

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Hebrews 13: 1-6

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we are going to read Hebrews Chapter 13, and today we will read verses 1-6.

Thank the Lord, we have come to the final chapter of the Book of Hebrews. The central theme of this book is to expound on the supremacy of Christ. Chapters 1-7 discuss how Christ's identity and position are better than the angels. The Jews revered angels because angels often protected them with great power, but Christ is far superior to angels. Christ is also greater than Moses and Joshua. Moses and Joshua were recognized as great leaders of Israel, yet as a leader, Jesus surpasses them both. Christ is also greater than Aaron. Aaron was Israel's first high priest, but as a priest, Jesus is far superior to him.

Chapters 8-10 then discuss Christ's work and His office, emphasizing that the new covenant He established with His own blood is far better than the old covenant. Chapters 11-13 exhort the New Testament saints that since they have received such great grace, they must uphold a life of faith, hope, and love. Faith, hope, and love are the three pillars of the Christian life. Faith is the beginning—the saints have already embarked on the journey of the heavenly path. Hope is the destination of this journey, and love is the most important element of walking through this journey—it is the process. Paul gives the most profound discourse on love in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 13, especially in verses 4-8, which define love. These are verses that all saints should memorize. In 1 Corinthians 13:13, Paul concludes, "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Why is love the greatest? Because without love, no one can complete this journey. The last verse of 1 Corinthians 12, verse 31, introduces chapter 13, the chapter of love. Paul says, "But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way." The NIV translates it as "the most excellent way," which, when

translated directly, means the best way. Love is the best way. Love is also the best connection between faith and hope and the only connection.

Going from faith to hope requires a lifetime of effort. Some people struggle on this journey because they do not understand love. Some walk in hardship because they lack love. Some cannot continue because their love has died. We must understand that love is a gift from God; it is not the natural love we have within ourselves. If we attempt to walk the heavenly path with our own love, that love will eventually die.

In Matthew 22:34-40, a lawyer came to test Jesus by asking Him which commandment in the law was the greatest. Jesus replied that the greatest commandment is to love God, and the second, which is like it, is to love your neighbor as yourself. Love includes loving God and loving others as yourself. It is a commandment, meaning it is a command from God. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:5, "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith." On one hand, love is a command from God; on the other hand, the purpose of God's command is love.

It is astonishing that love is connected to a commandment. We often think love is something we choose to give when we feel like it and that it should be voluntary and joyful. Dear brothers and sisters, do not be too naïve. The love that comes from human emotion is not enduring and cannot withstand trials. At first, love may seem effortless, passionate, and overwhelming, but after marriage, as soon as the honeymoon phase ends, conflicts begin. Human love is completely unreliable, which is why the Bible says that love is a command. We make the mistake of confusing passion with love, mistaking the hormonal responses in our bodies for love.

In John 13:34, Jesus tells us, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." Jesus gave us a new commandment—to love one another. How should we love? Jesus said, "As I have loved you, that you also love one another." Jesus loves us with a sacrificial love, a self-giving love. We must first experience and receive Jesus' love, and then we can use this love to love the saints around us.

At this point, we must all admit that we find it difficult to love. This is exactly why it is a commandment. We must exercise our will to obey the Lord's command. However, our natural selves cannot obey, so we must crucify our old selves on the cross. For I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. This new self can obey the Lord's command and love. Love is obeying God's command and using the love we receive from Christ to love others.

After understanding the Lord's commandment of love, we now look at Hebrews 13, which is about the life of love among the saints. Verses 1-3 teach us to love our brothers and sisters. Verses 4-6 instruct us to love ourselves. Verses 7-17, the longest section in this chapter, teach us to love God. How do we love God? By imitating Jesus and honoring spiritual leaders. The final section, verses 18-24, serves as the conclusion and greetings of the entire Book of Hebrews.

Verse 1: "Let brotherly love continue."

Brotherly love is a command from Jesus, so we must obey it. That is why the author uses an imperative, "Let brotherly love continue." This refers to the attitude we must have toward our brothers and sisters—we must love them. We do not love them because they are lovable, or because they share the same background, education, social status, cultural background, or political views. We love them simply because they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Because they believe in Jesus, they have the indwelling Holy Spirit and the life that comes from God; therefore, we love them.

According to God's design, our relationship with fellow saints—who share the same spiritual life—will last for eternity. This is even longer than our blood relationships, which end at death. Because the relationship between brothers and sisters in the Lord is eternal, the author encourages us to let brotherly love continue. Continue means it should always be present and never stop or diminish, which is indeed difficult. In church life, saints are not yet fully sanctified and still have the flesh, so when flesh meets flesh, there will inevitably be friction. If friction is not dealt with, it becomes difficult to love one another.

Therefore, the most basic lesson in church life is to learn to confess sins to one another and to forgive one another. Only then can brotherly love continue. Dear brothers and sisters, if you cannot remember the last time you confessed your sins and asked for forgiveness from a fellow saint, unless you are already completely holy, it means you are lacking in love. This also includes your spouse and your children. Usually, the closer the relationship, the more friction there is, and the harder it is to love one another.

Verse 2: "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels."

Brotherly love is an inner attitude, and entertaining strangers is its outward expression. In the early church, inns were very scarce, and when brothers traveled for ministry, they were hosted by fellow saints. When Jesus ministered on earth, He often traveled to Jerusalem with His disciples and was frequently hosted at Mark's house. During the last week of His ministry, He chose not to stay within Jerusalem but spent each night in Bethany, hosted by Mary and Martha.

When Paul and his coworkers first brought the gospel to Europe, they arrived in Philippi and preached to a woman who sold purple cloth, Lydia. After she was saved, she hosted Paul and his coworkers. In 1 Timothy 3:2, Paul even lists hospitality as a required character trait for elders.

