

# Studies in Grace and Faith

## Toward a Better Understanding of Hebrews 13:1-8

After having taught them what they needed to know about Jesus and the New Covenant, the author now gives instructions about behavior. You will notice that the teachings are either about believing in Jesus or loving one another.

### VERSE 1<sup>1</sup>

#### **Let love of the brethren continue.**

1. **Love:** “*phileo*, which speaks of human affection, fondness, a non-ethical, though perfectly legitimate, form of love.-Wuest
2. **Continue:** *menō*; to *stay* (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy): - abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry.
  - a. The clear implication here is that the Hebrew believers were already walking in brotherly love and the author encourages them to continue.
3. **Amplified:** LET LOVE for your fellow believers continue and be a fixed practice with you [never let it fail].
4. **Aren't we supposed to love everyone, not just believers?** Yes, of course, but we are clearly taught to make each other a priority.

#### **Galatians 6:9-10**

*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

#### **1 John 3:23**

*And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.*

5. **“Love” is not only a feeling we have for someone. “Love” = doing good for each other.**

#### **James 2:14-16**

*What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?*

6. **Phileo love may be the most important kind of love for us to emphasize in our lives. This is the brotherly love we walk in for each other, and it is the love we can have for Jesus.**

#### **John 21:15-17**

*“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (Agape) Me more than these?”*

*He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love (Phileo) You.”*

*He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” <sup>16</sup> He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (Agape) Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love (Phileo) You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” <sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (Phileo) Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to*

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, main text scriptures are in the NASB Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Supporting text is in the NKJV Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Unless otherwise noted, definitions of Greek words are from the Strong's Concordance.

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him the third time, “Do you love (Phileo) Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (Phileo) You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.

### VERSE 2

**Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.**

1. **“Hospitality” and “strangers”** do not appear in the Greek as two words. It is actually one compound word, “philoxenias” which means fond-lodging or hospitality toward a stranger.<sup>2</sup>
  - a. It is likely that this is an encouragement to the Hebrews to not reject the Gentile believers.
2. **Entertained angels** is a reference to men in the Old Testament who encountered heavenly beings. “The idea is that when you practice hospitality you may be helping a messenger of God without realizing it.”—Nelson Study Bible  
**Matthew 10:40-42**  
“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”<sup>41</sup> He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.<sup>42</sup> And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”
3. When we show hospitality to each other we are showing hospitality to Jesus.  
**Matthew 25:40**  
And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these **My brethren**, you did it to Me.’

### VERSE 3

**Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.**

1. The prisoners and those who are ill-treated were most likely a reference to those who were being persecuted for their faith in Jesus.
2. **In the body** is not a reference to the body of Christ, but to the physical body. “The recipients of this letter were vulnerable to similar persecutions as long as they were alive.”—Nelson Study Bible  
**Amplified:** Remember those who are in prison as if you were their fellow prisoner, and those who are ill-treated, since you also are liable to bodily sufferings.
3. When we remember the Christian prisoners and those who are persecuted, we are doing it to Jesus.  
**Matthew 25:34-40**  
Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup> for I was

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<sup>2</sup> For an extended discussion of philonexia see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philoxenia>

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hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

<sup>37</sup> "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?' <sup>38</sup> When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these **My brethren**, you did it to Me.'

### VERSE 4

**Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**

1. **Honor:** timios; *valuable*, that is, (objectively) *costly*, or (subjectively) *honored, esteemed*, or (figuratively) *beloved*: - dear, honorable, (more, most) precious, had in reputation.

**Ephesians 5:31-32**

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

2. When determining whether or not the Gentile believers were required to keep the Law of Moses, the Jerusalem council determine that they were NOT, but they did give some simple instructions. One of them was to be sexually pure. Most of us are not tempted to drink blood or things sacrificed to idols, so for most of us, we need only concern ourselves with the ONE THING.

**Acts 15:28-29**

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: <sup>29</sup> that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.

