



“..time to *move*.”

Hebrews 13

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Hebrews 13

- 1 Let brotherly love continue.
- 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so [doing] some have unwittingly entertained angels.
- 3 Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are

mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also. 4 Marriage [is] honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. 5 [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." 6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD [is] my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" 7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of [their] conduct. 8 Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, today, and forever. 9 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. 10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. 11 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. 12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. 14 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. 15 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. 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. 17 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. 18 Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. 19 But I especially urge [you] to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. 20 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom [be] glory forever and ever. Amen. 22 And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. 23 Know that [our] brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly. 24 Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you. 25 Grace [be] with you all. Amen.

13:1-25

For 12 chapters, the writer of Hebrews has been dealing with some very real and practical issues that are crucial to our Christian living. For 12 chapters, he has preached the positional sanctification through Christ alone and the progressive sanctification that, through His positional work, we now have the power to respond to. And now, as he moves to bring this letter to a close, in very Pauline style, the writer is going to wrap it all up in a plethora of practical applications in light of this new “mo” we have in Christ.

The first issue presented herein is how we are to treat each other inside the faith community. It speaks of the love we are to have for each other. Remember, this letter was written to Jewish Christians who had begun to take their eyes off the goal, off of their priorities. It is the same danger that we face as a church community in our day! It’s the plight of fallen man to *forget*. So the writer is calling us to not only love, but to love *continually*. Because what separated those early believers in Hebrews from the rest of the world may have been a plethora of different issues, but the greatest was to be the issue of love. And it is precisely that same issue that is to separate us from our “world” out there. Without a significant difference in this one area, the rest really doesn’t matter.

John 13:35 says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Not by our church attendance or our moralistic lifestyle, but by our **love**. These believing converts were, throughout this letter, being called to actually move in this new position they had in Christ. To embrace and live in the power that was being poured out through the gospel. But **these** believers were *vulnerable*! They were still living like babies in the faith, unable or unwilling to grow up and deal with the tough issues, the uncomfortable parts of their faith. They no doubt had begun with that same joy and passion that we began with when **we** were saved. But it seems that they had now begun to forget, and, in doing so, had begun to let even the fundamentals, the foundational elements of the faith, to *slip away*...

The writer understood the critical truth of the faith that He is laying out herein: *our vertical love is proportional to our horizontal*. The word “brotherly” literally means “from the same womb.” Those who share this body of Christ are each reborn from the same source. We are today a family: brothers and sisters of the same heavenly family. It’s a dirty shame what we often do to each other...*what some have done to others*, and still call themselves Christians. I’m not saying that we will not make mistakes or hurt each other. But that is a far cry from throwing a brother or sister under the bus out of blatant selfish pursuits, and furthermore, actually leaving them there. Doing so only reflects the fact that we have yet to come to know real Christ love.

1 John 4:20 says, “*If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*”

The word “love” (phileo) here means “a deep-seated care and affection.” It’s **more** than just a friendship love! It’s a love that runs deep into the heart and soul of the giver.

The word “entertain” in verse 2 speaks of a deeper idea in the original language. It encompasses a “love and hospitality” and even carries the same root as our word “love” in verse one, but this verse is not directed inward to the community but outward to those outside of the family of Christ. Part of growing up in Christ is carrying our love on to the next level to those who are not part of our faith community, to those God “puts in our way” each day. And the mystery in this is that some of these folks are not necessarily who they seem to be. We are warned that these folks can sometimes actually be angelic beings.

In verse 3, the writer is pushing on further into areas where some of us may be feeling uncomfortable. Now we are called to express God’s love amongst those who are incarcerated. Please note that it doesn’t seem to matter what they might be guilty of, nor does it exclude those guilty of even the most socially distasteful crimes. We need to remember that Paul wrote the majority of his letters from prison, and you and I are certainly not innocent in our natural state, even if we were never caught and incarcerated.

I have found those that are or have been incarcerated are...unlike us, generally quite aware of the fact they are sinners. And some of them are seeking a real way to change their lives, and we have that answer. We are to care for them as if we would our own bodies because, if reborn, they are a part of that body. This will mean some actual investment on our part. It means sharing in their pain and involving ourselves in their lives. But are we willing to risk our hearts to try to rescue someone from a bondage that is even greater than one of judicial incarceration?

All these things require a church to be missional. It requires, therefore, that the people inside that church be missional. Being missional means it’s not about me. Being missional means, we get out of the safety of our little

church world and reach out to bring the gospel to a lost and dying world. However, the problem for many of us is that all of “this” is solely about us. We essentially are looking to be catered to. And sadly, there are so many churches that will provide that to you. Now, we aren't one of them, but they are out there. It's what is called “Consumer Christianity.” “Cultural Christianity.” Chandler calls it “attractional ministry”, meaning that the focus is on being the biggest, the shiniest, the loudest, and the most fun, so that people will desire what is happening and want to, albeit completely in the flesh, be a part of what is going on.

