

Hebrews 13:1-6  
Joshua 1  
Psalm 118

“Let Brotherly Love Continue”

June 13, 2021

“Be strong and courageous!”

Some people have thought that Joshua must have been a timid fellow –  
so many times he is told, “Be strong and courageous”!

But there is actually nothing in the text of Deuteronomy or Joshua  
that would suggest that Joshua was timid.

He was the general who led Israel into battle in Exodus 17.

He was the young man who would remain in the tent of meeting when Moses went out.

He was one of the two spies who urged the people to trust the LORD  
and take possession of the land!

He had spent the last forty years being strong and courageous –  
trusting that God would do what he had promised!

So why does the LORD say to Joshua: “Be strong and courageous”?

Listen to verse 6:

“Be strong and courageous,  
for you shall cause this people to inherit the land  
that I swore to their fathers to give them.”

Joshua will cause Israel to inherit the land that God promised to Abraham.

Elizabeth Sunshine spoke at Village a couple weeks ago  
of Israel’s failure at Mt. Sinai.

Left to themselves, Israel cannot inherit the land.

But God promised Abraham that he would give his descendants the land!

How can God be faithful to his promises?

Only if Joshua causes Israel to inherit the land!

And that means that Joshua must succeed where Israel had failed!

So, yes, Joshua!

Be strong and courageous –

for you shall cause this people to inherit the land  
that I swore to their fathers to give them.

And do not be afraid, God says,

because “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

And as we saw earlier in Hebrews 3-4 –  
the name “Joshua” is translated into Greek as “Jesus.”

Only Jesus can cause his people to inherit the land!  
(Perhaps now you understand why the angel told Joseph to call his name Jesus!)

Our Psalm of response is Psalm 118 –  
and like many Psalms, it goes back and forth between the singular and plural –  
teaching us to trust in the *one* who comes in the name of the LORD.

Because God is with Jesus – therefore he will always be with you who are in Jesus!

Sing Psalm 118  
Read Hebrews 13

Do you see Jesus?  
(Hopefully, by now, you are seeing him more and more clearly –  
so that you can say, “Yes, by faith, I do see him!”)  
And where are you?  
(I hope that you are seeing that again – by faith – you have ascended into the heavenlies,  
where we now gather with Jesus!)

So what?!  
If the book of Hebrews ended at the end of chapter 12,  
it would still be true –  
but it might easily be mistaken for  
“pie in the sky by-and-by.”

Chapter 13 tells us *here is how to make visible on earth*  
the fellowship of the heavenly city!

### **Let Brotherly Love Continue . . .**

It would be easy to treat Hebrews 13 as a series of loosely connected exhortations,  
separate from the main body of the exposition.  
But you must never lose sight of the central exhortation of Hebrews:

You have a great high priest, the Son of God,  
who has passed through the heavenlies,  
who has brought the great and final sacrifice before the throne of God,  
and therefore he has brought *you* before the throne of God,  
where you now stand in the heavenly Assembly.  
You have been washed with pure water,

you have your hearts cleansed from an evil conscience,  
and so you may enter into the heavenly Holy of Holies,  
as a kingdom of priests, gathered together with the heavenly hosts!

And therefore, as Hebrews has said repeatedly,  
do not lose heart,  
do not neglect your confidence,  
do not forget what God has done in Jesus Christ!

Last week we saw in chapter 12, verse 14, that we are to pursue peace and holiness,  
and that our pursuit of peace and holiness is motivated  
by our participation in the heavenly worship.

Israel was motivated by Sinai—  
which, quite frankly, was the motive of fear and trembling.  
Our motivation comes from the heavenly Mt Zion,  
where the blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.  
Jesus has offered the final sacrifice that has dealt with sin once-for-all.  
And if your sins have been decisively dealt with,  
if God has cleansed you from *all* your sins,  
then you may pursue peace and holiness with great confidence,  
because “by a single offering Jesus has perfected for all time  
those who are being sanctified.” (10:14)

Hebrews 12 sets the stage then, by reminding you of your participation in the heavenly worship.  
(Read 12:28-29)

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken,  
and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,  
for our God is a consuming fire.”

Hebrews 13 then applies this to all of life.  
Because you participate in the heavenly worship,  
therefore, “let brotherly love continue.”

