

Hebrews: The Supremacy of Christ Above All Things...
Lived Out in Real Life
Hebrews 13:1-9

Text:

Hebrews 13:1-9 (ESV)

¹ Let brotherly love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. ³ Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. ⁴ Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. ⁵ 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.”

⁶ So we can confidently say,

“The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear;
what can man do to me?”

⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹ Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.

Introduction:

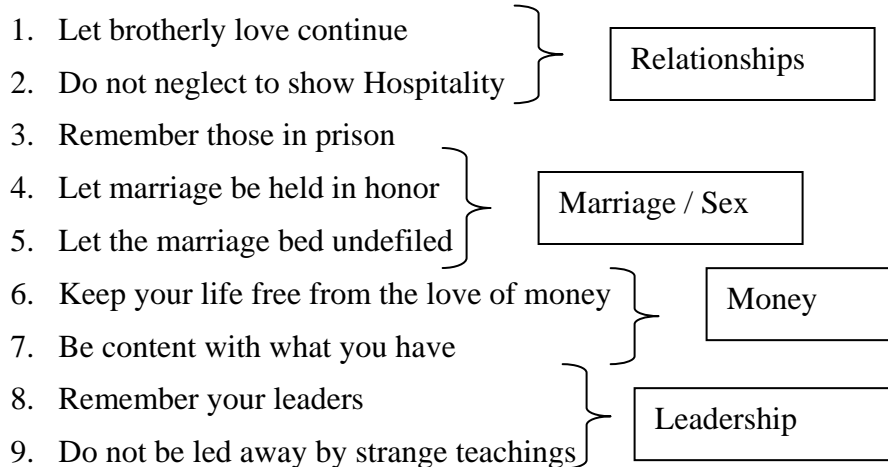
I ended our time together last week setting you up for the next series of verses that will deal with the marriage bed being held in honor. But as I contemplated all that I did not say last week, I want to linger a bit on the context of this passage before we move ahead. So, everything I said last week about this week's sermon, I will have to say again later.

I want to address one main question this morning: Why is chapter 13 of Hebrews included in the book at this point? How does Hebrews 13 carry the author's argument forward? The answer is not as mysterious as a surface reading of the text might seem.

As we began last week, I mentioned that for 12 chapters the writer of Hebrews has been establishing an air-tight argument as to why it is paramount for the Hebrew Christians to persevere in their faith so as to not turn back to Judaism away from Christ. His argument in a sentence is very simply: Christ is supreme over all things. Jesus, he has argued, is superior to angels, superior to Moses, superior to Levi and the entire Levitical priesthood, superior to the entire old covenant as the new covenant he ushers in is far surpassing in its promises and accomplishments.

What this means is that for a group of Christians who are near to caving in beneath the pressures that threaten them and to a group of Christians who are near to selling out to the pleasures that beckon them, there is a kind of life that is to be lived.

In these 9 verses he lists 9 exhortations that make up 4 categories for living. Notice these four topics:



I want to answer the question, “Why are these lists of ethical topics included here at the end of Hebrews?” I think the answer is two-fold:

Examples of Worship and Service

These nine exhortations are being brought forward as very practical ways that new covenant promises affect real-life believers. This is where Christianity is lived – true commitment of Christ means carrying out a commitment in the nitty-gritty of life. Beds and bank accounts cannot be separated from one’s commitment to Christ.

Therefore, I think we are supposed read the great doctrines of chapter 1-12 and then come to chapter 13 with one massive truth ringing in our hearts: Christ is supreme over all things. So shouldn’t we ask ourselves questions like these?

- How can I manifest the supremacy of Christ over my relationships?
- How am to I worship the supremacy of Christ in marriage and sex?
- How do I demonstrate the supremacy of Christ over money?
- What will my commitment to Christ look like in my treatment of leadership?

Ask yourself, “Do I reveal the supremacy of Christ above all things in the way I view my relationships, marriage, sexuality, money and my response to leadership?” The way we view these things, or the way we live our lives in these areas, says more than anything what we think of Christ and his NC promises. They speak volumes about our worship of Christ.

The nine exhortations which combine to give us four broad categories for life provide us a litmus test for demonstrating the supremacy of Christ over all things.

Areas for Corporate Perseverance

But not only are these topics set forward by our author as examples of worship; they are probably set forward as areas where we need the greatest help in our perseverance.

