

Let the Love of the Brethren Continue

Hebrews 13:1-6

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, July 16, 2023

Everybody's sitting on this side. Is this the broad way, and this is the narrow way? No, I'm not saying that; no jokes. No jokes this morning. Been in Tennessee for a couple of weeks, so jokes are in my head. Speaking of that, I do want to say thank you again for letting me get away these past couple of weeks to visit family. I know I said that last week, I just want to repeat that again here. Many of you have this experience. You come from other countries, so you understand how special it is to visit your loved ones, when you get a chance to do that. You don't get a chance to do that that much because you can't just go up the street and say, Hello. You've got to go to the airport, and go through the customs line, and see the border guard, and take the family with you, and then get out, and go get the rental car, and then drive three or four hours one way to see one side of the family, and then turn around and go see three or four hours the other way to see the other side. And it's exhausting. And everybody's very sanctified during the whole experience. But you do it because it's family, right? Or you do it because these are your loved ones, and there's nothing you wouldn't do for them. Which can be easy to forget because I can get caught up in work so that I ignore my family sometimes. Anybody know what that's like? You might relate to that. And I can get so busy answering emails, pastors are not immune from the rat race. I mean, we get stuck in that as well. But you guys gave me an opportunity to put that aside to go visit with them. And I just want to say I appreciate that. Thank you.

You know, on Judgment Day, the Lord is not going to judge you for how many hours you put in at the office. He's going to judge you by how you treated people. And He's not going to hold you accountable for how much time you spent on a sermon or something like that; He'll hold you accountable for what you said and for how you loved one another. So we always want to remember that. I want to remember that. And that's what our text is about this morning. It's about people. And not people in your family, per se, but people in the church. People in the body of Christ. People in this room. And so if you would open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, that's the book we're in this morning. We're in Hebrews chapter 13. And actually want to say a word of prayer before we look at it because I think it's a very important text. And we're going to need the Lord's help, as we consider it together. But let's pray for just a moment.

Heavenly Father, we need Your help today as we discuss the importance of loving one another and appreciating one another. And in the body of Christ, all of us have to admit this morning. We fall short of this. We are not very patient with one another at times, we're not very forgiving toward one another at times, we're not very long suffering, we're easily tempered and angry and hold grudges and it just doesn't please you, Lord. We get so focused on our jobs and our tasks and our calendars that we put the relational side of things on the shelf. Father, forgive us for that, we pray. And as we consider this admonition from the author of Hebrews, would You drive this home to our hearts? We don't want to be hearers of the word only. We want to be doers of the word. And we want to go home and live this out. Help us to do that we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, if you look in Hebrews chapter 13, starting in verse one, here's what the Word of God says to us this morning. It says,

Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," so that we confidently say,

**"THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID.
WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"**

That ends the reading of our text this morning. As you look at this, I don't have to tell you that passage doesn't sound like anything we've read so far, in the book of Hebrews because it marks a transition in the book. So far, this book has been very doctrinal in its tone. It's been very theological, like a sermon, because that's what it is. If you look in Hebrews 13:22, it calls this the word of exhortation. Because the author is exhorting you to do something in this book, and he's calling out to you to respond a certain way. And that is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Put your faith in His name. But now, after doing that, he says in chapter 13, "let love of the brethren continue." That's a very practical thing. It's very hands on. Why? Because that's the application of the sermon now. You're moving into the part of the book where the writer takes the message of Christ and Him crucified, and he wants to drive it home to your hearts by loving people. That's what you do with the message you've heard in the book of Hebrews.

You need to understand you're not the only one Christ died for. He died for others too. Amen? And you're not the only one he saved. He saved the people in this room who believe in him. He saved the people in the next church who believed in Him. So you have to live accordingly. He doesn't want you to be the kind of person that comes to church and says, "Me first" all the time. He doesn't want you to be the sort of Christian who shows up here saying, "I want I want I want. Me go to church. Me hear sermon, me pray prayers, me go back in the parking lot, me eat lunch." It's not about me. He wants you to come here saying, "I have come to give." That's what the church is about. There are greater things happening in the mind of God. It's been said, "You can be a citizen of Canada without loving someone. You can't be a citizen of heaven without doing it." That's what Christians do. We are good at loving people. We don't always agree with people. We don't always get along with people. We don't always have the same sports team. But we respond with a measure of grace, and compassion and kindness. Jesus said there are two great commandments. What are they? Love God; love your neighbor. That's it. That's what it's all about. If you get that right, you get everything right in the Christian life. If you get that wrong, you fail at everything. He also said in John 13 that "By this all men will know you're My

disciples if you have love.” He didn't say “By this all men will know you're my disciples if you have sound doctrine,” although that's important. You got to have that. And He didn't say, “By this, all men will know you're my disciples if you get the gospel right, even though that's important too. You can't be saved without the gospel. But He said they'll know it based on how you treat each other. Now it all goes back to that. It's important to talk about this today because we're a very doctrinal church here at Grace. I want us to be anyway. We get the gospel right, as the first part of Hebrews tells us to do, but if you don't watch it, there can be a tendency to think as long as we do that, nothing else matters. And as long as the gospel is sound in this church, God doesn't care how we treat people. We can be mean and nasty and rude. That's not true because Hebrews 13 is in the Bible too. And it tells you that he cares about this very much. This is the Word of God. It's not enough to just profess Jesus with your lips, you have to do it with your lives, and it looks like this.

