

Sermon Transcript

09.20.2026

Hebrews 13:1-6

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- Good morning. If you haven't already done so, open your Bibles to Hebrews 13.
- As you do, let's take a quiz.
- I'm going to present a situation and you tell me what 3 or 4 word phrase describes how you should respond in that situation. If it doesn't make sense now, it will after our first which is, what do you do in the event of a fire? What 3 words? Stop, drop and roll.
- What about an active shooter situation? Run, hide, fight
- This next one might be harder for us Texans, but I expect our Californian ex-pats to help us out. What do you do in an earthquake? Drop, cover, and hold on
- What about using a fire extinguisher? PASS: Pull. Aim. Squeeze. Sweep.
- Good job. Now, imagine there was a fire in the sanctuary & instead of saying stop, drop, & roll or even yelling Get out or Save Bandit, I started a 30 minute explanation of fire safety.
- Or, you're on a plane experiencing a problem and rather than saying, return to your seats and buckle up, the pilot decides to launch into a lecture on turbulence theory.
- When using a fire extinguisher, it isn't pull, when you feel emotionally ready, and then aim once you've fully understood the nature of the fire, and then squeeze the trigger after you process your trauma and then sweep whenever it feels authentic to do so.
- When there is an earthquake, you don't need a lecture on seismic theory. You need immediate commands because the situation demands action.
- And that's what we see in our text as well.
- We'll see these series of short, succinct commands directing us to immediate obedience in light of the circumstances.
- What circumstances?
- Well, the historical context of Hebrews involves suffering and persecution. We'll talk more about that shortly.
- But in addition, we have the context of eschatological judgment that we saw last week. The heavens and the earth will be shaken and only what is unshakeable will remain.
- As we see throughout Scripture, future judgment is tethered to present faithfulness.
- So this calls for a response.
- "Let brotherly love continue."
- "Do not neglect hospitality."
- "Remember those in prison."
- "Let marriage be held in honor."
- "Keep your life free from love of money."
- "Be content."
- "Do not fear."
- The collection of these rapid fire staccato commands is sometimes called a parenetic catalog from the Greek word for exhortation or admonition.
- As we've seen, the first 11 chapters of Hebrews are saturated with indicatives. Statements of who Christ is and what He has done.

- Christ is a better priest who has offered a better sacrifice in a better sanctuary on the basis of the better promises of a better covenant.
- But then in chapter 12, the book shifts to some degree from indicative to imperative. Imperatives are commands or exhortations.
- If the indicatives refer to what has been done, the imperatives show us what we should do in light of what has been done. The indicatives are the fuel that empower and enable the imperatives. We can do what we do because of what Christ did.
- This is part of the problem with the postmodern desire to minimize doctrine and just love Jesus and others. Well, which Jesus? The Jesus of JW, a creature. The Jesus of Islam, a mere prophet. The Jesus of Mormonism, a god but not THE God. The Jesus of secular culture, a good teacher.
- You might appreciate the ethics of Jesus without understanding who He is, but you'll never submit to His Lordship.
- And what does love mean when we say to love others? Is that love an emotion, tolerance, acceptance, is it absolute or conditional, how do we order our loves?
- Who gets to decide what is loving? What if I say love means you share your wife with me or if I think that loving me means giving me whatever I want whenever I want it?
- This is why we need doctrine before duty. We need theology as the fuel and foundation for our ethics.
- And that's the pattern that we see in Hebrews as well.
- The book is saying, you know what God has done. Now live like it. In other words, we are now presupposing all that we've read thus far in the book. Chapters 12-13 don't work if chapters 1-11 aren't true just like muscles can't work without an underlying skeleton.
- So chapter 12 started us in this direction of application. Throw off every weight and the sin that clings so closely and then chapter 13 will get a lot more specific about various areas in our lives where we need to do just that.
- So let's pray and then we'll look at how then shall we live.
- Self, others, me

Let brotherly love continue. (Hebrews 13:1)

- Before we tackle these individual verses, I want you to notice the series of commands that all start with the word let in English. Let brotherly love continue, let the marriage be held in honor, let the marriage bed be undefiled.
- You might want to circle or underline the word let and make a note that that's a bit anemic as a translation. The problem is that we don't really have a good way to translate this into English, but in Greek, it's more emphatic.
- The NIV says "keep on loving one another," the NET says "brotherly love must continue," but in Greek it's what's called a third person imperative which we simply don't have in English.
- So let doesn't imply permission, but prescription.
- So make sure that brotherly love continues might be a bit more to the point so that you feel the imperatival force of the command.
- As we've talked about before, it's important to understand that when we read the Scriptures we're reading the commands of God. These aren't suggestions, they're mandates, dictates, directives from our Creator and Redeemer. We can submit or we can rebel.
- They are opportunities to joy, but also obligations.
- And the first command is to see to it, make sure, be committed to the continuation of brotherly love.

