

Brotherly Love Lived Out, Part 1

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[0 : 00] The final chapter of the book of Hebrews. We're there, guys. We made it. 29 weeks through the text, and we're done.

I could have, and I thought about, I could have broken chapter 13 up into like eight sermons based on topics, not like really digging into the text.

That's what we need, but I chose not to. I chose to get through chapter 13 today. And then I'll deal with those topics at another time more in depth because it's a lot of stuff that I've been thinking about.

A lot of stuff I've been praying about, a lot of stuff that the Spirit has been convicting me about, and part of that conviction comes out through these sermons. So, yeah, let brotherly love continue.

This verse introducing chapter 13 continues the flow of thought that was previously established by the author before chapters 11 and 12.

[1 : 05] Just to give you a reminder, a rundown, they've developed the case, the author developed the case, that Jesus is superior to any and all religious expression previously held to under the old covenant.

He spent several chapters just going through different old covenant idols in a way, but old covenant practices as well that these Jewish believers would have been coming out of.

And he's just establishing the fact that Jesus has brought in a new covenant and these practices of sacrifices and such are no longer necessary because he's the one and final sacrifice for God.

He's the greater revelation. He's greater than Moses. He's greater than the angels. He's greater than anything conceptually the Jewish people have known or understood for hundreds of years.

And so that's a big portion of this letter to the Hebrews. The authors acknowledge the tremendous trials that their readership have endured since coming to Christ, including being thrown in prison and having their personal property plundered and having that taken away from them.

[2 : 29] As a means of encouragement, the author points them to Old Testament saints in chapter 11 who were faithful despite their own hardships in not receiving the promises of God before they died.

And finally, the author points to Jesus himself in chapter 12 as being the ultimate example of enduring hostility for the sake of righteousness and that the discipline of the Lord, those trials and hardships that they're enduring, is conforming us into the image of Christ, which we know from Romans 8, 29, that God has predestined us to be conformed to the image of Jesus.

So we reach the point now of returning to that previous flow of thought at the end of chapter 10. If you want to turn back there real quick, I know I've read 13.1, but we're going to go back real quick to chapter 10, verse 32 through 39.

The author says, But recall the former days when after you were enlightened and you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated, 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.

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised.

[4 : 07] For yet a little while, and the coming one will come, and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

Verse 39, But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

So as I've already mentioned, the readers are facing hardships and trials and opposition, but they're told to not throw away their confidence and shrink back.

Instead, if we can skip back to Hebrews 13.1, instead of losing your confidence and instead of shrinking back in your faith, let brotherly love continue.

That phrase in Hebrews 13.1, let brotherly love continue, it's in the imperative mood. It's a command by the author.

[5 : 15] And I guess this is probably the best way you can write a command of this sort. Let brotherly love continue. I guess you could say, continue brotherly loving.

Would be another way I suppose it could be translated, but then it's just weird. The temptation exists for the believer to be quiet concerning their faith.

For these believers to be quiet concerning their faith because of what they've endured. But the author says, don't. Don't be quiet. Don't shrink back. Don't lose confidence.

Everything they're enduring is changing them into the image of Christ. So continue to love and support one another as you have already been doing.

I found it interesting this week. I was engaging in conversation with somebody and they said, they said, I've recently read, they told me this, they said, I've recently read in Hebrews 12.

[6 : 18] And I just perked up. I was like, all right, yeah. In Hebrews 12, that God disciplines those he loves. Then they just made the statement, I wish God would love me a little less.

Yeah. And just, you know, referring to the trials and hardships that they're going through. But we're not to shrink back. We're not to lose confidence.

And so as we engage in the text here in Hebrews 13, I want to observe the six ways in which we are to see brotherly love lived out.

Before we dig deeper, let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for this tremendous letter and the lessons learned.

Now as we're in chapter 13, Lord, spirit, give us understanding, conviction where we need it, and the boldness and willingness to adjust where we need to.

[7 : 26] For your glory, I pray. Amen. So going into the text here, I'd like to read verse two. We're going to take it a verse at a time.

And we're going to see here first that brotherly love lived out in the air. So, you know, these areas of brotherly love being lived out. We see in verse two, brotherly love lived out in the area of hospitality.

hospitality. Hospitality. Hospitality. Hospitality. Hospitality. Hospitality. Hospitality. Hospitality. Hospitality. Hebrews 13, verse two. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

That's always been an interesting verse, and I've been curious about it. I know others have as well. So you look at this.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers. A stranger, by definition, is someone who we do not know personally. It's a panhandler in the median of a street asking for money.

