

Life Outside the Camp

Hebrews 13:1-16

Pastor Bryan Clark

So what do you think is necessary as a Christian to maintain a right perspective on things like loving one another, serving one another, caring for one another; things like marriage, sex, money, contentment? According to the writer of Hebrews we cannot ever lose sight of the fact that the life our souls long for is found outside the camp. To which you say, I have no idea what that means. To which I say, let's talk about that.

If you have a Bible turn with us to Hebrews 13. It's very interesting how similar the book of Hebrews is to the book of Romans in the sense that you have this wonderful, deep rich theology of salvation by grace through faith, and then you get to the end of it and it's like there is almost this random miscellaneous list of things that reflect the outflow of that theology in our lives. So last week in chapter 12 there was this reminder, a review of the book of Hebrews, that when we came to Jesus we didn't come to Mt. Sinai, we came to Mt. Zion. So it's a new covenant, not the old covenant. So the end of that is since we have received on the basis of God's grace a new, unshakable kingdom, then we should live like it. That's how chapter 12 ended and chapter 13 starts to talk about that with this seemingly random list. Verse 1:

Let love of the brethren continue. (*NASB, Hebrews 13:1)

So this is the Greek word *Philia* for love, there's a couple different Greek words for love in the Bible, I think often times the difference between the terms is exaggerated; they're both really strong terms. What is unique is in first century Roman culture the strongest bond was the bond between brothers, because women and children were so devalued. In their mind it's kind of like the band of brothers, the strongest love was between brothers in a family. Now we don't necessarily see it that way, so just run it through your own grid, whether it's your love for your spouse or your children, whatever makes sense for you, it's just this strong commitment, this love commitment to family. Love not defined so much as an emotion as a commitment of your will. We're in this together and we're going to get through it; that's the idea of verse 1. Verse 2:

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Vs. 2)

So again the whole idea of hospitality in a Roman culture is very different than what it means to us. This doesn't mean invite your neighbors over for supper. The idea of hospitality was a reminder that in an ancient culture they didn't have hotels and motels, they did have occasional inns but they were rare, they were very expensive and generally speaking they were very immoral. Most people wouldn't stay in the inns. So there was a very high value placed on hospitality. When people traveled they had to stay with someone. So these Christians had been dispersed from their homeland and because they're Christians they were undergoing persecution and so they're trying to find someplace to relocate. Churches met in homes so when people were there, there was a need to make sure everybody had a place to stay, everybody had food to eat, in the process of trying to relocate. So that's the general idea of hospitality here. In that culture with the persecution becoming greater and greater, if the Christians didn't look out for one another they simply weren't going to survive. Now the idea of "stranger" is not a random stranger. It has the word *Philia* in the word so it's a

stranger that's a part of the family so it's the idea that this is a Christian that is coming through and needs a place to stay.

The second part of the verse is very interesting. There is some commentary very much like the cloud of witnesses in chapter 12, verse 1, who immediately make a statement that this does not mean you have entertained angels and then they go on. And it's like there's this unwillingness to embrace some of the mysteries of our faith. I think that the text is just plain and clear, it means what it means. There are examples of this in both the Old and New Testament. The classic example would be Abraham in Genesis 18 where he entertained guests for supper, two of them were angels, and one was what we call the pre-incarnate Christ – Jesus in the Old Testament. So the idea is that typically if you go back and study those encounters the angels were messengers who brought messages of blessing. So the idea is that we're in this together, we should love one another, we should care for one another, you never know – the one you're entertaining may actually be an angel in human form and typically what they're delivering is a message of blessing and you don't want to miss that. That's the idea of verse 2. Verse 3:

Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, *and* those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.

So these are not prisoners because they stole something or because they killed someone. They're prisoners because they're Christians. We had this in chapter 10. Persecution is beginning, they're starting to arrest Christians, so that's why the text says as if you're one of them, as members of the body, and the idea is it could be you tomorrow. So there has to be this commitment in the Christian culture to take care of each other because it could be you in prison tomorrow and that's what you will need.