Here is no exaltation of celibacy as something inherently superior to marriage; the marriage union is divinely ordained, and its sacred precincts must not be polluted by the intrusion of a third party, of either sex. Fornication and adultery are not synonymous in the New Testament: adultery implies unfaithfulness by either party to the marriage vow, while the word translated "fornication" covers a wide range of sexual irregularities, including unions within bounds prohibited by law. Our author agrees with other New Testament writers that those who are guilty of such practices incur the judgment of God. "Let no one deceive you with empty words," says Paul; "for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6; cf. Col. 3:5f.). F.F. Bruce

3. Some of the strongest words in scripture are about fornication and adultery, both physical and spiritual. This stems from God's high value on the sanctity of marriage and His desire that we honor the fact that WE ARE JOINED TO CHRIST.

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### 1 Corinthians 6:9-20

Do you not know that the unrighteous<sup>3</sup> will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup> **And such WERE some of you. But you WERE washed, but you WERE sanctified, but you WERE justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**<sup>12</sup> All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.<sup>13</sup> Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. **Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.**<sup>14</sup> And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

<sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!<sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.”<sup>17</sup> **But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.**<sup>18</sup> Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.<sup>19</sup> **Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?**<sup>20</sup> For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

- a. Some have said that when we commit sexual sin, we are separated from God, but the passage above speaks 100% to the contrary. We are one Spirit with the Lord. If we commit sexual immorality, the presence of God remains in us. Shall we defile the dwelling place of the most high God by using our minds or bodies to engage in sexual immorality? God forbid! The horror of these sins is not that we will be separated with God, but that we are subjecting His temple to debauchery.
4. **God will judge**—This phrase should strike alarm in the reader and emphasize how highly God Himself esteems not only the relationship between man and wife, but our union with Him.
  - a. A few have clearly taught that sexual sin results in eternal damnation, but most don’t agree with that extreme. Some teach that as long as the person repents and asks for forgiveness, he will be right again with God. We teach, and indeed this book of Hebrews teaches that all of our sins were forgiven at the cross. Then how are we to interpret this judgement? Here are two views.
    - 1) God does not look lightly upon a believer who is living in sexual sin. Even though the believer is forgiven, God is not pleased with the behavior and will not allow that person to be content with his/her actions.
    - 2) Our “judgement” is discipline from God.

### 1 Corinthians 11:31-32

*But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.*

- b. Another way of looking at this verse is that anyone who would live the life of an adulterer or fornicator, which is described in 1 Corinthians 6:11 as what

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<sup>3</sup> Unrighteous refers to unbelievers.

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believers WERE, is more likely speaking of unbelievers. The natural state of a believer in Jesus Christ is to not sin.

**1 John 3:4-10**

*Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup>You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. <sup>6</sup>No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. <sup>7</sup>Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; <sup>8</sup>the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup>No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. <sup>10</sup>By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.*

- i. This verse is NOT saying that in order to be righteous, you need to live righteously. It is saying if you are righteous; that is, if you are born again, you will NOT PRACTICE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.
- c. **There is forgiveness when we fall short, but that fact does not endorse practicing sin.**

**1 John 2:1**

*My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

### VERSES 5-6

**Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said,**

**"I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU,  
NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"**

**<sup>6</sup>so that we confidently say,**

**"THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID.  
WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"**

1. "Your character", or as some translations interpret it, "your conversation" is referring to one's lifestyle. "The love of money" is one compound word in the Greek literally translated as the love of silver.

*The word "conversation" today is limited in its meaning to converse between two or more persons. In 1611 A.D., when the Authorized Version was translated, it meant what the Greek word means, "manner of life, behavior." The words "without covetousness" are the translation of *aphilarguros*, made up of *phileo* "to be fond of," *arguros* "silver," and Alpha prefixed, the total word meaning "without fondness for silver." The exhortation is against covetousness in the form of love of money. - Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament - Volume 2.*

2. Money is not evil. It is the love of money which we are to forsake. God has promised to meet our needs. With that provision, we are to be content. God knows our financial needs and will provide for them.

