

Let Love Continue (Part 2)
Hebrews 13:4-6
Reading: Matthew 6:25-34

Bethany Baptist Church
August 18, 2019 (a.m.)

...pray...

Let's return to Hebrews 13 and again read vv.1-6.

According to **v.1**, the Christian life is to be a life of *loving one another*, every day.

The church that first read *Hebrews* faced the threat of a *mass exodus*!

Christianity was becoming *unpopular* and the faint-hearted were growing *restless*.

S this kind of faith – “*love of the brethren faith*” – is commanded in order to hold the church together when the *flesh*, the *world* & the *devil* attack us.

I've outlined this string of “*brotherly love commands*” (1-6) as:

Five directives to love the brethren every day in every place.

Last Lord's Day:

- 1. Hear the command (v.1)**
- 2. Love the stranger (v.2)**
- 3. Remember the prisoner (v.3)**

Today:

- 4. Honor your marriage (v.4)**
- 5. Cultivate contentment (vv.5-6)**

By way of *brief review*...

Chapter 13 begins with a concise command to *live with one another in brotherly love* (Gr. – *phileo*). *Our love* for the saints is simply the spill-over of *God's love* for us! The following verses list practical expressions of our “*one-another love*.”

The **first** is to *love strangers* (2). More spec., by exercising *hospitality* towards Christians that you **don't** know. *Hospitality* (e.g. room, board) was a practical expression of *caring* in a time when travel was *common* but not necessarily *safe*. And who knows (2b) *the true identity* of that *traveler* you just sent on his way – maybe he was a *missionary*...or maybe a *messenger of God Most High* – an *angel*!

The **second** directive (3) is to *remember the prisoners & the ill-treated*. This is a call to *sympathy* in action! In fact, many of these believers had already suffered *persecution* and now (late **60s AD**) *persecution* seemed to be on the rise. Since they'd *suffered* themselves, *sympathy* was a *lovingly* appropriate response.

We closed last Sunday with this reminder from **6:10** - *For God is **not** unjust so as to forget your work and the **love** which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.*

Beloved, God *remembers!*

And God is paying attention to how you *honor Him* as you *honor your marriage* (read v.4)

1. **Marriage** is *under attack* – **not honored**: society's *disdain* for humanity's oldest social structure can take many forms:
 - a. *Asceticism* → the religion of *self-disciplined self-denial*. And with respect to *marriage*, an *ascetic* would claim that *marriage* is acceptable, but *celibacy* is the ultimate expression of *spirituality*.
 - i. *Celibacy* was a big deal in the first few centuries of the church! And there are, of course, remnants of this today (e.g. **RCC**).
 - ii. Do you recognize the *problems*...?
 1. **First**, *marriage* is God's idea and He called it *good*...! Elsewhere Paul will warn (1 Tim 4:3) that *forbidding marriage* will be a symptom of the dangers of the *last days*.
 2. **Second**, *asceticism*, here expressed as *celibacy*, is just another form of *works-based religion*. That's contrary to the *gospel of grace by faith alone in Jesus alone*.
 - b. But I guess you could say that the *polar opposite* of *asceticism* is the attack on marriage presented by *moral license/promiscuity*.
 - i. The **1^s** century Roman Empire that the church struggled to survive in was *quite immoral*...and **2000** years later there is *nothing new under the sun*!
 - ii. **Sixty** years ago Western Culture was caught-up in a *revolution* that many didn't realize was being fought. Lets' call it the *Sexual Revolution*. The *timeline* of the *Sexual Revolution's overthrow* of traditional *moral values* can be traced by:
 1. Increasingly open/accepted *promiscuity*.
 2. Which was accompanied by an increase of *easy divorce*.
 3. And a rising acceptance of openly *living together*.

4. The *homosexual* movement became more *militant*.
 5. All of this *intensified*, and then **2015** (*Obergefell vs. Hodges*) we experienced the Supreme Court *recognition of homosexual marriage* → explosion **LGQBT**.
 6. The accelerated access to *technology/data* also had a *marriage attacking moral dark-side: easy access to internet pornography at unimaginably lurid levels*.
 7. And throughout this entire **six decades** of moral decline, the *entertainment & advertising industry's*, and *academia's*, embrace of the *Sexual Revolution* have worked hard to **redefine** the way we think about traditional *morality & marriage*....
 8. It all *adds up* to **this**: an unrelenting *disdain/dishonor* for God's definition of *marriage*.
2. Yet Christians must make **no** mistake: *marriage* is God's invention; *God still holds the exclusive patent on marriage*. To *dishonor* biblical marriage is to *defy* the *love one-another* command of **v.1** (& everywhere in your **NT!**).
- a. Let's **define** *marriage* as seen in Scripture: Biblical marriage is **one man** and **one woman** coming together and living together in a *covenant relationship* before God for the purposes of *companionship, mutual mission, procreation, and illustration* (of Christ and the Church; Eph 5).
 - b. The first marriage is *documented* and essentially *defined* in **Genesis 2**. God said, "*It is not good for man to be alone.*" Then man said, "... *for this reason a man shall leave his father & his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*"
 - i. This "**one man, one woman, one flesh**" understanding of marriage was reiterated and endorsed by **Jesus** in Mat 19.

