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A teenage girl was examining her grandmother's wedding ring. She was surprised by the heaviness of it. She said grandma your ring is really heavy to which the grandmother replied yes it is, but remember honey, in my day they were built to last a lifetime.

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We get this awesome love of God living inside of us when Jesus comes into our heart.

Do we let Christ's love shine through us? Can people tell we are Christians by our love?

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What can we do to show God's love to others? Does God's love motivate us to live our lives His way? Just what does motivate us/ what fills our hearts and minds this morning?

As we contemplate these questions, let us look to our Lord in prayer. Would you pray with me as we begin this morning's message? {Pray}

Chapter 13 begins with the words let brotherly love continue. The author is telling us the secret to chapters 11 & 12. How do we get this great, conquering faith & focus totally on Jesus? Only with a deep, abiding love for Him. Out of our love for Christ flows our faith and focus. In this chapter the author is giving us some essential and practical ethics for Christian living. Brotherly love is the first and most important one; all of the others flow from it. Brotherly love identifies us as Christians. Jesus said in John 13:35 *"By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* If we are a disciple of Jesus, then we are an ambassador for Him. As ambassadors for Christ, our job is to present Jesus to the world in a loving, appealing, glorifying manner. Can others see the love of Christ in us? Are we good ambassadors for Christ?

From our love flows hospitality. Are we hospitable? Are we friendly? Are we sharing and giving people? Especially to strangers? Some have unwittingly entertained angels by practicing hospitality to strangers. We never know just how a random act of kindness we perform might affect someone. It could motivate them to be hospitable. It could motivate them to seek a closer relationship with Christ. When we are hospitable, it is like we are doing it to Jesus Himself. In Matthew 25:40 Jesus said *"As you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto Me."* Do we picture ourselves helping Jesus when we help someone in need? Are we hospitable?

Love helps us be compassionate. Verse 3 tells us to remember the prisoner. Remember these early Christians who received this letter faced persecution for their faith. Some were put in jail, some were tortured and others were killed. These people could be next. Do we remember our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted for their faith?

Love also leads to sympathy. This verse tells us to remember those who are mistreated. We all are human; we all feel pain. We are to be sympathetic toward each other as well as to strangers. Are we? Do we feel each others pain? Do we pray for them? Do we reach out in love to those who are hurting? Do we do all we can to alleviate their pain?

Love leads to marriage. Genesis 2:24 *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”*. God highly honors marriage; he invented it. It is not to be entered into lightly. He created it to make our lives better. He expects us to take it seriously. It is a life long commitment; it takes love, work and dedication. With so many marriages ending in divorce these days, it is more important than ever that we pray for our spouse, honor biblical marriage and stay faithful both in mind and body. God will judge those who live an immoral life. If we truly love God and our spouse, our marriages will be strong, long, & prosperous; we will live a moral life.

True brotherly love does not covet. If we love someone, we won't be jealous of what God has blessed them with; we will be glad for them and praise the Lord for what He has done for them. Love lets us be happy with what we have. If we love God, we will thank Him for what he has given us. We will use it and enjoy it and not be angry that we don't have more. 1Tim6:10 *“Love satisfies. Are we content with what we have/do we glorify God with it?”*

What we have is one thing that is of the utmost importance; Jesus' promise to never leave us nor forsake us. This is one of the most emphatic promises in the New Testament. In the Greek it is a double double negative. It is like Jesus is saying I will never ever ever leave you! Isn't that a comforting thought, that Jesus will never leave us? We aren't leaving Him are we?

In John 10:28, Jesus used this same technique when He told us *“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”* Jesus is always with us! Isn't that great! We are His forever. Now if God is on our side who can be against us? Knowing that God is everything we will ever need brings contentment and strengthens our lives & builds our love for Him. What are we doing for Him?

If we have brotherly love, we will pray for those that rule over us. Not just those in positions of authority like government officials but our boss and our teachers as well. Do we pray for those who have influenced us for Christ? Do we try to be good examples for others to follow? Do we try to influence the world for Jesus or do we let the world influence us for it? Jesus never

changes; He is the same today as he was yesterday and will be tomorrow. Jesus gave His grace to those mentioned in chapter 11, just like he was giving it to the recipients of this letter and just like he gives it to us today. Are we that consistent in our Christian walk? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is available immediately and permanently to all who ask for it. Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* Love is what makes God’s grace available to anyone who will accept it. Love is why Jesus died for our sins. In John 3:16 Jesus said *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”* God is love. Does His love fill us?