[8 : 31] It's a mom or dad who seemingly do not have enough money to pay for family groceries. It's somebody that we don't know, but we know is created in the image of God and is in need.

So it's consequently, it's easy to be deceived when helping a stranger. Right? I mean, we don't know these people. We don't know the people, the panhandlers in the median at the Biddeford 95 connector there, or in Portland.

They've got their signs up, and they've got their, you know, sometimes they have their buckets or whatever to collect. But we know nothing about them.

Typically, we know nothing about them. So it's easy to be deceived. A person who asks us for \$10 to help buy food for their family may spend it on alcohol or drugs. And if you're like me, you kind of become guarded at that point, maybe even a little skeptical.

You may have heard the statistics of, you know, how much money people can get by panhandling all day in these areas. And it's not, it's no small amount.

[9 : 47] You know, there are hundreds of cars that go by any given day. So, I honestly, I'll be honest with you, a little transparency here, I have grown very skeptical about that.

And we should use common sense in deciding how best to help people. But our primary concern should be for helping and not avoiding being taken advantage of.

Now, if we help in good faith, God will honor our effort. Now, love is often taken advantage of. Yet, we're still told to love your neighbor as yourself.

I was particularly, I was particularly struck by this verse and wanted to, you know, really dig in more on it personally. You know, but that's it.

You know, it's like, Jesus, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. But people take advantage of love. Yeah, they do. Love them.

[10 : 54] They take for granted love. Love them. So, the question I had now, do we have open homes? Do we have open homes ready to serve and meet the needs of others?

Do we have an open church institution ready to do the same? Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.

For thereby, some have entertained angels unawares. The point of that second half of verse 2, I've always, like I said, I've always been intrigued by it. Like, oh man, wonder if we've entertained angels.

Wonder if we've had that opportunity. Well, have you been doing the first part? Have you been showing hospitality to strangers? Because if you've not been showing hospitality to strangers, if you've not been loving people who you don't know who are in need, if you've been skeptical, and you've been holding back because you don't want to be taken advantage of, can I tell you something I know for sure?

You have not entertained angels unawares. You've not entertained them at all. At best, you've interacted with one and rejected them.

[12 : 16] I think the point of this verse is that we never can know how important and how far reaching a simple act of helpfulness can be. We minister because of need, not because of any consequences we're able to foresee.

We don't gauge a situation and say, well, does this person really need help? Do they really need \$1,000 for oil?

It used to be like \$400, right? Do they really need this money now? I mean, let's think about this. I mean, Janet Mills has been mailing out checks to people and there's supposed to be more coming.

They'll get money enough to do that. Are we foreseeing and thinking about and assuming how their need can be met or how maybe we can get off the hook from being the one to meet it?

I'm not saying that any of us have \$1,000 to meet somebody's oil need, though this church institution does. But I'm just saying, what's our mindset when it comes to when we see need around us, when we see people desperate around us?

[13 : 31] Are we taking advantage of the opportunity to show hospitality or are we neglecting that? I think of Genesis 18 verses 1 and 2 when I read this verse.

And it's Abraham, right? Can I stop for a second?

First is this. It's the heat of the day. Abraham is resting. That's kind of a thing they do. When things get hot in Israel, the work kind of slows down and stops until it can cool off.

There was a time in my life before kids, Bonnie and I, we were talking about the possibility of going with an organization known as Baptist for Israel.

And going to Israel and moving there, living there for a year on a kibbutz, living among the Israeli community, engaging with them, and basically living life with them, right?

[14 : 46] Immersive learning that way. And one of the things that they said in their preparation packets and such is, you will have to work, right? You'll have to do work.

And the workday starts at like 4 a.m. Some of you are like, well, so what? Well, it starts at 4 a.m. And then it stops around 12 because that's when it starts getting really hot.

And then at 12, it is common in the community for hospitality to take place, for visiting to take place, for fellowship to take place, because they're not working.

It's too hot, unless you have to work, right? And so they're entertaining one another. And here Abraham is, he's by the oaks of mammary, he's by some trees, probably in some shade, heat of the day, probably a little wiped, exhausted, maybe just woke up from a nap.

