

Rules of Conduct for Pilgrims

Hebrews 13:1

Halifax: 7 April 2024

Introduction:

Today we are continuing our sermon series in Hebrews.

- We are starting chapter 13 today.

In doing so, I want to begin by reading chapter 12 and continuing into the first three verses of chapter 13. Here is the word of God:

Heb 12:1 – 13:3: Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. ⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” ⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble

knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; ¹⁶ lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

¹⁸ For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. ²⁰ (For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.” ²¹ And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”) ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of* Abel. ²⁵ See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on

earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, ²⁶ whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” ²⁷ Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be

shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.

^{13:1} Let brotherly love continue. ² Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels. ³ Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.

Thanks be to God for His holy word.

Hebrews 12 describes our journey as Christians to our heavenly Father’s house in glory.

- Jesus has opened the way for all of us to come from sin to God.
 - He has not only opened the way, but He Himself is the way.
 - We go as pilgrims from sin and the wilderness to our Father’s house in glory.
- It is a hard way.
 - Our Father chastens us—training us which involves the painful process of separating us from our sins—the refiner’s fire, threshing, and pruning are illustrations of what He does.
 - We have been encouraged to press on and not slacken our pace lest we come short of the grace of God and be turned out of the way.
- We saw recently that we are going with the most excellent of companions—all those whom Christ has redeemed.

And today we come to chapter 13 where we are told how to behave ourselves among them.

- We might call this chapter:
 - “Rules of Conduct for Pilgrims Who are Going to God’s House in Glory.”
- Today, we will look the first thing that is said about conduct.
 - It sums up at the rest.
 - Hebrews 13:1: **Let brotherly love continue!**
 - That is our Scripture text this morning.

I. Brotherly love. What a grand thing it is!

A. It is God’s most excellent gift to man by nature.

1. We were created in God’s image.
 - In a marvellous way that surpasses our understanding God is social.
 - He is a trinity—one God in three persons.
 - He is love. The Father loved the Son and the Son loves the Father and the Father and the Son love the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit loves them.
 - Yet the three are but one divine essence.
2. As those created in His image, we are also social creatures.
 - We were created for companionship, not only with God, but with those who share our human nature—our brothers as it were.
 - There is a mutual love that is to flow among us as brothers.

- B. We are naturally associated as brothers in all sorts of different ways.
1. The foundational brotherly companionship is marriage.
 - Here is a companionship that is cemented together by a covenant—a permanent union of mutual affection, service, commitment, compassion, helpfulness.
 - And it is the fountain of reproduction with the special intimacy that God designed for it—
 - Here we share the task to fill the earth with image bearers.
 2. Out of this there is the brotherhood of the family—where children are nurtured and trained until they are ready to go out, many of them forming their own bond of marriage.
 3. Besides these brotherhoods, there are many others where we mutually support and enjoy each other in brotherly love.
 - There are brotherhoods of service—people that we work with in the same trade or service.
 - There are brotherhoods of pleasure—those who enjoy the same hobby, sport, art, or recreation.
 - There are brotherhoods of those who dwell together in the same neighbourhood or the same city, or nation who form unions for each other’s mutual benefit.
- C. Brotherly love is the God-given ability we have to do good to each other.
- The power to be a blessing to each other is a most wonderful power.
 - God’s creation is much more enjoyable when we enjoy it with others—when we can say, “Look at that!”
 - What are your skills and talents if there is no one to share them with?
 - You can make things that are blessing to others. You can be a blessing to them, and they can be a blessing to you. We can enjoy God better together.
 - And even the mutual care, thoughtfulness, interest in, and devotion to others is itself a wonderful gift that God gave us at creation to enjoy.
 - Brotherly love.

