

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Hebrews 13

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through the book of Hebrews

And we have actually come to the final chapter of this letter that was written to a group of Jewish believers who were contemplating going back to religion system that left them empty and hurt.

They were contemplating abandoning Jesus to return to Judaism.

To return to following a list of do's and don'ts and the sacrificial system

And so the writer of Hebrews has been making the argument against them going back

–

He doesn't want them to quit.

He wants them to persevere.

And the way they were going to persevere was by faith.

This group of Jewish believers wanted to go back because they were afraid, they were going to lose everything to follow Jesus

But the writer makes the argument that they are not going to lose anything by trusting Jesus they are actually going to gain everything.

Now as we move to Chapter 13, the writer is going to make a transition -

the writer of Hebrews is going to remind his readers that our pursuit of God is lived out here on earth and in particular, in our relationship with those that God has placed before us.

Not only do we run our race and finish it well

We love!!!

Let's pray...

As I was doing my study yesterday – I was putting myself in the shoes of these Jewish believers

I like them, grew up in a religious environment – following a list of do's and don'ts.

Observing feasts and rituals

Never having fellowship with God

It was all at a distance

So – I was thinking what is the draw of manmade religion

What is the draw of following a list of do's and don'ts.

And then I read verse 1 – and then it hit me

[Heb 13:1-6 NKJV] 1 Let brotherly love continue.

In a religious system –

Individuals can spend their lives observing rules and feasts

And never be changed – exhibit A (me)

I can spend countless hours in a church service lighting candles, on my knees, repeating the same prayer over and over again that someone told me to pray.

And never change from the inside

I can have the outward appearance of religion – but inside, I am the same guy.

Everything that I mentioned – as difficult as it sounds – is so much easier – than simply loving each other.

Loving each other is hard

And what the writer of Hebrews is saying here in verse one – is that as a believer, we love one another and then we continue to love one another.

In a few Sunday – we will look at what John writes to us in his short epistle to us –

Where he writes in 1 John 3:14

[1Jo 3:14 NKJV] 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love [his] brother abides in death.

How do we know if we are saved?

We love one another.

If we love one another – we have passed from death to life

But if we don't love one another??? Then we really have to question whether we truly are saved.

Because a believer loves one another

A believer continues to love one another.

A believer demonstrates brotherly love / Philadelphia

The presence of mutual love is the most convincing evidence of the fact that we are saved.

Because if we say that we have the presence of God living inside of us – then our lives would demonstrate that we have His love inside us too.

And by love, I don't mean a warm fuzzy feeling – or the way Hollywood defines love.

Love in the bible is the willingness to do what's right toward someone else.

It speaks of relationship – not simply an emotional love.

So how do we continue to in love?

In order to continue in love – we need to grasp where the source of this love is found.

Turn to 1 John 4 and keep a finger there -

[1Jo 4:7-8 NKJV] 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

The group of Jewish believers they knew this love – they had love for one another but the exhortation that the writer of Hebrews is bringing to them is that they need to continue in their love for one another – because if they didn't, the stress of persecution would produce cracks in their fellowship and weaken their commitment to a community of love.

Now – turn to the left to 1 John 3

[1Jo 3:16 NKJV] 16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren.

How do we know God loves us?

Because He laid down His life for us

He sent His only Son to die for us – in an act of sacrifice.

And so the Apostle John invites us to sacrifice for each other

Because love is something we do –

not something that we simply believe or something we feel in our hearts – but something we do.

Christians in the past, Christians in the present and Christians in the future are all marked by love for one another.

So how does the writer of Hebrews want them to do this???

He gives them ways in which they can continue showing brotherly love.

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

The Greek word that is used here for stranger – simply means someone who is different than me

It could be someone from another tribe

Someone who has a different language

A different culture

The writer of Hebrews says – we are to be hospitable to these strangers

Keep in context to what the writer has been addressing – brotherly love

And one way we show brotherly love is by being hospitable to strangers

Remember, in the Old Testament – opening your house to travelers was considered to be one of the most basic things that a Jew could do for one another.

In the OT, a failure to show kindness and hospitality to strangers by an individual or a village was seen as the evidence of serious moral failure.

In fact, in some cases, a lack of hospitality led to God's judgment! (Sodom)

And there were instances that these strangers were sometimes angels.

Such was the case with Abraham, Gideon and Manoah

Who entertained strangers / they were hospitable to them

They offered food

And so – the believer is to be marked by his or her hospitality toward everyone.

Here is the problem

Hospitality is difficult for some – especially when they are going through their own set of difficulties.

If we are going through a trial or tragedy – it is hard to be open and gracious and hospitable.

Another reason that we might shy away from being hospitable is because we may have a suspicion that we are being taken advantage of or because we may have a fear.

