

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS:
40. “The Call to Tangible Love for One Another”
Hebrews 13:1 – 4

Introduction:

This morning we are returning to our study of the letter to the Greek-speaking, ethnic Jewish people had come to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior when they heard the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They experienced being **Saved** by **Faith** in Jesus Christ and received His presence in their lives, His indwelling Holy Spirit.

But as our author writes, they are in grave danger of turning away from following Jesus and turning back to legalistic righteousness! They are considering turning away from their faith in Jesus and reverting back to legalism: Keeping rules and laws that had no power to save anyone from anything!

If you recall in our study of the early chapters of Hebrews we saw there the author’s deep concern for his readers’ beliefs. They were perilously close to walking in heresy. They had begun to supplement what Jesus had done in His redemption for us all on the Cross, His blood shed to cleanse us, His death for our sins, His resurrection power poured out in us, with a “**Jesus And**” system of beliefs. In their case it was Jesus and angels, Jesus and Moses, Jesus and the Law, Jesus and the sacrificial system!

So, he writes to refocus his readers’ attention on Jesus: His atoning sacrifice for our sins, His precious blood shed to cleanse us of sin, His resurrection life and victory over sin, death, and all the powers of Hell! He appeals to them to **Follow** the **Lead** of the Holy Spirit who was dwelling in their **Hearts**. His role in our lives is to bring us to Jesus, who He is, what He has done for us in His sacrifice on the Cross, and what He has taught.

The distinguishing characteristic of the Spirit’s presence in our lives is the agape love of God burning in our hearts and lives. Romans 5:5 “*And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.*” So, the author writes about the primary truth: What we do for God in works and deeds is always a result of having opened our hearts to receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit within us, motivating us to **Loving Obedience!**

The text in this letter that addresses the need to live a life of loving obedience is Hebrews 6:10 – 12 NLT; “*For God is not unfair. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him by caring for other Christians, as you still do. **Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true.** Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God’s promises because of their faith and endurance.*”

Listen to his powerful words of counsel and admonition in the text. **Keep on Loving Others**, for in so doing you make certain what you are hoping for, the salvation of your souls. **Remain Faithful and endure to the very end of your lives on earth**, so that you do not permit the enemy of your souls to make you spiritually dull or indifferent to the things of God. We choose how we will live our lives and what or whom we will choose to love in life!

And please notice the author says, **God is not unfair: He won't forget how they glorify God and honor His name among them by Loving Others deeply!** We glorify God by loving others deeply with His love! We simply can't overstate the importance of living a life motivated by the Holy Spirit's presence in us motivating us to think and act in holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love for people in our spheres of influence.

There is a reason why we must know and understand the truth about being motivated by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts as we respond to what Jesus did for us on the Cross by faith. This entire letter is a call to **Perseverance** in the **Walk of Faith** in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. **If we are to remain steadfast in our walk of faith in Christ Jesus, we must have greater motivation than our human will and determination moving us to obey God's laws!**

The Hebrew author again and again makes the clear and vital point that Jesus is the only way for human beings to be brought into a right relationship with God Almighty. Jesus alone makes us to be sons and daughters of God, adopted into His family, cleansed and purified of sins and self-interest, and people who are inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Jesus alone can give us this kind of **Open Access** to God the Father by grace through faith in Christ's atoning work!

Many scholars believe this letter was written to dispersed Hebrew people who had been thrown out of Rome by the emperor Claudius in about AD 49. The Scriptures refer to this incident in Acts 18:2. They were now living elsewhere in the Roman Empire and our author is writing to them to bolster their faith, to urge them to stay close to Jesus and walk in the Spirit. At the time this letter was written the name Jewish was a lot safer name to bear than the name Christian!

Christians were beginning to feel intense hatred and persecution under Roman Emperor Nero. Nero blamed Christians for the fires of July AD 64. He used that incident to touch off violent and murderous persecution of Christians. Our brothers and sisters were tortured and murdered in some of the most awful ways we can imagine. Nero also used that accusation as a means to keep the Apostle Paul locked up in Mamertine Prison and ultimately to put Paul to death by beheading!

In that light, as we study this amazing letter, it is important to remember what the author was writing about and to whom he was writing. He is moved by deep love for these fellow believers. He pleads with them to stay soft and pliable in the hands of the Holy Spirit, moved in their hearts and lives to live out their faith in Jesus. Understanding this gives us such good context for the exhortations we will study together this morning.