II. Sin has spoiled it, caused terrible disruption, terrible disorder!

- A. We were not meant to be God. When we fell, we set out to be gods.
1. When we try to do that, we turn in on ourselves and lose our capacity to give.
 - God is the great engine or fuel of our love.
 - He has an unlimited capacity to give, but when we separated from Him at the fall, we became leeches—consumers that are never satisfied.
 2. We actually become consumers of our own souls.
 - Trying to save our life, we end up swallowing it up.
 - We become deader and hungrier.
- Our original sin (separation from God) is a wretched business that destroys brotherly love.
- B. It sets us against each other.

1. As gods, we compete with each other—full of pride in how we are better, or full of envy when others are better...
 - And out of that comes boasting and flaunting ourselves—we want to show off and we demean others.
2. A focus on our own desires (even ones that are good in themselves) makes those desires turn into monsters that are always eating and never full.
 - We are disappointed by others instead of grateful to them—and of course this disappointment is magnified because they, being sinners, are slack toward us—but even if they were perfect, we would still be disappointed with them.
 - And this disappointment makes us angry or bitter.
 - And the result is cold wars (which are sometimes the worst) as well as hot wars with cursing and quarrelling and physical fighting.
 - Feeling that we are not getting our fair share or that others have gotten more than theirs, we begin to cheat and try to take advantage of others instead of living to benefit and enrich them.
 - As this goes on, it leads to lying and stealing and all kinds of manipulation and exploitation—oppression if we have the power.
 - Amazingly, even a powerful dictator who can order whatever he wants often sees himself as a victim of mistreatment and deprivation.
 - And those with the greatest beauty and talent, and receiving such devotion that others make idols of them (a beautiful actress, for example) are often the most miserable people of all, who become suicidal addicts.
 - Sin is a wretched business.

C. It is painful to self-analyse about this because we all come so short.

- But we all need to take a good raw look at ourselves and face the truth.
- We can bear to do this because there is forgiveness in Christ and new life from Him—He can and will actually change us if we will entrust our souls to Him.
- If you want to change, go to Him.

TRANS> Let's talk about Jesus!

III. Jesus has restored brotherly love. He is the restorer of it.

A. He brought it down from heaven.

1. He showed us heavenly love—the love that is in the Trinity—when He came.
 - He spoke about it. He spoke about how the Father loves the Son (that's Jesus) and gives Him all things.
 - He spoke about how He always does what pleases the Father—how that even coming here was done to please the Father who sent Him.
 - And we saw from Him how pleased the Father always was with Him.
2. He came, as He said, that we might have this love.
 - He came to restore it.
 - Our brotherhood is the brotherhood of those whom He has restored to this love.

- I said before that there is natural brotherhoods from creation—marriage, family, brotherhoods in labour, business, nations, arts, and so on.
- The brotherhood in view in Hebrew 13:1 is this brotherhood of the redeemed who are going together as brothers to their heavenly Father's house.
 - They are going from sin and misery to their Father's house in glory.
 - Jesus brought this love where it was not.

B. He swept us up into this love if we are among His own.

1. He came caring for us, providing for us, drawing us in—doing all for us—blessing us in ways that we could not bless ourselves.
2. He came to pay the debt of sin that we could not pay.
 - By His atoning sacrifice on the cross, He paid it all so that we, though sinners, can have constant forgiveness.
 - As Hebrews tells us, He ever lives to make intercession for us.
3. He accepted us and drew us into His love—setting the standard for us.
 - His own example is the standard for us as a redeemed brotherhood.
 - He told us that His commandment was a new commandment.
 - Brotherly love was an old commandment, but it was new because He set a new standard—and He said we are to love one another as He has loved us.
 - This love is unique because it calls for total acceptance of sinners coupled with an absolute standard that excludes sin.
 - In other words, it is not the kind of false love the world has where you accept without standards, or where you have standards without acceptance.
 - We are a brotherhood that is fully accepted though we are yet sinners, but a brotherhood that has as our goal perfect conformity to God's standards of holiness and purity and certainty that in Christ we will obtain it when He brings us into His Father's house.