Heat wipes me out. I'm sure it wipes you guys out as well. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him, and instead of saying, oh, man, really? Why?

[16 : 04] Are you here? Why do you have to be here? Have you ever had that kind of attitude when somebody stops by to visit? You don't have to answer that, because I know you have.

I have, too. It's like, oh, man, really? It's like you're exhausted, you're tired, you're ready to just rest, and then people show up. Man. So Abraham could have been, you know, he's not like, oh, no, he just, he jumps up, and he gets to it.

He grits him. Come on in. And it says he's running from place to place. That's got to be exhausting even more. And he's, you know, preparing, like, hey, you know, get some biscuits and rolls going.

We need to, you know, go kill the fatted calf, whatever it is. I forgot what he said, everything exactly. But, you know, he basically arranged a meal to be prepared for these folks. He said, invite them in, sit them down, give them something cool to drink, feed them, and whatnot.

He was ready and eager to be hospitable to anyone that came to his home. And in this case, it happened to be the Lord himself, and chapter 19 reveals to us, two angels.

[17 : 13] So I really think, I wonder if Hebrews 13, 2 kind of gets its idea from this experience with Abraham. Abraham, no, he, oh, man, guys are here, we have to be hospitable.

And it just happened to be the Lord himself and two angels. Imagine if he wasn't hospitable. Could you imagine being in a situation where you were not hospitable to your creator?

You're not hospitable to the one who has made amazing promises and an awesome covenant with you and your descendants forever. We're told in scripture that God created man in his own image, Genesis 127.

Yet, we are more apt to find reasons why we can't be hospitable towards others rather than having a being ready at all times policy. Think about that.

When we choose, so Abraham had a unique experience. As far as I know, the Lord is not coming down and seeking to be having people show hospitality towards him now.

[18 : 18] We are told that perhaps you've entertained angels unawares. But the fact is this, Abraham entertained his creator. He showed hospitality. We are all created in the image of our creator.

So in as much as we are showing hospitality to even the least of these, we do it to him. Oh man, that sounds like another verse of scripture.

Sheds light on that passage too. where Jesus is talking about, you know, in as much as you've done this and this and this to the least of these you've done it to me, well, when Lord did this happen?

Right? It's because we're created in the image of God. We have the opportunity to show hospitality. But my house is not clean.

clean. Ah! Or what are they going to think when they see this mess? Well, let me tell you this. First of all, it's a guy, he probably doesn't see the mess.

[19 : 23] Most likely. And if it's a woman, she's probably like, I completely understand. And can relate to him. But the bottom line is this.

Who cares? Who cares? Think about that. My house is too messy. It's not clean. I can't have people over. Why? Because of what they're going to think about you.

Oh, I see. So you're not going to show hospitality to somebody because you are a self-centered person. Somebody had to say it.

So your brother or sister, they're dealing with depression. They have a loss. They've lost a loved one. Their marriage is on the rocks. And all you can think about is how unpresentable your house is. Please get your thoughts off yourself and on other people.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers. 1 Peter 4.9, show hospitality to one another without grumbling. And with that, we move to verse 3.

[20 : 29] So verse 2 is brotherly love being lived out in how we show hospitality, in our hospitality.

Verse 3, brotherly love lived out in the area of brotherly association. Verse 3, remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated since you are in the body.

This verse changes the focus to those imprisoned and abused for their faith. They've already been introduced at the end of chapter 10. Imprisoned believers could easily be forgotten and neglected.

You've heard the phrase, out of sight, out of mind. However, when you have sympathy for others, it can help sustain our love for them.

It's easier to help others when we ourselves have needed help. It's easier to appreciate hunger when we've been hungry. Loneliness when we've been lonely and persecution when we've been persecuted.

[21 : 37] Now I told you I was going to bring up Ruth again. Ruth, I'm going to put it this way in terms of this text, Ruth is in prison. Ruth can't go anywhere.

Ruth can't go anywhere. She can't get up and just leave. I mean, she has, like, by all rights, she has the freedom to do that if she could.

But she can't. So she's basically in a prison. Remember those who are in prison. As though in prison with them.

Remember those who can't go anywhere. You want to talk about text of scripture that beats you up. This is it for me, right? Is this.

I reflected on this earlier. A couple weeks ago, last week. Think about people we've lost in the last 12 months from this church. And they're all, like, long-time members.