- c. *In the beginning*, God *invented* marriage. *This morning*, God *still* holds the *patent* on marriage. Secular culture's attempts to redefine marriage are **not** *legitimate*. *Living together* for a long time is **not** marriage. *Divorcing* your spouse to marry someone you now think is your soul mate is **not** marriage. Living with someone of your *same sex* is **not** biblical marriage.
3. To bring this all into the *context* of this morning's over-riding *command* (1): *Let love of the brethren continue*. One of the most fundamental and important and *honorable* (lit. "precious") expressions of "one another love" is *marriage*, and marriage is *under attack*!
- a. Our text warns spec. that marriage is under attack *sexually*.
- b. We are warned that the *marriage bed* is to be *undefiled*.
- i. The expression "*marriage bed*" was intended to bring to mind the *physical intimacy* that is a part of God's blessings on marriage (Gen 2 – incl. in *one flesh*).
- ii. The *attacks* against God's plan for *physical intimacy* are carried out (4) by *adulterers* (spec. reference to *intimacy outside of marriage*) and *fornicators* (a broader term, **πορνός**, that encompasses all manner of *immoral sexual expressions*).
1. A clear example today is *pornography* (same root).
 2. The *credit card guy* is asking "What's in your wallet?" God is asking, "What's on your phone? ... laptop? ...mind? ...**heart**?"
 3. *Pornography* is devouring *men (&women)* today and *defiling & destroying* marriage!
 4. Do you understand that *pornography* is addictive? Please get help! You will need *counselling* and *accountability* and *hard work* and ...the *Holy Spirit* (→ *self-control*)!

4. To *refuse to repent* of sexual sin (any form) is to *beg* God to *judge* you! We read this warning at the end of **v.4** – *fornicators and adulterers God will judge*.
 - a. What gives God the *right* to judge *adulterers* (or *anyone*)?
 - b. *First*, marriage is **His**; God *invented* marriage and He *forbids* you to *tamper w/ it*!
 - i. **Heb 12: 19** - One of the **10** *words* that *terrified* Israel from the *top* of Mt Sinai was this: **“Thou shall not commit adultery!”**
 - c. And even *more fundamentally*, **you** are **His** (by right of *creation*) and thus you are *accountable* to Him, to *obey* all His commandments, in all areas of life.
5. I want to simply list some *biblical keywords* to help you *love one another* in your *marriage*:
 - a. **Husband**: *love, companionship, sacrifice, cherish, nurture, understand, respect.*
 - b. **Wife**: *love, companionship, submission, helping, home, respect.*
 - c. **Both**: *intimacy*. The attack on *love* (4) comes via sinful attacks on *intimacy*. *Physical affection* is emotional *super glue*, by **God’s design (2X)**. God gave *sex* to strengthen your marriage! But if you are *careless* you can *glue* yourself to the *wrong* person → **disaster!**
 - i. But another form of *carelessness* is to never avail yourself of the **relationship- glue** at all! To *neglect*, even *refuse*, *intimacy*.
 - ii. **1 Cor 7:5** – **Stop depriving one another...** This clear *marriage protecting command* is as binding on you as “*Thou shall not commit adultery,*” and “*fornicators and adulterers God will judge!*” Husbands & wives, **don’t** be guilty before God of *either!*

Let love of the brethren continue ...continuing love should begin in our marriages ...perhaps even in our bedrooms!

We are to strengthen our love as we cultivate contentment (read vv.5-6).

1. *How much is enough....?* You know the *answer*, don't you: *just a little bit more!*
 - a. When our writer warns against the *love of money* he is speaking of the sinful attitudes of *greed & coveting*.
 - i. To **covet** is “*to lust after what God **hasn't** given you, including what He **has** given to someone else.*”
 - ii. **Thou shall not covet** was the *tenth & final word* that thundered from *Sinai!*
 - iii. **Greed** is an “*inordinate appetite for possessions and wealth.*”
 - iv. The Bible records a long list of *coveters*, incl: *Achan (Ai), Rich Young Ruler* (much property), *Judas (30), Ananias & Sapphira* (Acts 5 *real estate deal*),...perhaps even the *apostle Paul (BC)*!
 - b. The *love of money* is a *character/spiritual* problem, **not** a *financial strategy*. Here are some of the *dangers/warnings* concerning *love of money* in Scripture:
 - i. **Coveting** is *endless*. Eccl 5:10 – *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance w/ its income. This too is vanity.*
 - ii. **Greed** is **no guarantee**. Eccl 5:13 – *There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being **hoarded** by their owner to his hurt. When those riches were lost thru a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support his son. In fact, greed put his finances in *harm's way!**
 - iii. **Coveting** is *idolatry*: Eph 5:5 – *For this you know w/certainty that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, **who is an idolater**, has an inheritance in the kingdom of God (cf.Col 3:3).*
1. To **love money** is to **worship money!**

iv. **Coveting** is *salvation robbing*. A greedy man has a hard time prying his own hands from his *debit card* long enough to lay hold of the *cross*. Do you recall **Jesus'** encounter with the **Rich Young Ruler?** How did *that* end...?

