

TEN CRITICAL AREAS IN A BELIEVER'S LIFE

HEBREWS 13:1-18 • TV097A

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Hebrews 13:1-18

I would like for you to open your Bible today to the **Book of Hebrews**. I'm going to be speaking from **Hebrews chapter 13** and my subject will be: "**TEN CRITICAL AREAS IN A BELIEVER'S LIFE.**"

Now, if you will open your Bible to **Hebrews 13** and think with me as we deal with this subject; I believe the Spirit of God will teach us some things that we need to at least remember or learn if we do not know them, "**Ten Critical Areas in a Believer's Life.**"

Now, every believer ought to get acquainted with the book of **Hebrews**. It's not a difficult book any more than any other book in the Bible. The Holy Spirit wrote it and He must reveal it. He must take the things of Christ and reveal them unto us.

Certainly they are not understood by natural wisdom, but the book of **Hebrews** is a very important book in the life of a believer. It glorifies Christ and it's instructive to everyone who trusts Christ.

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Now, in the book of **Hebrews** the apostle Paul sets forth Christ superior over all creatures, over all creation, and over all ceremony. Paul said, *“Christ is greater than the angels. To which of the angels said he at any time: thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee?”*

“To which of the angels said he at any time; sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool?” Our Lord is superior to all angelic creatures.

Then, Christ is superior to Moses. Paul says in **Hebrews**, *“Moses is a servant in the house and Christ is the Son over the house. Christ is greater than Moses as he that built the house is greater than the house.”*

And then, Paul shows in this book how Christ is superior to all of the Old Testament priests and to all the Old Testament sacrifices, to the Tabernacle, and all of these things. He sets forth Christ as superior. These sacrifices could not take away sin but they were pictures of Christ who does, by the sacrifice of Himself, He put away sin.

There were many of these Old Testament priests; there were many of them. There were thousands of them. Christ, he was one, he was the Great High Priest. And these Old Testament priests offered many sacrifices, often times they offered the same sacrifices, which could not take away sin.

Christ offered one sacrifice. The Scripture says: *“By the sacrifice of himself and by one sacrifice he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”*

These Old Testament priests died; Christ ever lives. Their priesthood had a beginning and an ending. Christ's priesthood has no beginning and no ending. *“He's a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek.”*

These Old Testament priests offered animal blood which could never put away sin. Christ offered His blood. And these Old Testament priests ministered in a Tabernacle made with hands. Our Lord ministered in heaven itself. They entered into the Holy place made with hands. He entered into heaven itself and there made an effectual sacrifice for all of our sins.

These Old Testament priests never sat down because their work was never finished. In fact, of the seven pieces of furniture in the Tabernacle; there was not a single chair there because the priests never finished their work.

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Christ having finished His work, crying: *“It is finished, ascended to the right hand of the majesty on high and sat down expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.”*

So, every believer needs to get acquainted with the book of **Hebrews**. It shows the superiority of Christ. It shows the priesthood of Christ, and the atonement and sacrifice of our Lord. And in this book also, the apostle warns the believer.

Now, you and I have promises throughout the Word of God called *“precious promises,”* but we also have some warnings and we are warned by the Word of God not to depart from the faith. *“Take heed brethren lest there be found in you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.”*

We are warned not to depart from the faith. Faith is not an isolated act. Someone said, “Well, I once believed.” If you’d ever believed, you are still believing; saving faith is a continuous act. We continue in faith. We have believed, we are believing and we shall believe.

It’s like repentance; repentance is not an isolated act. A person can’t say, “Well, I once repented.” If it was genuine, God given, Holy Spirit wrought repentance; it is a continuous act. We continue in the faith. We continue in repentance. We continue to believe on Christ.

And throughout the book of **Hebrews** we are warned, we are warned about apostasy. We are warned about departing from the faith. We are warned about drawing back. The Scripture says: *“Christ is the Son over his house whose house we are if we continue in the faith, if we hold fast our profession firm unto the end.”*

And so, this book is full of warnings. Someone says that, “God has hedged us about, on one side with promises, lest we despair.” God does not want His people to despair. He doesn’t want them to live in doubt and fear; He wants them to have confidence, assurance, rest, and peace in Christ.

So, we have all the precious promises that keep us from falling into despair. But on the other hand we have in the book of **Hebrews** especially, warning after warning: *“Take heed brethren.”*

Israel could not enter the promise land because of unbelief. *“Take heed lest there be found in you and evil heart of unbelief.”* Paul writing in **Corinthians** tells us to, *“Examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. Know ye not your own selves how that Christ dwelleth in you except you be reprobates?”* Peter tells us to, *“Give diligence to make our calling and election sure.”*

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Then, another thing about this book of **Hebrews**; in **chapter 13** and of course in **chapter 11** we have that spiritual hall of fame, talking about the faith of Moses, Enoch, Abraham, Hagar, David, and all of these you know, that believe God.