I. Exhortation to Brotherly/Sisterly Love:

Hebrews 13:1 MSG *"Stay on good terms with each other, held together by love."*

Our author makes it clear that the issue of **Loving Each Other** as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, philadelphia in the Greek text, resides with us, and it is not optional. The word is taken from two root words: Philos is the Greek word meaning affectionate love we feel for our natural brothers and sisters, and adelpoi is the Greek word for brothers. The believers in Jesus Christ become warmly affectionate to one another making the Church a family of believers.

Our author uses the word “philadelphia,” to describe how we who have been redeemed through what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us and in us choose to treat one another! Remember, he is writing to people who are experiencing horrific persecution from Rome! If believers needed anything in life, it was to know they were loved by their brothers and sisters in Christ! This word is used to describe the **Kindness** and **Love** of the **Christians** for one another is found in four other places in New Testament:

Romans 12:10 *“Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring one another.”*

I Thessalonians 4:9 *“But I don’t need to write to you about the Christian love that should be shown among God’s people. For God himself has taught you to love one another.”*

I Peter 1:22 *“Now you can have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters, because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. See to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts.”*

I Peter 1:7 *“Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have love for everyone.”*

This warm affection for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus is to be one of the distinguishing characteristics of the gathered Church on earth. It is different from the word agape love, the Greek word meaning holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love. It refers to the believers as having a **Common Bond** of **Kindness** toward and **Love** for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Our author makes it clear that we are responsible to deposit this loving kindness, brotherly, sisterly affection for each other in the lives of others who have been redeemed and brought out of enslavement to a life of sin. His call to us is just three words in the Greek text: “he philadelphia meneto,” meaning “let brotherly love remain” in the lives of those you interact with. **The word meneto comes from the word mone, from which we get our word monument, something that is an enduring witness of our lives!**

Is it any wonder our enemy Satan hates to see brothers and sisters in Christ living in family-like love, affection and kindness toward each other? Our author teaches us in this text, the way we treat one another in the church is a remaining **Witness** in a **Community**, as they look on at us. The enemy has used two great extremes to tear down brotherly love in communities of believers.

The first extreme is the danger of “fixing those with whom we disagree on some issue.” The issues can vary and really aren’t “the issue.” When people divide up in a local body of believers, brotherly and sisterly love and affection fly right out the window! What people in our sphere of

influence see as they look on at a church being divided by strong opinion shapers over some issue, is a “witness to how divisive and opinionated we Christians can be!” The call to brotherly and sisterly affection, kindness, and love means we love each other despite our differences of opinion on issues.

The second extreme is the danger of a local church that has become harsh, unsympathetic, and critical of those who have crumbled and their faith has faltered under some test and trial. The truth is really important, and living in faith when things are hard is vital, but if we are honest with ourselves, we all have needed people to come alongside us and love us when we have blown it in some way. **The local church should be a place where we turn when our faith has faltered and we need to be restored in heart and soul!**

Paul writes to the Galatian Christians in Galatians 6:1, 2 *“Dear friends, if a Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”*

II. Affection and Kindness for Those in Need:

Hebrews 13:2, 3 *“Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! Don’t forget about those in prison. Suffer with them as though you were there yourself. Share the sorrow of those being mistreated, as though you feel their pain in your own bodies.”*

Our author is talking to his readers about living a life of kindness, affectionate love for others, and he introduces three categories of people in need of being loved in this way by their Christian brothers and sisters. Interestingly, all three of these categories of people describe situations the persecution of the Church by Roman authorities had created among them.

First, he says be in the Greek text, “philodzenias” which means be kindly affectionate and practice being loving toward **Strangers** who come into your lives. The believers are exhorted to have homes that were ready to receive, give a warm meal and a place to rest in peace and grace, to others whom they had never met. Often, they found themselves loving and helping those who were fleeing from the horrific persecution that was happening in Rome and Roman colonies.

This word philodzenias implores the believers in Christ to have homes that are **Open, Warm,** and **Kind** to those who need a place to stay, a warm meal, a bath, and a bed. In the first century when this was written to the scattered Hebrew believers, it was entirely possible that Christians they had never met before were going to need hospitality, tangible love from brothers and sisters in Christ.

He says some people who have been hospitable to those they had never met before, found the person was extremely interesting and an “aggelos,” which can be interpreted either by our word “angel” or “messenger,” meaning they bore a message of Christian love as they stayed in the home of new Christian friends.

Second, he refers to how they were to feel toward those who were **Prisoners**, the Greek words is “desmiois,” “ones in chains or bound up,” and his words are so specific to the believers in Christ Jesus. He says we are to treat those who are in prison, in chains or bonds, as though we were right there in the cell or bearing chains with them.

When we think about these words, it is easy to think about people we have known who have gone to prison for a period of time for some felonious crimes they have committed. But what our author is writing, calling to their minds those who were in prison, he is writing about people who were chained and imprisoned for their **Allegiance** to and **Fidelity** to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord!

