

One More Thing – June 10, 2018

The author of Hebrews is somewhere far away from his congregation [v19]. He's penned this glorious sermon in a letter, just for his congregation of Jewish Christians seeking to convince them that leaving Jesus to avoid persecution is about as good an idea as [slide] giving up oxygen to avoid the stressful effort of breathing.

His message is tailor-made for his people and presented with clarity and power. But like someone going away, leaving a friend in charge of the house and kids there's always: [slide] **just one more thing:** "Don't forget to lock the doors, and don't push the small green button on the remote or the TV will explode, remember to floss the dog's teeth, and vacuum WITH the nape of the carpet- never against,, etc., etc." Likewise ch13 is list of "*one more things,*" **housekeeping items that are just as applicable to us as to them.**

The letter ends with a prayer of blessing. It reads: [slide] 20 Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. [slide] May the God of peace...equip you with everything good for doing his will, And may He work in us what is pleasing to Him.

There are things God wants you to do and to be that will accomplish His will in the world. This final prayer prays that God will make this happen in our Hebrews [& us] through Jesus Christ. And the "to do" list that comes before the prayer gives us a pretty good idea of God's life-changing agenda for us all.

So let's consider the things God wants us to do and be according to Hebrews ch13.

I. [slide] **Love each other** 13 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.

"Love" in the NT is typically [slide] "**agape**" which is, as I like to call it: "**The love that loves no matter what.**" In John Jesus' new commandment: "...that you love one another as I have loved you," is agape. Agape was in Heb 6:10 -our Hebrews are commended for the agape they showed God. And in 10:24 they're to consider how to spur one another on to agape ...

But Greek has four words for love and the one used here is: [slide] philadelphia-friendship love or brotherly love. Philadelphia is different from agape in nature but in a sense it's also contained within agape. Paul uses them both in [slide] 1Th. 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren [philly], you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love [agape] one another; They do well with Philly cause God's taught them agape.

In its Christian context, [slide] philadelphia is a mutual positive regard for each other within the body of Christ regardless of race, gender, or social status. [Gal. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.] It's the exercise of love AND the adoption of a new relationship within

the household of Faith. However important your family members may be to you, your siblings in Christ are to be just as important, just as loved. Don't believe me? [slide] How about Jesus: 48 But Jesus answered ... "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! 50 "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother." To decide to be a follower of Jesus requires this of you. [dead bury/ division]

This is the way it's supposed to be within the worldwide body of Christ. Whether brown or black or white, whether speaking Farsi or Spanish or Dutch or English anyone who calls Jesus Lord of their life should be accepted in Christian philadelphia- they are your siblings in Christ. **This love residing in you will please Him and bring about His will.**

II. [slide] **Hospitality 2** Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

All cultures of the Middle East- Jewish, Greek, Arabic- saw **hospitality as a virtue**. The Greeks saw Zeus, himself, as a protector of strangers. And the children of Isaac and Ismael remember Abraham welcoming three strangers to his home that turned out to be "The Lord." Hospitality was a great virtue in first century Palestine. But it was also very necessary –especially for Christians- as Roman Inns were less than safe and generally considered to be "**dens of iniquity.**" But, of course the v1 call to "philadelphia" expects hospitality be given to Christian strangers. And [slide] v5b and 6 give us the reason and means for our generosity: *God is our helper who will never leave us. We can be generous.*

A lot of things hinder hospitality in the 21st century: *our too-busy lives, inconvenience, our insular lifestyles, fear of being taken advantage of.* [slide] The Didache, an early Christian Faith and Practice prescribed strict limits on traveling preachers use of hospitality. "If he stays 3 days he is a false prophet. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.] Some people have a special gift of hospitality [my sister] but the scripture expects all of us to be hospitable to our siblings in Christ- those we know and those we don't- as they might even be angels
Your exercise of Hospitality will please Him and bring about His will.

III. [slide] **Compassion for the suffering 3** Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Again, like hospitality, this takes us right **back to philadelphia**. Our Congregation of Hebrews is dealing with persecution from neighbors and Imperial forces. From ch10 we know that in the past persecution meant prison or being abused and insulted publicly. Here our Hebrews are reminded to continue bringing respite from suffering to their fellow-believers in prison and suffering outside prison too.

