

Live Out The Faith
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Allen Power

Hebrews 13:1-8

As we look at the last chapter of Hebrews we're reminded that this book was part letter and part message or sermon. Parts of it were for unbelievers, but most of it was for new believers in Christ who were tempted to turn back to trusting in the old covenant of Judaism.

As he nears the end, the teacher begins to summarize with some specific points. These first eight verses of Hebrews 13 form an elegant, concise list of instructions, and encouragement. We call those "exhortations." An exhortation is giving someone something to either BE, DO, or REMEMBER. The writer of Hebrews has given them a ton of truth, now he's wrapping up with how he wants them to ACT on that truth. You might say this was his "takeaway."

1 Let brotherly love continue.

I like the way the NIV has it: "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters." (NIV)

- This verse is so well written it doesn't need much analysis or unpacking.
- **What very important words from Jesus does this verse bring to mind?**
- In four words the writer has beautifully stated the "horizontal" or second portion of the great commandment.

Matthew 22:36–40 (ESV)

36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

- In verse one, **what does the word "continue" tell us? If something is to continue, that means it has...? How does that word "continue" speak to how long we're to love other believers? When does the Bible tell us to STOP loving a brother or sister in Christ?**
- Some people are not very lovable. **What enables me to love in that situation?** (Illustration)
- **What "action steps" could help us love other believers continuously?**

Romans 12:10 (ESV)

10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Loving Christ allows us to love others. Loving others as brothers and sisters is the foundation of living the Christian life as a fellowship of believers.

2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

- **What is showing hospitality? Why would showing hospitality to strangers have been important in that day?**

- **What does he mean by “some have entertained angels” without knowing it?** (Gen. 18:1-15)
- **What are some examples of how to live this out today?**
- Some in this class have modeled this concept beautifully for us.

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.

- **Is this talking about a prison ministry to felons down at the county jail?**
- In this country it’s rare that someone actually gets locked up for their faith.
- **What are examples from today where believers have had the opportunity to help and support someone who has been jailed or mistreated for their faith? How can we help?**

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.

- This is another verse that is pretty straight forward.
- Marriage, as God designed it, should be honored and held in high esteem. Sex in marriage is to be only between the husband and wife, and there is to be no sex outside of marriage.
- Consider the context of the times. In the Roman empire promiscuity, perversion, and infidelity were running rampant. If Christians honored marriage and stayed pure in the marriage relationship, the example would be powerful against the backdrop of a sick society. Sound’s kind of like today! It’s sad but true that a happy and pure marriage is really counter-cultural.

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.”

- He doesn’t say money itself is bad, but the love of it. **What do you think is the proper balance between making money and contentment with what you have?**

What’s the love of money? Someone asked Bernard Baruch, *“How much money does it take for a rich man to be satisfied?”* Baruch answered, *“Just a million more than he has.”*

Contentment: *“If God honors my hard work with more money, I’ll be grateful and use it wisely for the good of my family and His kingdom. If He simply meets my needs only, I’m just as grateful.”*

- It’s interesting that the writer moves from a warning about greed to the promise of God’s presence. **Why did he do that?**
- Verse six builds on verse five, but I see it as its own point. It’s a testimony we need to give to ourselves as much as to others:

6 So we can confidently say,

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

- He’s quoting Psalm 118:6. Psalm 118 tells how God came to the rescue when evil people were trying to destroy the psalmist. It’s a hymn of TESTIMONY of what God did for him.

- How often do we remind ourselves of the truth of verse six? How often do we tell others?

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.

- First, let me say, what a convicting verse for those of us who take a leadership position in the church, especially those who teach God's word! We're being held to a higher standard.
- We are wired for "role models." **Why do you think that is?**
- The wording of this verse would indicate we're talking about those in the past.
- **Have you accumulated some spiritual role models? Some from history? Some from YOUR own lifetime? Tell us about that.**

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

- Do you know anyone else you can say that about? We sometimes compliment someone we know as being consistent. *"You always know what you'll get with them."* **But are they really always the same? Why not? So, why is Jesus the same?**
- Verse eight is very comforting. It's also fundamental to living the Christian life.
- We said at the beginning, this sermon/letter is all about Jesus. What has the writer told us about Jesus? Look back at Hebrews 1:1-4, and Hebrews 12:2.
- Jesus never takes a day off:
- He was the agent of all creation at the beginning, and He is the sustainer of all creation now.
- He was the perfect sacrifice for our sins on the cross, and He is the great High Priest advocating on our behalf to God the Father every hour of every day.
- He gave us our faith when we began this journey, and He will perfect our faith when we end it.
- He has gone to Heaven to prepare a place for us, and He will come back to take us there.
- No matter what we face, He will never leave us or forsake us.
- How could we trust a God who isn't the same, yesterday, today, and forever?

I can only live the Christian life by looking to Jesus. I can only trust Jesus if He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- These eight simple verses are a good summary of how Christians should live.
- There's MUCH more to living the Christian life. That's why we need to open our Bibles every day. But, these verses would be a good REVIEW to check ourselves on how we're doing.
- This week let's try to spend some quiet moments reviewing how we're doing in each one.
- The writer closes the message with this great benediction in Hebrews 13:20-21:

Hebrews 13:20–21 (NLT)

20 Now may the God of peace— who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—

21 may he equip you with all you need for doing his will.

May he produce in you,* through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.