What WE want to *do* and *be* is “incarnational.” Meaning, we want to be living, breathing examples of Christ on earth. We come to church post salvation to be equipped for that task and then take our place as missionaries all week long in the place to which we are called. That might be a work place, or a classroom, or a neighborhood. And lose the idea of “coincidence!” Once God is in the driver’s seat, there are no more coincidences. Thus, we pay very close attention to the world play out around us. That may mean with the guy next door or the buddy in the cubicle next to ours or the guy with the “colorful” past that’s dragging some baggage. But if this Jesus thing, personally and community-wise, is all about you, there is going to be trouble, and you will eventually depart, looking for someplace that “gets you” and that isn't so focused on doing stuff. But the problem with scripture and the problem with this verse before us is that it is calling us to do stuff! Its calling us to “move.” Loving requires movement and activity. Being missional and incarnational requires movement and activity. Thus, the fact is we can't be a true church, messengers of Christ and redemption, unless we get over ourselves and really grasp what Christ love is and how that is very different than the love of this world.

Verse 4 gives another practical directive. One that is notoriously going to be an issue when our love for God begins to fade, and our love of the world and of ourselves begins to dictate our life’s actions. For when the focus is on me, I cease to practice love for my brethren and I fail to love those God puts in my life—my coworkers and my neighbors—as well as those that this world has beaten down: the broken, the wounded, incarcerated, the developing-world residents. Then, of course, such a self-centered lifestyle is going to take the next step and corrupt the marriage and consume the family. For this writer, it is clear that the problems presented through chapter 13 are linear. They are interconnected and are “growing outward manifestations” of a larger cancerous presence.

Before you claim the high moral road here, we need to understand the language. Adulterers are those who break the marriage bond through sex with another, but those of you that are single are not going to escape this verse. For fornication encompasses a wide range of sexual vices: homosexuality, pre-marital sex, and all other “out-of-marriage” sexual contact, whether intercourse is involved or not. God is not ignorant and neither are our actions unseen by Him. He will judge!

See, the signs of our self-obsession are readily evident today, even virally within the greater religious community! It's happening all around us yet we are in denial mode. We refuse to take a good look in the mirror for fear of what we might see. It shows in our attitudes toward our brothers and sisters, toward the Christian community to which we belong, and ultimately it plays out in our marriages. Now you may not be physically sexually cheating on your spouse, but such can go on in your head and in your heart. We know that a lot of spousal abuse goes on without even touching each other, right? Most selfishness plays out in marriage by just being aloof to the other person and not really caring what he or she thinks or wants. So for many of us, the answer is always to “move on.” Move on from our first marriage to our second. Move on from our church community to another one that appreciates me. Move on in relationships, jobs, and cities. We just stay mobile and never take our foot out of the door. We do all of that, and it never occurs to us that by doing so, we deal with God the same way. We keep our foot in the door with Him also. If He fails to come through as we think He should, or in the time that He should, we're out of there. So churches close at the rate of 75 to 150 a week in this country, marriages are tossed aside at a rate of around 25% within the evangelical community, hatred and public

verbal wars are fought between "Christians" that have been wounded and otherwise slighted by the other. All the while the world is watching us. Who really would want that?

All of this naturally leads us into the next issue (verses 5-6), which is how we think about money and possessions. The word "conversation" in the old KJV and the word "conduct" in the NKJV mean more than just what we say but encompass the whole of our life's actions, our character and manner of walk. Covetousness is not so much a *cause* of the lack of contentment, but rather that which is *produced* by the lack of contentment! Contentment is the gift and attribute of the Spirit's presence in the life of a believer. When the Holy Spirit is present within me, His presence is unlike anything this world has to offer, and thus I am not seeking the world to give me that "buzz."

This does not mean we cannot or are not to work to better ourselves or finances, for the scripture clearly teaches the opposite. But it means rather we are to be content and at peace with the place that God has put us, not craving constantly for more of the material. God "never leaves us or forsakes us," and promises to provide every need! Our world as believer is not to be framed by finances and possessions! Other factors are far more critical: Does God want me here in this job? In this house and neighborhood? If so, what am I called to do here? Does this job provide the hours and freedom to fellowship in community, serve my brothers, advance the kingdom, and reach out missionally? Does it allow time to love my wife and family, spend time with them? Am I able to pursue God's mission for me here in this job and in this place? These are more critical aspects of financial, vocational and materialistic issues. How much the job pays or if the house is in a good neighborhood for high resale are minor issues in comparison.

