

Series: Hebrews

Lesson #60

Title: Entertaining Strangers

Scripture: Hebrews 13: 1-2

Date: 12-21-08

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

Hebrews 13: 1: Let brotherly love continue. 2: Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

The literal translation is: **Hebrews 13: 2: concerning hospitality, be not forgetful, for through this unawares certain did entertain messengers.**

The context is speaking about brotherly love. This word "angels" is translated from a word which means "one sent from God, a messenger from God." So primarily the word the believer is concerning fellow believers. All believers were once strangers and foreigners to God and the covenant of grace. Now having been called by his power we are strangers and pilgrims in this world. If anybody should know something about what it means to be a stranger the believer knows what it means.

When the Lord's people were persecuted it resulted in their being driven from their own homes and forced to seek a refuge abroad. **Acts 8: 1: At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles...some traveled as far as "Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch"** (Acts 11:19). They needed lodging. That could happen again. Even now, the work of an evangelist according to scripture is one who travels from place to place preaching the gospel. These brethren may prefer to lodge with brethren than in a hotel.

The first way mentioned in which we show love to our brethren is by entertaining them. Inviting them into our home and feeding them. 1 Peter 4:9, "**Use hospitality one to another without grudging.**" This is especially true of God's preachers 1 Timothy 3:2, "**A bishop then must—be given to hospitality;**" again in Titus 1:8: **But a lover of hospitality.** Included with lodging strangers is washing their feet and feeding them.

And this verse includes showing hospitality and meeting the necessities of those outside of the faith. Knowing what we were when we were strangers to God, and knowing that we are now strangers in this earth and long to be with God, we know the heart of a stranger.

The exhortation "be not forgetful" speaks as much for us to remember what we were, and now are by grace, as it does for us to remember to entertain strangers. If we be not forgetful of what we were, we will be more apt to entertain strangers.

Leviticus 19:34: *But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*

What is it to be a stranger? Rachael and Leah said that Laban, their father, treated them as strangers when he sold them and spent all their inheritance. You and I, who now believe on Christ, know that was the case with us in our father Adam. We were once strangers to the covenant of grace.

Exodus 23:9: *Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

Be not forgetful of the heart that was in you when you did not know God. Be not forgetful of the fears that possessed you; be not forgetful of the inward distress of your soul; remember the anxiety of your mind; be not forgetful of the grief and sorrow, and dejection of spirit

Even more now that you are foreigners and strangers to this world, you long to be with God, remember how it feels to be in a foreign place. That is the true meaning of this word stranger in Exodus 23: 9. It is so comforting for a believer to find a familiar spirit in a world where we are strangers, foreigners. Doesn't your heart light up when you see a familiar face when you are in a foreign land? Remember the heart within you that longs to be with your Redeemer and your brethren and consider that is the heart of your brethren who come your way.

Ephesians 2: 11: *Wherfore remember,* that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12: That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14: For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; 16: And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19: Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20: And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; 21: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

And even our fellow brethren, when travelling, this same heart is often within us when we are away from our loved ones and in an unfamiliar place. As believers we always long to be with our brethren and with our Lord in heavens glory. To the stranger who may not know the Lord remember what it was to be a stranger to God. Therefore, let us remember what Christ has done for us:

- Freely taken us home with him--risen with him.
- Freely gave us the garment of his righteousness
- Freely feeds us the Bread of Life
- Comforts us in the household of God
- Comforts us with fellow saints
- He does so being a habitation of God through the Spirit

Let us take in our brethren and those in need, clothe them, feed them, comfort them, for if they be Christ's he dwells in them through the Spirit.

What about angels unawares. What does this mean?

- Abraham--Genesis 18: 1-10
- Lot--19: 1-3; 15-16
- **Luke 24:28: And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 29: But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30: And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31: And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.**

In many cases it was the Lord himself. But in each case, the Lord sent them--they are messengers sent of the Lord--and in each case the Lord's people received edification from the Lord himself.

Illustration: What if he's an angel.

The Lord is reminding us that we are his. He may be giving us opportunity to help one of his saints that he might teach us something at their mouth in the process. And he is reminding us that he will not forget our labor of love wherewith we minister to his children.

Matthew 25:35: For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:...for as much as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.

Hebrews 6: 10: For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11: And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: 12: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

