

Unshakeable things

Hebrews 13:1-6

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The first verse of our chapter is very short but very important.

Heb 13:1 Let brotherly love abide.

The word continue is virtually the same as the word remain, which closes verse 27 of the previous chapter. Only the things which cannot be shaken are going to remain when the great day of shaking arrives; then, let brotherly love remain amongst the saints of God today. It is one of the things which will remain unshaken in eternity.

Let us recall that in the early part of the epistle believers are spoken of as the “many sons” being brought “to glory.” Christ was seen to be “the Captain of their salvation,” who is “not ashamed to call them brethren.” Hence most evidently Christians are brethren, and the love existing between them, the fruit of the new nature divinely implanted, is to be cultivated. In fostering it we shall not be like children building a sandcastle to be washed away by the next tide, but like those who build for eternity.

Verses 2 and 3 indicate two directions in which brotherly love is to express itself.

Heb 13:2–3 Be not forgetful of hospitality; for by it some have unawares entertained angels. 3 Remember prisoners, as bound with them; those that are evil-treated, as being yourselves also in the body.

First, in hospitality; that is, in the love of strangers. The world is usually prepared to receive those they esteem as important or influential, and thus to do honour to the distinguished guest. We are bidden to rise above merely worldly motives and to receive brethren unknown to us simply because they are brethren. This is true brotherly love in manifestation: a manifestation all too often but very little seen in our land. Second, it is to come out in the remembrance of brethren in adversity, particularly of those suffering imprisonment.

The word, remember, means to recollect in an active way; not merely to call to mind, but to do so with active sympathy. If one member suffer all the members suffer with it, we are told elsewhere; and what we find here is in keeping with that fact. True brotherly love would lead us so to remember all such sufferers as to sympathetically support and succour them, as far as we are able.

Heb 13:4 Let marriage be held every way in honour, and the bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers will God judge.

In verse 4 natural love is in question, and that in the world has been sadly perverted and marred. By Christians it is to be preserved intact as a sanctified thing, which originated in God. In verse 5 another “love” comes before us – the love of money. The Christian’s manner of life is to be characterized as being without this altogether, since this is a love which never originated in God at all. Only when man had become a fallen creature did he lose all love for God and enthrone in his heart earthly objects, and more particularly the money which enabled him to pursue them.

The word for us is, be content with “such things as ye have,” or, “your present circumstances.” A very searching word it is too! The world is filled with covetousness as much as ever, perhaps more than ever. God is not in all its thoughts, which are concentrated upon material gain. Out of this spring all the strifes. Envies, jealousies, heart-burnings, quarrellings are everywhere! Oh, let us so live as to present a very definite contrast to all this! May it be manifest to all that we are actuated by another love than the love of money!

“But,” it may be said, “in these days of competition we must bend all our energies to the making of money, else we shall not long retain such things as we have, but shall sink into poverty.” The answer to this thought is however immediately anticipated in these verses. We have the definite promise of His unfailing presence and support; consequently we may boldly count upon the Lord for all our needs, and have no fear of man.

There are two points of great interest about verses 5 and 6.

Heb 13:5–6 Let your conversation be without love of money, satisfied with your present circumstances; for he has said, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee. 6 So that, taking courage, we may say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid: what will man do unto me?

The first concerns the way in which the Old Testament Scripture is quoted. It was to Joshua that the Lord said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” We might very properly say to ourselves, “But I am no Joshua. He was a very eminent man of faith, and I am a very insignificant and often a very feeble believer. Would it not be a rather forward and impertinent thing for me to calmly assume that a promise made to him is equally valid for me?” It is delightful to discover from these verses that such an application of this ancient promise is not the boldness of presumption but the boldness of faith. The fact is, of course, that what God is, He is towards His people in all time and circumstances. There is no variableness nor shadow of turning with Him. He will not be less towards His people in this dispensation than He was in a past dispensation. We may wholly count upon Him.

*The Christian poetess has said,
“They that trust Him wholly,
Find Him wholly true.”*

This of course is so, but it is well when quoting these happy words to lay the stress on the word, find; since it is equally a fact that He is wholly true to those who do not trust Him wholly. Their defective faith will never provoke Him to defective faithfulness. No! But their defective faith will obscure their view of His faithfulness, and possibly they may never *find* Him wholly true, – never really wake up to it, as a realized and enjoyed thing – until they discover it in glory.

The second point of interest is not so much the application of this Old Testament text but rather the reasoning which is based upon it. The skeleton outline of the reasoning runs thus, “He has said ... so that we may boldly say ...” If God speaks we may accept what He says with all confidence. More than this, we may assert what He asserts with all boldness. And we may

do even more than this. For if He asserts things concerning Himself in regard to His people, we may, since we are of His people, assert these things boldly as applying to ourselves. Indeed we may take it home with all confidence as applying to each individually; even as here we read, "The Lord is MY Helper, I will not fear." In our reading of Scripture let us form the happy habit of thus applying the words of God to ourselves.

Before leaving the first six verses let us notice the simplicity which is here enjoined upon believers; a simplicity all too much lost in these days of civilized artificiality. How striking a testimony would be rendered if we were marked

- by that brotherly love which expresses itself in hospitality and practical sympathy,
- by natural love preserved in undefiled honour, and
- by a holy contentment, the fruit of the realized presence of God, and the very opposite of the mad covetousness and discontent of the world.

Extracted from a commentary on *Hebrews*

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