**Bethel Christian Fellowship**

**Fair Lawn, NJ**

**Hebrews (45): The Book Of Better Things**

**“Last Minute Reminders” Part One**

**Hebrews 13:1-6**

**May 18, 2025**

Like many of you, I grew up in a world without computers or cell phones. If we wanted to call someone, we’d use a landline and dial the number on a rotary telephone. If the landline was a “party line” (shared with some of the neighbors), then we would have to wait until the line was free before we could place the call.

If we wanted to correspond with a friend or family member, we had to write a letter, place the letter in an envelope, place a 5-cent postage stamp on the envelope, put the envelope in the mailbox for the mailman to pick up, or drop it off at the post office. Depending on where we were mailing it, delivery could take from two to five days.

During my high school years, I spent every summer away from home at a Christian camp. During my four years in college, I was gone for most of that time. So how did my parents stay in touch with me? Sometimes by phone, but mostly by letters. The chief correspondent, of course, was Gladys, my dear mother.

I remember her letters well, especially during those college years. The first three or four pages were filled with all the news from home – news about the family, the church, and the goings-on in the neighborhood. Invariably, however, when she came to the end of her letters, she would somehow manage to squeeze in her last minute “reminders” at the very bottom of the last page. A typical letter would end like this: “Get to bed at a reasonable hour.” “Don’t miss breakfast.” “Remember to write your grandparents.” “Try to find a part-time job.” “Don’t call home collect.” “Love, Mom.”

I can’t help thinking about those letters when we turn to this last chapter of Hebrews. The main body of the letter is finished. In a very systematic way, our author has developed a well thought through presentation of the superiority of Jesus Christ. He is “better” than any prophet, or angel, or priest, or Old Covenant institution. Therefore, rather than leaving such a great salvation, he calls everyone to press on in the faith – and to encourage others to persevere, despite the persecution they were facing.

Now come the “last minute reminders,” seemingly “squeezed in” at the end of the letter (13:1-19), just before the benediction (vv. 20-21) and the final greetings (vv. 22-25).

Today’s study focuses on the opening six verses, in which our author moves quickly through five general exhortations. Each one constitutes the right pathway for living as the people of God in the Christian community.

**A. Brotherly Love (v. 1):** “*Keep on loving each other as brothers*” (NIV, 2008), or “*as brothers and sisters*” (NIV, 2015). As we may recall, the Hebrews had valiantly displayed compassion and kindness towards their persecuted brethren at great personal risk (10:32-34). Here the emphasis is upon a *continuance* in their mutual affection and service within the church family. The same is no less true for us! Such brotherly love must never grow cold, even when it proves to be costly. So let’s keep on praying for each other, encouraging each other, and serving each other!

**B. Hospitality (v. 2):** “*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it*.” In the New Testament, hospitality is incumbent on all Christians (Cf. Matt. 25:34-35; Rom. 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9). It’s essential for Christian leaders in particular (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8). Christians traveling on business would especially welcome other Christians offering them food and shelter, as would traveling ministers of the gospel (3 John 5-8). Back then, there weren’t hundreds of inns scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

What’s significant about this exhortation is the reason why we should be hospitable. There were some who had opened their homes to passing strangers, but who later found out they were entertaining “*angels unawares*” (KJV). The *point* is that those who are given to hospitality discover that such good experiences far outweigh the bad ones.

Our author no doubt has Abraham’s gracious hospitality in mind when he entertained “three men” with a lavish feast (Gen. 18:1-8). One of them proved to be the Lord Himself, who promised that he and Sarah would have a son the following year (18:9-15). Later that night the two other “men” went to Sodom and were entertained in the house of Lot, whom they delivered from the fire and brimstone that destroyed the city the next day (Gen. 19:1-22). All three proved to be a blessing to Abraham and his family.

**Q.** Is it possible that something like this can happen to us? **A.**  Yes. There’s no reason *not* to believe that God still empowers angels with temporary bodies so that they may come to our aid. After all, “*angels are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation*” (Heb. 1:14). However, in the words of F. F. Bruce, our author “is *not necessarily* encouraging his readers to expect that those whom they entertain will turn out to be supernatural beings travelling incognito; he *is* assuring them that some of their visitors will prove to be true messengers of God to them, bringing a greater blessing than they receive.” So, let’s be hospitable – it’s a ministry sometimes rewarded in surprising ways!