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### 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Now godliness with contentment is great gain.<sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.<sup>8</sup> And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.<sup>9</sup> But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.<sup>10</sup> For the love of money (philarguria) is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

### Matthew 13:22

Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

The word "content," therefore, in our Hebrew passage means more than "satisfied." It refers to the ability of the Christian dependent upon the Holy Spirit, to be independent of outward circumstances. -Wuest

The words "such things as ye have" are the translation of *tois parousia*, literally, "the things which are at present around one," namely, one's circumstances.—Wuest

The word "leave"<sup>4</sup> is not the usual word which means "to leave," *leipo*, but *aniemi* "to send back, to relax, to loosen, not to uphold, to let sink." It is preceded by two negatives in the Greek text which in English make a positive, but which in Greek only serve to strengthen the negation. It is "I will not, I will not cease to sustain and uphold thee."—Wuest

The word "forsake" is a compound of three Greek words, *egkatalaipo*, *eg* meaning "in," *kata* meaning "down," and *Leipo* meaning "to leave." *Leipo* has the idea of forsaking one, *kata* suggests rejection, defeat, helplessness, and *eg* refers to some place or circumstance in which a person may find himself helpless, forsaken. The meaning of the word is that of forsaking someone in a state of defeat or helplessness in the midst of hostile circumstances. The word in its totality means "to abandon, desert, leave in straits, leave helpless, leave destitute, leave in the lurch, let one down." There are three negatives before this word, making the promise one of triple assurance. It is, "I will not, I will not, I will not let thee down, leave thee in the lurch, leave thee destitute, leave thee in straits and helpless, abandon thee." All of which means that our God will come to our rescue when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances.—Wuest

3. Often when quoting "I will never leave you or forsake you", we view it in light of God being with us always, never abandoning us when we face hard time. This is a proper interpretation, however, it is exceedingly powerful to consider the context here, that of money. We need not be lovers of money. We can be content. Why? Because He has promised to never leave us when it comes to financial provision.

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<sup>4</sup> NASB uses "desert" for "leave".

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When we face financial difficulties, this verse takes on a power application in its obvious context. God will not forsake us when we are in financial need. He will not. He will not. He will not. Read this in the Amplified version and apply it to finances.

**Amplified:** *Let your character or moral disposition be free from love of money [including greed, avarice, lust, and craving for earthly possessions] and be satisfied with your present [circumstances and with what you have]; for He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!] <sup>6</sup>So we take comfort and are encouraged and confidently and boldly say, **The Lord is my Helper**; I will not be seized with alarm [I will not fear or dread or be terrified]. What can man do to me?*

*But the carefree contentment of which he speaks is not an irresponsible improvidence; it springs from an intelligent trust in God and acceptance of his promises. If to each one of his people God gives the assurance, "I will never leave you or desert you" (NEB), their reasonable response may well be made in the words of the psalmist: "With Yahweh on my side I do not fear: what can man do to me?" (Ps. 118:6). F.F. Bruce*

### VERSE 7

**Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct; imitate their faith.**

**Amplified:** *Remember your leaders and superiors in authority [for it was they] who brought to you the Word of God. Observe attentively and consider their manner of living (the outcome of their well-spent lives) and imitate their faith (their conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things, the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ, and their leaning of the entire human personality on God in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness).*

1. **“Remember”**-*mnēmoneuō*, mean to remember, to call to mind, to think of and feel for, to hold in memory, keep in mind, make mention of.<sup>5</sup> Many commentators believe that the writer of Hebrews is encouraging them to remember the ones who had taught them who were now dead due to persecution. They further point out that **“led you”**, (in other translations **“who rule over you”**), is in connection with the teaching of the word of God.
2. **“Who led you”**- *hēgeomai* (used again in verses 17 and 24)  
The KJV says, **“who have the rule over you”**. This in reference to those who were their overseers in the faith. They were there teachers. Their job it was to teach them the truth so that they would grow up in the faith. They did this, not only by teaching, but by living what they taught.

**Thayer Definition:**

1) to lead

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<sup>5</sup> Thayer

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- 1a) to go before
- 1b) to be a leader
- 1b1) to rule, command
- 1b2) to have authority over
- 1b3) a prince, of regal power, governor, viceroy, chief, leading as respects influence, controlling in counsel, overseers or leaders of the churches
- 1b4) used of any kind of leader, chief, commander
- 1b5) the leader in speech, chief, spokesman
- 2) to consider, deem, account, think