### **Let Brotherly Love Continue... (v1)**

*Let brotherly love continue.*

This is the word “philadelphia”—brotherly love.  
It refers to the love of a family—in this case, of the family of God.  
I love the way that Hebrews says this.

Let brotherly love continue.  
And “continue” is the same word that John loves to use in 1 John –  
often translated “abide” – or “remain.”

Let brotherly love abide – let it continue – let it remain!

Notice what Hebrews assumes!  
It is present!

How could it not be?!  
If Christ is present – if his Spirit is present – then love of the brethren will be present.

Jesus has established a new family –  
as Hebrews pointed out back in chapter 2,  
Jesus is not ashamed to call *us* brothers – “I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

That’s what Jesus says of us!  
Jesus has joined himself to our humanity in order that he might join us to God.  
So that we might become his brothers!

And therefore, we are called to love one another in the family of Jesus!  
If we are honest with ourselves – then we will acknowledge that sometimes,  
our “brotherly love” can be rather hard to find!

And when we fail, we need to repent.  
After all, how can we show brotherly love – when we have to show brotherly love?!  
If I failed to love you – then I need to repent –  
I need to acknowledge that I have failed to love you,  
and then turn from my unloving way and begin to practice love!

How do you practice brotherly love?  
Hebrews gives us four ways –  
four exhortations as to what brotherly love looks like in practice.

If by faith you see the heavenly city,  
and if by faith you behold Jesus sitting at the right hand of God,  
then there will be lots of practical consequences!

### **1. ...through Hospitality – Loving Strangers (v2)**

<sup>2</sup>*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

First, you practice brotherly love by showing hospitality to strangers.  
This is the word “philoxenia” – love of strangers.

The English word, “hospitality,” has become synonymous with throwing a party for friends.

We often think about hospitality as having friends over after church.  
But if all you do is have your friends over,  
then you are no different from the world.

This is why the ESV goes out of its way to point out that in Greek,  
this word means showing love to strangers!  
Of course, if we just translated “do not neglect to love strangers” –  
we might be tempted to content ourselves with saying hi to someone,  
and quickly walking away!

True hospitality means opening your home to strangers.

Now, at the same time, the strangers in view are not just anyone.  
Hebrews is not saying that you should go downtown,  
walk up to a stranger,  
and invite them to stay the night.  
No, we are still in the context of *brotherly* love–  
love of the brethren–which means our fellow believers.  
Plainly this should overflow into our treatment of unbelievers as well,  
but the focus is on “brothers.”

This is brotherly love – love within the family of Jesus.

So how do you show hospitality to strangers?

I once received an email from a Christian in Australia  
saying that he was going to be in South Bend for a couple days–  
could we get together.  
We had him over for dinner, but to my shame I let him stay in a hotel.  
That was not hospitality.

Hebrews gives us an example of hospitality:  
“thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

This hospitality story is found in Genesis 18,  
when Abraham urges the 3 travelers to stay for a meal  
(which takes several hours to prepare);  
This hospitality is found in Genesis 19 as well,  
when Lot takes in the two angels for the night, so they do not have to stay in the square.

We now have a “hospitality industry”  
in order to make sure that no one ever has to show true hospitality any more!

Hospitality has to do with your attitude toward your home.

We often view our homes as a “haven” from the outside world.  
And so it should be!  
But we may not be selfish.  
If your home is truly a haven,  
then it should be a place where friends and strangers can find rest.

After all, what is a haven?

A haven is a port—a place where ships can be safely anchored even in the midst of a storm

Hebrews has told us that Jesus is the anchor of our souls.  
He is our haven—our port—our place of refuge where we may ride out the tempest around us.  
Therefore our homes must become places of refuge,  
where Christ is the center—the anchor of our souls.

When I was in seminary I learned a lot about hospitality from David and Sharon Covington.  
They rented a third-floor apartment from a professor—  
two itty-bitty rooms, with a bathroom, and the landing as a kitchen.  
But in that little, tiny apartment, David and Sharon carried on the gracious hospitality  
that characterizes them in their Quincy, California, home.  
—a place where strangers quickly become friends.

And verse 2 reminds us that Abraham and Lot “entertained angels unawares.”  
I don’t think that Hebrews is saying that it is likely that you will entertain angels.  
Rather, Hebrews is saying,  
“think about how redemptive history would have been different,  
if Abraham and Lot hadn’t shown hospitality?”

