

Hebrews

Hebrews 13:1-6 – Christian Character - Part 1

April 11, 2010

I. Christian Character

- A. **Hebrews 13:1-4** . . . Let love of the brethren continue. [2] Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. [3] Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. [4] Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.
- B. In these four verses, God gives us four marks of a Christian's character, and all four are related to love. First, a Christian's character is marked by love for each other. Second, a Christian's character is marked by love for strangers through hospitality. Third, a Christian's character is marked by love for prisoners and those ill-treated (persecuted). Finally, a Christian's character is marked by love for one's spouse and the honor of marriage.
- C. For reasons that don't need to be explained right now, I am going to start today with verse today.
- D. Prayer

II. The Christian's Character Is Marked by Love

- A. The Christian's character is marked by love for one's spouse and the honor of marriage. **Hebrews 13:4** . . . Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.
 - 1. **Marriage is to be held in honor by all Christians** – that is, the well established and universally recognized practice of marriage, or what we call the institution of marriage, is to be held in honor.
 - a. For all Christians to hold marriage in honor, we all must think of it and treat it as something that is sacred, revered, highly respected, greatly valued, and protected.
 - b. **We hold marriage in honor**
 - (1) when we remain married and are sexually faithful to our spouse until death parts us,
 - (2) when we work together, as husband and wife, to nurture a relationship built on mutual trust and love – so that the

- way we live is no longer my life and your life, or my way and your way, but our life and our way,
 - (3) when we remain faithful to God's expectations for marriage and love within marriage regardless of how our spouse behaves,
 - (4) when we speak out against anything that denigrates or dishonors or opposes the ideal of marriage.
 - c. **We are not holding marriage in honor**
 - (1) when we engage in or support divorce,
 - (2) when we support remarriage after divorce where no adultery has taken place within the marriage,
 - (3) when we participate in any sexual immorality – be it premarital sexual activity, adultery during marriage, viewing pornography of any kind, looking and lusting, fantasizing, or living together in a marriage type relationship without a settled commitment to remain together until death parts us,
 - (4) when we are physically or emotionally abusive,
 - (5) when we bring any kind of substance addiction into the relationship,
 - (6) when we speak in derogatory terms about marriage
 - (7) when we choose selfishness instead of love so that we please ourselves at our spouse's expense.

- 2. **The marriage bed is to be undefiled** – in other words, the state or condition of the marriage bed is to be pure or uncontaminated.
 - a. What makes the marriage bed so significant that God says we are to protect it from defilement? Why is this so important?
 - (1) Because according to the way God created us, sexual intercourse is an act that **makes us one flesh** with whomever we have intercourse.
 - (2) **Mark 10:6-9 . . .**"But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. [7] "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, [8] and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. [9] "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (adultery, divorce)
 - (3) Now, to prevent us from turning sexual activity into an occasion for fornication or adultery – and therefore debasing the oneness that comes from intercourse – God

established, by law, that sexual intercourse and a life-long commitment to live together are to go hand-in-hand. In fact, they are to be inseparable. According to the Law of Moses, adultery was punishable by death. And if an unmarried man had intercourse with an unmarried woman, and they got caught, he had to marry her, and he had to pay her father 50 shekels of silver, and he could not divorce her – ever. Note: **Deuteronomy 22:28-29**.

- (4) The point that God is making here in Hebrews is that we are to protect the sanctity and purity of the marriage bed because He makes a man and a woman one flesh through intercourse – and He does this with the full intention that we remain one flesh with the person we've had intercourse with until death or adultery breaks the union.
- (5) Now I realize some of us have a sinful past in relation to this great truth. The important thing for us now is to make sure we have repented and are going forward with a strong commitment to keep our marriage bed undefiled.
- b. There are primarily three ways we defile the marriage bed.
 - (1) Engage in intercourse with someone who is not our spouse (adultery),
 - (2) Engage in forms of sexual immorality that include physical contact but not intercourse (fornication with probable mental adultery),
 - (3) Engage in those hidden forms of sexual immorality that include looking and lusting, fantasizing and lusting, masturbating and lusting, or contemplating what it might be like to get sexually involved with a certain person (mental adultery with fornication).
- 3. Some important truths about immorality from the scripture:
 - a. It is a reason for God's wrath coming one day upon the earth
 - (1) **Colossians 3:5-6** . . . Therefore put to death the members of your body that are upon the earth: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. [6] For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience.
 - b. It is a reason for exclusion from the Kingdom of God
 - (1) **I Corinthians 6:9-10** . . . Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not

be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, [10] nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