And here in **chapter 13** along with the words of praise for the Lord Jesus Christ, “*who’s the same yesterday, today, and forever,*” the apostle deals with ten critical areas of the believer’s life. I want to interest you in the book of **Hebrews**.

Several months ago we went through the **Book of Hebrews**. We spent 26 weeks in the book of **Hebrews** in our Sunday morning Bible classes. It was a mountaintop experience for me and I think for many of our people.

It was a time of great rejoicing and great blessings as we studied this precious, precious, book of **Hebrews**. And here, in the **13 Chapter** the apostle deals with ten critical areas in the believer’s life.

If you want to, take your Bible and as I refer to these verses, underline these statements or write them down on a piece of paper. They are all right there in **Hebrews chapter 13**.

The **first** one is found in **verse 1**, the first critical area of the believer’s life. Paul says in **Hebrews 13:1**: “*Let brotherly love continue; (underscore that) let brotherly love continue.*”

Now, there’s a special love between believers. There’s a family love. There’s a love of the body of Christ for one another. “*By this shall all men know that you’re my disciples if you love one another.*”

Christ said, “*And this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*” There’s a special love that knits the hearts of believers together, wherever they are.

They may be separated by thousands of miles. They may be separated by several blocks. They may live in the same home but where there are those who believe in Christ, trust in Christ, and rest in Christ, they love one another. There’s no question about that.

But the believer is not only to love other believers; he’s to love all men. Our Lord said, “*You love them that love you; what thank have you, sinners do the same. I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you and pray for them which despitefully use you.*”

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Believers who know Christ are to love all men. I do not believe that hate can live where Christ lives. Christ is light, Christ is love, and Christ is truth and beauty and peace. Christ is mercy, forgiveness, and grace.

And hate just cannot live in the heart where Christ lives. The Scripture tells us, *“He that loveth not knoweth not God for God is love.”* Do you hate people? Do you hate people of other races? Do you hate people of other religions? Do you hate people of other philosophies? Do you hate people of other political parties? Do you hate anyone?

Well, *“He that loveth not knoweth not God for God is love. And how can we love God whom we’ve never seen if we do not love our brother whom we have seen?”* So, this is the first critical area.

Paul says, *“Let brotherly love continue.”* Let’s not let it rise in spurts and then fall one day, loving the next day, hating one day, receiving the next day, and rejecting. Just let it continue in a forgiving, gracious, kind, spirit. *“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God for Christ’s sake forgave you.”* Let brotherly love continue!

Now, here’s the **second** critical area found in **verse 2**: *“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers for many have entertained angels unaware.”* Be hospitable and be generous and gracious.

Abraham was sitting in his tent door one day and saw these men coming across the desert and he arose and offered his home. He offered food, he offered lodging and he entertained these men and they turned out to be the angels of the Lord.

One day two disciples were on their way to Emmaus on a certain road and a stranger joined them and talked to them and they invited him in their home and fed him. It turned out to be the Lord Himself.

Paul is saying here, open your hearts and open your hands and open your homes to others. Look forward to sharing with others what God has given you. A saved heart is a gracious heart and a gracious heart is a generous heart and a generous heart is a heart that reaches out to others.

What does the Scripture say? *“As you would that men should do unto you; do you even so unto them. This is the law and the prophets.”*

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers. Oh, it’s easy to entertain your children, your grandchildren, your brothers, your sisters, and your mother and your father. We are talking

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about strangers. Let your heart be open and your hands be open and your home be open to offer shelter, food, clothing, and sharing with others, whatever God has given you.

And then the **third** critical area; in **verse 3** Paul says: *“Remember them that are in bonds as being bound with them and remember them that suffer.”*

Now, there are two kinds of adversities here. First of all, there are those who are in bonds. Now, I know when Paul wrote this that many Christians were in prison, not for criminal action but for Christ's sake, and they were suffering. They were in chains and they were in prison.

And Paul says for the people there to remember them as bound with them, as being fellow prisoners. But, we do not have people in prison in this country; they do in other countries for their faith, but not in this country.

But there are those who are suffering and who are persecuted for the sake of their faith. And we are to remember them as being sufferers with them. *“Weep with those that weep.”* Bear the burdens of those that carry burdens and afflictions.