Now again in a first century Roman culture prisons were very different. Prisons were not there for people to serve out a sentence. Prisons were there to hold people for trial. Everybody in prison was just awaiting their trial. As a result of their trial they may be executed, banished, have a debt and possibly be sold into slavery, they might just be released. But they're all just waiting for trial. Because of that there just wasn't much care. Maybe they would be given bread and water but often times even that was neglected. So if you had someone you knew in prison it was necessary to make sure they had food, clothing, their basic needs met, or there was a real possibility they would simply die in prison. So in chapter 10 we had this, that when Christians visit their fellow Christians in prison they are in a sense outing themselves, they are identifying themselves as fellow Christians and there was a very high likelihood they would be put in prison themselves. So it was a very courageous act but a necessary act to take care of one another.

So again you have this both loving one another, this idea of hospitality, this idea of prisoners is the idea that Christians have to come together and run the race together as family or they simply were not going to make it. Now when you read those verses and think about us, 21st century Americans, most of those issues don't exist, it's a completely different circumstance. But the fundamental principal is the idea of coming together as the people of God and helping each other in the most ordinary, basic needs of life. So you think about us, one of the things that comes to mind is that because of your generosity in 2018 we were able to distribute about \$250,000 to people with various needs such as just paying the rent, paying for utilities, health care needs, just basic, benevolent needs that people find themselves in because of difficult circumstances. That's just a very basic way of coming together and helping one another. But that's just the tip of the iceberg when you look at what we're doing out in the community, what we're doing through Car Care, Hope Builders, and all these things. All these ways of just meeting the basic needs of people. It's not just

out there, it's on the campus, helping people struggling with addictions, needs, hurts, pains, marriages, parenting, and all these ordinary things that people go through – they just need help. They need people to come alongside them, love them and help them get through a difficult time. So that's kind of the expression of what these verses are talking about.

It's difficult enough to be a Christian without Christians fighting each other. There has to be a coming together across the community and taking care of one another. Now one of the things that's just sad is that over the last couple decades for some reason it's become kind of trendy, kind of vogue, to be anti-church. Now when I say that I'm not referring to the secular community. By and large the secular community just leaves us alone. We're talking about other Christians, for some reason they find it fashionable to throw stones at the church. They just kind of become anti-church. They seem genuinely surprised that there are imperfect people in churches. That's like being surprised that there are sick people at a hospital. The claim has never been that we are a gathering of the self-righteous. Just the opposite. The claim has always been that we are sinners and losers and misfits made right through the power of Jesus. There's always going to be issues with people. That's just the way it is. But it's also true we're talking about people that have been redeemed by the power of Jesus, radically changed. When you look around this room, I would suggest you see the most caring, loving, generous people that I have ever known. I would consider it a privilege to identify with the people in this room. There has to be an understanding that hey we're not perfect but we are the church. We're redeemed. Not just Lincoln Berean but around the community. It's hard enough to be a Christian without Christians fighting with one another. We come together in order to run this race together. That's the heartbeat of those verses. Kind of a shift then in verse 4:

Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

So in a 1st century Roman culture, marriage was not valued. Marriage was highly devalued because of the devaluing of women and children. Primarily it was believed that the role of the wife was to have children and take care of the home. And it was considered to be unreasonable that a husband would limit his sexual experiences just to his wife. That was just a normal part of the culture. So now as Christians God is calling them to a different way, to a higher standard. Rooting it back to Genesis 2, that this is something holy and sacred, this is meant to be a picture of the love affair between God and his people, between God and the church, and to recapture the value that God puts on marriage. What is interesting in this particular verse is this conversation roots to the marriage bed which is just a way of talking about the sexual experience between a husband and wife. Now without boring you with unnecessary details, the grammatical structure of verse four is very interesting in that it ultimately pulls together in this case the valuing of marriage centers on protecting the marriage bed. In other words just like Genesis 2, marriage is described as the two shall become one flesh which is an emphasis on the sexual union in a marriage that defines this unity. So in essence what he is saying is at the center of this valuing is a recapturing of this sacredness, the holiness of the sexual union between a husband and a wife. Now let me say this in a different way. There are a lot of couples today that see marriage as nothing more than a piece of paper. As a matter of fact I hear couples say, we don't need a piece of paper to say that we love one another. So this is how they justify living together and having sex together. So I do think the piece of paper matters but let's put that aside for right now. Let's just go with it. What God is saying in verse 4 is that when two people come together and experience a sexual relationship in God's mind, in that moment they're making a promise, making a covenant before God, that this is my life-long, one-flesh partner, I am committing to marriage with this person. That's the center of the covenant. That was a very big part of the Jewish weddings. There was kind of a party, the couple would then