- Anyone know the Greek word for brotherly love? Philadelphia which is why the city is called the city of brotherly love although anyone who's ever watched an Eagles game knows what a misnomer that is.
- So let brotherly love continue.
- And the word continue is a bit of a word play with last week. Remember in 12:27, the heavens and the earth will be shaken until only what is unshakeable remains. Well, the word translated remains is the same word as is translated continue here.
- So brotherly love is one of those things that can't be shaken. It is one of those things that remain or abide.
- And notice that the command isn't conjure up brotherly love. Generate it on your own, whip it up. It is to maintain it. Like tending or stoking or nurturing an existing fire.
- That fire of love has been granted to us in the new birth by the Spirit. We see that in the book of 1 John for instance. Those who have been born of God have love for the brothers. So don't let that love diminish and die out through neglect.
- And this reinforces the communal cohesion that we've seen in the book. As we've explored a number of times, Hebrews has an underlying corporate theme running through it. The book isn't merely written to tell individuals how to live as individuals, but as the Church, as a body, as a community.
- For instance,
 - *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* (Hebrews 3:12–13)
 - *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.* (Hebrews 10:24–25)
- In other words, in the theology of Hebrews, we have a responsibility to each other.
- 'You do you' might be a cultural slogan, but it isn't a Christian one. There is no such thing as lone Ranger Christianity. You have a personal relationship with Christ, but there is no such thing as a private relationship with Christ.
- That's why the second great commandment is like the first. What's the first? To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And what's the second? To love others as yourself.
- Remember last time where we talked about the importance of worshiping God with reverence and awe? Well, part of the way that we worship God is by loving others. We can't separate those.
- And in particular, Scripture is concerned with loving others within the context of the body. The command isn't just generic love, but brotherly love which is playing on the familial theme we saw back in chapter 2 where Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers.
- So how do we show brotherly love? Well, by submitting to all of the various one anothers of Scripture.
- There are some 60 commands that outline our responsibility toward each other such as serve one another, be hospitable, encourage, forgive, teach, correct, confess to, pray, honor, share, do good, etc.
- If we remember the imagery of the danger of drifting from earlier in the book, we can think about that with this call to let brotherly love continue. Because of residual sin, we all tend to drift, we

are prone to wander as the hymn goes. Like wheels that go out of alignment, we need to be reminded of our duties lest we drift.

- So the call to let brotherly love continue is a call to remember that our souls will gravitate toward self-centeredness and narcissism, we will drift away from community and from generosity unless we oppose that slide.
- Look at Romans 12:10
 - *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.* (Romans 12:10)
 - Notice how love is manifest in honoring another. Deferring to another. Emptying yourself for another.
 - Greater love has no one than this, that you might lay down your life for your brother. That's love. Sacrifice and selflessness.
- As we read in 1 John 3
 - *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.* (1 John 3:16–18)
- BTW, the next verse says:
 - *By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him...* (1 John 3:19)
 - Do you lack assurance? Do you struggle with doubt? One of the most helpful biblical prescriptions is to love and serve others. The more you're thinking about how to help others, the less you're thinking of yourself which is the essence of humility.
- So let brotherly love continue. Stir it up, stoke it, maintain it. And as an example of that brotherly love, we'll see both charity and chastity in the coming verses. Let's begin with charity in vss. 2-3.

***Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.* (Hebrews 13:2–3)**

- In the previous verses we read about philadelphia, now we read about philoxenia which literally means love of strangers or outsiders, but generally just means hospitality.
- But the idea of loving strangers or outsiders is instructive in that it helps to orient us to two dangers. One danger is in a very insular love that never reaches outside your immediate circle. Jesus corrects that in the sermon on the mount by commanding us to love our enemies.
- But the opposite error is that in loving outsiders, we forsake insiders. As Galatians 6:10 says:
 - *So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.* (Galatians 6:10)
- Notice the especially. Though we have a general responsibility toward the world, we have a particular responsibility toward our families. Our biological and spiritual families.
- We call this the *ordo amoris*. Our loves are ordered such that we bear a higher responsibility toward our own family, our own church, our own country, etc.
- Again, this doesn't mean that our only or exclusive responsibility lies there, but there is a hierarchy of loves and in general our hospitality can and should reflect that.
- So what is hospitality?
- Hospitality is making room in your home, life, and resources for the good of others—especially those outside your normal circle.

- Often times we invite people over to our homes that we like, we want to see, we want to hang out with. There's nothing wrong with that. But it often falls short of the fullness of hospitality in that many of our parties are about us, and our wants and desires whereas biblical hospitality is more focused on others, on whom I can bless. So there's a cost or sacrifice associated with it.
- And this would have been of particular importance in the ancient world in which there weren't massive industries like hotels and Airbnbs to provide for travelers.
- So we see the importance of hospitality in a number of places like:
 - *Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.* (Romans 12:13)
 - *Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.* (1 Peter 4:9)
- Hospitality is an extension of the parable of the Good Samaritan which is itself an extension of the call to love your neighbor as yourself.
- And as a justification or rationale for the command to show hospitality, he writes, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.
- This is most likely referring to the example of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18 who show hospitality to three men who turn out to be angels. Or perhaps even to Lot in the next chapter who showed hospitality to the angels who came to visit him.
- Now, this doesn't mean that we should assume angels will be showing up looking for a meal, but it does remind us that we never know how a simple act of faithfulness can have drastic effects.
- So, is hospitality a regular rhythm of your life? Are you regularly looking for opportunities to bless others and open to unexpected interruptions?
- Do you view your home and time and resources as things to be hoarded for your own desires or stewarded for the good of others?
- Do you regularly make room in your life & home for people who aren't already close friends?
- Do you invite people because you can bless them, or primarily because they can benefit you?
- Are you willing to have people over when inconvenient, messy, or costly?
- Do you notice people who might otherwise be left out?
- And on Sundays, do you come early and stay late to services to welcome strangers and visitors or do you show up later and scurry out early to avoid the hassle?
- Are you neglecting to show hospitality?
- Next, he writes of another form of brotherly love.
- He says to remember those in prison.
- Why might that be on his mind?
- This isn't so much a call for prison ministry, although that can be a good thing, but that isn't the context of the letter.
- Remember the context. We've seen prison before.
 - *But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.* (Hebrews 10:32–34)
- So the context is most likely those in prison for their faith and testimony.
- They aren't in prison for murder or assault or robbery, but for being Christians.
- As 1 Peter 4 says:
 - *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer*

or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. (1 Peter 4:14–16)

- Does this mean you shouldn't visit someone in prison for some other purpose? Of course not, but it does mean that you probably shouldn't use Hebrews 13 or other such passages as a proof text for that.
- For example, look what Christ says in Matthew 25:
 - *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.*' (Matthew 25:35–36)
- When the righteous say, we don't remember doing any of that to you, He then says, as you did it to the least of these, you did it to me. In other words, what you do for the body of Christ is counted as being done for Christ Himself.
- And that's what the author implies here as well. He says to remember them as if in prison with them and he writes of those who are mistreated which is another reason to think this isn't referring to someone who has been justly imprisoned for his actual crimes.
- The mistreatment in question is most likely what he mentioned back in chapter 10, the reproach, affliction and plundering.
- We are to remember which means more than simply calling something to mind. It means keeping it before your mind in such a way that it shapes your action. It is inherently practical rather than merely ethereal.
- For instance, suppose your wife says, remember to get the milk and you come home and she asks if you got the milk and you say no and she says, why'd you forget and you say, I didn't forget. I remembered I just chose not to do it. Well, then you've defeated the purpose of the request.
- Likewise, when told to remember those in prison & those who are mistreated, it means to show brotherly love and hospitality. To serve and pray for and help and encourage and so forth.
- In fact, if you want to be convicted, just study the local church. In letters like 1 Clement we read about Christians actually selling themselves into bondage in order to ransom others from slavery. That's love. That's sacrifice. Like Sydney Carton taking the place of Charles Darnay in A Tale of Two Cities, that's what the early church evidenced at times.
- And in the 4th century Apostolic Constitutions we read this:
 - "If any Christian, on account of the name of Christ, and love and faith towards God, be condemned by the ungodly to the games, to the beasts, or to the mines, do not overlook him; but send to him from your labour and your very sweat for his sustenance, and for a reward to the soldiers, that he may be eased and be taken care of; that, as far as lies in your power, your blessed brother may not be afflicted..." (Apostolic Constitutions)
- So remember those in prison.
- And the reason is that you also are in the body.
- And as members of the same body, we have a responsibility. Paul writes of it like this in 1 Corinthians 12
 - *If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.* (1 Corinthians 12:26)
- Perhaps you've noticed I'm wearing a little brace on my hand which is the unfortunate result of playing goalie in a soccer match. And by playing goalie, I meant that I wore some gloves and stood in front of the goal and watched as the other team scored over and over and over. But on one particular goal, they managed to injure my thumb which means that I'm having to

