

Jesus: Our Great High Priest Forever
(Conclusion)
Hebrews 13
“The Love Chapter”

Introduction

Ask any believer worth their salt where to find “The Love Chapter” in scripture, and they will boldly answer, “**1 Corinthians, Chapter 13**”, and they would be exactly right. However, there is a lesser known “love chapter” found in the book of *Hebrews*. Coincidentally, it is also the thirteenth chapter of that book. At the conclusion of his letter to the Jewish believers, it would seem that there were several things that the preacher still wanted to share before saying goodbye. **Hebrews thirteen** reads like one very long post script, with a laundry list of just how a believer in Jesus should behave. The list is all about how we, as followers of Christ, should be characterized by our love. Jesus Himself stated that:

“By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:35

The writer of *Hebrews* was undoubtedly well aware of this fact, for he concludes his message in essence by saying, “If you are truly filled with Jesus, then you will be filled with His love as well.” He goes on to list all the ways that a true follower of Christ should love... By Loving: One Another, Strangers, the Outcast, your Spouse, God above Riches, your Pastor, Jesus, and Forsaking all else - to Sacrifice, and our Leaders. There are nine separate ways listed here in which the child of God is commanded to love. We are to live our lives in such a way that they are characterized by love. The “real” Love Chapter in *1 Corinthians* tells us that without love, our “religious piety” is meaningless.

“If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging symbol. If I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so that I can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give away all my possessions to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

You see, “religion” without love, is just noise. The difference between empty religion and a relationship with a living Christ is that He LOVES through us! As I have said many times before, J. Vernon McGhee is probably my favorite Bible teacher of all time. In his commentary on *Hebrews*, he says and I quote:

“Jesus would like to walk in your shoes.”

What an awesome statement. It simply means that Jesus wants to live in us and let the light of His love shine through us. What if we were to live in such a way that Jesus “walked in our shoes” as it were? Now **that** my friends would enable us to love as He loves, would it not? Just imagine what that would look like in our churches. They would be filled to the brim with people that loved each other; complete strangers, the outcast, our spouses, our God, our pastors, our Lord Jesus, with sacrificial giving, and those who are called to lead us. If Jesus walked in our shoes, then we would BECOME the Body of Christ! Let us take a closer look at how Jesus wants to love through us.

Loving Each Other (vs. 1)

“Let Brotherly love continue.” Hebrews 13:1

A better translation for this would actually be, “Let brother love continue”. What the writer is telling us is that Christians are to love one another. Why? Because we are brothers and sisters in Christ. We have been adopted into the same spiritual household, and therefore, we must have love for each other. In fact, it is the very proof that we are saved to begin with (**John 13:35**). If we do not possess the agape love for one another that is God-given upon our salvation, then we are not Christians at all.

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and yet, hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister, whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." **1 John 4:20**

Simply put, if you love God, then you will also love his children. If you don't love the children of God, then sadly my friend it is proof that you are not one of them. So... Let brother love continue! It is one of the things every believer should expect, in fact, **demand** from their church, to be loved unconditionally.

Loving Complete Strangers (vs. 2)

"Don't neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this, some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it." **Hebrews 13:2**

This verse is pretty self explanatory don't you think? Don't turn away a stranger in need... cause' you just never know!

Loving The Outcast (vs. 3)

"Remember those in prison, as though you were in prison with them, and the mistreated, as though you yourselves were suffering bodily." **Hebrew 13:3**

"Out of sight out of mind" may be a popular quote in our culture, my friends, but it must never become the motto of God's people. We must always remember those who have, for whatever reason, not been able to remain among us. And while I'm on this topic, allow me to ask a question. Do you realize that as a church grows, it becomes increasingly difficult for the pastor alone to keep up with those who have fallen away from the fold? All of us should be constantly on the look out for the lost and straying sheep of our congregation. We want to see them restored, not forgotten. Reach out to help those who are no longer here, as well as, those who are sick and are unable to join us. At the time this was written, people were being imprisoned for their faith, and the writer wanted them to be remembered and cared for. Here in this country, we don't imprison Christians (for now), but we do have those who are lost to us in various types of bondage. We need to be rescuers! What if we truly loved each church member as we would our own son or daughter? We would not forget them so easily then. This is how God expects us to feel about one another. Let brother love continue.