If you're wondering, “Well, okay, Pastor Jeremy, what was what does this look like?” Well, when you come to church, God wants you to have a certain amount of sympathy and tenderness and compassion for the people here. He doesn't want you to be cold when you walk in the room. He doesn't want you to be apathetic, so you stare at the floor. He wants you to lift your eyes up off the floor, make eye contact, and find out how people are doing. It also means when you come through the room, He wants you to have a certain amount of warmth, and feeling and sensitivity because you mean it. That's your brother sitting in the pew over there. That's your sister beside you and you want to treat them that way. He wants you to be polite and gracious and generous. He wants you to be sweet and pleasant and nice. He wants you to be thankful and considerate and kind so when you approach people, you do it with your arms wide open, holding your heart on your sleeve in a sense.

But the point is that the church is not a self-centered thing. This is hard for us to get because let's be honest, we're selfish by nature, aren't we? Anybody say amen to that? We want to think about ourselves first, which is why we fight so much. We're gonna talk about this next week. But if you're wondering why churches split and scrap and squabble it's because everybody comes in the room saying, “What can I get out of this? How's it going to benefit me?” Many of you have been through a church split before you wonder, well, how did it happen. This is how it happened because somebody was selfish. They were looking out for number one. “If I don't get in my way, I'm gonna burn it to the ground.” God hates it when you act like that, which is why a text like this is so important that the author. It's like He knows some people are prone to do this. And He understands we have a tendency to be selfish at times. So He lays out some principles to help you know how to deal with it.

So let's talk about some of these this morning; I'm gonna give you five ways to love people in the church in this text. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline. But in Hebrews 13 in these verses here, we're going to look at five ways to love people in the church. And we're gonna get them all from the passage. So you can just read along as we're studying this.

But the first one is to let the love of the brethren continue. First way to love people in the church, let your love for one another continue. That means you don't just love each other once, but you do it over and over again. And when you come to church, you don't just show sensitivity and graciousness and kindness in a single moment, this should be the pattern of your life. That's the command. When people look at our church, when people look at you, they should say that's a loving person.

And as you come to this text, I want to point out again, that this is a different section of the book of Hebrews. The first part is about the gospel, from the beginning of chapter one, all the way down until Chapter 12. It stands as one big unit that tells you about the person and work of Christ in different ways. It's calling on you to believe in Him, begging you to put your faith in His name. But now when you come to chapter 13, we're moving into another section where the author takes this and drives it home. And He does it by saying if you have believed in Christ, this is what you need to do now in verse one, let the love of the brethren continue.

That's a short verse. It's not very long, it's only six words in English. But it's a good one. It's packed with a lot of rich stuff. Because the word for love here, it's *phileo* in Greek, from which we get the word Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. The reason I bring it up is because the Greek language had several words for love in their vocabulary, each one covered a different component of love. So for example, they had *agape* or unconditional love, which referred to the sacrifice of love, or the selflessness of it. When you love someone with *agape* love, you have an open hand expecting nothing in return because it was love for love's sake. It was given for no other reason than you just wanted to help someone. And then they had another word, the word *eros* where you get erotic love, the kind of love you felt for your wife or husband in a physical sense. And it was a selfish love because you love someone for what you get out of it. That's erotic love. And then they had this word in verse one *philia*, which refers to the kind of love you experience in a family. The kind of love you have for your brother or sister or uncle and aunt, where you love them, and they love you. And everything is wholesome about the relationship because it's reciprocal. It's a mutual kind of thing. It's not just selfish. It's not just selfless. It's both sided. And this is what the author is encouraging you to have when you come to church. You want wants you to treat each other with a *philia* type of love. The kind of relationship that's beneficial to both parties. You love them, they love you.

Everything is good on account of that because the idea is that when you come to church, you're not worshiping among strangers. And when you praise God in this room, you're not doing it among people you don't know; these are your brothers and sisters in the Lord so that every time you show up here, there should be joy in your heart and excitement because it's like a family reunion. You've been waiting to see them all weekend. You couldn't wait for Sunday to get here. I mean, you guys know what this is like but several of you have brothers and sisters and anytime you're away from them, you can't wait to see them, right? It's a big deal. No matter how much you fight with them, it doesn't matter, they're still family. And no matter how much you disagree, it doesn't change the fact that these are your relatives, and it breaks your heart to be away from them. That's how you should look at church life.