compensate with my other hand. I'm a lefty so most of the time my right hand only exists to make me look symmetrical, but its had to pick up the slack this week.

- And that's the image that I think of when I think of that body metaphor of the church.
- We not only suffer together, but we take care of and support one another as an overflow of brotherly love because love is inherently other-directed.
- The essence of sin is to twist and bend our affections inward, but love is inherently generous toward others.
- That's why the trinity is so essential to theological understanding. It helps us to see how God could be eternally loving rather than dependent on creation in order to love.
- Christ was able to sympathize with our weaknesses as we read about in chapter 4 and gives himself to us so we are called to imitate that love by complementing each other in the church. Pouring ourselves into each other.
- So the natural question is whether or not you actually subjectively feel that objective reality? Do you feel as if you have been united to and grafted in to this or some other body? Do you feel a genuine responsibility toward the good of the body and its individual members?
- And are you acting on that responsibility whether you feel it or not?
- Or are you content on the fringes and margins, consuming rather than contributing?
- So serving others is one way to show brotherly love. In vs. 4, we'll see another.

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. (Hebrews 13:4)

- Any form of sexual immorality is inherently a failure of brotherly love. There is the failure to love your spouse or future spouse, a failure to love the person with whom you are engaging in acts of immorality, and even a failure to love the body of Christ in that your sin affects those around you.
- That boy who tells his girlfriend he loves her so much that they have to consummate the relationship isn't suffering from an excess of love, but a deficiency. It's the very antithesis of love to lead another into sin and thus judgment. He's willing to risk her eternal joy for the sake of his temporal pleasure which is the essence of immaturity and narcissism. It is an abuse rather than a proper use of sex.
- So the author tells us to let marriage be held in honor.
- And perhaps the best way to talk about how to honor marriage is by talking about how to dishonor it.
- We dishonor marriage by suggesting it is disposable, when we expand the grounds of divorce and remarriage, we dishonor it by redefining the meaning of the institution. Or by means of adultery or premarital sex or pornography. Or by neglecting sexual intimacy by withholding ourselves. We dishonor marriage by abusing our spouse or refusing the biblical responsibilities that cohere to marriage. When men turn their authority into authoritarianism or abdicate their headship, or when wives domineer over their head.
- We dishonor marriage when we gossip or slander or belittle our spouse.
- We dishonor marriage when we say that we don't need a ceremony or certificate, but are just married in God's eyes so we just never formally marry.
- We dishonor marriage when we suggest that marriage is cheap and dirty as many of the early church gnostics did or as medieval RC often did.
- So the command is much larger than simply don't cheat on your spouse, the call is to not only purity, but also faithfulness and reverence.