Did you catch that? The greatest help! These are areas where we will most likely trip up in our perseverance. These are four areas of life where we are likely to feel pressures that threaten and pleasures that beckon. These are four areas of life where we will most likely be prone to drifting, deception, dullness and deliberate sinning.

- Do you ever feel pressures that threaten in areas of leadership, submission, marriage and other relationships?
- Do you ever feel pleasures that beckon in sex or money?

We need perseverance and we need help in perseverance.

The context of chapter 13 flows over from the warning passage that began in chapter 12, verse 12. For those among us who have drooping hands and weak knees, we are to help and strengthen. And the exhortation in 12:12 was flowing from the discussion in 12:1-11 about discipline. Do you need help in gaining discipline in money management, or sexual purity, etc.? Do you know someone else in this church that needs help in gaining discipline in money management or sexual purity?

Do not forget for one moment that everything about the book of Hebrews has been about corporate perseverance. The progress in sanctification, holiness, righteousness, purity, discipline of every individual in this church is the business of every other individual in this church. Persevering in the faith is a corporate project!

1. Your drifting heart is to be our concern.

Hebrews 2:1 (ESV)

¹ Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

2. Your deceived and hardening heart is to be our concern.

Hebrews 3:12-13 (ESV)

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. [Do you hear the corporate call for perseverance in this verse?] ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

3. Your sluggish heart that has become dull of hearing is to be our concern.

Hebrews 5:11 (ESV)

¹¹ About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

4. Your deliberate pattern of sin is to be our concern.

Hebrews 10:24-26 (ESV)

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. [This is a loud-and-clear call to corporate perseverance.] ²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

- Are there individuals in our congregation who have started to drift away from Christ because they begun to sell-out to other pleasures – money or sex?
- Are there any persons in our church whose hearts are growing deceived as they buy the lies of our culture for more pleasure or pressure-free lifestyles?
- Are there adults or teenagers in our congregation who profess faith in Christ yet deliberately sin in their sexuality? Love of money? Refusal to submit to leaders?

- Are there couples, families or individuals in our church who are refusing to hear Christ speak because they do not want the kind of relationships that make them vulnerable?

The answer to all of these questions is a resounding, “Yes!” We need help if we are to persevere in the areas of relationships, marriage, sexuality, money and leadership.

*Case Studies*¹

Jean and Crystal meet each week for lunch. “Over one of their weekly lunch meetings, Jean told Crystal about her ongoing struggles with her husband.” Does that fit one of our four categories? Yes! What does that reveal about Jean? It reveals that she is a person in need of change who needs help. What should Crystal do? What should Crystal say?

“Frank loves leading his small group, except when it comes to the prayer time. Each week someone shares something that Frank knows he should follow up on, but he doesn’t know how to minister to people who haven’t really asked for his help.” Which category does that fit in? Relationships? Leadership?

“Fred and Ellen enjoy their relationship with the Smiths, but the Smith kids are driving them crazy. They know the Smith’s are struggling as parents, and they have talked together about it. They know they should do more – but what?” Do you sense in this scenario a set of parents about to cave-in beneath pressures that threaten? Do they need help? Has God providentially placed help in their path? Absolutely! And the help is not supposed to come from the Smith’s pastor, per se, but from Fred and Ellen.

“Andy’s struggle with lust is spiraling out of control. He can barely look at a woman without impure thoughts. He has begun to live a secret life, and in his rational moments, he is scared. He would love to talk with someone, but who? He fears that he would be judged and his life would get trashed.” Do you know what would offer hope and help to Andy? If he knew he attended a church that honestly believed they are sinners helping sinners.

“Richard’s life is dominated by his work, and his friend George can see its affect on Rich’s spiritual life and his family. When George brings up the topic, Rich is prickly and defensive. George knows its wrong to back off, but he doesn’t know what else to do.” Does that fit one of our four categories? Yes!

You see, church, honesty must compel us to admit that we are people who need help, surrounded by people who need help. Hebrews was written with that fundamental presupposition in clear view.

Do you know what the biggest sign of weakness is? You might say, “Showing your weakness.” To which the writer of Hebrews would respond, “WRONG! It’s in trying to hide your weakness.” Admitting that you need help in your daily life is a sign of strength.

Jesus has not given us a neat little formula to follow to holiness. There are no seven steps to personal and interpersonal perfection. There is only the lifelong process of fighting sin – a fight that is meant to be fought shoulder to shoulder with those in your church.

¹ These quotes are taken from Paul David Tripp’s book, *Instruments In the Redeemer’s Hand*. P&R, 2002. pp. 37-38.