[22 : 41] people who poured their hearts and their passion and their love for people into the ministries of this church.

Cal Verrill. I'll be honest with you. I don't think I had seen Cal for 10 years. I didn't even know where he was.

What about you? Barbara Garin was here for a good long time.

And she had been in Sanford for a couple years, I think. About. But, I mean, she couldn't drive herself.

I mean, if, I mean, stubbornly she would have driven herself or whatever she wanted to do, right? I mean, like, it doesn't say anything about the character of the person. But she was unable to do it, right? She couldn't drive herself.

[23 : 41] She couldn't leave. But she was in Sanford. I saw her twice, I think. I'm ashamed. I'm not saying this by, like, you know, oh, I'm so great.

No, man, I'm ashamed. Lista. Right up the road. Around the corner. Basically, a prisoner.

Not that they were keeping her in prison, but, like, the way in development. She couldn't go out. She couldn't do things. She couldn't remember things. She was unable to move around. Ruth Boothby.

Been in Atria for a few years. So, I mean, like, so, I mean, she's not gone, right? But the point is this, is that we have people who, well, they may not be in, like, a literal prison, but figuratively, they're in prison.

Listen. So, are we remembering them? Are we seeking to go and encourage them? They may be towards the, no, the, they may be in the twilight of their life.

[24 : 47] They may be getting, they may be very close to glory for all we know. So, do we ignore them? Is it out of sight, out of mind? Oh, it doesn't matter anymore.

They're not contributing anything. They can't, they don't do anything around the church building. You know, maybe they contribute financially. What are we thinking? These are people who love Jesus and love people and who, because of their bodies breaking down, are unable to get to where they want to be, when they want to be there, and to fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Can we at least admit we have cars or modes of transportation that can take us there, that we have at least, no, an hour a week or a month that we can contribute and travel and go and see these people?

Can we? We talk about being the church and loving people and meeting needs, but it seems like it's only when it comes here.

It's only when it's brought to our doorstep. It's only when they call us. It's only when we find out through the grapevine that somebody has a desperate need and we can try to meet that.

[26 : 04] But if it's an inconvenience on us, we forget it. We forget people. We forget God's image bearers who can't go and do anything that they would love to do.

Can we support them? We should. Remember them. 2 Corinthians 1, verses 3 and 4. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our afflictions so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted with by God.

We go through hard times and trials and we experience the comfort and love and deliverance from God and we have confidence in our faith so that we can go and comfort others as well. So I've already gone on enough about these folks and Ruth now on my mind.

Yeah. So I'm ashamed but I'm not down and out because I see opportunity for improvement.

And so please don't let anything that I have said at this point discourage you to the point of immobility. See it as an opportunity.

[27 : 37] Say, hey, you know what? Maybe I will go visit that individual. Maybe I will go and share the love of Christ. Maybe I'll go share a cup of coffee. Have a conversation.

Pick up a phone or your cell phone. Make a phone call. Write a note. Let them know they're loved and cared for.

Verse 4. Brotherly love lived out in the area of intimate relationships. Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

the exhortation that marriage should be honored by all is essential because it demonstrates that Christ's people where they are visible in the world ought to be seen as a people who value marriage.

and note this is not a negative statement. You're not told not to do something but it's a positive one.

[28 : 44] Honor marriage. Christians should honor marriage publicly and privately as the monogamous union of a man and a woman and let's not lose sight of that.

it is a man and a woman that God has ordained for the marriage union. God the Father honored marriage by establishing it in Genesis chapter 2.

Jesus honored marriage by performing his first miracle at the wedding in Cana in John chapter 2. The Holy Spirit honors marriage by using it as a picture of the church in the New Testament in Ephesians chapter 5.

So the Godhead in its entirety the Father the Son and the Spirit all three honor marriage one way or another.

And also notice that the Bible teaches that sexual morality in all of its aspects and manifestations comes down to one central thing. And that is that sex belongs in marriage and nowhere else.

[29 : 57] There's no need to elaborate long on this point. Pornography prostitution polyamorous relationships etc. etc. Whatever perversion of sexuality that our secular culture pushes in their agenda on us and on the world is they are all perversions of God's intended realm and purpose for sex.

Ephesians chapter 5 verse 3 about sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among saints. Don't let it be named among you.