3. **Many commentators agree that this verse is in reference to their leaders who were now dead, likely as martyrs.** The author of Hebrews, after pointing to the good examples of faith in Hebrews 11, and the bad examples of faith in Hebrews 12, brings the topic closer to home, to those whom they actually knew. These had led them, taught them the word of God, had conducted their lives and even died in faith. He encourages them to do the same. To continue to follow after Jesus, even to the point of death, if necessary.
4. **Who are those who “have the rule over us”/lead us? They are those who accurately teach the word and whose lifestyles reflect that teacher. An abusive “leader” would not be included.**
5. **Their conduct was a result of their faith. Faith influences our lifestyle.**

*The writer is still mindful of the danger which many of the Jewish recipients of this book were in, namely, that of renouncing their professed faith in Messiah, and of returning to the abrogated sacrifices of Judaism. He exhorts them to remember those which have the rule over them. The word "remember" is mnemoneuo, "to be mindful of." Here it means "to think of and feel for a person." The exhortation is, "Remember, with a view to observing the admonitions of those who have the rule over you." The word "follow" is the translation of mimnisko "to imitate." The word "considering" is anatheoreo "to observe attentively." The words "end of their conversation" are more clearly, "the outcome or issue of their manner of life." The exhortation is to remember their deceased leaders, persons of such a nature that they spoke the Word of God to them (2:3, 4:2). Some of these had probably gone to heaven by way of martyrdom. They are urged to imitate their faith while they at the same time observe attentively the kind of lives they lived and the outcome and issue of their lives. They were to imitate their lives where the latter tallied with what they preached. Thus, they would be guarded against forsaking Messiah and going back to the temple sacrifices. - Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament - Volume 2.*

**Wuest Expanded Translation:** *Be constantly remembering those ruling over you, especially as they are those who spoke to you the Word of God, whose faith imitate as you closely observe the outcome of their manner of life.*

### VERSE 8

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

1. Vincent points out that this should read Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah), etc.

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No doubt the old teachers believed in the unchangeableness of Jesus Christ; but that fact is not represented as the subject of their faith, which would be irrelevant and somewhat flat. **The emphatic point of the statement is Christ. They lived and died in the faith that Jesus is The Christ - the Messiah.** The readers were tempted to surrender this faith and to return to Judaism which denied Jesus's Messiahship (comp. Hebrews 10:29). Hence the writer says, "hold fast and imitate their faith in Jesus as the Christ. He is ever the same. He must be to you, today, what he was to them, yesterday, and will be forever to the heavenly hosts - Christ. Rend. therefore "Jesus is Christ."-Vincent Word Studies

The thought of the writer is "Jesus is Christ, the same, yesterday, today, and forever." The word "Christ" is the transliteration of the Greek word meaning "anointed," which in turn is the translation of the Hebrew word meaning "Messiah." That is, the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of Nazareth of the New. And that Person is the Messiah, the unchangeable One.—Wuest

**Amplified:** Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is [always] the same, yesterday, today, [yes] and forever (to the ages).

Jesus Christ the same . . .—Rather, Jesus Christ is yesterday and to-day the same; yea, also forever. Their earlier guides have passed away (Hebrews 13:7); their Lord and Saviour abides the same forever. He who is the subject of all Christian teaching is the same, therefore (Hebrews 13:9) "be not carried away by divert teachings." Thus, this verse stands connected both with what precedes and with what follows. "Yesterday" carries the thought back to the lifetime of the teachers now no more; what the Saviour was to them, that will He be to their survivors. The whole period since He "sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12-13) is covered by this word. What He was "yesterday and to-day" He will be forever. (See Hebrews 1:11-12.)- Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

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"I am He," says God to his people in Isa. 48:12; "I am the first and I am the last"-language which in the New Testament is taken over and applied to Jesus without any sense of incongruity. Yesterday Jesus "offered up entreaties and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death" (Heb. 5:7); today he represents his people in the presence of God, a high priest who has a fellow-feeling with them in their weakness, because he "endured trial in all respects like" themselves, selves, "while remaining free from sin" (4:15); forever he lives, this same Jesus, "to intercede for them" (7:25). His help, his grace, his power, his guidance are permanently at his people's disposal; why then should they lose heart? F.F. Bruce

## *Studies in Grace and Faith*

Jesus never changes. The way we see him in the Gospels is the way He is now, and will always be. The things that angered Him (religion, self-righteousness), anger Him now. His compassion and eagerness to heal and provide for His children is the same now as we see in the Gospels.