Remember these that are persecuted because of their faith. *“Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.”* What is this law of Christ? It's the law of love.

I think of missionaries. We have missionaries in Mexico, Ireland, France, Spain, Canada, and on Indian reservations that our church helps to support. And these men are to be remembered. They are to be taken care of. They are to be prayed for. They are to be written to. We are to share their burdens. They are undergoing certain persecutions for Christ's sake.

But there's another adversity here and that is *“remember them that suffer”* in body because of sickness, because of being of old, old age, because of being handicapped, and because of being afflicted.

Remember that you also are in the body and you are subject to these same afflictions. You are subject to these same infirmities. Remember these. Remember those who are suffering. Remember those who are handicapped.

Remember those who are lonely. Remember those who have infirmities. Remember those who are suffering because of failure, just anyone who is less fortunate than you are; remember them in prayer, with a gift, with a call, and with a visit.

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There are so many ways to remember them. In other words, let's quit thinking about ourselves so much and begin thinking of someone else. I've always believed this; the way to be happy is to make someone happy. The way to receive is to give. Christ said, "*It's more blessed, to give than to receive.*"

Here is the **fourth** critical area: In **verse 4** he says: "*Let marriage be held in honor;*" that's what he's saying.

Now, I know that we are living in a day of divorce, but man's customs will not change the Word of God. Man's customs; I don't care what they are. We may be having one divorce out of every three marriages or one divorce out of every two marriages but that doesn't make it right.

There are dissolving homes on every hand; there's hardly a family listening to me that divorce hasn't touched your family somewhere but that doesn't make it right. That doesn't alter the law of God almighty.

Marriage was instituted by the eternal God, by our heavenly Father. He said: "*A man and woman shall be joined together in marriage and for this cause shall a man leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh.*"

And God does not give us grounds for dissolving our marriages and our homes. When a man and woman are married they enter into a contract in the presence of God almighty. And they bring forth children into this world and they are under an obligation to themselves, to their children, to their God, to their faith, and to their community. They are under an obligation and a contract to continue in that marriage.

And then, marriage was sanctioned by our Lord Jesus Christ. That was where He wrought His first miracle (at a wedding feast). Our Lord attended the marriage.

And then the apostle Paul commended marriage; he said, "*The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.*"

As far as I can tell the Lord has two institutions on this earth. One of them is the home and the other is the church. If you can find any other I will be glad to hear from you. But I know that the home is one and I know that the church is another.

And I know that the Lord is jealous over both. And I have a responsibility; I'm talking about the believer, I'm talking to believers now; a believer has an obligation and a responsibility before his

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God to protect that which his God has established and to hold forth a good witness, and one is our home and the other is our churches.

Now notice the **fifth** critical area in **verse 5**; he says, let your character and conduct, that's the word "*conversation*." Do you see it there, "*let your conversation (your character and conduct); let it be free from covetousness (or the craving for worldly possessions and worldly wealth).*"

This is something we are plagued with today is materialism. I believe America and professing Christians and church members have gone crazy over materialism. You know, our Lord said in **Luke 12:15**: "*Beware of covetousness. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.*"

Our life does not consist in the things we possess but in whom we know. "*Let not the rich man glory in his riches or the strong man in his strength or the wise man in his wisdom. Let him that glorieth glory in this that he knows me, that I am the Lord.*"

Our God tells us "*Having food and clothing; be content.*" Paul said, "*I've learned how to abound and how to be abased. I have learned in whatsoever state I am to be content.*"

Did you know covetousness is idolatry? We talk about the heathen in Africa that fall down before their false gods and worship idols. We may not worship calves of gold but we worship gold in a different form.

We worship materialism. We are more interested in what we have and what we eat and what we wear than we are in our soul's welfare and our soul's knowledge of God almighty. I'm worried about us! "*Covetousness is idolatry.*"

Anything that hinders your relationship with God is an idol, anything that comes between you and God. You know, our Lord said, "*The pagans are interested in what they eat, what they drink, and what they wear. You seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. God will add these things to you.*"

Believers don't have to worry. David said: "*I've been young, now I'm old. I've never seen God's seed begging bread yet.*"

In **verse 7**; here's the **sixth** critical area: "*Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of the Lord.*"

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Well, that means faithful pastors and preachers. *“Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of the Lord.”* That’s referring to faithful pastors and preachers. I don’t mean everybody that calls himself a preacher or a pastor; I’m talking about those who have ministered to you the Word of the Lord, not their creeds and catechisms but His precious Word.