He tells his readers then and now to have deep concern for, sympathy for, **Compassion** for those who have been placed on trial for their faith and have been put in chains, bonds, and imprisoned! He calls on them and us to feel so deeply for them that we imagine ourselves sitting there beside them with our ankles and wrists chained or bound.

The truth is, beloved ones, there are many people on the other side of the world who are experiencing this very thing today, chains and torture for their faith in Jesus Christ! This exhortation is for us right now in 2020, in Mifflintown PA! **We are to be deeply moved, to affectionately care for those who are imprisoned, chained, held in bondage for “the Crime” of faithfully loving and following Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord!**

James wrote some powerful words about true religion. James 1:27 *True and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us.*”

Third, he refers to those Christians who are **Abused** and **Mistreated**. “*Share the sorrow of those being mistreated, as though you feel their pain in your own bodies.*” They and we are exhorted to walk alongside those who have experienced abuse, who have been brutally tortured and have suffered mightily for their testimony of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives! We are to be so moved by their plight, their sorrow and suffering that we feel in our own bodies what they have been caused to feel!

The Apostolic Constitutions lay out the path the followers of Jesus are to take as we care deeply for our brothers and sisters who are in suffering. Sometimes Christians in the early church were sent to slavery in mines, sort of like being imprisoned to hard labor in Siberia: “If any Christian is condemned for Christ’s sake to the mines by the ungodly, do not overlook him but from the proceeds of your toil and sweat send him something to support himself and to reward the soldier of Christ.”

When we choose the Christian virtues of brotherly and sisterly love for those who have been abused, beaten, who have suffered at the hands of those who hate them for their faith in Christ Jesus, we are **Brokenhearted**, **Humbled** deeply, and moved to feel deep **Compassion**, knowing full well: “There but for the grace of God go I!”

The plight of our Christian brothers and sisters around the world, when truly felt and owned in our hearts and minds, causes us to think soberly and honestly. **When we stand for our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and base our decisions on His Word, adhered to in sincerity and simplicity, we may very well experience right here in the United States, what our Christian brothers and sisters in China, North Korea, and radical Islamic states have been enduring for decades!**

III. Love for One Man, One Woman for a Lifetime:

Hebrews 13:4 NLT “Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.”

The author continues his call to the Hebrew Christians to live a life of godliness and Christian love in a world that was sorely in need of those two things. He takes his readers to the most basic relationship we have as human beings: Our **Marriage**. In a world where cheap and meaningless sex was everywhere, **the man and woman of God are called upon to treat their marriage relationship as something sacred to God and to the two of them.**

If we were to translate the words of this command literally, he says marriage is to be considered *timay*, “precious, priceless, costly, of inestimable value.” The covenantal relationship between a man and a woman, who have made promises to each other before God, is to be considered sacred to both the man and the woman for the rest of their lives. It deserves our best human effort and energy before God.

The author is wanting his readers to know that just like every other godly covenant we enter into it is **Costly** to **Make** it **Work!** Marriage does not become all that God intends for it to be between a man and a woman without both parties being determined to make it work. **It requires the costliness of laying aside the pull our incessant self-interest, which is the foundation of individualism.**

It requires two people who are so committed to their sacred covenant of marriage before God all things common with each other **Includes** their **Bodies**. The word in the text translated “marriage bed” is the G-rated expression of the Greek text. **It is the actual word that describes what happens between a man and woman as God-ordained and to be held as sacred!**

Paul wrote about the sacredness of the union between a husband and wife to the church at Corinth. I Corinthians 7:3, 4 “*The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*”

Then he describes what happens when this most sacred and basic relationship of society breaks down and sex becomes the end of all relationships in and of itself. The sex that people have outside of the marriage covenant before God is casual, cheap, and **Diminishes** the **Capacity** to truly **Love** in the hearts and lives of those who practice it! That is why he writes in the text, God will hold accountable, will judge all who have lived in a state of fornication and adultery without repentance and changing their ways!

Listen to Paul’s words from I Corinthians 6:13b – 20 MSG: “*There’s more to sex than skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture the two become one. Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us lonelier than ever – the kind of sex that can never “become one.” There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for “becoming one” with another. Or didn’t you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don’t you see that you can’t live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not*

some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.”

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS:
40. “The Call to Tangible Love for One Another”
Hebrews 13:1 – 4

Introduction:

We’re studying the Book of Hebrews. It was written to Jewish people who had been **S**_____ by **F**_____ in Jesus Christ and had received His Holy Spirit in their lives.