Loving Our Spouses (vs. 4)

"Marriage is to be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers." **Hebrews 13:4**

If someone tells you that they are a Christian and you want to be certain, just observe the way they treat their spouse. If we dishonor the one's that are closest to us, then how can we be trusted to honor anyone or anything else? Marriage is to be taken seriously, for it is meant to be an earthly representation of Christ and His Bride, The Church. Those who would commit adultery against their spouse will have no problem in being adulterous when it comes to their commitment to Christ. It is no mistake that God accused Israel of being adulterous, when the nation worshipped the gods of other nations (**Jeremiah 2:23-25**). A marriage is a covenant between a **husband** and his **wife**, and between a **wife** and her **husband**. To break this covenant is a serious offense (**Malachi 2:16**). A Christian should honor the vows that they make, both to their spouse, and to The Lord Jesus Christ.

Loving God Above Riches (vs. 5-6)

“Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for He Himself has said, “I will never leave you or abandon you”. Therefore, we may boldly say, The LORD is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

Hebrews 13:5-6

Again, self explanatory. If you have Christ, then you have it all. Trust in Him to provide for your needs. Not your wants, mind you, but your needs. Seek first the kingdom of God, and He will see to it that you have everything else. Be content with his provision. He has never promised that you will be able to “keep up with the Jones”! If you have Christ... it is **enough!**

Loving Our Preachers (vs. 7-9)

“Remember your leaders who have spoken God’s Word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Don’t be led astray by various kinds of strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be established by grace and not by food regulations, since those who observe them have not benefited.” Hebrews 13:7-9

Instead of being offended when our preachers tell us the truth from God’s Word, we should accept it lovingly, knowing that these men have been called by God to equip the saints (**Ephesians 4:1-16**). Your Pastor has a pretty tough job and a great deal of responsibility. He has been commanded to teach *The Word* to you faithfully. He is also commanded to live a life that is above reproach (**1 Timothy 3:2**). The writer of *Hebrews* calls us to examine the lives of our preachers and see that they not only talk the talk, but walk the walk as well. Every pastor carries a great burden for those in his congregation. If he has truly been called, then he will take his calling seriously. Your pastor isn’t allowed to live in a manner that says, “Do as I say, not as I do”. Just listen to the words of the Apostle Paul and then maybe you will have some insight into what a pastor should be.

“imitate me, as I also imitate Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1

How would you like it, if the church watched your every move in order to know how to live like Jesus? Sounds a bit overwhelming does it not? But that is what pastors are called to do. We are to live in front of our fellow believers in such a manner that everything we do points to the Savior. We are to be examples for the flock to follow. As you study the life of your pastor, you should be able to see a consistency in his walk, through good times and bad. This is what it means to live a life above reproach.

Jesus was the same in every circumstance. The Scriptures give us various “snapshots” of his life here on earth. He was the same in every snapshot. When He was 12 years old teaching in the temple, and when He was in his early thirties... the same. He always had the right answer. He always responded to every circumstance correctly. He healed, forgave, encouraged, rebuked, and taught, and in every situation, His actions were spot on. Even when they nailed Him to the cross, He prayed for His tormentors. Everything that He taught... He lived out for us to observe. He never complained. He just did what he had been called to do. This is the consistency of the life of Christ. Those who have been chosen to lead His people have been called to do likewise. It is a daunting task to say the least. But the writer of *Hebrews* admonishes us to observe the lives of those who preach to us and see if they follow Christ in a consistent manner. Your pastor doesn’t have the luxury of quitting when times get tough. He has been called to finish the work to which Christ has called him.

Not only is he required to live out his faith, your pastor is also required to teach sound doctrine, called here the doctrine of “grace” (**vs. 9**). The Jews, to whom this letter was addressed, were thinking of returning to the rituals of Judaism, to the abstention of certain foods, and to ritual cleansing, and *Old Testament* sacrifices. Jesus had come to do away with all of that. The Old Covenant had been designed to point to Him in the first place. Pastors are required to have a strong understanding of God’s Word, so they are able to teach it to any who would believe in the Name of Jesus and be saved. To teach The

Word of God is the highest calling on this earth, and those who presume to teach had better do so with a sober understanding that they will be judged by their teaching. Your pastors are required to “correctly handle The Word of Truth” (**2 Timothy 2:15**), and we as Christians ought to love them for it!

Loving Jesus Above All (vs. 10-14)

“We have an altar from which those who worship at the tabernacle do not have a right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the most holy place by the high priest as a sin offering are burned outside the camp. Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, so that He might sanctify the people by His own blood. Let us go then, go to Him outside the camp, bearing His disgrace. For we do not have an enduring city here; instead, we see the one to come.”
Hebrews 13:10-14

Ok, so this passage, is a little bit hard to understand (that is unless you're Jewish). What he is referring to are “the sin offerings” made upon Yom Kippur, which were offered up for the sins of the priests, as well as, the people. You see, from many of the sacrifices that were offered in Israel, the priests were given a portion to eat. The offerings made on the day of atonement, however, were forbidden to be eaten. The blood from these offerings was sprinkled upon the “mercy seat, but the carcasses of the animals themselves were taken outside the camp and burned. No portion of those animals were made available for the priest's consumption.