How do we remember them? Well, first of all we remember them by giving heed to their message: *“He that hath ears to hear let him hear.”* When a true Gospel preacher preaches to you Christ and Him crucified; listen to him, hear him, walk in the light God gives you through that man’s preaching.

When he preaches salvation by grace, when he preaches ruined by the fall, redemption by the blood, regeneration by the Spirit, and eternal life by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross; listen to him. Walk in the light God gives you.

Then, to remember them is to pray for them, to give them honor, to honor them for Christ’s sake.

And then to remember them is to faithfully support their ministry, the ministry of the Word. Now, if a man’s not dedicated to the preaching of the Word of God; don’t support him. But, if a man is dedicated to the preaching of God’s Word support that ministry.

And then to remember them is to follow their example. That’s what it says in that verse, *“Follow their example.”* Don’t follow any man but follow that man as he follows Christ. Follow Christ together. Seek the Lord together. Examine the Word of God together. Pray together and exhort one another.

But if you have a faithful Gospel preaching minister; remember him, remember him. It’s a great gift and it’s a great tragedy when people do not have a faithful minister.

Verse 9 gives us the **seventh** area, a critical area in the believer’s life: *“Be not carried away with different and strange doctrines. It is good for the heart to be established with grace”*

Now what does this mean? It means this, guard against doctrines, guard against spiritual instructions that are different and strange from the Word of God. *“If they speak not according to the word of God it is because there is no light, no truth in them.”*

You beware of doctrine that is contrary to God’s Word. *“Search the Scriptures whether these things be so.”* When I preach to you don’t take my Word for it. Get your Bible, open it, and

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read God's Word. Compare Scripture with Scripture and don't accept any doctrine that's strange from the Word of God.

And then, don't accept any doctrine that's not in agreement with the person and work of Jesus Christ. Measure everything you read in the Old or New Testament or anywhere else. And remember that it must be in agreement with the person and work of Christ.

It will glorify Christ if it is of God. God honors those who honor the cross and these Old Testament writers; *"To him give all the prophets witness. Moses wrote of me. Abraham saw my day."* Isaiah wrote of Christ. Beware of any doctrine that doesn't magnify and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then guard against doctrines that are contrary to God's grace. Watch out for that doctrine that promises you mercy for doing something. Mercy is given because of Christ doing something, not you doing something.

It's good that the heart be established with grace, three key words here, the heart; salvation is a heart work and the heart needs to be established, committed firmly on a good foundation, the Word of God settled, not always moving about and going with every wind of doctrine, established with grace.

Salvations by grace, not of works, not of law, not of church membership, by the grace of God; *"For by grace are you saved."*

Now the **eighth** critical area: **Verse 15** says: *"Let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God giving thanks."*

You know, murmuring and complaining against the providence of God is not Christian. It's certainly not glorifying to God and it's certainly contrary to faith, to murmur, to complain, and to find fault with the hand of God whether it's a heavy hand or a light hand, whether it's a hand of affliction or a hand of blessing to find fault with God's providence is contrary to faith.

We are priests; did you know that? Every believer is a saint, every believer is a king, and every believer is a priest: *"He's made us kings and priests unto God."* We are sanctified.

But as priests of God we have sacrifices to offer, not blood sacrifices, but sacrifices of praise, sacrifices of faith, and sacrifices of love. And here this sacrifice of praise is coming to God through Christ.

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The fruit of our lips, that is the praise of our lips, and that continually, in every condition, whatever it may be; let us be able to say:

**“Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise him all creatures here below,
Praise him above ye heavenly host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”**

“Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.”

The **ninth** critical area, **verse 16**: *“Don’t forget to do good and to communicate; with such sacrifices; God’s well pleased”*

God’s pleased with the sacrifice of praise, but He is also pleased with the sacrifice of communication or a distribution. That is, we are to take care of those who are in need.

Our Lord said: *“I was hungry and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me.”*

And they said: *“Lord; when did we see you hungry or weary or in prison or sick?”* He said, *“In as much as you have done it to the least of these my brethren, you’ve done it to me.”*

You know, when he met Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus he said: *“Why persecutest thou me?”* Well, Saul had never touched the Lord but he touched some of His people. So, *“to do good and communicate, forget not.”*

Then in closing, **verse 18**, the **tenth** critical area: Paul said, *“Pray for us.”*

One old prophet said, *“God forbid that I should so sin against the Lord as to fail to pray for you; pray for us.”* Be an intercessor like Moses and Paul and pray for people, *“pray for us”* that’s a critical area. John Bunyan once said, *“that prayer to the believer is like breath to the natural man; you can’t live without it!”*

Here are **ten** critical areas in a believer’s life found in **Hebrews chapter 13!**