You know, for an example of this, we just went back home to see our family. And we went to a place with my relatives called The Old Country Store in Jackson, Tennessee. You've never heard of it before. But they have banana pudding and fried bologna. It's a beautiful place. Bologna is bad enough on its own, but they fry the thing. And we're sitting around the table with my uncles, my aunts, my cousins, my grandmother who's 95, my mom and dad. And I told them, I said, "Look, we don't see you guys very much, but I want you to know, you are heroes in our house. We talk about you all the time. We share stories about you because your last name is Cagle. You're family. We always speak highly of you in Canada." That's how you should look at the church. You always speak highly of these people. They're heroes in your eyes. Let's be honest, we often don't do this because we look at the church as enemies, not friends. And we talk about them like they're the scum of the earth sometimes. You don't do that with family.

Here in verse one, it says we have a love of the brethren. And the way this is worded, it shows that the love of the brethren is already there. And the affection you have for the people is already present. It was placed in your heart by the power of the Spirit, the moment you're saved; you just have to continue in that now. You maintain it, in a sense. Let love of the brethren continue through thick and thin, good and bad, high times, low times, ugly times. This is not a love that's measured in years; it's measured in decades. It's not a love that's determined by how you're acting this moment; it's determined by how you act today, tomorrow, the next day, and in 2035. You're not supposed to love each other for a season it's over. This is never over. You should go to your grave loving the church.

To be real practical, this means you are to love the brethren when they get on your nerves. Don't start looking around the room keep your eyes straight ahead. You're to do it when it's awkward. You're to do it when they drive you crazy because you know they're a work in progress. They haven't arrived yet. They're not perfect. They don't have it all together. And that's okay. This can make you patient with them.

God doesn't want you to be wishy washy when you come to church. You know, most people really struggle with this because they don't have a deep commitment to the church anymore. A lot of Christians are wishy washy about this nowadays, especially after COVID. They've done studies on this and found the average pastor today, at least in the Southern Baptist Convention I was talking to a friend about this recently, only stays in the church about three to five years. And the average church members not lasting much longer than that, depending on their circles that they're in. And oftentimes the reason is because they're just selfish. They want to know what's in it for me. What kind of programs do you have? What kind of things do you do for my family? How are you going to meet my needs? And when the church doesn't do it, they're gone. It's not supposed to be like that. This phenomenon is so common right now there's even a term that's describes it called church shopping, where people approach the church like they would a store at the mall to browse the aisles and shop around a little bit and examine the merchandise and say, "Well, I like a little bit of this, but I don't like that. I like music, but I don't like the

fellowship. Like the prayers, don't like the programs. Like the people, don't like the sermons, they're dry. There's too serious. There's not enough jokes." But it all goes back to a lack of commitment. They just want to know what can I get? That is the exact opposite of what this text is telling you to do.

To be honest, this should really hit home for us as a church because we've been around for about seven years or so here at Grace, maybe seven or eight years, something like that. And I cannot tell you how many people have come through this church. I don't know what the numbers are hundreds, maybe thousands. And some of them have come for good reasons. Let's brag on them for a minute, some of them will come because they want to hear the Word of God and circumstances just lead them away. That's fine. That's okay. But some of them didn't because they were just shopping. They were blowing through here like a bag in the wind, tumbleweed. They won't appear through the window and look at the merchandise, but they didn't want to buy anything. They wanted to sample the product, taste the food, but they didn't want to bite.

You can't approach the church like that. You wouldn't approach your family like that? You wouldn't come to your loved ones and say, "Hey, Uncle Tommy, what's in this for me? Hey, Aunt Beth, what do I get out of this relationship?" That's foolish. She's your aunt. That's what you get out of the relationship. He's your uncle. That's what's in it for you. It's like that in the body of Christ. These are your uncles and aunts, these are your nieces and nephews, these are your sisters and brothers, cousins and relatives. And that should be good enough for you. You have to be satisfied in the fact that you have a church to come to at all. Some people don't. We've had people come to our church from other countries, and they said in their country, they don't have anywhere that even preaches the gospel within 100 miles. We get to experience this and it's such a blessing.

And it brings us to another way to love the people in the church in the in the passage here, and that is to show hospitality. A second way you love people in the church is to show hospitality, which refers to the act of bringing someone into your home. So you don't just love them from a distance, but you do it close up and personal. And what the author of Hebrews does in verse two, is he's going to move from the general theme of love to the specific ways you can practice it because love is the overarching theme of the passage; it's the great umbrella under which everything falls. But the first way you live out love is found in verse two, when it says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers." Now later on in verse three, if you want to read ahead a little bit, he's going to say "Remember the prisoners" because that's how you show love to them. And this is how you put the virtue into practice in that area. Then in verse four, he'll say "Marriage is to be held in honor by all" because that's how you love people there. But here he's talking about strangers, people you don't know yet. That's what a stranger is, right? Someone you don't know, you haven't been introduced to them, they've come in off the street. The author says be gracious to these people too because there's some of the ones who need it the most. I mean, we understand what it's like to come to church for the first time and you don't know anybody. It's awkward, strange. Music is strange, the service is strange, depending on where you're coming in from. So in order to help them, he encourages you to be gracious and welcome them in, don't

keep them at a distance. Don't just visit in your own comfort zone but get out and talk to the people you don't know.