But the writer of Hebrews reminds us that we are not motivated by suspicions or fear – we are motivated by love.

We continue to love the brethren

And we are to also love people who are not like us

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

Culturally – we have to understand that during this time – in the Roman prison system – there was little to no need to feed and clothes those that were in the prison system – just like it is in some 3rd world countries today.

Rome simply provided the cell for the prisoners

It wasn't Rome's responsibility to take care of the prisoners

In their eyes, they did something wrong – they had to suffer the consequences.

The problem in the early church was that there were people that were being arrested simply because of their faith

Simply because they are Christians

And so the writer of Hebrews is exhorting his reader to show brotherly love to those that are behind bars for the sake of the gospel

To show brotherly love to those that have accepted the Lord from behind the prison walls and to those that the Lord is softening their hearts while they are serving their time.

Those prisoners are depending upon the believer for food and clothing.

The writer of Hebrews is wanting us to identify with those that are in prison with those that sit in jail cells in Iran and China simply because they are Christians

And we pray with them and encourage them.

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

Again – we keep everything in context

What has the writer of Hebrews been talking about – love

We know that God is the source of our love

We know that we are to have brotherly love toward one another

That we are to show hospitality to strangers and not forget about those in prison

And here he brings up marriage

Marriage is honorable among all

God declares the institution of marriage to be honorable –

therefore, we are to honor what God honors!

Who invented the institute of marriage?

God

When?

Garden of Eden – before the fall

He creates Adam and then He creates Eve

[Gen 2:24 NKJV] 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Why is the writer of Hebrews bringing up the institution of marriage?

The writer of Hebrews is dealing with an insidious idea that had already begun

infecting the thinking of many Jews – that marriage, and specifically, sex, was immoral and to be shunned by the godly.

Therefore – some in the early church thought that celibacy was superior to marriage.

That if we really wanted to have a relationship with God – forget about marriage.

Which is the opposite of what the scriptures say –

God invented marriage

God honors marriage

And sexual activity between husband and wife is pure

But any sexual activity that comes outside of marriage – invites judgment

That is the testimony of the scriptures

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."**

The word for conduct is the word for behavior.

So the writer of Hebrews is exhorting us to not have the behavior of always wanting more – or we can put it simply “the love of money”

Now, what is interesting is that the love of money is an issue of the heart

but here we're told to not let the love of money control our behavior

How does the love of money control our behavior?

- We will always want more. The love of money will never be satisfied, we are always going to want more.

[Ecc 5:10 NKJV] 10 He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also [is] vanity.

- the more we get the more we want. That is covetousness

Jesus –

[Luk 12:15 NKJV] 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

if we allow ourselves to think that more is the answer to our need, it will never be enough and we'll spend our lives striving after the acquiring of things!

A love of money or covetousness will inevitably sour our relationships with others.

If I am striving to get more things because I am not content – what is going to happen when I see someone who already has those things? Envy

We will envy others of their possessions, their position, and their persons; meaning the people in their lives, like their children, their husband/wife, and their friends.

Once we start to realize things don't satisfy, we can be deceived into thinking it's position or people who will meet our craving for significance.

but again – they don't.

So - The writer of Hebrews tells us to not let our lifestyle fall into the trap of pursuing satisfaction through the acquiring of possessions, position, or people.

Why is covetousness so dangerous – because it breaks fellowship with God, it stalls spiritual growth

Covetousness makes it almost impossible to love each other

And to love the stranger or love the needy

And to love our spouse

It brings our spiritual growth to a sudden stop – because we want something more than holiness.

It makes fellowship with God impossible and love impractical

Rather – he says,

[be] content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

When we have God, we have all that we need. That is contentment

the material things of life can decay, break or be stolen

but God will never leave us nor forsake us.

The writer quotes two passages from the OT in which God promised His unfailing presence to His people. (Deut 31:6-8 & Joshua 1:5)

God will neither wander off, nor turn His back on us. He has pledged Himself as our Eternal Companion!

Therefore – we can be content with what we have, having utter confidence that what we have is what God has ordained for us at the present moment.

We may have more or we may have less in the future – but we have to remember that our future is in His hands.

Now, regarding contentment

We have to understand that contentment is not found in our surroundings or circumstances.

That is the mistake that we often make

We think – if only I was in this position, I would be content

Or if I had this type of marriage, I would be content

So - we cheat ourselves by thinking contentment is “out there.”

but contentment is not “out there” it’s “in here;”

it’s a heart issue –

a choice we make to define our lives by of our relationship with God rather than the world.

You & I can be content today because God has given us a promise to abide with us. If we have God, and we do, through faith in Jesus Christ – then we have everything we need.

A lack of contentment is really a lack of faith in God

it's saying that we think we deserve more than we have

and that God has somehow overlooked us and not supplied what we need.