If Abraham lets the three men pass by,  
then God would never have promised a son to Abraham.  
Lot and his family would have perished in the destruction of Sodom.

Without hospitality to strangers,  
the entire shape of redemptive history would have been different—  
so you never know what God is going to do through hospitality.

After all —  
the ultimate act of hospitality was when — while we were yet sinners —  
while we were strangers —  
while we were hostile — alienated from God and from one another —  
Christ died for us.

The Word became flesh — the Son of God joined himself to our humanity —  
as the ultimate act of hospitality — love for strangers

that welcomes them into my home!

## 2. ...through Remembering the Mistreated (v3)

<sup>3</sup> Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

A second focus of brotherly love is “those in prison, those who are mistreated.”

And again, this is not referring to the common criminal,  
but those who “in the body.”

This is a call to *brotherly love* – love for our fellow believers.

Hebrews is referring to Christians who have been unjustly imprisoned for their faith.

There is nothing wrong with establishing prison ministries  
in an effort to convert criminals,  
but that is not what this passage is about.

The early Christians would bring food for those in prison,  
since Roman prisons generally did not provide meals,  
risking their own imprisonment in order to maintain the unity of the body.

The “mistreated” is a broader category.

In 11:37 we heard about those who “went about in skins of sheep and goats,  
destitute, afflicted, *mistreated*—of whom the world was not worthy.”

Those who are afflicted and mistreated for their faith should be remembered –  
and cared for.

At the moment our congregation does not have anyone in prison for their faith –  
for which we should be grateful to God.

But many of us have endured various sorts of afflictions for our faith –  
and we do have brothers and sisters around the world  
who continue to suffer for the faith,  
and we should remember them!

Because the rationale for remembering prisoners and the mistreated  
is that “you also are in the body,”  
and when one part of the body is hurting,  
the whole body is affected.

I continue to thank God every day for you.

Because you take seriously what the Word of God says about being “in the body.”  
About loving one another – and caring for those who are afflicted and mistreated!

## 3. ...through Honoring Marriage (v4)

<sup>4</sup> *Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.*

A third focus of brotherly love is to honor marriage.

This may seem obvious, but that doesn't mean that it doesn't need to be said!

There are two aspects to this:

First, "Let marriage be held in honor among all."

The first point is your attitude toward marriage.

Whether you are married or not,

you need to view marriage as an honorable institution.

And second, "let the marriage bed be undefiled."

It starts with your attitude, but your actions are equally important.

Do you honor marriage with your lips?

Then honor it with your actions!

Hebrews says this in the middle of Roman culture—

a culture that did not honor marriage.

Divorce was easy and sex was cheap.

We too live in a culture where marriage is not held in honor,

where the marriage bed is regularly defiled by sexual immorality and adultery.

And we are called to be different.

Because, as verse 4 says, "God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

Certainly it is true that God will judge the sexually immoral in the world,

but Hebrews' point is that God will judge those *in the Church*

who are sexually immoral and adulterous.

If we are no different from the nations around us,

then judgment will begin with the household of God,

and if it begins with us, then what will be the result

for those who do not believe?

So what does this look like? What does it mean to "honor marriage"?

In practice, that means to do everything in your power to promote godly relations between husbands and wives.

It is not enough for you to "avoid" sexual immorality.

There must be a positive effort to honor and promote godly marriages.

You are honoring marriage when you speak well of your own spouse,

and when you encourage one other to greater love and faithfulness in marriage.

As singles, you are honoring marriage when you rejoice in the marriages around you —

and when you pursue marriage honorably!



Likewise, keeping the marriage bed undefiled is not just a negative command.

Respect for marriage must be joined with maintaining purity in bed,  
as you delight in your wife or husband.

What Hebrews 3:4 states negatively, Proverbs 5:18-19 states positively:

“Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth,  
a lovely deer, a graceful doe.

Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight;  
be intoxicated always in her love.”

I have found Rosaria Butterfield’s comments about modern American culture very helpful.

When I was growing up, I was taught that “attraction” was fundamentally sexual.  
And so for years – decades – I was confused!

If I am a “heterosexual man” – then that means that I am attracted to women.

Well, if attraction is fundamentally sexual in nature,  
then if I find a woman to be attractive...then I am lusting after her.

But not all attraction is sexual in nature!

Right now we have a horribly confused culture  
that thinks that everyone is defined by their sexual “orientation.”