In fact, it's even more than this because if you understand the setting, the reason the author's writing about this is because there were a lot of traveling missionaries at this time in the first century, who needed the church's hospitality to survive. And so the church began when men like Peter and Paul and Timothy went from one place to another spreading the gospel, which was hard to do because the roads were not safe. Travel was dangerous. You could literally take your life in your own hands as you did that. So he reminds his audience of the importance of helping them out in that. If you were just a normal church person at this time, you couldn't stop what you're doing and go bounce around from place to place with Peter and Paul on their travels. You had to work, you had to raise a family, you had to stay at home, but you could do something for them. And that was to give them a place to stay. And that's what he's talking about here. We could relate it this way. Even though some of you may feel like you can't do a lot here at Grace because you can't preach sermons or lead Bible studies or some of you may not have the gift of music to sing. That doesn't mean you can't do anything. You can invite someone over. And you can go up to them and say, "Hi, my name is so and so. What's yours? Would you like to go out for coffee?"

You could add to this phrase "hospitality to strangers," it's one word in Greek. That comes from the Greek term *phileo*, which we just talked about. Philadelphia, that word brotherly love. This one means a love of strangers because the idea is that you don't invite them in because you have to. You do it because you want to. And you're not being kind and welcoming and friendly like this because someone is making you because pastor Jeremy said you're supposed to, it's something inside compels you to act this way; you can't help it. So when they knock on your door, you don't say, "Well, I guess you can come in if you don't have any other choice." And when they come to church, you don't tell them, "I guess you can come to coffee, just don't stay too long. Don't get the carpet dirty." You say, "You can stay as long as you like." *Mi casa: su casa*, what's mine is yours, yours is mine.

The text is not just encouraging you to have people in your home, but to look for ways to do this, and to be on the search for things you can do to serve someone in this fashion. In one of his books, Kevin De Yong had an interesting thought on this when he said that opening up our home to others is a wonderful gift. And it's a neglected discipline in the church. And we easily forget the point of it. You can think of it this way, hospitality is just that. It is a hospital, a tea. It's making your home a hospital. So friends and family and the wounded can come to you and leave refreshed and built up in the things of God. Too often hospitality is a nerve-racking experience for us because instead of setting our guests at ease, we set them on edge by telling them how bad the food is and what a mess our house is. And we're sorry for the kids' behavior. So instead of encouraging them, we make them feel compelled to encourage us; anybody understand what that's like? But it's not supposed to be like that. Christian hospitality is nothing more than taking what God has given you in a home and offering it up to Him to use. And when you do that the emphasis is on others. The command is to help others. That's all. Do you have a house? Use your

house to serve others. If you have some food, use your food to serve others. If you have a spare bed, do the same thing with that; don't make it any more complicated. This passage is not telling you to serve a four-course meal and put someone up in the Holiday Inn. And some of you may hear this and say, "Well, I can't do this Pastor Jeremy, I have a small house." Well, that's fine. Use your small house. Make it available. You say, "Well, I have an apartment, that's fine. Use your apartment for the Lord." We have Bible studies and apartments around here all the time. "Well, I have a guest suite." Use the guest suite. "I live in my parent's place." Well take them somewhere else. Doesn't matter how you do it. Just make it a priority.

The verse actually says do not neglect this because you're caught up in other things and you're so busy. Some translations say, "Don't forget it." And here's why. Because verse two says, "For by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Now, that's possibly one of the most misinterpreted verses in the book of Hebrews. Because some have taken it to mean that if you do this, you might accidentally host an angel. So be looking out for it. That's a high expectation to make when you bring a guest over to your house, by the way. You're looking at him going, is this an angel? Well, probably not. That's not what this means. If you look in the text, the word "entertain" is in the past tense in order to say this is something that happened in the past. And in the Old Testament, men like Abraham, and Lot, and Gideon entertained angels. Doesn't mean it's gonna happen to you. It just means that when you do this, you never know how God is going to use it. You never know how He's gonna take something small, like the act of hospitality and do something amazing. That's what He did for those men. So be sure to take this seriously.

