
Christian Behavior: Our Love for Others

Part 2

Hebrews 13:1-3

“Let brotherly love continue. 2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”

INTRODUCTION:

- **Practical Christianity Built upon the Foundation of Biblical Doctrine**
 - **Paul—for the first time in Hebrews—takes the time to lay out some practical steps and actions that these Hebrew Christians should be living out**
 - **He didn’t start out the book of Hebrews out with practical living—but rather spent the majority of the book laying out sound doctrine**
 - **About who Jesus is**
 - **How He fits into prophecies given about Him in the OT**

- **How He is better than the Old Covenant (Testament)**
- **How the Old Covenant could never bring salvation—“*making the comers thereunto perfect*”**
- **But Jesus—who is the mediator of the New Covenant—does provide salvation for sinners**
 - **Through His one sacrifice—upon the cross**
 - **Satisfying God’s demand for the sinner’s punishment**
- **This doctrinal thesis went through the first 10 chapters of Hebrews**
- **Chapter 11 & 12—Paul points out that a person enters into this New Covenant not by his own merit—but by faith**
 - **And by that faith—he is able to honorable do God’s will—for the first time**
 - **And Paul lists for us a whole group of people from the OT—who stand as examples to these Hebrews on how to enter this Covenant by faith**
 - **And many of these OT patriarchs, by faith looked to the promises that these Hebrews were now witnessing coming to pass**

- These OT saints had entered into this covenant without ever seeing the fulfillment of it
- And so—in chapter 12, Paul challenges both groups of Hebrews—those that were saved but were struggling moving on—and those who had been drawn close to Christ, but had never truly believed
 - Those who were saved—needed to pick up their running in the race like they had at the beginning of their faith
 - Those who were not saved—needed to start the race
 - They were to remember that the hardships that they were going through—was God’s means of chastening His children—developing them to live out their faith as they should
 - And this covenant that they were being called to enter into—was nothing like the Old—that would certainly bring judgment
 - It was a covenant that brought them into the very presence of God
 - A covenant of joy
 - A covenant of life

- So now we come to the practical part of this New Covenant
 - If entering this covenant has nothing to do with merit that you have
 - Not based on any good works
 - Then the question comes up—“*How then should one who has entered this New Covenant live?*”
 - “*Should he just live any way he pleases, since he is not saved by good works, nor does he keep himself saved by his works?*”
 - “*What does living out the Christian life look like?*”
 - So that is what Paul answers—in Hebrews 13
- The first thing that Paul lays out for the Christian—is that he is to love
 - It is the chief characteristic of the believer—**LOVE**
 - And as we discussed last week, love is not some emotional good feeling that we have for people
 - That’s what the world says that love is
 - But it’s not what God says love is

John 15:13—“*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*”

1 John 3:16-18—“*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*”

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” (telling people that you love them—with no action that follows—is not the kind of love that characterizes the believer)

- **Paul in our text lays out 3 groups of people that we are to be actively loving (laying down our lives for)**
 - We are to be loving the saved
 - We are to be loving the lost
 - We are to be loving the afflicted
- **I can’t really think of any other category of people that remain**
 - All people fit into at least one categories
- **So we are saved to love people (to lay down our lives for people) just as Christ did for us**

CIT: How is a Christian Supposed to Live Out His Faith Before Others?

I. He is to Live Out His Faith by Loving the Saved (vs. 1)—“*Let brotherly love continue.*”

A. Brotherly Love: A Love for the Saved

1. Greek word for “Brotherly Love”—*Philadelphia*

a. It has 2 possible meanings

i. A family or national love

- Love for those who are of near descent
- Jews loving fellow Jews
- Family members loving other family members

ii. A love for the people of God

- The people of God are part of another family—the Family of God
- And the love that is found among those of God’s family—can sometimes be greater than the love relationship between physical family
- And the reason is—is because faith in Christ has the tendency to separate people rather than unite them

Matthew 10:34-36—“*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.*”

2. This brotherly love is based on common life

a. The believer’s common life—is Christ life living in them

i. The new nature that every believer gets (2 Corinthians 5:17)

ii. And it’s a nature of holiness from the inside out

- Which means they have a desire for both inward and outward righteousness
- They have hatred for their sinfulness—and the sinfulness of this world
- They hunger for God’s Word
- They love obedience—both in themselves—and in fellow believers
- They are frustrated with disobedience when it shows itself in their personal life
- They love God and His Son Jesus Christ