I have become increasingly convinced that from a biblical perspective,  
there is no such thing as a “sexual orientation.”

You are not a “heterosexual.”

You are not a “homosexual.”

You are a man – or you are a woman

(and I do realize that there are some really awkward cases  
where male or female can be ambiguous!)

But here is the thing that I have found  
since I abandoned the language of “sexual orientation”:

I find all sorts of people attractive – in non-sexual ways!

It’s what Hebrews means by “let brotherly love continue.”

Love one another!

But let the marriage bed be undefiled!

Insofar as you give in to sexual temptation,  
you need to repent!

You need to turn away from sexual sin.

If you are dabbling with pornography –  
or fantasizing about someone who is not your spouse –  
you need to repent –  
and repentance includes beginning to *practice* brotherly love!

#### **4. ...through Being Content and Avoiding Love of Money (v5)**

<sup>5</sup> *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

The fourth way to show brotherly love is by being content with what you have –  
keeping your life free from the love of money.

This is a third “philo” word –  
we heard philadelphia in verse 1,  
philoxenia in verse 2,  
and now aphilarguros in verse 5.

The term is also used in 1 Tim 3, to speak of the elder who should not “love money.”

Two of the greatest temptations are easy sex and easy money.

The seventh and eighth commandments forbid adultery and theft.  
And that is the order we find them here.  
Sex and money are two of the main temptations that we face.  
And Hebrews warns against these two things as well.  
The call in both areas is to be content with what you have.  
Do not be grasping after sex.  
Do not be grasping after wealth and riches.

Hebrews chooses an interesting way to approach contentment.  
He cites a familiar statement, used several times in the OT:  
“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”  
That was what God said to Jacob in Genesis 28:15,  
as Jacob left the land to go look for a wife.  
It was what God said to Joshua in Joshua 1:5,  
as Joshua was preparing to enter the promised land.  
Joshua was to lead Israel,  
and Joshua’s faithfulness would be rewarded  
with the inheritance that God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In other words,  
the largest chunk of wealth that God ever gave to his people was at stake.  
–the inheritance that symbolized the eternal inheritance!

And yet the LORD spoke to Joshua saying,  
“Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.  
I will not leave you or forsake you.  
Be strong and courageous,  
for you shall cause this people to inherit the land  
that I swore to their fathers to give them.” (Josh. 1:5-6)

Be content with what I provide.  
Walk before me, trust in me, and I will provide the promised inheritance.

And that is what God says to us.  
Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,  
and all these things will be added to you.” (Matt 6:33)

Contentment does not mean that you have to stay in your present job  
(In Joshua’s day, God led Israel into the promised land and gave them new homes, etc.),  
rather, contentment means that you do not set your heart on money.  
You do not set your heart on promotions, a new job, or any material thing.

Contentment comes when you see by faith.

If your inheritance has been already received by the new Joshua, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who has entered that inheritance in the heavens,  
then you may be certain that Jesus, the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings  
will provide for your needs.

**Conclusion: Because the Lord Is My Helper (v6)**

<sup>6</sup> So we can confidently say,  
“The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear;  
what can man do to me?”

“So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’”

This quote comes from Psalms 27, 56, and 118—  
all three of which say this.

If the LORD is your helper—if Yahweh is on your side—  
then what can man do to you?

Has the Father helped Jesus?

Most certainly!

As God had promised Joshua, so he has done for Jesus—  
and because God will never leave Jesus,

therefore he will never leave the one who lives and believes in Jesus!

If you see by faith the heavenly city,

and if you share in Christ, the one who has delivered his people from sin and death,  
then you will be content because you see – in Jesus – that God will provide  
for all your needs.

Verse 7 functions as a hinge between verses 1-6 and verses 8ff.

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.  
Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

Your leaders are to be examples to you of brotherly love,  
showing hospitality,  
remembering those who are mistreated,  
honoring marriage,  
and being content.

You are to look at your elders –  
look at Jay and Mark and Rex and Dave and Jacob and Joel and myself

You are to consider the outcome of our way of life,  
and imitate our faith.

Notice that it is not a blind imitation–

the call to “consider” our way of life

means that you need to compare how we live to what God has said!

But your elders are called to be examples to the flock,

But this call to remember your leaders and imitate their faith  
comes back to the very heartbeat of faith:

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

You imitate the faith of your elders because they show you Jesus.