The author writes to people who are perilously close to turning away from following Jesus and turning back to legalistic, human righteousness!

These Hebrew Christians were supplementing what Jesus did for them on the Cross: A “**J**_____ **A**_____” something else mentality.

He pleads the readers to **F**_____ the **L**_____ of the Holy Spirit who will always lead them to Jesus.

The distinguishing characteristic of His presence in our lives is agape/love. Romans 5:5 ... Our good deeds must be rooted in the Holy Spirit pouring out His love into our hearts, motivating us to **L**_____ **O**_____.

The author’s text pointing them to live the way of agape/love is Hebrews 6:10 – 12. Listen to his exhortations: Keep on **L**_____ **O**_____. **R**_____ **F**_____ to Jesus for your lifetime!

This entire letter is written to people as a call to **P**_____ in our walk of **F**_____ in Jesus Christ and His provisions!

The author writes again and again about the truth, Jesus alone can give the believer **O**_____ **A**_____ to the Father God.

The historical setting of the people to whom our author is writing ...

I. Exhortations to Brotherly/Sisterly Love: Hebrews 13:1

Our author makes it clear the issue of genuinely **L**_____ **E**_____ **O**_____ resides with us and is not optional.

The word “philadelphia” is used to describe **K**_____ and **L**_____ for Christians, is found in four other places in the New Testament:

Romans 12:10; I Thessalonians 4:9; I Peter 1:22 and 1:7 ... It is used to refer to Christians as having a **C** _____ **B** _____ of love and kindness for one another in local churches!

“Let brotherly love remain, is from the Greek word “meneto” meaning something that is a permanent monument or witness. He is saying our love for one another is a **W** _____ to our **C** _____.

The enemy of our souls uses two extremes to tear down brotherly/sisterly love in communities of believers.

-The first extreme “Fixing those with whom we disagree.”

-The second extreme is what happens when churches become harsh to and critical of those whose **F** _____ has **F** _____.

The local Church should be a place we run to not away from when we need to be **R** _____
... Colossians 6:13, 2

II. Affection and Kindness for Those in Need: Hebrews 13:2, 3

The Church is called to “philadzenias” kindness and hospitality for **S** _____. This word calls Christians to have homes that are **O** _____, **W** _____, and **K** _____ to people who need a place to stay, a meal, and a bath!

The author calls us to care for the **P** _____, literally “desmiois” refers to “those who are bound or in chains!” These are people who are in chains for their **A** _____ and **F** _____ to Jesus! The readers are exhorted to have great **C** _____ for them!

He refers to the **A** _____ and **M** _____ for their faith! When we choose the way of brotherly/sisterly love we feel brokenness for and **C** _____ for those who have suffered abuse for Jesus!

III. Love for One Man, One Woman for a Lifetime: Hebrews 13:4

The author calls us to faithfulness in the most basic relationship of society, our family. He implores them to consider the marriage covenant as sacred!

We are to consider our **M** _____ as “timay” meaning “precious, priceless, costly.”

The author says like all human covenants, marriage is **C** _____ to **M** _____ it **W** _____. We all must lay aside our self-interest in order to succeed in marriage!

This selflessness **I** _____ our **B** _____. The actual word “marriage bed” is the G – rated rendering. Paul adds in I Corinthians 7:3, 4

The casual and meaningless sexual activity people practice today outside of the Covenant of marriage **D** _____ their **C** _____ to truly love, selflessly! I Corinthians 6:13b – 20
MSG

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. What is the role of our faith in our personal salvation experience with the Lord Jesus? How does faith increase and grow in our hearts, souls, and minds?
2. If someone asked you what is the infallible proof of our salvation in Jesus, how would you answer them? Why?
3. Why is it so important to God that we know the responsibility for and the practice of brotherly/sisterly love resides with us?
4. What are some ways Christians can demonstrate philadelphia love to one another?
5. What do Christians from different theological and doctrinal positions stand on to remain in Christian unity with each other?
6. What does the author want the readers to do for people who are suffering, in bonds or mistreated for their faith? How does that apply to us in 2020?
7. What does the author say about Christian marriages? Why does the Bible speak so clearly to how Christians should conduct themselves in marriage?
8. Read together aloud I Corinthians 12:1 - 27 and discuss insights you have regarding how Jesus works to unify His people today.
9. Read together aloud I Peter 3:1 – 7 and Ephesians 5:21 - 33 and discuss insights you have regarding the way believers in Christ Jesus should conduct themselves in their marriage.
10. What are some things you took away from the message on brotherly/sisterly love? Why is it so important for us to carve out time in our daily schedule to relate meaningfully to one another in our church family? What are some things we can Christians consider our marriages to be sacred?