- They desire to know Him at a more intimate level

iii. And it’s that common life that is found in every believer

b. The presence of that love for the believer—is evidence to the reality of someone’s salvation

3. The nature of that love—“*Let brotherly love continue.*”

a. That means that this kind of love is a natural kind of love

i. It’s not something that has to be mustered up—or developed

ii. It’s natural to the believer to love fellow believers

b. What’s unnatural—is when it is not there

i. When this “*laying down our lives*” for the brethren is gone

ii. That’s not natural nor is it right

iii. The first century set us the example of what is natural

Acts 2:41-47—“*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued*

stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. (giving of themselves for each other) 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"

B. Fight for the Continuance of Brotherly Love

1. This natural love for believers can be squelched
 - a. When we allow sin in our lives—or in the church—that natural love will begin to fade
 - b. When we don't make coming to church important—that natural love will begin to fade
 - c. When we don't participate in ministry with fellow believers—that natural love will die
2. We need to fight that Brotherly Love continue
3. We need each other

- a. God never designed us to be “*Lone Ranger*” Christians
- b. In a world that is becoming more and more hostile to Christianity—we definitely need each other
- c. We don't need to have in the church—the same kind of spirit that we have outside of the church

“Let brotherly love continue.”

I. He is to Live Out His Faith by Loving the Saved

II. He is to Live Out His Faith by Loving the Lost (vs. 2)—*“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”*

A. The Hospitality of a Christian

1. The love that God has put into the heart of believers should manifest itself in the showing of hospitality
 - a. The phrase “*Entertain Strangers*” is actually one word
 - i. *philonexia* (fil-on-ex-ee'-ah);
 - ii. And the word simply means *hospitableness*
 - iii. This word comes from another word—*philoxenos* (fil-ox'-en-os) which simply means to be *fond of guests*

iv. Hospitality is simply caring for guests that God brings your way—

- Whether they be *friends*
- Or *strangers*—people you know nothing about—just that they have need

v. Ministering to strangers

b. Strangers—could be both **saved** and **unsaved** people

- i. People who love God
- ii. And people who are enemies to God
- iii. Strangers can fit into the category of those who may be your enemy

c. God expects His people to not just show love and kindness to those who show love and kindness to them

- i. But show love and kindness to all men
- ii. Even strangers—people you don't know

2. That's the kind of love that we are called to put on display

a. Not just a natural love for the believer—because of the common life we share

b. But a love for all men—even strangers

B. The Cultural Background

1. Hospitality in the ancient Middle East was incredibly important

a. The “*stranger*” was divided into 2 distinct classes of people

- i. There was the traveler (one just passing through the land)
- ii. And the resident alien (a foreigner who lived in the land)

b. In Israel God gave a special that required the people to protect the “*resident alien*”

- i. He was not able to own land (because the land was promised to the Jews)
- ii. But he could participate in communal activities
- iii. And find the protection of being part of that society

c. But the traveler (passing through) had no such law given for his protection

i. But it was the custom (or code of that day) that the residents of a home show hospitality to strangers passing through

- It was a common practice among all the people at that time
- And the travelers could expect to be taken care of (**given food, water, and a place to stay**)
- The traveler also could expect to be protected from harm—from any possible enemies or threats in that area

ii. The environment of that time was very harsh

- A lot of the area was desert and arid (very dry)
- For the traveler, there was very little food and water to sustain him
- It was a matter of life and death for the traveler to be taken care of

iii. Most settlements were built near available water or wells—

which made these places ideal for travelers to come into

- And when a traveler came into the settlement—he could expect to be taken in and cared for
 - Often times, when a traveler came through, he would be taken in—have his feet washed by a servant (**which was a sign of acceptance of the stranger**)—and was fed and watered by the host of the family—and if need be, he was provided a place to stay
 - If this custom was not shown to the stranger—**it would appear as an insult and even be viewed as an act of hostility toward the stranger**
 - And the reverse was also true
 - If the stranger—who was being taken into someone's home—

refused the food or any other thing that was offered to him—**it would also appear as an insult—and could also be viewed as hostility toward the host**

- And this custom was not just practiced by people in local settlements
- It was also an expected practice by desert dwellers living in tents
 - If a traveler stopped at their tent—it was expected for the resident—to take their guest(s) in

NOTE: It was Abraham who set that example for us in the Scripture.