Brings us to another way to love people in the church in chapter 13. Just going along in the in the passage here, remember the prisoners. A third way to love people: remember the prisoners. Which means show compassion to the least of these. Do it for those who have no friend in the world. That's what prisoners are. They're the most helpless of people. And this is what you see in verse three. Mentions brothers in verse one; love them. Strangers in verse two; love them. Verse three says remember the prisoners and when it says prisoners is not talking about what you would typically think of in that word. This is not prisoners who were thrown in jail because they murdered somebody. This is someone who's in jail for the sake of Christ. And they had been in prison for the sake give the gospel. We haven't seen this a lot in the nation of Canada a little bit, but not a lot. But at this time, life in the first century was very dangerous. Not only was traveling dangerous, but anything was dangerous. A lot of these people in the book of Hebrews when they got saved, they turned their back on the Jewish ways. They stopped going to the synagogues, they neglected their rabbis. And as such, they arrested them, they sent the authorities after them.

If you want to see this for yourself, just keep your finger in chapter 13. Look over in chapter 10:32, there it sheds a little light on the imprisonment of these people. Because it says, "Remember the former days when after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings." And that's talking about the sufferings they endured for the sake of Christ when they were arrested, in the context. Suffering is in the

plural, because they didn't just suffer one time, they did it over and over and over again. It was pain upon pain upon pain. Because verse 33 in this chapter says they were made into a public spectacle because they weren't just attacked in private, it happened in public. And the authorities didn't come after them behind closed doors, so they could keep their dignity intact. It happened in the open for all to see. So it was embarrassing for them. Bad enough to be arrested when nobody's around. It's even worse when everybody sees it, and once that happened, verse 34, says they had their property seized. Which was a terrible thing at this time because if you were arrested back then, the government wouldn't pay your room and board when you went to jail, it was up to you. And so if you didn't have any property, and you didn't have any money because they seized your bank account, you could starve. It wouldn't take very long before you died. And then, with all that said, that brings you back to chapter 13:3 because here, the writer says, "Remember those people." That's not saying, put them on the prayer list. And it's not telling you just blog about them on Facebook. He says, "Stop what you're doing, put your life on hold, and go help them. So they don't starve."

The verse in its entirety, says, "Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves are also in the body." And in the body there, that's not talking about the body of Christ. That's saying, you're in a physical body like the prisoners. You have needs and wants and struggles like they do in your flesh. So it shouldn't be hard to relate to them. You get hungry, like they get hungry. You get cold like they get cold. You get injured like they get injured. And when it happens, it should make you think as though you're in prison with them. Well, one author said it was hard to sleep in prison due to the sound of the chains. And it should be hard for you to sleep at home knowing your loved ones are in chains because that's not just anybody in jail, that's your friend in jail. And that's not just anyone who is locked up. That's your brother and sister in Christ who's locked up, and it should feel like a kick in the gut to you. It should seem like it's taking your breath away.

And the author ties this into the issue of persecution here, but you can tie this to any kind of suffering. I mean, when someone loses their spouse in the church, it should feel like a kick in the gut to you; like your breath has been taken away because you feel their pain. You're so close to them that their loss is your loss. Their misfortune is your misfortune. Their suffering is your suffering. There's a connection there. When someone loses a loved one, child, uncle, aunt, cousin, same way, you don't just say, "Oh, well, that's life. It's just fate." What can you do? No, you get out of your chair, you go to their house, you pray with them, hold their hand through the trial. When they lose their job, it's the same reaction. You don't shrug your shoulders; you go out and hit the street and try to find some work for them. But the point is that this is a family and that's what families do. We love each other. You don't shoot your wounded in a family. You don't kick them when they're down. You put your arms around them and put them back on their feet again. In the passage, it's not describing a cheap love or an easy grace. This is a love that costs you something. It's willing to go the extra mile. Some of you read our Grace For Your Day article this week. But if you did, you'll know that we talked about this in the article because I said, all throughout history, Christians have been known for being a very compassionate people. For example, one historian points out that the spread of Christianity slowed down the following things in the Roman

Empire. And I don't know if you've ever thought about this before, but it's very interesting. It slowed down or stopped abortion. It stopped infanticide or the murder of children after they were born because nobody wanted them. Child abandonment, child abuse, child prostitution, gladiatorial combat, branding on the faces of criminals, polygamy, human sacrifice, cruelty to prisoners, mistreatment of women, exploitation of the poor and get this, Christianity was responsible for the abolishment of slavery. He also mentioned that it had other impacts on society, such as the creation of orphanages, hospitals, homes for the disabled, because nobody did that before the church showed up. If you were a Roman living at this time, you didn't visit people in prison. Prison was an awful place. You don't go to jail. Jails are dangerous. It was the same way when somebody was sick. If you got sick back then, they let you die alone. They didn't want to catch what you had. Slaves were treated like that; orphans were treated like that, abandoned women or mistreated women were treated like that because they thought if you ended up like that, you deserved it. It was your fault. And then Christians stepped up and showed people how to have compassion.