Now let us put this all in context. Those day of atonement sacrifices were a picture of Christ, Who was crucified on mount Calvary just outside the city of Jerusalem (outside the camp). His blood was shed upon the cross for any who were willing to leave and forsake the *Old Testament* Law and come to Him for forgiveness. In other words, they were being called to “leave the camp” of Judaism and come to Christ, trusting in Him alone for salvation. To remain “in the camp”, as it were, was to reject Christ. Those who reject Him will have “no portion” of Him for their forgiveness, much like the priests of Israel who could not partake of the sacrifice made on the day of atonement. The writer of *Hebrews* once more wants to emphasize that if his readers are to find salvation and forgiveness, they must leave behind the rituals of the Old Covenant, or “come out of that camp”, and come to Christ, forsaking all else.

Jesus also calls us to forsake everything to follow Him. We are to love Him more than anything in this world. We are called to love Him above the acceptance of this world, above its riches and splendor, and most of all, above any “dead religion” based upon rituals and rules. If we are to follow Christ, then we too must “leave the camp” of this world and follow Him with our whole hearts. Jesus is not interested in having a “part of you”. He wants all of you or nothing at all.

“...If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.”
Luke 9:23

I always cringe when I hear pastors say, “Give your heart to Jesus”. He doesn't want just your heart. He wants it **all**. He wants your hopes and dream. He wants your finances. He wants your obedience, and He wants to be the reason that you live. He wants you to love Him above all else. If you truly want to follow after Him my friends, then get ready to leave the safety of “the camp” behind you, and take a walk of faith that is found only in Christ.

Loving To Sacrifice (vs. 15-16)

“Therefore, through Him, let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is the fruit of lips that confess His Name. Don't neglect to do what is good and to share, for God is pleased with such sacrifices.”
Hebrews 13:15-16

To love Christ is to love to give sacrificially, both for Him and for His people. I have never met a sold-out believer who didn't relish the opportunity to worship God by sacrificial giving. Notice how the writer of *Hebrews* links the worship of our lips with sharing from our hearts. A loving Christian will also be

a sharing Christian. You may be able to sing all the songs in the hymnal from memory, but until you know the sheer joy of giving selflessly to help those in need, then you have never experienced genuine worship. Always be on the lookout for ways to give sacrificially. By doing so, you will be storing up treasures in heaven. The most joyous people I know do not have a lot of treasure in their bank accounts, but they have a worshipful giving spirit. Stingy and Jesus just don't go together. Learn how to love sacrificially, and you will be pleasing in the sight of God!

Loving Our Spiritual Leaders (vs. 17)

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” **Hebrews 13:17**

I love this verse!! The preacher circles back once again to those who are called to leadership. Not just the preachers, but all those who are in leadership over the flock. We are to love those people and submit to their leadership. Why? Because they have to stand before God and give an account for how we have matured in our faith under their leadership. That's an awesome responsibility, so we need to cover them with as much grace as is possible. God wants each of us to be the kind of church member that makes it a joy to serve and lead! This isn't always the case by the way. Some folks seem to think that their “spiritual gift” is to keep those in leadership miserable! Pray for those whom God has sent to lead the church. If they are truly called to this position, then their only goal is for you to become all that God wants you to be. If they have not been truly called, this too will show up over the course of time. So be patient with your leaders. They are sinners saved by grace just the same as you. They just want to help you to follow Jesus. That **is** their calling after all. They will answer to Christ for how they led, just as we will answer to Him for how we followed! Respond to their leadership in a way that enables them to serve you with joy and gladness. That is how you can best love those in authority.

Well, there you have it, the nine examples of how we are called to love, if we truly belong to Christ. Does this seem overwhelming to you? Take courage, the preacher of *Hebrews* gives us the solution in his closing benediction:

“Now, may The God of peace, Who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus — The great Shepherd of the sheep — through the blood of the everlasting covenant, EQUIP you with everything good to do His will, working in us what is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”
Hebrews 13:20-21

Did you catch that? Jesus will equip you to love as He loves! You don't have to do anything, but stay close to Him. He will do the rest. He wants to walk in your shoes! He will live out His love **through you**. Just give yourself over to Him, and He will do the rest. You **can** show this world the love of The Father. So just go out there and love! You have been thoroughly equipped by Jesus Our Great High Priest... Forever!

Amen and Amen!