Notice the extreme gestures and compliments he shows toward these strangers whom he did not know.

Genesis 18:1-5—“*And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: (Abraham does not know it’s the Lord) and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2 and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent*

door, and bowed himself toward the ground, 3 and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: 4 let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: 5 and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant.”

iv. This custom (code of conduct) was so strongly held by the people—that to not provide for a stranger **could have severe consequences**

EXAMPLES:

- **During the days of Gideon—he and his 300 men were pursuing the men of Midian (Judges 8)**
 - **they had been traveling long—his army had grown faint with hunger and thirst**
 - **So they stopped at the city of Succoth and asked for bread for his soldiers**
 - **The men of Succoth refused**
 - **So Gideon went on to the next town—Penuel and they did the same thing**
 - **So—after Gideon and his army destroyed the Midian army and captured the 2 leaders—they came into those 2 cities and slew them**
 - **Just because they did not show kindness to the strangers—which was expected**

- **Another incident happens like that—David with his soldiers (1 Samuel 25)**
 - **had been on the run from King Saul—who sought his life**
 - **And even though he had been treated as an outlaw—and an outcast from society—David showed kindness to people he came across**
 - **In Carmel—there lived a man of great wealth—Nabal**
 - **David, while on the run took time to protect Nabal’s many sheep**
 - **And at a point in which Nabal and his shepherds were sheering their sheep (the time of harvest for shepherds) David sent some of his men to Nabal to ask him to provide some food for he and his men—showing kindness to a strangers**
 - **But Nabal refused**
 - **And when David got word of that—he intended with his soldiers to kill Nabal and all the men of his household**
 - **To think that Nabal showed such disrespect to one who had protected him**
 - **And showed kindness to him (to his shepherds and his possession)**
 - **It was understood as a custom to show kindness to a stranger**
 - **And it was considered an insult and an act of hostility to not do so**

- **There is one other incident where we see that happening—with the Lord Jesus Christ**

Luke 7:36-46—“*And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. 37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38 and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.*

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

*40 And Jesus answering said unto him, **Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.***

And he saith, Master, say on.

*41 **There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?***

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most.

*And he said unto him, **Thou hast rightly judged.** 44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, **Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.***

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”

- **The point Jesus is making—is that this woman—who was sinner—showed great love to Jesus because she had been forgiven**
- **But this Pharisee—showed little love (not washing his feet, not showing respect with a kiss, not anointing his head with oil)—all of which should have been done by the host—just because it was customary**
- **And to not do it was considered insulting**
- **And since this Pharisee showed little love—but rather insulted Jesus by his lack of hospitality—it indicated he had not been forgiven**

C. Paul’s Admonition to These Hebrew Christians—“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers”

1. The Christian Life—New Covenant—does exempt you from the common responsibility to love strangers
2. In fact, it should cause you to love them greater
 - a. It should elevate your love for strangers
 - b. You were saved to live a secluded life apart from the people around you
 - c. You were saved to love them—and minister to them

d. With the hopes that you might win them to Christ

3. Don’t forget that as a Christian—you have entered into a life of love

- a. A love for the saved
- b. A love for the lost
- c. A love for all men

Galatians 6:10—“As we have therefore opportunity, *let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*”

Matthew 5:43-48—“*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? 48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*”

QUESTION: “*Why would Paul have to admonish them to keep loving the stranger which was expected in that culture?*”

- **Paul knew that they were fearful**

- **A stranger could represent danger to them—because of their faith in Christ**
- **You’ve got the whole culture around them rejecting Christ**
- **But Paul is saying to them—you don’t get the option to choose to love the stranger**
- **You love them regardless of the consequences that might come**
- **They might be suffering already for their faith—maybe even financially**
 - **They may have justified that—since I have lost so much—God understands why I can’t truly love strangers**
 - **But being poor doesn’t exempt us either from loving the stranger**
- **We are to love the stranger no matter what**

D. Paul’s Motivation to Love the Stranger—*“for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”*

1. I think this is a reference to Abraham’s encounter with the 3 men who showed up at his tent one day
 - a. Abraham, showing the common love for strangers—took in these men
 - i. Washed their feet