Do you know how to do this today? Do you know how to have compassion towards people who are in this kind of predicament? Are you the kind of person that visits the sick? Are you the kind of person who helps people in jail? Have you ever been to jail? There may come a day when you will have no choice but to go to jail. There may come a time when the authorities start locking people up here in a cell. And somebody is going to write a letter to Grace Fellowship Church and say remember them. Remember Quentin. Remember Richard. Remember David. Remember Jim. Remember Darren. Remember Pastor Jeremy because he keeps complaining all the time because he can't get his French Vanilla coffee creamer. I hope not. But whatever the case, you can't let your heart grow hard to things like this, you have to maintain a spirit of grace to those who are suffering in the church. The way you prepare for suffering later is you prepare for it now. Be kind to one another now in these ways.

Brings you to another way to love people in the church in this chapter. And we're just putting them all together because they're all under this one big theme, and that is to honor your marriage. You see this one in verse four. The fourth way to love people in the church is to, it says, make sure marriage is to be held in honor among all. Now in that verse it makes you say, "Well, why is that in there?" I understand \ why he's telling you to love prisoners and love strangers, but why marriage? Well, the answer is because there's no better place to love someone than marriage, right? Marriage is the closest relationship you have on earth. So if you're going to love anybody anywhere, you have to do it there. That's where it begins. And this is another brief statement in the text because it's pretty self-explanatory, but he's telling you that marriage needs to be held in honor among us, because it's held in honor by God. And you need to hold marriage in high esteem now because He does the same. In fact, the Lord holds marriage, this institution, in such high esteem, that it's the first institution He ever created on the earth. Before He made the establishment of government and the church and the nation of Israel, He started marriage. He said, "It's not good for a man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for Him." And that's what He did.

And just to walk you through this verse in verse four, when it says, “Marriage is to be held in honor among all,” the word “all” is very helpful because it reminds you that no matter who you are, you need to do this. Whether you're married or not, whether you're single or not, whether you've had a good experience with marriage or a bad experience with marriage, it doesn't matter. If you're a Christian, marriage is to be held in honor by you. If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to put it on a pedestal and talk highly about it and speak highly of it. When you see someone who is married, you build them up in it, encourage them. When you meet someone who is engaged, you say, “That's a wonderful thing. Congratulations.” You don't talk about the ball and chain; you don't make jokes. This is a lofty thing in your eyes. It's a gift from God.

And as you do this, it says in verse four, you need to make sure the marriage bed is undefiled which tells you to keep any impure thought out of it. Keep any lustful image from coming into your mind that will pollute it in any way. When you marry someone, it's not okay for you to think about someone else in this fashion. And when you make a covenant with them before the Lord, it's not okay for you to lust. You have to stay faithful to them, loyal to them, and it tells you why at the end of the verse. “For fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” That's two ways of looking at this sin from different angles. The term fornicators refers to those who commit sexual sin outside of marriage. And adulterers refers to those who commit sexual sin inside of marriage. And the idea is that either way, the end result is the same, and that is judgment. Whether you sin as a fornicator or an adulterer, inside or outside of marriage, you will be held accountable by a holy and just God. And you need to live accordingly.

You know, I don't know about you guys, but when I read this verse, it kind of sends shivers down my spine a little bit. Because when you consider the state of Canada right now, and how bad things are with marriages, it makes you say, “God have mercy on us.” There are entire cities in this country who do nothing but try to find new ways to violate God's plan for marriage. And there are whole groups like the LGBTQ, who are designed to do nothing but try to destroy it. And the reason it should frighten you a little bit is because what this verse is saying is that it doesn't matter. A day is coming when God will destroy them if they don't repent. And a time is coming when He will send them to the lake of fire. And what He's saying here is that as a Christian, you can't get to the place where you join them in that and you say “It's okay” because this sin doesn't just impact your relationship to God, but in the whole setting of chapter 13 it impacts your relationship to others. He's telling you to let the love of the brethren continue. One reminder here is that when you violate God's plan for marriage, you're not doing that. When you sin in this area it doesn't just hurt you, it hurts others as well. That's why you need to avoid it. You know, you see things like this in areas like the gay pride parades, because when that happens, they often interview those people. And what do they say? They say, “We're not hurting anybody. We're not doing anything wrong.” Yeah? Go talk to their kids and ask them if they're doing anything wrong. Go talk to the spouse they left behind and ask them if they're hurting someone. They are hurting someone. They deceived those people, they stabbed them in the back, they made a covenant that said, “I will love you for better or worse.” They made a promise which said, “I will stick with you in sickness and health, till death do us part, so long as we both shall live.” And they lied. They broke their word, which left

everyone shattered. This sin always breaks things. It always leaves people shattered. I can say in all my time as a pastor, I've never talked to a husband or wife who was sinned against in marriage who told me it was no big deal. It's always a big deal. Always. And you don't want to do that to someone in the church. There's nothing more selfish than lust.

