our greatest treasure and paramount goal—that we will not just live *for* Him but that we will live *with* Him. Resolve to practice the presence of God.
2. In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32), Jesus examined two kinds of relationships to the father.
 - a. The prodigal was a rebel. Not caring for his relationship to the father, he took his inheritance, abandoned his home, and indulged his carnal desires with his father's wealth. He deserved nothing but contempt, but on returning home, he received unconditional love and acceptance from the father.
 - b. The elder son was the actual focus of the parable. He was like the Pharisees and scribes to whom Jesus addressed the parable. Although the elder son remained at the father's side, he, too, wanted only what the father could provide.
 - c. Like many performance-oriented Christians, the elder son served the father but had no real relationship with him. He would not rejoice with the father upon the return of his prodigal brother because he did not share his father's heart. Rather, he sullenly withdrew and grumbled about what he did not get.

d. The glorious truth often missed in the reading is the father's appeal to the elder rebel: "*Son, you are always with me*" (v. 31). Christian, do you understand that the Lord is always with us?