Does God’s word fill us? In vs.9 the author warns us not to be misled by false doctrine. As Christians we must know what it is that we believe and not stray away from it. Like the song says, you have to stand for something or you will fall for anything. What do we stand for? Do we know what we believe and why we believe it? The New Testament is continually warning believers to watch out for false doctrine and false teachers. Are we on the look out for them? The gospel of Jesus Christ is a simple one; Jesus died for our sins and rose again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. We have life eternal through him and only through him. Any other teachings about getting eternal life any other way than Jesus are false doctrines. The world is filled with false teachers and false doctrine. The bible is filled with the truth of God. Failure to believe the truth does not make it a lie. Believing a lie does not make it the truth. Jesus said in John 14:6 *“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me”*. All we have to do to get eternal life is believe, ask & receive. Have we done that? Are we following true bible teachers or are we being carried about by various and strange doctrines?

The writer says it is good for our heart to be established by grace/what does that mean? Those who experience God’s grace through Christ have a stable walk with him. Their hearts& minds remain stable. God’s grace gives their lives consistency, meaning & worth. Christians are under grace & not the law. Jesus did not come to abolish the law, he came to fulfill it. That is what he did. The law had all kinds of dietary rules & regulations as well as directions for sacrifices and offerings; but now people are free to eat what ever they want and the animal sacrifice is no longer necessary.

The writer was concerned that some of these believers might go back to the old ceremonial laws and rituals. False teachers were teaching that it was still necessary to obey the strict dietary rules. But it is not. God gave Peter a vision about food. It showed him that Christians could eat anything. God told Peter *“What God has cleansed you must not call common.”* God not only cleansed people from sin, he cleansed their food as well. Truly God did make all things new. But the non believers were making it hard for the believers. Persecution does not only come from enemies and strangers; sometime it comes from those we know best.

The writer explains how Jesus was the Lamb of God; how He was the supreme sacrifice for our sins. The sacrificial system pointed to Jesus; He was the spotless Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. The Priests were aloud to eat the meat from the regular sacrifices offered by the people, but the lamb slain on the Day of Atonement was not to be eaten; it was to be burned outside the camp. Outside the camp meant to be unclean. Jesus suffered & died outside the walls of Jerusalem, outside the camp. The cross of Christ was the alter upon which God sacrificed His

son for sinful mankind. Believers must join Jesus spiritually outside the camp of the world, no longer a part of its sinful, vial and unholy actions. The author is urging believers to leave the system of sacrifice behind and go forward in faith, being living sacrifices to God.

It takes love to start this new life in Christ; to face persecution & hardship. We must 1<sup>st</sup> be loyal to Christ no matter what the cost. Loyalty requires love; do we love Christ enough to be loyal to Him/ to move outside our comfort zone/ to leave our families & comfortable lives to follow & obey Him?

When we become a Christian, our life changes. Our focus changes. We are no longer self-centered; we are now Christ centered. We can't feel at home in this world anymore. We look forward to our home in heaven; but until we get there, God has a job for us to do. If we are alive, God has a purpose for us. Are we willing to do His purpose?

We are to continually offer to Him the sacrifice of praise. It is not hard to praise someone if you love them. Do we love Jesus? Do we praise Him continually?

Lastly the author reminds us to share what we have and to do good. It is easy to share and do good if our hearts are filled with the love of Christ. What fills our hearts this morning?

Romans 12:1-2 *"I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* Are we willing to be a living sacrifice? If we love Jesus, we are.

Does the love of Christ flow through our veins? Can others see it in us?

Are we good ambassadors for Christ? Are we hospitable, honorable, moral, and upright? Do we pray for our leaders? Do we support them in Christian love? Do we trust God?

Do we know what we believe? Do we share our faith with others? Do we continually praise God? Are we thankful, friendly, giving people? Does our faith please God?

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run our race of faith in love, obedience, and joy for the glory of God.

Amen, let's pray. [Pray]

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