1. **Jesus:** *“One thing you lack: go & sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”*

2. **RJR response?** *But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.*

c. By the way, we have yet to define *contentment*. Hebrews' directive is to *be content with what you have*. *Contentment* is to be *satisfied with God's provision for your life*.

2. But here we have to be a little *careful*. *Contentment* is **not** supposed to be *camouflage* for *complacency*! Nor an excuse to *condemn* the *godly rich*.

a. The *heroes* of the faith included the righteous *wealthy*: *Job, Abraham, godly kings*; (NT) several of *Jesus' supporters*; *Joseph* of Arimathea, perhaps the family of *John Mark*, & the church leader *Philemon*.

b. But what if you **don't** have the *basics*? And what if God gives you an opportunity to do better? Is trying to *better your circumstances* an expression of *coveting*? Not necessarily...!

i. The Bible (**Proverbs**) commends industrious men & women for their *innovation, early hours, wise investments, careful planning, house-work, yard-work* (Prov 24:30-34), **hard work!**

ii. **2 Thess 3:10** – clear teaching is that every *man* should *work hard* to provide for his *family*. *For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.*

iii. Every Christian man ought to be able to *outwork his deodorant* - just take a *shower* once and a while (“*hard work*” can expressed in *body or mind*)!

3. How do you *cultivate contentment*...? *The key to contentment is not in **what** you have, but **Who** you have! 2X*
- a. Our author likes the **OT**, and here he goes back to **Dt 31 & Ps 118**.
 - b. **V.5** records **God's promise** (Dt 31) that He will meet the needs of His people: *"I will **never** desert you, nor will I **ever** forsake you."*
 - c. **V.6** guides **our response** ("*so that*") to God's promise (Ps 118): *so that we **confidently** say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will **not** be afraid. What will man do to me?'*
 - d. ? What *essential spiritual ingredient* is necessary to **hear** God's promise and **respond** in confident *courage & contentment* (think...Hebrews Ch.11)? ... **Faith!**
 - i. **11:1** – *Now **faith** is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen!*
 - ii. **11:6** – *And **w/o** faith it is impossible to please God*
 - e. Over the past several weeks we've seen (Hebrews) that *faith produces: **courage, obedience**, and now...*faith in God's promises produces **contentment**.**
 - i. Because *faith is convinced* that God is *willing and able* to deliver on *all* of He promises, above *all* we can *ask or think!*

4. Let's think for a moment of how *contentment* can encourage *brotherly love* among God's people.
 - a. Ever since the *schisms* between the *rich* and the *poor* in the church of Corinth (which showed up at the celebration of the *Lord's Supper!*), *wealth* has created problems in churches:
 - i. The ***rich*** can be *prideful*, or at least *insensitive*.
 - ii. The ***poor*** can be *envious* ... and *prideful*.
 - b. But when the *wealthy* will relax their *grip* on their *gold*, they are more willing to *help* their brothers in *need* (see vv. 2 & 3).
 - c. When the *poor* trust God and accept that He **hasn't** given us all the same *material* resources, they will grow in *contentment*.
 - d. And to be clear, *in Christ*, we **all** have the same *Heavenly Father* & *eternal inheritance!*
 - i. And so Paul wrote (Ph 4): *And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*
 - ii. And our Lord Jesus said (Mt 6:33): *"But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and **all these things** will be added to you."* Mt 6:33

The key to *contentment* is not in *what* you have, but *Who* you have!

We've reminded ourselves over the past two Sunday's that the Church must *continue in love in order to stand in victory!*

1. *Let love of the brethren continue* – reminds us that we a *family*, in Christ. And that our *love for one another* is to be a key component of our *Christian lifestyle*.
2. *Practice hospitality*. This is a call to *practical help* when a bro/sis is in *need*. Even when *helping* might be *risky!*
3. *Remember the prisoners & the ill-treated*. Shared *suffering* produces loving *sympathy*, and *sympathy* is expressed by *practical action*.
4. *Honor your marriage*. Marriage is God's *gift*. Guard your marriage from *ordinary decline* and *all-out attacks!*
5. *Be content*. *Greed* can betray a lack of faith. *Coveting* is idolatry. Work hard, perhaps you'll prosper, but regardless, **don't worship** what God **hasn't** given you!

Let's continue to *infuse* these *virtues* into the *life* of our church: *brotherly love* → *hospitality, sympathy, purity, contentment*

...pray... *love* → *hospitality, sympathy, purity, contentment*