You could say it's one of the most destructive sins in Scripture. Because in 1 Corinthians 6 it says this, if just want to write that down, 1 Corinthians 6, it says that this is one sin that's so destructive, if it's in a category by itself, and the consequences are overwhelming. Paul says there that "Do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her. In other words, when you sleep with a prostitute, this is what you're doing. You're uniting your body with hers. You're becoming one flesh with her, so that when you leave her, it's like ripping flesh apart and tearing off a piece of your soul. And when you do it as a married person, it's like dragging your wife through that. You can't ever act that way. I wish I had time to give you a million different warnings about this from the Bible because I think you need it. I wish we had liberty to preach on this for hours, so you could walk through Scripture and show every time it tells you to avoid this sin.

You know, I remember the time I sat in a counseling room with a man who had just committed adultery against his wife, and he said that he loved her. And I won't forget it, because the counselor said, "No, you don't. You don't love her. You don't care about her. If you did, you wouldn't have done that. That's where your sin is. That's what the problem is. And that's where you need to repent. Ask the Lord for His grace and mercy. So you can turn from this and learn how to love her again."

That takes us to one more way to love people in the church in this passage. Just to go back over these other ones, the author's told you, you need to love the church by letting the love of the brethren continue. That was the first one. You need to come to church with an attitude that says, "I'm in this for the long haul; I'm going to stick around. I'm not shopping; I'm going to plug into the body of Christ." He also tells you to make sure you don't neglect to show hospitality to strangers. And remember those in prison. That's some tangible ways to love people. Love strangers, those who don't know; love prisoners, those who are dangerous. And he also says here to honor your marriage, which is looking at this from another angle, and that is your home. There's a balance here, God wants you to serve people in the church, and He wants you to do it at home. I think Robert Murray McShane said, "A Christian is someone who loves God in the home."

Brings you to one more way to do this, and these are all practical, we're just going through these to put them all together, and that is to keep yourself free from the love of money. A fifth and final way to love people in church is to keep yourself free from the love of money because nothing hurts your relationships more than this. Nothing can come between people in the church like the love of filthy lucre. So he says this in verse five, "Makes sure that your character is free from the love of money."

Now, the way that said, he's not telling you keep your character free from money, that's not possible. And he's not saying, "keep your life free from work or employment." Because you can't do that you got to work; you need to make an income. What he's telling you here is to keep yourself free from the worship of money, or the praise of money, or the adoration of money because it will tear things apart in the church. The people that the writer is talking to here were probably poor. They didn't have a lot of money. They were being persecuted. Some of them had their property seized and they were in jail. But it doesn't change the fact that even poor people can struggle with this issue, right? Even those who are poverty stricken can wrestle with greed and wanting something more. And that's what he's warning them against here. If you look in your Bibles, he tells you to be content with what you have. That means be happy with it. Be satisfied. Because he quotes from Deuteronomy 31:6, to say, "For He himself has said, 'I will never leave you, nor will I forsake you.'" Which is a way of saying when the money's gone, God won't be gone. And when it drives up, He'll stay by my side. And that's why I can be so joyful. My hope is not in money.

Verse six has a similar theme here. I know that if the Lord gives me a lot, so be it; I will praise Him. And if the Lord gives me a little, so be it again; I will respond the same way. That's contentment. That's satisfaction. Job, said the Lord gives the Lord what takes away, blessed to be the name of the Lord. That's the attitude of this verse. We know God is sovereign. And we understand if we remain focused on Him and exercise wisdom in our finances, He will give us exactly what He wants us to have. No more, no less. So don't have to worry about that. That's a burden that's not on my shoulders. In God's sovereign wisdom, He's allotted to each person what He wants him to have. And He's given us all a different standard of living. We don't believe in communism here. We're not saying everybody has the same. He's given us different measures of wealth. But as you keep it in mind and rest in His sovereignty, it helps you to have peace. Peace with God, peace with the church. You don't have to look at what someone else has, and say, "Why don't I have that?" That happen in Chilliwack? It happens all the time. You don't have to stare at your neighbor across the street and wonder, "Why does he get to have two cars, and I have one? Why does he have a big house, and I have a small one? Let me give you a redneck analogy that's close to my heart. Why does he have a gas grill, and I have a charcoal grill? This thing takes forever. Who cares? Right? I know I have the grill God wants me to have. I have the house He wants me to have.

I can't tell you how many fights have broken out in church over this issue. And how many times I've talked to a pastor on the phone, who has told me that his church split over the issue of jealousy related to money. One set of people was mad at another one because they had more power, or prestige, or influence or wealth. And they did this, and the church just broke apart. Not in the world. But in the church. Some of you probably have people you haven't talked to for years over something like this, decades. It's not supposed to be that way. We need to love God more than money. And just as importantly, we need to love each other more than money too. I mean, what's more important, your brother or your car? And which one should you treasure more, your sister or a big fancy house? You

should treasure your sister. And when she gets a big fancy house and you don't, you should be pleased with it. Be happy for her. She's gonna have to clean that house.