go off and consummate the marriage, then they would go back to the party. There was this sense in which that's the moment where the marriage actually comes together, binds the marriage, at the core the two shall become one flesh. So another way of saying that is whenever someone has a sexual relationship with someone else, what you're saying to God is I am promising this is my life-long, one-flesh partner. Now I don't expect the unbelieving world to care one cent about what I just said. They're like, whatever. But shouldn't it matter to us as the people of God? If God has radically redeemed us, shouldn't it matter what God's view is? Whatever your view is, I'm just telling you, this is God's view. So when you get together and have a sexual relationship with someone, as far as God is concerned in that moment you are covenanting to God saying I promise this is my life-long, one-flesh partner. So then when you move on and have sex with someone else, you're breaking your promise and making another promise. You're saying God I promise this time, this is my one-flesh, life-long partner. But when you move on to someone else you just broke the promise again. And at some point you have to think about what are you doing? Shouldn't it matter to you that you keep making promises before God and breaking them? That's what verse 4 is saying. At the core of valuing marriage is understanding that's what sexual intimacy is. Whether you have a piece of paper or not, in God's opinion, in God's value system, that's what happening in that moment and it should be taken seriously. He goes on to say, for those that ignore that there is a consequence, there is judgment; God takes it very seriously. Verses 5-6:

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?" (Vs. 5-6)

It's very interesting throughout the New Testament how often this couplet of sex and money are talked about together. Both are expressions of the same selfish heart. When you are selfish you use people and you use money and stuff. It's the same heart just fleshing out in two different directions. So often the conversation of sex and money goes together. In this conversation when it talks about money the Greek word is literally 'love of more'. Often translated covetousness. More money, more stuff, more. Now there's no problem with money. There's no place in the Bible where there's a problem with money; money's a good thing, we just shouldn't **love** money, it's not our safety, it's not our security, it's not our significance. It's not what will ultimately last.

So think of it like this, in this room this morning there are people that work very hard, they're very good at what they do, and as a result they make a considerable amount of money. But because they're generous people they steward their money and that enables us to do great things in this community and around the world. All of that is good. We're thankful for that, there's no problem with that. The problem is when we start to love money, the problem is when we start to find significance in our money and stuff. When we find our security in it, which is the primary focus in this text. When we start to think that's the basis of my security. All the studies show the more you have the more you worry about it. The more you have the more anxious you are. You don't have more security, you have less security. You depend on it more and more and worry you will lose it. That's why the text immediately goes to this discussion, Jesus is your security, and Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you. No matter what happens with the economy, no matter what happens with your business, no matter what happens with the stock market, no matter what happens with the weather, it's going to be ok. Because ultimately our security is not in a house, it's not in stuff, it's not in our business, it's not in our bank account, it's in Jesus. Therefore, He says I will never leave you nor forsake you, I will be there for you, I will help you. Jesus wants to be your security, that no matter what happens it's going to be ok.

