**Hebrews 13 Behavior**

**November 30 - December 1, 2016**

 *“The world,” said Alexander Maclaren, “takes its notion of God most of all from those who say they belong to God’s family. They read us a great deal more than they read the Bible. They see us; they only hear about Jesus Christ.” Unfortunately, throughout the history of the church, the often mean, prejudiced, and immoral lives of professed Christians have given the world a ready excuse to malign the claims of Christ. Perhaps this phenomenon explains the rationale for Hebrew 13.*

*Most of Hebrews does not emphasize specific commands to Christians. There is an obvious lack of practical explanations or exhortations. The bulk of the book is pure doctrine and is almost entirely directed to Jews who had received the gospel but who needed to be affirmed in the superiority of the New Covenant. But in the last chapter, the writer gets practical. This fits the pattern of the New Testament teaching, which is always doctrine and then duty, beliefs then behavior, position and then practice. Chapter 13 is not an afterthought; it is integral to the message of the book. A pure faith demands a pure life. As you read, look for some of the essential ethics of Christian behavior that will portray the true gospel to the world, encourage men to trust in Christ, and bring glory to God.*

*Contentment: This Greek word means “self-sufficiency”; Stoic philosophers used it to describe a person who was unflappable and unmoved by external circumstances. Christians are to be satisfied and sufficient and not to seek for more that what God has already given them. He is the source of true contentment. Murmuring reveals dissatisfaction with God’s sovereign will over our lives and the lives of others, and is a sin that He does not take lightly, even in view of His grace. Complaining dishonors our heavenly Father; contentment glorifies Him. We daily benefit from the goodness of God’s love. He gives us richly all things to enjoy. More than that, His love is shed abroad in our own hearts. There is no greater source of comfort, no more sure foundation for ours security, no richer source of contentment.*

*Sacrifice of praise: As seen throughout the book of Hebrews, sacrifices were extremely important under the Old Covenant. Under the New covenant, God desires the praise and thanksgiving of His people rather than offerings of animals or grain. Yet the sacrifices of praise coming from the lips of God’s people will only please Him when accompanied by loving action.*

Hebrews has laid out who Jesus Christ is, then stated the necessity of the faith we must have, followed by encouraging us to persevere in this faith. Finally, the writer says now go and do, do these things. Go from just knowing these things, to living this out.

**Read Hebrews 13**

V.1 states to love one another as brothers and sisters. Discuss the analogy to love as brothers and sisters, what does this mean to you? How can and how do you live this out in your own life with those around you, those in the BCM, those in classes, etc?

Describe what hospitality means to you, what does the command in V.2 mean to you? Why the emphasis on entertaining or being hospitable to strangers? Is this something that we do or should do today?

*Other versions use “entertain” – The second grace needing development was the extension of love to those who were strangers. Hospitality in the ancient world often included putting up a guest overnight or longer. This is hardest to do when experiencing a time of persecution. The Hebrews would not know whether a guest would prove to be a spy or a fellow believer being pursued.*

V.3 states to remember those in prison as if you yourself were in prison. In what ways could this command be relevant to us today? What are some ways that we can follow the message behind the command, even though we may not know someone in prison due to persecution of the faith?

V.4 introduces the topic of marriage, stating that it should be honored and marriage bed kept pure. Discuss what this means, what does it mean to honor it, what does it mean to keep the marriage bed pure? Is this something that you agree with or follow today?

*“Honorable – God highly honors marriage, which He instituted at creation (Gen. 2:24); but some people in the early church considered celibacy to be holier then marriage, an idea Paul strongly denounces (1 Timothy 4:3, 1 Corinthians 7). Sexual activity in a marriage is pure, but any sexual activity outside of marriage brings one under divine judgment.*

Are you able to keep yourself free from the love of money? What are the struggles that come with the topic of money (either lacking or having money)? What does this have to do with the following verses about contentment in God (V.5 & 6).

Who are some leaders in your life? What about them do you want to imitate?

What are some strange/incorrect teachings that you may have witnessed? How do you see this command being especially relevant today (where do we need to be diligent to follow this command)? How we are able to discern what is true what is “strange.”?

What does it mean to you to “bear the disgrace he bore”? What does it mean that we are looking at a city that is to come? (V.13)

What are the sacrifices that we should be offering to God? (V.16). Are you able to live out these commands?

V.17 discusses how we should submit to our leaders. How do you, or should you, live this out in your own life?

Chapter 13 walks through several specific commands as outlined above, and then in vs. 21 there is a benediction to have Christ equip you with everything to do His will. What does this mean to you? How does this work in your own life? Do you believe this is true?

**Reflection**

Review Chapter 13, what commands stand out to you? How can you, and how do you plan to, live these commands out specifically? How is it necessary to establish good faith, and THEN do good works, instead of vice versa?

Review and reflect on the book of Hebrews. Give a summary. What stands out to you? What spoke to you? How has your relationship with God been changed? What are specific things that you are doing now, or want to do, because of what was read or discussed in these studies? How can you remain strong in your faith through the holiday break based on what we read?