And as we look at all these things together, I mean, some of you may be looking at this list and saying, "Okay, that's a lot Pastor Jeremy. We've covered all kinds of stuff this morning. We've talked about loving people continually, which is hard. I don't mind loving somebody for a little while, but to do it for a lifetime. But I think that's a tall order. We talked about showing compassion. That's not easy. Have you ever been to prison? Prisons are not easy places to do this with. We talked about marriage; I don't have a good marriage. My marriage is hard. We've talked about money; I struggle with money. Well, how do I apply all this? Well, how do I put this together in my life? I try but I fail in these things. I'm working on my marriage. I'm working on contentment. I'm working on satisfaction, but I can't make any headway. What do I do?" Well, the answer is you need to look to Christ. That's what Hebrews is about. That's the point of the whole book, you need to come to Him because He's the one who gives you victory over these things. You can't do this in your own strength. You can't fix your marriage, or your contentment, or your relationships in your own power. So you keep your eyes fixed on Him. He's the one who gives you the power. That's what Hebrews 1 through 12 is all about. You need to believe in Jesus, you need to come all the way to a saving knowledge of Him, not halfway, all the way until you're converted.

In fact, like we saw last time, the book of Hebrews is very explicit about this. Just let me tell you some of these verses that we've looked at before. But in chapter 1:3, it tells us that Christ is the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of his nature. So that when you look at Jesus Christ, you're seeing the face of God. And when you think of Him, you're thinking of Yahweh; He shares the same essence. He's not just an ordinary man. He's the Godman. So He can help you overcome the sin of greed, or the sin of lust, or the sin of not forgiving your neighbor. The book also tells us in chapter 2:9 that as God, this is what Christ did, He became a man for us and made himself a little lower than the angels, so He could taste death for everyone and provide a perfect sacrifice for every sin. Even the sin of jealousy, He died for even the sin of looking at what people have and wanting it. He went to the cross for that. Then in chapter 4:14, it says that He became a great high priest, and pass through the heavens, because you couldn't pass through heaven yourself, so He made a way.

And we could go on and on. We've talked about this for quite a while now as a church. But He did all of that, listen to this, He did all that so you could come to this chapter and apply it. He did it, so you could come to a verse like this, and keep your character free from a love of money and do all these things. It's not magic here. There's no secret. This happens when you put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I could even say the reason some of you may be struggling with this is because maybe you haven't done this. And the reason you read a text like this, and you say, "This is so hard," is because you haven't put faith in Christ. Jesus has been offered to you over and over again. He's been presented to you freely from the pulpit of this church. And you said, "No, I don't want it. I don't like it. I can get along fine without Him." Well, the book of Hebrews says you can't. You can't do any of these things without Christ. You can look

like a Christian on the outside; you can't be one on the inside. You can fake it in front of other people; you can't fake it before God. So here's what you need to do. If you've sat on the fence long enough, you need to say to yourself, "I will arise and go to Jesus." I will say God, "Have mercy on me a sinner now, right now. Save my heart from sin. Change me into a new creature. Give me new thoughts, new wants, new desires, so I can look at money differently. God, I need to look at my marriage differently. I need to look at the people in this church differently." Ask Him to do that, and He'll do it. He's a God who loves to save and change sinners.

Next week, we're going to look at another subject in this final chapter of Hebrews. And that is the subject of church leadership. That's just the next one that comes up in here. Verse seven, says, "Remember those who led you who spoke the word of God to you and imitate their faith." That's the next area where the author tells you to take the book of Hebrews and apply it. Take the gospel and apply it, and that is by imitating the faith of your leaders. And not just the leaders of this church, but the leaders of any church you've been a part of. The word "remember" here's looking back to the past and remembering the good men who have led you before, and I'll talk about that the next time we're together.

But for now, we're about to approach the Lord's table. And I want to pray for us that our minds will be fixed on Christ as we do that. So let's come to the Lord in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for what we've read and learned this morning. And we never want to take passages like this Lord and make them into a to do list. It's not a to do list. This is a list of life. We want our lives to be characterized by these things because Jesus Christ has saved us. Lord, I pray that would be our mindset this morning.

I pray that as we go from this church, our hearts would be pricked and challenged by the power of the gospel, Lord, that we would be different. Maybe if someone is lost this morning, Lord, they could be different because they're saved. They come to You for the first time. But for those who are saved, Lord, I pray that they would be different because they would see areas in their life where they need to change. No one's marriage is everything it should be. No one's view of money is that way either. And Father, we need help in this. Lord, I pray that our church would be characterized by these things of love. We want to stick to this sound doctrine. We want to get Christ and Him crucified right. But just as importantly, we want to get our relationships with each other. Right. Lord, would You help us to make that priority this morning? And would Christ be glorified in it? Thank You for these words. Would they penetrate our hearts? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.