



30: Keep Living Like A Christian Should

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.

Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say:

"The LORD is my helper;
I will not fear.
What can man do to me?"

Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."

Hebrews 13:1 – 17

At first glance this first part of Hebrews 13 looks like a list of unconnected instructions squeezed in at the end of the book. But we know that can't be the case and on closer inspection we note that it all refers back to things the writer has previously mentioned.

- ◆ *Why do you think these instructions are being brought to our attention again at this point in the Book of Hebrews?*

Don't Get Selfish

Verses 1 to 4 are about maintaining the kind of fellowship that ought to exist among believers: the kind of fellowship that is especially important when times are hard and the kind of fellowship that often gets forgotten about when times are hard.

"Let brotherly love continue." When times are tough there's nothing so easy as to forget our duty to love others. When we get preoccupied with our own hardships it's all too easy to become self-centred and even selfish.

The word used here (philadelphia) speaks not of the kind of love that's commended for example in 1 Corinthians 13 (agape) but of human familial affection. It emphasises the basis of the fondness we have for one another as Christians: we are all children of the same Father.

- ◆ *Why do you think the writer might have chosen to use this word here?*

"Do not neglect to entertain strangers" or don't forget to extend hospitality.

- ◆ *What would it have meant to entertain strangers in the days when this was written and what should Christian hospitality look like in our modern culture?*

"Remember the prisoners." Don't forget about those who are suffering and those who have been imprisoned because of their faith.

- ◆ *What does it mean to remember them "as if chained with them"?*

Verse 4 is a reminder that marriage is to be considered of great value and that fornication and adultery will be judged by God.

- ◆ *Why might the mention of marriage have been included in this list?*
- ◆ *Why do you think the phrase, "the bed is undefiled," is added?*

Keep Right Priorities

Next we're reminded to demonstrate by our manner of behaviour that we're content with what we have and we're told why it should be so. The Lord is with us, to help us, at all times (verses 5 to 6).

- ◆ *How is the absence of covetousness shown in conduct?*

Follow Good Examples

In verses 7 to 8 we're told that it's good to remember and to "scan closely" the lives of our teachers and those placed over us in order to follow their example. Jesus Christ of whom they have presumably taught us is unchangeably the same. The writer returns to the same thought in verse 17 where he tells us that we are to submit to leaders and give them occasion for joy, not grief.

The thought that Jesus is eternally the same leads the writer back to what has been a main thought throughout the whole of the Book of Hebrews..

"Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them."

Hebrews 13:9

- ◆ *What is the significance of the second part of verse 9 with its contrast between grace and the eating of ceremonial foods as ways to strengthen the heart?*

Be Prepared For Suffering And Rejection

Thoughts about the eating of foods used on the altar lead to the thoughts of verses 10 to 16.

The reference in verse 10 to the altar we have is not to a physical altar but to Jesus' sacrifice of Himself on our behalf, in the same way that we would say a man keeps a good table when what we really mean is that the food he presents on it is good. Our "altar" is special to us. It far surpasses all that went before and those of the old way have no right there. To make His sacrifice, in the same way that the remains of Old Testament sacrificial animals were burned outside the camp (Leviticus 4:12,21) as a token of the rejection of all that they represented, Jesus suffered outside the camp. Both his suffering and His rejection were necessary parts of His work to sanctify His people.

- ◆ *Explain, in your own words, why it was necessary for Jesus to die "outside the camp."*

Verses 13 to 16 continue the list of exhortations:

Following Jesus example, we should bear His reproach.

We should remember that our home is not in this world.

We should praise God continually with lips that give thanks to His name.

And we should not keep on forgetting to do good and to share.

- ◆ *What will be your practical expression of each of these four exhortations this week?*