Interestingly enough first century Christians took "prison ministry" very seriously, perhaps because, so many of their siblings in Christ found themselves in prison. They not only provided food and medical care but also simply stayed together with those in lock up. While it may be difficult to see just how to apply this call to our present-day situations the

command to continue to show compassion to the suffering remains God's expectation upon us. **It please Him and bring about His will.**

IV. [slide] Faithfulness in marriage 4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

This statement is a call to faithfulness in marriage. **NT Wright [slide]** translates the 2nd half nicely rendering it as **“God will judge those who sleep around or commit adultery.”** And while **we've** heard the Christian perspective on sex & marriage for most of our lives, **it was still brand new to the Greco-roman world.**

Sure, some Greeks might be ascetics avoiding all pleasure, including sex. But even more popular was the Libertine approach: “Everything is permissible” so let's go for it!! **In Roman marriages** [typically arranged] wives might encourage husbands to visit temple prostitutes both as a means of birth control and keeping him from taking a lover which might threaten her position as wife. And he'd go along thinking of himself as a perfectly faithful husband.

And within Judaism women were essentially property. If she burnt the toast or didn't give him children or he just got bored wanted a “newer model” a Jewish husband could just give her a letter saying so and out she goes! And in comes the new.

The difference between all that and the command of v4 is enormous. The rise of the Jesus movement in the Greco-roman world brought about significant shifts in the understanding of sexual morality. **Maintaining faithfulness in your marriage- at every level- will please God and bring about His will.**

V. [slide] Disinterested in Money & Content 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” 6 So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”

This is a compact expression of the **“theology of enough.”**

Yesterday was our anniversary: 36 years. In the first year of our life together in an apartment on the Queen Anne Counterbalance [\$350/month] every Sunday I would get a newspaper, [slide] flip through the headlines, read the comics, [slide] and then set about perusing [slide] **ALL the sale circulars from the Sunday Paper.** I was looking for “The Bargain” that would allow me to purchase THE THING that would complete us; the thing we didn't have that would make us happy. I was truly hoping to find some sort of contentment in life through stuff. I don't do that any more.

There isn't a thing that I need [short of Jesus and Rebekah, a roof over my head and some food... and internet access.] And the secret to that contentment is believing, knowing, trusting that God's agape love for me means [slide] **He will never abandon me, ever. And He is my helper so there's no reason for me to be afraid.**

And that knowledge- which should be standard equipment for every follower of Jesus- **is what frees us to be financially generous in acts of brotherly love, in hospitality, in our compassion for the suffering.** Remember what brother Paul told the Philippians : 19

... God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. God is your helper and He will never leave you so you can be content and avoid the love of money.

Your contentment and generosity will be pleasing God and bring about His will.

VI. [slide] Inspired by Leaders past & supportive of Leaders present.

7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever

17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

Wednesday night in thinking about this I asked: who are the leaders from your past that you feel helped your faith in Christ the most? Almost everyone at the table had a name or many names come to mind and stories to tell about that person. The Leaders in v7 are probably those who first brought the message of Jesus the Messiah to our Hebrews- another layer of Heroes of the faith. According to Hebrews 2 they were people who had heard Jesus in person and so could confirm the truth about who and what Jesus was. V7 has the feel that **these leaders are no longer living.** While we can't be sure, within the whole context of the Hebrews situation it seems likely that "Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith," suggests they died for their faith and were faithful to Jesus all the way to the end.

V17 calls our Hebrews to apply that same respect to their current leaders [of whom our author could be one]. While it's difficult in 21st century American society- where we are prone to resist anyone exerting authority over us- the message is these leaders will have to answer to God and they know it so –all things being equal- **you should abide by their authority and be confident in their leading.**

The "punchline" to this statement is interesting: If you can't or won't do those things the one who will suffer the loss is you.

Of course all church leaders- no matter how good- are mortal and so transitory. But Heb 1 extolled Jesus forever nature "...you remain the same, and your years will never end." And 7:24 ... because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Regardless of how human leadership changes, Jesus "the great shepherd of the sheep" is the same yesterday, today and forever. **Being inspired by Past leaders and supporting the present ones will be pleasing to God and bring about His will.**

VII. [slide] Strengthened by Grace & Bearing His Disgrace

9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange [foreign] teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so. 10 We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. [slide]

11 The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. 12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. 13 Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. 14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

Here our author points back to everything he's said in the previous sermon. [slide] Because of the Jewish nature of this letter "**strange**" in v9 may not be the best word... as it leads us to think of esoteric, mystical, religious foods. In fact the Greek *xenos* primarily means "**foreign**" - like xenophobia: fear of foreigners. So in the context of Judaism and food it's probably talking about teachings foreign to the gospel: like, for instance, Jewish food laws. The only NT food law was "don't eat any blood."