**C. Sacrificial Compassion (v. 3):** “*Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering*.” As previously noted, these readers had already demonstrated compassion towards their imprisoned friends, and for those who had suffered in other ways for their faith, regardless of the personal risks that were involved (Heb. 10:32-34). Thus to “*remember*” them doesn’t mean that they should merely think about them or mention them during the announcements in Sunday morning worship, or merely pray for them.

To “*remember them*” as if “*you were their fellow prisoners*,” and as if “*you yourselves were suffering*” means to *keep on* *empathizing* with them. It’s another way of saying, “If you were in prison, how would you want to be treated by the rest of the church family? Envision yourself suffering in this same way and then *look for practical ways to help* those who *really* are in prison.” The same is true for those who are suffering in countless other ways. This is but one application of “the golden rule:” “*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*” (Matt. 7:12).

**D. Marital Fidelity (v. 4):** “*Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral*.” If marriage is ordained by God, regulated by His Word, and blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, as we say it is, then it *should* *always* be held in honor by *all* men and women.

Given this marital context, it’s important to note the distinction between the “adulterer” and the “sexually immoral.” As we all know, adultery is unfaithfulness by either party to the marriage vow. But the “sexually immoral” is the translation of the Greek word *pornos*, which covers “a wide range of sexual irregularities” (F. F. Bruce). In addition to extra-marital sex, these “irregularities” include premarital sex, incest, prostitution, pedophilia, bestiality, and homosexuality. All such practices are clearly forbidden in the Word of God. For that reason, all *unrepentant* sexual immorality incurs the judgment of God, as numerous other New Testament Scriptures confirm (Cf. Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Jude 5-8; Rev. 22:12-15).

**E. Money Matters (vv. 5-6):** “*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you’* (Deut. 31:6). *So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’*” (Psalm 118:6-7)

The first thing to note is the double exhortation that’s found in verse 5: “*Keep your lives free from the love of money*” and “*be content with what you have*” are separate statements, but they’re saying the same thing. To be free from the love of money is to be content with what we have. Conversely, if we are content with what we have we will be free from the love of money. **Q.** Why is this such an important reminder? **A.** Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6:9-10; “*People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.* *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*”

The second thing to note is the reason why we should be content rather than driven by a love for money. There is a promise that God has given us. The author is quite emphatic about this, for he literally writes, “*He Himself has said . . .*” (NASB) This isn’t someone *claiming* to speak for God. *God* is the One who makes this promise, and He doesn’t merely say it once, He says it twice; “***Never*** *will I leave you,* ***never*** *will I forsake you*.” Today that might be translated, “*I will* ***not****,* ***no****, by* ***no means*** *will I ever abandon you*.”

No matter how bad it gets, whether there be a financial disaster, or a physical disability, or a devastating loss, we can be assured that God’s presence is always with us. We can count on Him. He will never let us down. His promises are always true, and His love is always constant. The secret to experiencing such contentment is learning to trust Him for what we need. Those who are tempted by *discontent* and the *love of money* are those who seek their security in financial resources. But God’s promise gives us greater security; “*Never will I leave you, no, not ever*.”

The third thing to note is the right *response* to this promise: “*So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?*” (v. 6) But wait one minute, we might say, there a lot of things that people can do to us! They can sue us and possibly bankrupt us. They can vandalize our property. They can slander our name. They can conspire to get us fired from our job, or have us thrown into jail, or even have us killed! Yes, they can do all the above! But that’s not our author’s point.

He's speaking about one of the greatest blessings we gain through faith in Jesus Christ. No matter what we may face in this life, God is always with us, comforting, guiding, and encouraging us. It was David who said, “*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for* ***you are with me***” (Ps. 23:4). To the people of Israel, God said: “*When you pass through the waters,* ***I will be with you;*** *and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you*” (Isa. 43:2). To the church, the Lord Jesus Christ says, “*And surely* ***I am with you always****, to the very end of the age*” (Matt. 28:20).

Here the author of Hebrews reminds us of the same glorious truth: “*He will never forsake us – He is our Helper. . .*” If so, we need never fear what people can do to us. They can *never* separate us from God’s love. They can *never* stand in the way of God orchestrating all things to work together for our good and His glory. As Paul asks in Romans 8:31, “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*”

*That’s* our author’s point: there is no human adversary, no political foe, no spiritual enemy, that can ever deprive us of the joy of knowing that God is with us and for us. All His promises to us are true and unchanging and more satisfying than all the money in the world, and all the things money might buy for us. Knowing this - and *believing* this – brings all the contentment we will ever need. There’s only one question that remains: Will *you* believe this?