How many of us say that we trust God and we believe that He has our back but our living speaks something totally different? Because the fact is, real peace is something that can't be faked. At least not for long. Real peace is worn on a person's shirtsleeve. And so is the lack of it. And let me tell you something that is so very important: Peace comes from knowing your mission. I know people without goals and without direction, and they are just lost out there. The wind blows them from place to place, job to job, service to service, relationship to relationship. And my experience has been that so often such comes from trying to get God to get on board with your wants, desires and plans instead of you getting on His (assuming you really want God at all). Because we want our toys, pleasures, *AND* God's peace and that just never happens.

These folks can appear to be alive spiritually but are in fact dead.

1 Ti 5:6 "But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives."

Job 21:11-13 "They send forth their little ones like a flock, And their children dance. They sing to the tambourine and harp, And rejoice to the sound of the flute. They spend their days in wealth, And in a moment go down to the grave."

Re 3:1 "...I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

(CNN) **Woman found dead years later in garage.**

"At some point, her bank account ran dry. The bills stopped being paid.

After its warnings went unanswered, the bank holding the mortgage foreclosed on the house, a common occurrence in a region hit hard by economic woes. Still, nobody noticed what had happened inside the house. Nobody wondered out loud what had become of the owner. Not until this week, when a worker sent by the bank to repair a hole in the roof made a grisly discovery.

The woman's mummified body was sitting in the back seat of her car, parked in the garage. The key was halfway in the ignition. Authorities say they believe the woman died at least six years ago. They're still trying to figure out what happened. "I've been doing this 37 years. Never seen anything like this before," said Undersheriff Mike McCabe of Oakland County, just outside Detroit. "She really kept to herself. We never really heard anything from her," neighbor Caitlyn Talbot told CNN affiliate WXYZ. Talbot said she wasn't aware of anyone having seen the woman, who traveled a lot, in about six years.

The remains of a woman were found sitting in front of her TV - 42 years after she was reported missing. Hedviga Golik, who was born in 1924, had apparently made herself a cup of tea before sitting in her favorite armchair in front of her black and white television set. Croatian police said that she was last seen by neighbors in 1966, when she would have been 42 years old. Her neighbors thought she had moved out of her flat in Zagreb.

However, she was found by police and bailiffs when they broke in to help the authorities establish who owned the flat. When officers went there, they said it was like stepping into a place frozen in time. The cup from which she had been drinking tea was still on a table next to the chair where she had been sitting, and the house was full of things no one had seen for a long time. Nothing had been disturbed for decades, although there were more than a few cobwebs in there.

Despite numerous actions by tenants, who noticed that nobody had been using the flat since 1970, as well as those by city services, which requested that the apartment be broken into and examined, nobody reacted to their pleas for nearly four decades."

The one thing that jumps out at me in these stories is that no one knew these people were gone. Everyone thought they were somewhere fine and in fact they were dead the whole time. I wonder how many of us are spiritually walking around in the same condition? Sooner or later we find out, but what a waste, what a loss.

Verse 7 says, *"Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct."*

The ESV renders this verse as follows: "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith."

Verse 17 continues with that thought: *"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."*

These verses, and this direction, is often, frankly, hard for us to receive, and I will acknowledge that it is uncomfortable to teach. It is hard to lay this out there without it sounding self-serving. But I want you to notice that in verse 17 there is something in there for me as well as the rest being for you. And it is important to handle these two things together. Because a man that is worthy of being followed, worthy of being emulated and deserving of being submissive and obedient to, is a man who clearly understands that he will answer for it all one day.

You see, that man had better grasp clearly the fact that he will have to give account before His Creator for his leadership and model. Is he doing what is best for the body or best for himself? Will he do the right thing even if it is the hard thing? If this is your guy, then give him your loyalty and your commitment. Because frankly, it's a hard position to be in. I have always been forthright on that account. If we fail in this, I lose, and you lose, and

the kingdom loses. The text says "*it would be unprofitable for you.*" While I have felt the incredible pain of one side of this possible scenario, I have also experienced a faithfulness from many of you that is unparalleled, and I thank you with all my heart. It is because of you that I have endured here.

One reason for this call is that the leader is, if he is worth his salt, trying to protect you as well as teach and grow you. That warning continues in verses 9-13. The fact is, there are always a lot of people out there that want to mess with you for a lot of various reasons. Usually, *both scripture and actual practice supports this*, the motivation is to gather followers unto themselves.

Acts 20:30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."

