

Sacrifices Pleasing to God: Brotherly Love, Part 3 (Hebrews 13:1–3)

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Introduction

We are to “*let brotherly love continue*” because *love* is the foundation of God’s covenantal purposes in the earth. So, what does the covenant that God established with Abraham have to do with *love*? Everything. God intends to bless all the families of the earth in Abraham’s offspring, Jesus Christ through *agape*/love (John 3:16). This blessing is in the salvation of multitudes from every nation on the earth. *Philadelphia* (brotherly love) is both the *evidence* and the *motivation* for the continued outworking of *agape* (sacrificial love) in Christ’s saving work. It is my opinion that *philadelphia* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term *hesed*, translated as mercy, kindness, goodness, or steadfast love, which identifies God’s love for His own.

This morning, we want to look at *philadelphia* (brotherly love) and *hesed* (covenant love) as evidenced in the life of Abraham.

I. Justifying Faith: a Promise to Save a Covenant People

A. The call of Abraham to leave all in order to have the promises of God fulfilled to him (Gen. 12:3; 15:6).

B. Hedging the covenant promise with dual aspects (unconditional and conditional)

1. A covenant son must be *blameless* (Gen. 17:1, 2)

How can God require something of Abraham, who can and will fail? What becomes of the promise if Abraham fails to be blameless? To explain this apparent conflict, *hesed* comes to the rescue. God will hedge the covenant promise with two sides, one unconditional and the other conditional. The conditional side requires the inward working power of the grace of *hesed*.

2. Only *hesed*-grace enables *blamelessness* (Phil. 1:6, 7)

Paul was confident of God’s saving grace and goodness (*hesed*) in these believers because they shared in Paul’s circumstances and suffering with respect to the gospel (Hebrews 13:1–3).

3. The *purpose* of the conditional aspect of the covenant (Gen. 17:7)

All those with whom the covenant was made were to walk before the Lord blamelessly. . . Circumcision was necessary for covenant identification, but merely symbolic of the individual’s dying to self and the flesh in order to identify with God and holiness. Real heart circumcision was necessary for His covenant people to love the Lord (Deut. 30:6). This heart circumcision (regeneration) is what separates true covenant children from mere religious professors (Matt. 7:21). In order to do this, they must have rules to follow; hence, the *Law*. The law cannot save, but guides the saved into holiness and righteousness (Rom. 3:20).

C. The law and its purpose with respect to covenant promises (Gal. 3:17, 18, 19, 22)

Paul is careful to note that the law did not and could not annul the promise. So, why was the law given? The law imprisons everyone under sin so that the promise could be fulfilled to all for whom it was made—all, who like Abraham, *believe* God (v. 22). The law cannot

justify, however (v. 11). It is only to *believers* that are justified along with Abraham, the man of faith (v. 9; Rom. 9:8).

II. Blameless Behavior: the Promise lived out through Faith

A. Faith *exercised*: *hesed* at work—the rescue of Lot twice (Gen. 18:19)

1. Faith *encouraged*: the first rescue of Lot (Gen. 14:20; 15:1)

Humanly speaking, there is nothing that explains Abraham's faith save for God's merciful loving kindness to Him.

2. Faith *rewarded*: the second rescue of Lot (2 Pet. 2:7; Gen. 19:29)

Abraham *prayed* (intercession is *philadelphia*, brotherly love at work) and Lot was delivered again.

B. The offering of Isaac; *hesed tested*, the second incident demonstrating the power of *hesed* to change the life of a covenant son

1. The need for unwavering faith in God's *hesed*-faithfulness when Abraham remained childless (Gen. 17:17; 18:12)

2. The confidence in *hesed*-love: hope confirmed in the command to sacrifice Isaac, his only son (Gen. 22:12)

3. The fact of *hesed*-love proved by Abraham's servant (Gen. 24:14, 27)

What can we take away?

What can we take away from this and how can we use it to offer to God acceptable service of worship by letting brotherly love continue (Heb. 13:1)?

1. We do not initiate brotherly love. We either have it by virtue of our faith in Christ, or we don't.

2. We can let brotherly love continue only by our dying to self in order that His love may work through us by grace (Luke 9:23, 24).

3. As we let brotherly love continue, we prove our faith and gain assurance of our standing with God, and we participate in the suffering of our fellow believers for the sake of the gospel and for the advance of the kingdom.