Paul confirms v9 [slide] telling the Corinthians: 1Cor. 8:8 ... food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. And Jesus said: Mark 7:18 ...nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person unclean, 19 because it goes not into the heart but into the stomach and passes into the sewer?' [NJB] *So here's another warning not to get caught up in into useless religious ceremony about food and drink. Let God's grace be your strength.*

Still on the same subject "altar" [slide] in v10 is intended to be a figure of speech for "sacrifice." You may remember that meat from most animals sacrificed in Judaism was consumed either by priests or by the worshippers [Passover]. So our author is saying when it comes to holy food, we've got an excellent sacrifice a prime cut- that's not available for all those Jewish Priests. Of course the sacrifice he's talking about is Jesus. Unless they accept Him as Messiah and God the Jewish priests have no part in him.

To press this even further, our author mentions the bull and goat sacrificed on the Day of Atonement. [slide] Their blood was used in the Tabernacle to purify the people. The carcasses were not eaten but hauled out of the camp and destroyed with fire. Similarly Jesus was also dragged outside the city gate of Jerusalem and destroyed. *His blood spilled outside the City redeemed the whole of Creation.*

Then comes a shocking call to our Hebrews: [slide] 13 Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

Jesus is outside the camp, outside the city, the holy city- Jerusalem. And the call is to go to him outside the camp, outside the city, outside Jerusalem. [slide] The point here is if their Judaism keeps them from Jesus and his cross then they must leave it behind. If their heritage and their traditions keep them from Jesus then they must be left behind. If their devotion to temple or priesthood or nation kept them from Jesus they must leave them behind and come out to him...outside the city. This may mean experiencing disgrace among their Jewish neighbors just as Jesus experienced the disgrace of the cross.

Our author is challenging them to stop hiding in Judaism and come out freely to Jesus.

Remember last week we talked about God "shaking the earth and heavens" once more and only that which is permanent/ eternal will stand. The rest will be shaken away to nothingness. [slide] The earthy Jerusalem and everything that belongs to it is part of that, which, will be shaken. **Just like the Temple and the sacrificial system, it will not last. It will not endure.** As our author says [slide]: 14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

And so are we, here in 21st century America. And so the call to come to Jesus outside the city bearing his disgrace is just as real for us.

If our traditions, our heritage, our devotion to race and nation are, in any way keeping us from Jesus then we **MUST** come out of the camp, out of the city to Jesus and stand with Him enduring the same disgrace He endured outside Jerusalem.

If we resist teachings foreign to our faith, and depend on God's grace for our strength; and if we follow Jesus "outside the camp" and share in his disgrace it will please God and bring about His will. And finally and briefly...

VIII. [slide] Offering sacrifices of praise & service 15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Both Jews and Greeks thought Christians had no sacrifices to offer and mocked them for it. But they were wrong! We have two sacrifices to offer that please God: expressions of praise and thanksgiving that fearlessly profess Jesus Name and good works done in the power of brotherly love, hospitality, & compassion.

These offerings never fail to please God and bring about His will.

All of the items on this "holy to-do" list are as applicable to you and me, here and now as they were to our Hebrews in the first century.

[slide]

We need to intentionally live out **Brotherly Love.** [slide]

We need to actively practice **hospitality.** [slide]

We need to engage in **compassion for the suffering.** [slide]

We need to be unquestionably **Faithful in our marriages.** [slide]

We, as Jesus People, need to be obviously **Disinterested in Money** and unquestionably **Content** with what we have. [slide]

To continue in faithfulness to Jesus we need to be **Inspired by Faith Leaders past and supportive of Faith Leaders present.** [slide]

We need to be **Strengthened by God's Grace** while **Bearing Jesus' Disgrace** as we "come out" of our city and leave behind all that will be shaken. [slide]

And we need to be constantly **Offering sacrifices of praise & works of loving service** to the world.

If we, all of us, could live out all of the above [in the power of the HS of course] it would unquestionably please Him and bring about His will in the world. [slide]

20 Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13

1 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. **2** Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. **3** Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. **5** Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?"

7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. 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 carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so. **10** We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

11 The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. **12** And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. **13** Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. **14** For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. **16** And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

18 Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. **19** I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.

20 Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, **21** equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

22 Brothers and sisters, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you quite briefly.

23 I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.

24 Greet all your leaders and all the Lord's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings.

25 Grace be with you all.