We all understand the last month has been a very difficult month in our state. The floods have been devastating. I would never want to minimize that. They have been devastating. But there is also in that a reminder of the message that reoccurs in the Bible all the time. Stuff doesn't last. Your house isn't going to last, your farm, your cattle, your business, your bank account isn't going to last. It's just the way it is. This stuff is all temporary. That's what we're constantly told, don't build your house on the sand, it will never last. You have to build on the rock, I will never leave you nor forsake you, I will be there, I'll be your helper no matter what you go through, you'll never lose the stuff that matters forever. I hear so many people on the news say I lost everything, and I want to say you didn't lose everything. You've got to regain some perspective. You lost a house, you lost a farm, you lost stuff, but you were going to lose that stuff anyway, no one hangs on to that stuff. Somehow we have to refocus on the stuff that matters forever, that's where we find our security, that's what give us the strength to face the difficult moments in life. Verse 7:

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

The result of their conduct means the sum total of their lives. This verse has 3 verbs. *Remember* those that brought the gospel to you, *consider* how they lived – all commentators pretty much agree those people have died whether as martyrs or of old age, they've lived their lives, they're now among the cloud of witnesses, they're now among the spirits in the presence of the angels at the festival that we talked about last week waiting for you to join them. But they've come and gone. The verbs are remember them, take a good look at how they've lived their lives, and *imitate* them. So again it's live for the things that matter – life is short. It's not saying everyone should be a missionary or a pastor, it's just saying wherever God's called you, whether you're an engineer, whether you're a business man or women, whether you're an educator, whether you're in construction, wherever God has called you, you just have to remember what matters, what lasts forever, and to represent God's kingdom wherever God has placed you. That's the idea of verse 7. Verse 8:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Now this has come up a few places in the book of Hebrews. Reading between the lines we guess that the false teachers were saying well there was the old covenant, now you've switched to the new covenant, but that's only going to last for a while and then what's the next thing going to be? And so, there's been a message all throughout the book of Hebrews that that is not true. From chapter one Jesus is not the next word from God; He is the last word from God. Jesus is not the next high priest He is the ultimate High Priest. He is not the next sacrifice; He is the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, mission accomplished, it's been fulfilled. Remember we were even told that God is so committed to the new covenant that He made an oath and a promise that Christ's death on the cross will be sufficient for sin forever. So that's the idea there, we find our contentment and security in Jesus who is the same yesterday, today and forever. It's not going to change again, this is solid, that's why we find our security there. Verse 9:

Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace,

This is the message that we don't lose sight of what's good for my heart, this message of grace, not religious performance but the grace of God. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Verse 9 continued:

not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.

Probably a reference to the false teachers again, bringing elements in from the old covenant that you still have to follow the dietary laws and other parts of that. The comment is the same comment Paul makes in Galatians, if it did not benefit them before salvation, what makes you think it would benefit someone after salvation? You cannot merit favor with God by keeping a bunch of religious activity. Strengthen your heart with the message of grace, don't go back to the bondage. Verse 10:

We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

There are some commentators that think the altar is a reference to communion. But that makes no sense. If that's what it was he would be reestablishing what he just has been arguing against. The altar is the cross, it's the place where the ultimate sacrifice was made, so we have an altar, the cross, in which those who serve in the tabernacle have no right to eat. In other words those that are stuck in the old covenant pursuing self-righteousness have not partaken of what Jesus offered. Verse 11:

For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp.

This is one more shadow from the old covenant. On the Day of Atonement the high priest would take the blood of the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies and offer it as payment for sin, but the bones had to be taken outside the camp and burned. What people didn't realize is that was actually a shadow or a picture of what was to come. Verse 12:

Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

You read the gospels and there is a lot of emphasis the crucifixion was outside the city. That was not just the regulation of the city, it actually was a fulfillment of the shadow of the old covenant, that the one who would come was not there to participate in the old covenant or be the next high priest. What He would accomplish was actually outside of all that religious behavior. Outside of walls of Jerusalem, a large city dominated by the temple and all that went with that. What Jesus had to accomplish was not more of the same within the city, He would have to go out of the city, this would be something outside of that, where He would shed His blood in order to fulfill the covenant in order to usher in the new covenant built on better promises which would bring a better hope for a better city. Verses 13-14:

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.