Don't miss what the writer is telling his readers -

The writer is telling his readers, if they already have the best, then why settle for less?

Because that is exactly what they were doing by going back to Judaism.

6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD [is] my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Notice the link here

because He has said "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (end of verse 5)

we can boldly say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Our lives are based on the Word of God

our contentment is centered on His promise!

because God has spoken, we can live - boldly and confidently!

Here is God's promise – "I am with you always! I will never leave you!"

So here's what we can say as we get up each morning, "The Lord will help me today!"

When we see the horrible news on social media or in the news– instead of losing sleep or panicking – we can say, "I will not fear!" What can man do to me?"

The writer of Hebrews is quoting Psalm 118

what a great promise – the Lord is on my side!

We have perfect security

We have perfect protection

We have perfect peace

What can we add?

Every single promise of God, in Christ

[Phi 4:19 NKJV] 19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews is exhorting us to have confidence in Jesus

He will give us help

He will provide His presence

He will provide His protection

And when we are tempted to think of everything we have lost – we are to remember everything that we have gained.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

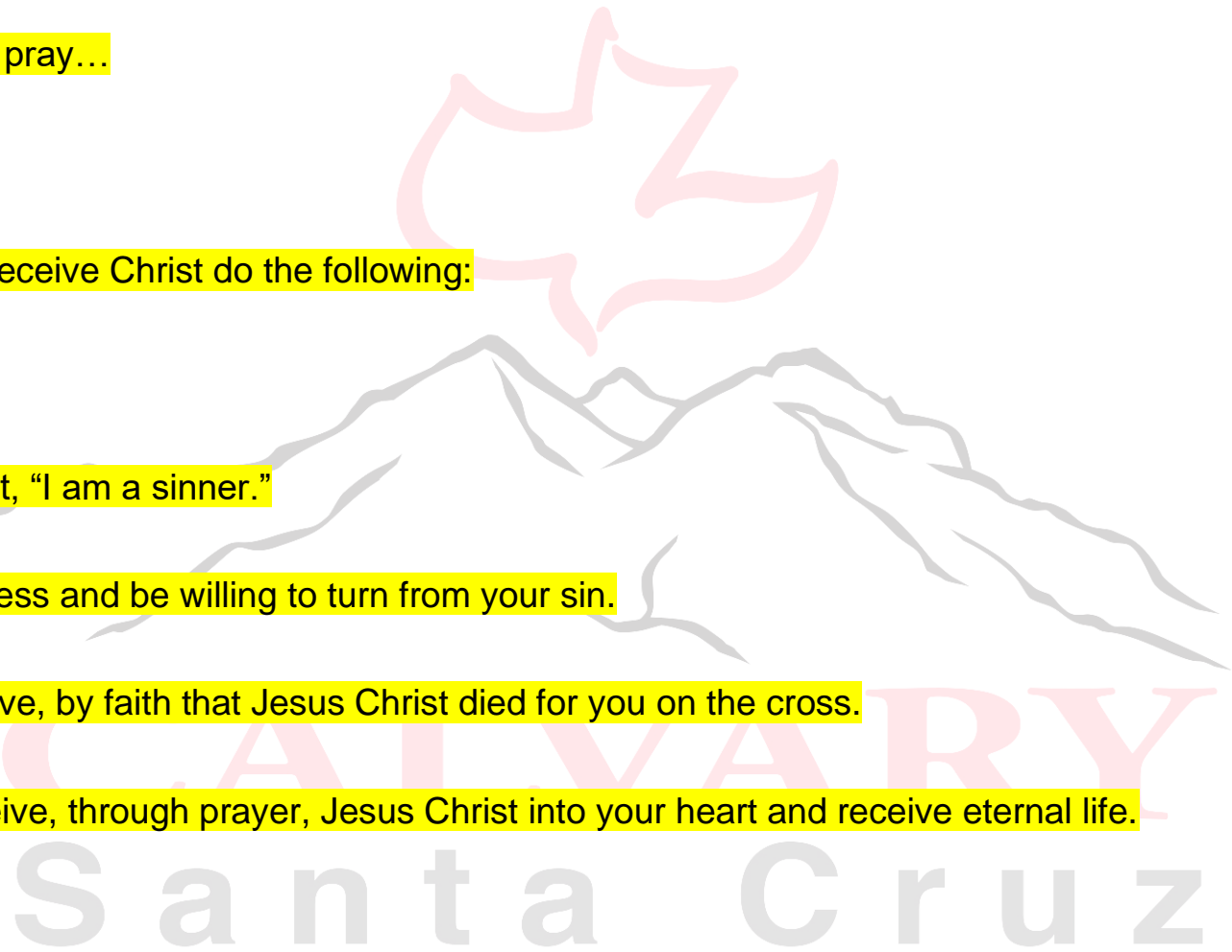
Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I



accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