- ii. Washed their feet
- iii. Fed them a great meal

b. And the whole time—he didn’t know—until it was all done—that he was entertaining the Lord Himself, and 2 angels

2. And Paul’s point is—YOU REALLY DON’T KNOW WHAT YOUR LOVE FOR STRANGERS IS ACCOMPLISHING

- a. So don’t forget to love the stranger
- b. Don’t forget to minister to them—when God brings them into your life
- c. You don’t know what God will do through that

I. He is to Live Out His Faith by Loving the Saved

II. He is to Live Out His Faith by Loving the Lost

III. He is to Live Out His Faith by Loving the Afflicted (vs. 3)—*“Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”*

A. The Christian Faith Sets a Believer in Contrast to the World

1. The world hates Christians—especially in that day

John 15:18-19—“*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*”

1 John 3:13—“*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*”

- a. And the way the world shows its hatred for Christians is to persecute them
- b. Jesus warned His own disciples to expect that kind of treatment

Matthew 10:16-18, 21-22, 24-25—“*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. 17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18 and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles ...21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake ...24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. 25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*”

2. It is this kind of treatment—that Christians have gone through—that Paul is alluding to with this statement

“*Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*”

3. The love that Christians are to show is not to be limited to the saved—and to the cultural love—loving the stranger—**but also loving the persecuted**

- a. Loving those who are suffering for their faith in Christ
- b. Loving them sacrificially
- c. Ministering to them in their pain

B. Paul Method of Love For the Afflicted: Put yourself into their position

1. Don’t just love half-heartedly
2. Love the afflicted the way you would want to be loved—if you were in their position
3. If you remember previously—Paul noted how that some of these Hebrews had demonstrated this kind of love toward him

Hebrews 10:34—“*For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*”

- a. They gave of their substance—to minister to Paul who had been in prison for his faith in Christ
- b. This obviously became a principle for Christians as they saw their brothers and sisters suffer

i. Tertullian—an early church father said... *“If there happen to be any in the mines, banished to the islands, or shut up in prisons, the Christians became carriers of their confession.”*

- They picked them up in their burden

ii. Aristodes, the heathen orator said... *“If they hear that any one of their number is in prison or in distress for the sake of their Christ’s name, they all render aid in his necessity, and if they can, they redeem him, to set him free.”*

- In other words—they would come up with the money to set him free

iii. The Apostolic Constitution said this... *“If any Christian is condemned for Christ’s sake to the mines, by the ungodly, do not*

overlook him, but from the proceeds of your toil and sweat, send him something to support himself, and to reward the soldier of Christ. All money accruing from honest labor do ye appoint and apportion to the redeeming of the saints, ransoming thereby slaves and captives and prisoners, people who are sore abused, and condemned by tyrants.”

- It is even reported that some Christians—to raise the money to set another Christian free—actually sold themselves into slavery to come up with the money
- This is the kind of love that we are called to show
- It is love like God loves

QUESTION: Do you know how to develop a love like that for the afflicted?

- **Put yourself in their affliction**
- **Imagine what it’s like to be in jail simply for believing in Christ**
- **Imagine what it is like to suffer affliction (hardship) at the hands of the wicked simply for living out your faith**

- **And when you can place yourself in their shoes—then you’ll know how to love them—in a way that honors Christ**

C. Do We Know Anyone Who Is in that Position?

1. Maybe not directly or personally
2. But I think about the many that are being persecuted in other parts of the world—for simply being a believer
 - a. I think about the man—Saeed Abedini—who has been in prison in Iran for almost 2 years—simply because he’s a Christian
 - i. I had an opportunity about a year ago—to write a letter to the president of Iran to petition Saeed Abedini’s release
 - ii. I joined in with thousands of other believers who were concerned for his well being
 - iii. I’ve signed several petitions—trying to urge our President to make a public statement on behalf of his release
 - b. What about the many Christians who are being driven out of home and country in the Middle East for the cause of Christ?

- i. What kind of love should we show toward them?
- ii. Should we ignore them—because they are so far removed for us?
- iii. If we don’t show some kind of compassion upon persecuted Christians—if persecution starts happening here, will we show it here?
- iv. We as believers are to be characterized by love

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CONCLUSION:

Matthew 25:31-46—“*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:*

36 naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”