C. Jesus also actually forms this love in us by His Spirit.

1. Paul speaks of this in Romans as the love of God being poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
 - This includes both our sense of God's love for us as well as our love for Him.
 - It puts an end to our efforts to be God ourselves.
 - We are restored to our Father as our God—to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. Now we are able, by the grace of God's Spirit working in us, to follow Jesus' example more and more.
 - We are able to have that mutual care for each other, that self-giving to each other, that desire to see our brothers blessed in every way, and to act on it.
 - It is a real love, a beautiful holy love that is shaped by God's will and commandments.

IV. Now that brotherly love has been restored, the exhortation to us is: let it continue—"Let brotherly love continue."

- A. You have been drawn into it—don't let it decay.
1. Don't let yourself become cold and indifferent to your brothers and sisters.
 - Care about them.
 - Don't let yourself become selfish—bitter—proud—envious.
 - Those things spoil love.
 - Remember. The greatest blessing is to do good to others.
 - Think about that when you see a need you can help with.
 - Think about what Christ has done for you and what you deserve instead.
 2. It is sad that we need this exhortation at all—but we do!
 - It is so easy to start out with zealous love and then let it fade away.
 - You have some trials and you start to focus on them and to look at other peoples' needs as less important than your own—so unlike Jesus.
 - When we look at the church today from God's standard, whether we look at the church in our nation, our denomination, or our own congregation, we can see how much brotherly love has decayed among us.
 - When we look at ourselves, too often we see the same thing.
- B. Oh shrivelled up souls, pray! Pray! Pray!
1. Ask the Lord to put down the evil in you and in your brethren.
 - Ask Him to breathe into us the breath of life again.
 2. You are destined for glory if you are in Christ.
 - You are destined for your Father's house in glory.
 - You have the example of Christ before you.
 - You have the Holy Spirit at work in you.
 3. It is by His grace alone that you go on.
 - Go in the only way you can—as we have seen—looking unto Jesus.
- C. Be deliberate about this love.
1. You must be deliberate about it or you won't continue in it.
 - It would be nice if it were more natural, but you have plan for it—you have to think “How can I love my brethren? What can I do for them?”
 - You have to look at the ways that you are not loving them but could be.
 - What breaches are there in your love? What attitudes are crushing it?
 - You must be deliberate about fixing them.
 2. Be deliberate about going with your companions—your redeemed brothers.
 - Some of you are loners—you have a tendency to go at it alone.
 - You pull away and isolate yourself from others—you shield yourself.
 - You are not open about your going—about either your struggles or your victories.
 - It's not that you must become a social butterfly—social butterflies are not necessarily loving—you need to become a loving companion, a loving brother.
 - Be deliberate about drawing in those who are lagging behind.
 - Draw in outsiders.

- Help the weary to go on. Support the weak.
 - Counsel the confused that they might see the way to go.
 - Comfort those who are sorrowing and renew their hope.
 - Admonish the stubborn—pull them along a bit.
 - Be deliberate about meeting physical needs.
 - Providing a meal.
 - Providing service and relief to one who is overwhelmed with work.
 - It is a holy brotherhood.
3. We are given two ways to be deliberate in the verses that follow.
- We will only mention them today and take them up next time...
 - First, that you are to reach out to those that you do not know.
 - **2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels.**
 - Second, that you are to help those who are in need.
 - **3 Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.**
 - Everything else in this chapter has to do with continuing in this brotherly love.
 - From our sexual purity to the way we worship—we are to continue in love that is warm and affectionate and at the same time holy and submitted to God’s commandments.
 - That is the love that we are restored to when Christ redeems us.
 - That is the brotherly love that we are to continue in as we make our way to our Father’s house in glory in Christ as our way.

Conclusion: Let me encourage each one of you—think about what you need to do and what you can do.

- Talk about it with each other.
- I will begin.
 - I see that I need to work in my preaching to be sure that I bring God’s word to you so you can see how it applies. I have been convicted about that.
 - I also see that I need to have a greater care for others—a greater interest in my brothers who are travelling to God’s house with me—to minister to them.