- There is a reason that sexual purity is so often connected to worship in Scripture. We see idolatry described as adultery. Christ's relationship to the Church is described using marital imagery. In Romans 1, disordered worship is pictured as leading to distorted sexuality.
- Now, marriage is a gift of common grace. By that, I mean that marriage isn't only for believers.
- It is what we call a creation ordinance, created and instituted by God before the fall just like work.
- So marriage is an institution in which believers and unbelievers can partake and yet Christians should ideally have the best marriages because we're the only ones with the owner's manual.
- We know not only what marriage is, but what it is for and what messes it up and how to fix it and so forth.
- So if your marriage is in a state of dishonor, defilement, distortion, or disrepair, you need help.
- And how much more given the sanctity of the institution.
- We talked a couple of weeks back about how cavalierly we are tempted to view God when Scripture screams that He is holy, holy, holy.
- And if He is holy, then any institution that is intended to image Him in some manner should be accorded a certain respect and sanctity.
- That's why there is the threat of judgment attached to the command.
- God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterer.
- This resonates with what we see elsewhere such as:
 - *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9–10)*
 - *For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:5–6)*
- And consider how this fits into the larger concern of the book which is apostasy.
- In my experience almost every example of deconstruction I've ever seen has been someone who was compromising on sexual ethics. I wouldn't go so far as to say that all apostasy is owing to sexual sin, but there is a strong correlation.
- That's why in 1 Corinthians 10 after warning against things like sexual sin that Israel practiced, Paul writes:
 - *Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Corinthians 10:11–12)*
- As we've said before, the fact that the elect will not and cannot fall away doesn't mean that we should presume upon His grace. As Paul writes elsewhere, God is not mocked.
- God is serious about sin. Again, He is holy. When He appeared on Sinai the people trembled in utter terror.
- As we read in 10:31
 - *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31)*
- Far too many Christians have far too little fear.
- God forgives sinners, but only those who are contrite and repentant. That's why the author of Hebrews has already said, today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.
- Every unconfessed sin, every compromise is a slight hardening and, like concrete, if your heart isn't stirred by confession and repentance, it will harden.

- Let there be any confusion on this, check out 1 Thessalonians 4:3
 - *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. (1 Thessalonians 4:3–8)*
- Sexual immorality there is porneia which is a junk drawer term for any illicit sexual behavior. In other words, anything outside of a permanent heterosexual, monogamous marriage is unlawful and immoral. In the first century context, that would include all manners of other sins such as homosexuality, adultery, bestiality, incest and so forth. In our context, it is all of that but also broadens out into masturbation, pornography, transgenderism, and so forth.
- So the biblical command is to flee sexual immorality. Not just avoid it, but flee. Like Joseph ran out of the room when tempted by Potiphar's wife. The fact that we don't flee it only evidences that we don't understand the danger.
- It reminds me of those tourists at Yellowstone who try to get close to moose or bear. They want to get as close as possible, totally oblivious to the folly and danger. Well, likewise, we want to coddle our lust. Get close to the edge. Keep it near when in reality we should be running, fleeing.
- Cut off your hand, gouge out your eye as Jesus said. Be killing sin or sin will be killing you as John Owen said.
- So sanctify marriage. If currently married, sanctify it by fidelity, fidelity to your spouse, but also fidelity to the Lord by submitting to His commands to husbands and wives.
- And if not married, sanctify it by not looking down on marriage, and, unless one of the few to possess the gift of singleness, to desire and pursue it.
- Yes, upholding a biblical ethic of marriage might cost you, but that's the whole context of Hebrews in which faithfulness has led to mistreatment, imprisonment, humiliation and so forth.
- And one of the ways in which we can sanctify marriage is by means of being satisfied. Let her breasts satisfy you at all times as Proverbs said. One of the ways we fight our craving is by means of gratitude and contentment and that's what we see next.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 5-6.

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5–6)

- Anyone remember what the 7th commandment given in Exodus 20 is? Thou shalt not commit adultery. What about the 8th? Thou shalt not steal.
- And what about the 10th commandment? Thou shalt not covet. Covet what? Your neighbor's possessions or wife.
- Throughout Scripture we see a correlation between sexual immorality and greed.
- We even use the same term to describe the sinful desire for either. We can say that we lusted for another person or we lust for gold.
- Earlier we read 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 which says;
 - *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who*

practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9–10)