Don't let it exist. Get right and do it right as our Creator has ordained. Verses 5 and 6 brotherly love lived out in the area of financial contentment.

Yeah this could have been a while. Verses 5 and 6 keep your life free from love of money 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?

Many people have tried to be satisfied by being rich and collecting all the wealth that they can but it's never enough. J.D. Rockefeller one of the richest people to have lived in America would be worth about 26 billion dollars in today's money.

[31 : 39] When asked once how much money is enough money he replied just a little bit more. Jim Carrey may know that name successful and famous actor has said I hope everybody could get rich and famous and will have everything they ever dreamed of so they will know that it's not the answer.

Jim Carrey by the way net worth I looked it up about 180 million dollars so talk about people who can pretty much have whatever they dream of.

It's not the answer and he's not a Christian. He recognizes the emptiness in material things and financial wealth.

Ecclesiastes 5.10 he who loves money will not be satisfied with money nor he who loves wealth with his income this also is vanity. So I guess we just need to read Ecclesiastes 5.10 and realize yep money's not the answer.

Is money good? Yeah. Yeah. It is good. It buys you things. It secures things. It buys you oil to keep you warm. It buys you pellets to keep you warm. They're coming Dennis.

[32 : 59] Promise. I've already ordered them. I'm waiting for them to be delivered. Sorry he's been on me for months to do that. Anyway. So the fact is this. Money buys things we need.

It pays for things that we need to pay for. It's a good thing. But the love of money. No. See the more you get the more you want.

When we focus on material things our having will never catch up with our wanting. The appetite for more will consume anyone who gets in its way. If that's your thing I need more.

I need more. I need more. more games more TVs more TV shows more phones more movies whatever. More more more will never be satisfied.

And it's not money although money is very much involved with it but more sports more baseball looking at you Donovan. No.

[34 : 00] Kid has a passion for baseball. But your more your wanting will never or your having will never catch up with your wanting.

It's always a little bit more a little more a little more. I'm going to skip that but if you want to write down 1 Timothy 6 verses 6 through 10 that's the passage where it says that godliness with contentment is great gain.

And so I'm going to go ahead and read that later. All right. Verses 7 through 16. Now you're wondering. It's 12 12. I think I'm going to stop.

I'm going to stop there and finish next week. I wasn't going to but I'm going to. Because I want to this is one that might need a little more fleshing out an explanation.

Brotherly love lived out in the area of following and obeying spiritual leadership. let's go ahead and pray. Father I thank you for your word.

[35 : 08] I thank you for the text of scripture. I thank you for the book of Hebrews. I thank you for your truth, your standard, your expectations, what you lay out for us.

Lord I thank you that we don't need to live defeated when we failed but we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous who prays and intercedes on our behalf.

Lord we have the Holy Spirit who reminds us and instructs us and guides us into all righteousness, into godly living. Lord I just pray that we would not grow discouraged and overwhelmed and depressed because we see areas here so far that we have failed and that we are not following through on, that we are not honoring you with, that we are not loving others through and Lord just help us to see that as an opportunity to seek Christ in these things.

Lord I just pray that we would indeed open the doors for hospitality. Lord that we would be hospitable to strangers. Not caring so much about the are we being taken advantage of questions.

But Lord are we showing the love of Jesus. And Father for the opportunity to remember those in prison, to identify with them, to be with them, to show your love and care and compassion.

[36 : 44] You are a great God and you have given us some awesome people. And Lord I pray now for Ruth. I pray for her physical therapy but Lord I pray for her spiritual well-being.

I pray for her emotional well-being. I pray Lord that you would help us to encourage her, to love her, to converse with her, to remind her Lord that we love her, that you love her and to be thankful for the love that she has shared for so many years in this church and in this community.

Lord help us to be pure, showing, living out this brotherly kindness and this brotherly love through proper intimate relationships and standards and boundaries.

And that Lord we would seek holiness in your name. that we would be content with what you've given us, content with how you provide for us. Lord that we would not have a love for money, a love for more material things, more wealth.

Lord we would know that you're providing what we need. And that when we don't have the money to pay the bill, we don't have the money to get the oil, Lord we know that's what we need to because it is through these trials and hardships that you're making us like Jesus.

[38 : 18] Thank you for your love, even if it may be hard for us to fully comprehend and understand. In Jesus' name, amen.