So the idea is in order to experience the hope that my soul longs for, I don't find that within the religious activity of the temple, within religious legalism, the religious rituals and attempts to merit favor with God. Jesus went outside of that to shed His blood and to experience His salvation. I go outside of that camp and I find what I need outside, at the cross where Jesus shed His blood for me. It's this beautiful imagery that reminds us again that it's Mt. Zion not Mt. Sinai. Verses 15-16:

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Vs. 15-16)

So what is the sacrifice of the new covenant? It's living out this new truth in our lives, this wonderful message of grace. So with hearts of thanksgiving we praise God, we serve, we live out this new found faith in Christ.

It's very interesting to me that in Galatians, in Romans, in Hebrews, anytime the conversation moves to living out our faith, loving one another, caring for one another, serving one another, there is immediately this concern that we are going to turn it back into religious bondage. That we're going to somehow think we're meriting favor with God and turn it back into some sort of religion. So the writers keep going back, when they talk about serving and remembering that this is not an attempt to merit favor with God, don't turn it into that, don't turn it into religion, don't turn it into bondage. Our lives have been changed through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we don't need anything else. But now having lives radically changed through Jesus we live like it. But there is always that risk as people made into the image of God that we start to turn it back into bondage. That must be a significant problem because the writers of scripture are so concerned about it.

There are those of you that are here this morning that would honestly say that you have never really experienced new life in Christ. Maybe you are up to your eyebrows in religion. Maybe that's how you grew up, maybe that's all you've ever known, but you have to understand the life that your soul longs for is found outside the religious camp, where Jesus went to shed His blood as payment for your sin, to do for you what you could never do for yourself. And having been buried and having rose again He offers salvation to you freely as a gift of His grace. That's what your heart longs for. You're never going to find it in a bunch of religious activity. You're only going to find it in Christ, Christ is enough.

Next week we're going to finish up Hebrews and we're going to celebrate that through baptisms. So next weekend is going to be an awesome weekend, all 3 services are filled to capacity with a waiting list, it's going to be wonderful. But for those of you that have never trusted Christ as Savior, I would strongly encourage you to come back next week and listen to the stories, listen to the testimonies of how people share of how Jesus Christ and His death on the cross has radically changed their lives. And my prayer would be, in listening to those stories and considering what we've talked about, that you too would choose to place your trust in Jesus. It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what you've done, it doesn't matter what's been done to you, you don't have to go out there and get good or get religious, God offers you salvation freely as a gift if you're willing to receive it. Christ is enough.

Our Father, we celebrate that wonderful truth when we were lost in our sin, you sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world, to offer salvation freely as a gift. Lord, may we with all of our hearts believe that Christ is enough. May we believe it so strongly we actually live like it as our testimony to the world. It's in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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Life Outside the Camp

Christ is Enough

Hebrews 13:1-16

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Opening Discussion

1. What is the difference between “religion” and salvation by grace through faith? In other words, what’s the difference between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion (from last week’s study)?
2. What can you do to make sure service that flows out of our salvation doesn’t turn into religious service to gain favor with God? How do we keep from drifting back into a performance-based relationship with God?

Bible Study

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-8. There are a number of examples of “acceptable service” listed in this text. Love, hospitality, care of prisoners, marriage, sexual purity, use of money. Discuss each of them. What are practical expressions of these in today’s culture?
2. What do you think is meant by “entertained angels unaware?” See Genesis 18, Acts 12
3. What is one way we learn to live well according to Hebrews 13:7. What does that mean to you? Who has that person been for you? Can you be that person for someone else?
4. What is the significance of 13:8 as it relates to the discussion in this text? How does this affect our theological foundation upon which this acceptable service is built?
5. Read Hebrews 13:9-14. This text seems to revisit again the concern about allowing elements of the Old Covenant or any other religious activity to infiltrate and contaminate the message of grace. Explain the imagery of this text. See also Galatians 2:15-21; 3:1-5; 5:1.