- Notice how thievery and greed follow right after a bunch of sins having to do with sexual immorality. We see the same phenomena in the Ephesians 5 passage we read earlier where sexual immorality and impurity is followed by covetousness.
- And in Luke 16, the Pharisees are called lovers of money and then the next section is a prohibition of divorce followed by a parable about a rich man and Lazarus.
- Its even fairly common to have heightened sexual dreams immediately after entertaining a craving for some materialistic desire.
- So we've seen thus far two loves to pursue. The love of brothers and the love of strangers, but now we see a counterfeit love, a competing love, a negative love.
- The love of money.
- We are to keep our lives free from the love of money.
- One of the ways to do that is by practicing what we talked about last week in TEC on giving. One of the best ways to mortify the love of money is by giving it away, by practicing brotherly love and hospitality.
- And if we are not going to be consumed by the love of money, then we need to cultivate contentment.
- Now, this isn't a prohibition of ambition. We see this in 1 Corinthians where Paul is talking about slavery and says, if you are a slave, be content, but if you can attain your freedom, then do so. In other words, contentment and ambition are not at odds.
- What distinguishes them? Well, when you are willing to sin to attain your ambition, it has moved into a state of discontentment.
- For instance, for you to desire a better job isn't inherently wrong, but for you to forsake your family or church or to engage in unethical behavior to get it, is.
- For you to desire marriage is a good and natural desire. But if you are so desperate to marry that you marry an unbeliever or live in perpetual bitterness and anger at God in the meantime, then that ambition has been corrupted and distorted.
- For you to desire more money, may or may not be sinful depending on why you desire it and what you are willing to do to get it.
- Here the command is to keep free from the love of money.
- As Ecclesiastes 5:10 says:
 - *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 5:10)*
- Wealth is temporal, it's a shadow not substance. It can't really satisfy which is why some of the wealthiest men in the world never think they are rich enough. As John Rockefeller, the richest man in the world at the time responded when asked how much is enough. Just a bit more.
- So in 1 Timothy 6:10 we read:
 - *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Timothy 6:10)*
- As we talked about in TEC last week, wealth is portrayed in Scripture as having a gravitational pull. It isn't neutral. Again, this doesn't mean that we swing the pendulum to a piestic poverty gospel, but we need to learn how to use money for good and not be used by it for evil.
- And the reason for contentment is tethered to God's promises. I will never leave you or forsake you which isn't an exact quote, but alludes to promises given to Jacob, Moses, and Joshua.

- And this is interesting in the first-century in which Stoic philosophy was common. The Stoic ideal was to be satisfied because the philosopher relied on his own self-sufficiency. So notice how the Christian ethic is different. Our satisfaction comes not from our own strength and resources, but from God's provision and promises.
- And we can therefore confidently speak the words of Psalm 118:6
 - *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?* (Psalm 118:6)
- As Romans 8 says:
 - *... If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:31)
- So do you have this confidence? When you think about Iran, Islam, immigration, inflation, interest rates, illness, Israel or whatever, is your response fear or confidence in God's sovereignty and goodness?
- Are you anxious or are you content? Yes, many of these things need our voices and actions, but none of them are cause for terror. Our response should be neither fearful anxiety nor detached apathy, but a confident contentment in providence.
- So how do we cultivate contentment?
- Well, we began by talking about how indicatives lead to imperatives. So let me give you a few doctrines that will fuel the duty to be content.
- First, realize that God is omnibenevolent or in simpler English. God is good. He is kind and loving. He cares about the sparrows, how much more does He care about you.
- Second, realize that God is omniscient. He knows what you are experiencing and knows what you want and knows what you need. He knows every single reality and potentiality.
- Third, realize that God is omnipotent. There is no lack in His ability to do what is for your good. In fact, He's promised to work all things together for good.
- Fourth, realize God's supremacy. Christ is better is the motif of the book. As Moses was willing to forsake the comforts and conveniences of life in Pharaoh's household because of the surpassing worth of following God so reflecting on Christ's superiority will prevent lust from gaining foothold in your life.
- Fifth, I would say to realize just what you actually deserve. It is really hard to complain about what you don't have when you realize what you should have in light of your sin. Yes, you may not have that promotion, but you don't have hell either.
- Finally, you need to realize what you have. As we talked about in Philippians 4 a couple years back, gratitude is the key to fighting discontentment. Yes, you may not have a new car, but you have a job. You may not have a spouse, but you have a church. You may not have a house, but you have a roof over your head. You may not have steak and sushi, but you've got enough to fill your belly.
- So I'll close by reading Ephesians 2 and I want to you just think about what you we deserve and what we get in contrast to that as a result of divine mercy and grace.
- *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we*

are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:1–10)

- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- In 1 Corinthians 11:28 we read this:
 - *Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. (1 Corinthians 11:28)*
- So this morning I just want to give you a chance to examine yourself. Examine whether you are showing brotherly love and hospitality, whether you are honoring marriage, fleeing sexual immorality, and walking in contentment and confidence in God's love and sovereignty.
- Take a few seconds to think and pray and then we'll partake together.
- On the night.