When the author of Hebrews wrote this letter, Christians were beginning to face widespread persecution. Some saints had their property confiscated; others were forced to flee to distant places. These suffering saints needed hospitality, and this became an important ministry of the church. Thus, the author gives the command, "Do not forget to entertain strangers." Hosting guests meant opening one's home, providing food and lodging, and caring for their needs in love, which was a considerable act of service.

"For by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." This likely refers to Genesis 18 when Abraham saw three visitors and earnestly hosted them, preparing

a feast for them. He later realized that he had entertained angels, who brought the message that Sarah would bear a son the following year.

Verse 3: "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also."

Since Christians were facing widespread persecution, some were imprisoned. The author urges believers to remember them as if they were also imprisoned—to empathize with their needs and supply what they lack. They were also to pray for them, just as Christ intercedes for us. "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also." This means as if you yourself were suffering. Jesus said in Matthew 25:40, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." Remembering the suffering brethren and doing something for them is the same as doing it for the Lord. Paul also said in 1 Corinthians 12:26, "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it." We are all members of the body of Jesus; if one member suffers, all the members suffer together. Since we are in the same body, we experience the same things and share the same outcome.

From verses 4 to 6, the focus is on loving oneself. Loving oneself is not about indulging in pleasures, eating well, dressing well, or going on vacations. Of course, taking care of one's physical needs is necessary. However, in the life of love, the author only mentions two things related to oneself: honoring marriage and not loving money. These two matters can cause the greatest harm to oneself. If you truly love yourself, first, you must honor marriage, and second, you must not love money.

Verse 4: "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge."

"Marriage is honorable among all," because the institution of marriage was established by God, even before sin entered the world, as recorded in Genesis 2:24,

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The relationship between husband and wife is even closer than that between parents and children. That is why God says a man shall leave his parents and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. The husband and wife should face everything together because they have already become one. If conflicts arise in marriage due to parental relationships, priority must be given to the marital relationship.

Not only was the institution of marriage established by God, but your spouse is also the one whom God has brought together. Matthew 19:6 says, “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Before marriage, we do not know who God has prepared as our spouse. Therefore, we should not be too hasty or make quick conclusions. We must seek God earnestly and observe carefully. It is best to examine all of the other person’s shortcomings before making a decision. After careful consideration, if you find that you cannot accept those shortcomings, then that person is not the spouse God has prepared for you. However, once you are married and have become one flesh, that person is the spouse God has prepared for you. Jesus said, “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” This includes the couple themselves. Therefore, after marriage, you should close your eyes to your spouse’s shortcomings completely.

"Marriage is honorable among all." This is a lifelong commitment and should be the pledge of everyone entering into marriage. Before marriage, the love between a man and a woman may have elements of passion, based on the other person’s beauty or charm. However, after marriage, these should all be set aside. Your love for your spouse should not be based on feelings of attraction, because those are unreliable. Instead, you love your spouse as a conscious decision, honoring God's arrangement and choosing to submit to His will. Based on this foundation, you should rediscover your spouse’s virtues in their new creation, such as their devotion to the Lord, diligence in serving, and passion for evangelism. Such a marriage will surely be blessed by God.

"The bed undefiled" refers to abstaining from sexual immorality outside of marriage, as this is one of the most destructive forces against marriage and must be strictly avoided. "But fornicators and adulterers God will judge." In church life, we must be extra cautious in interactions with the opposite sex: avoid being alone together, do not converse in a closed room, and do not give the devil a foothold. In modern churches, many well-known preachers have caused great harm due to sexual scandals. We must take warning from these examples.

Verse 5: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"

1 Timothy 6:10 says, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." Loving money and having money are two different things. Some people have no money but are very greedy, while others have a lot of money but are not greedy because they acquire it righteously. Therefore, greed has nothing to do with whether one is rich or poor. It is an attitude of the heart. A greedy person has two major problems: first, they are never content; second, they place their trust in wealth. Greed is embedded in the nature of the old self—every person is naturally inclined toward greed.

Therefore, we must learn two lessons. First, we must be content, as this verse says, "Be content with such things as you have." Paul also said in 1 Timothy 6:7-8, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." Since everything we own will be left behind at death, accumulating too much has no lasting value. Therefore, if we have food and clothing, we should be content.

On the other hand, if God blesses you with more than you need, you should learn to store up treasures in heaven. Luke 16:9 says, "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home." Money, by its nature, is unrighteous and cannot be taken to heaven. However, in this life, it can be used to make friends by investing in the work of the gospel. When we reach eternity and money becomes useless, those who

were saved because of your financial contribution will welcome you into the eternal dwellings.

The second lesson we must learn is to trust in God. "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" Instead of trusting in uncertain riches, we should trust in our faithful Lord. He will never leave us nor forsake us, while money easily "grows wings and flies away" and is completely unreliable.

Verse 6: "So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"

We can boldly declare, as it is written in Psalm 118:6, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" This continues the thought of the previous verse—we must place our full trust in God. Some trust in chariots, some in horses, but we will trust in the name of the Lord of Hosts. Our God is almighty, and He is willing to help us. If He is on our side, what do we have to fear? What can man do to us?

A person who truly loves themselves must learn to trust in God. Dear brothers and sisters, in a life of love, we must love the brothers and sisters around us, learning to love one another. We must also learn to love ourselves by honoring marriage and not being greedy for money. May the Lord help us.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for reminding us through the author of Hebrews to live a life of love. Help us to love our brothers and sisters, to be hospitable to those who visit from afar, knowing that we are all part of Your family. Teach us to truly love ourselves by honoring the marriage You have arranged for us and by being content with the provision You have given us, trusting in You in all things. Because You are our Shepherd, we shall not lack. Bless our daily lives. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.