These folks have the innate ability to be able to torture scripture until it says what they want it to say. They will abandon all proper biblical interpretation in order to press their personal agenda, which always seems to stress some fringe concept over the state of one's heart.

Many folks clearly need to convince others of their doctrine and their position because they're dealing with extreme guilt and even remorse, and they need to bring someone to their side in order to justify themselves. Few things express the wickedness of the hearts of men more than this practice. But how do you know? How do you know if a guy is to be supported and backed up or if he is a false teacher?

Matthew 7: 15-20 *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them."*

2 Peter 2:1-2 *"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed."*

Paul was a man committed to emulating the leadership qualities of Christ. He led with strength and compassion, with humility and diligence, and he longed for the prayers of the flock. He never demanded to be revered. He just sought the opportunity to preach the Word. His faith and life matched his words and teaching.

Verses 10-14 say, *"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."*

You see, in that day, the sin offering would be taken outside of the tabernacle and burned. And in the same way, Jesus died outside of the city, outside of the camp. So **outside of the church**: incarnational ministry, hospitality, a care for the oppressed and poor, guarding our marriages, watching what our deep loves are. **Inside the church**: honor your leaders if they submit to God and his grace. Love each other, love your pastor, love Jesus and care for each other.

“So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.” The writer is calling us to “take it outside.” Yes, outside, where we are likely to be ridiculed and reproached just as He was. The community life is awesome and needful, but we can’t fulfill our mission in its wholeness by hunkering down in here and not taking it to the streets. This place, this world, is not our home. We are here on mission, and there is so much work to be done. It’s so easy to get distracted. So easy to become self-absorbed if we are not diligent. We are called to join Him in the path that He walked. We must pick up our cross, die to this world, and follow Him. In doing so, we share in both His joy and His pain.

That is not something one hears from many pulpits across America. How different many confessed believers live today. We often live for the temporal, for the things which pass away. Most often it is not a matter of not knowing or even the lack of understanding. In truth, it is frankly a lack of truly accepting that what we read and hear from the Spirit’s voice as truth. It never becomes a real part of us. It is what we have learned throughout Hebrews as a lack of faith. We hold to the *“form of godliness, but deny the power therein.”*

We have talked a lot throughout this book about the gospel, how Jesus did it all for us and we can add nothing to His salvation work. But we have also talked about our part in all of this. What, if anything, should we be doing? Our part is to respond. To get up and move in the power of Christ.

Verses 15-16 say, *“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.”*

Our place is to live a life of praise and to serve Him accordingly. In these things, God is pleased. And I do so want to please my God! What He really wants from us is to receive the gospel, and to love Him for it. Receive the gift of free, unearned grace and love, and then praise Him for all of eternity. But to do so, we must grasp what the writer of Hebrews has tried in detail to explain to us in the last 13 chapters. We must wrap our hands and heart around the awesome gift of grace. To let go of the battle of life’s pursuits. To surrender the flesh and all of its empty desires. To let go of religion and all its ritual. To simply love Him and to let Him love us.

What we have learned here in this book is that our religious sacrifices are not only no longer **needed**, but God no longer **wants** them! He wants you! The born again salvation experience is the receiving of the final sacrifice, whole and complete. We join Him on the altar of sacrifice. Now, in our completed state, we serve Him with passion and boldness. Not for earned value and standing, but out of love and thanksgiving.

Verses 18-19 say, *“Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.”*

What you can do for me and your leadership here, beyond your submission and service, is the most important issue of all. That is the service of prayer. This is not for a select group or individual. Prayer is a right, a gift, and a mandatory part of any and every believer’s life. Nothing you can do for me or for any pastor is as crucial and beneficial as your prayers. Pray for strength against the enemy, boldness in approach, wisdom in decisions, and a clear vision for the future plan of God. Pray that I hear His voice clearly and act without fear.

Verses 20-25 say, *“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of*

exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly. Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you. Grace be with you all. Amen."

Ah, it's language like that that convinces me that the author of this letter is none other than Paul, as the writer is momentarily swept away with the glory of the miraculous resurrection, as well as the priceless gift of peace. The writer points out, in following his exhortation concerning the support and submission to the under shepherd, that the "great shepherd" is none other than our Lord Jesus. It was the final sacrifice of the cross, detailed in the pages of this letter, that brings such a perfect peace to the hearts and lives of those who have died to this world, only to join Him in the eternal kingdom which, for many of us, has already begun.

It is through that peace that Christ longs to make you "...complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight..." Full of His peace, we are compelled to do good works and driven to do His will, not just believe it in our heads. It is Him working in us, and our response, is all to be well pleasing in His sight. It is HE who makes us *move*...