- (2) **Galatians 5:19-21** . . . Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, [21] envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- (3) **Ephesians 5:5** . . . For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.
- c. It is something we are to put to death and flee
 - (1) **Colossians 3:5** . . . Therefore put to death the members of your body which are upon the earth: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.
 - (2) **I Corinthians 6:18-20** . . . Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. [19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? [20] For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.
- d. It is proof of personal stupidity
 - (1) **Proverbs 6:27-29** . . . Can a man take fire in his bosom And his clothes not be burned? [28] Or can a man walk on hot coals And his feet not be scorched? [29] So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished.
 - (2) **Proverbs 6:32-33** . . . The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself does it. [33] Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out.
- e. It is a significant reason to pursue a sanctified heart and mind.
 - (1) **I Thessalonians 4:3-8** . . . For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual

immorality; [4] that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, [5] not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; [6] and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. [7] For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. [8] So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

4. Why is marital infidelity so prevalent in history, in our culture today, and even in the Church? Let me give you just three reasons.
 - a. **Selfishness!** For many, sexual stimulation in its varied forms is very pleasing to their flesh. For some, sexual stimulation provides temporary relief from emotional or psychological pain. For some, it is an oasis of excitement in an otherwise dull life. Yet immorality or unfaithfulness of any kind is always **self-centered**. No one chooses any kind of unfaithfulness for the good of their spouse or out of love for their spouse.
 - b. **Discontentment!** Many become dissatisfied with the sexual part of their marriage.
 - (1) Some are dissatisfied with the amount, or the variety, or the lack of intimacy in love making.
 - (2) Some are hurt by the obvious selfishness of one partner, or the demand for love-making when things like tenderness, kindness, and endearment are missing from much of the rest of the relationship.
 - (3) Some are dissatisfied with the physical attributes or physical condition or age of their spouse.
 - (4) Whatever our reason for dissatisfaction – if we allow it to grow instead of crushing it quickly, it isn't long before we build up anger and resentment – which often leads to feeling like a victim. And once we feel like a victim, our next step is to justify some level of unfaithfulness to get the satisfaction we desire.
 - (5) Note: **Malachi 2:13-16**
 - c. **Disassociation!** Many – and I believe it is only right to say that over the course of history, this applies far more to men

than women when it comes to immorality – many disassociate sexual activity from love and a committed relationship.

- (1) In other words, they treat their hidden lust and the physical activities necessary to gain sexual pleasure apart from their spouse as if they had no effect on their love for their spouse or the sanctity of their marriage.
- (2) In fact, when we disassociate sexual pleasure from love and intercourse from a life-long committed relationship, we begin to think we can actually involve ourselves in varied forms of immorality and at the very same time love our spouse as we ought. Or to put it another way, when we disassociate, we think our unfaithfulness has no more affect on our love for our spouse than a ride at Cedar Point or eating a favorite desert.
- (3) This is why so many get involved in pornography or fornication or adultery, and when caught, just don't understand why their spouse is so upset and hurt. In fact, most of those who get caught plead for understanding on the basis that they still love their spouse.
 - (a) Brothers and sisters, the only way we can believe we love our spouse while deliberately and freely, and especially repeatedly choosing selfishness – of any kind – is to desensitize and harden our heart toward God and His word. And if your heart is in this condition today, it is doubtful you are absorbing what I am saying right now.
 - (b) Yet here is the truth. Knowingly choosing your own happiness or pleasure or fulfillment or whatever at the expense of your spouse is selfishness, and there is no love in selfishness. You may pack loving deeds or loving words or loving attitudes all around your selfishness, but no amount of dressing can change a selfish choice into a loving choice. And no amount of loving deeds packed around unfaithfulness can change unfaithfulness back into love.
 - (c) Let me say this once more – there is no immorality of any kind or to any degree without selfishness – and I am speaking of the kind of selfishness that is deliberate and freely chosen.

- (4) What is my point? Many who defile the marriage bed do so without a strong sense of guilt or any sense of guilt by disassociating their immoral behavior from reality – the reality of God – for He is the one we sin against first; the reality of love – for that is the foundation of marriage; and the reality of being one flesh with my spouse.
- 5. What can we do, as Christians, to hold marriage in honor, and keep the marriage bed undefiled?
 - a. Love God above all else. Fear God and His judgment – remembering it is God who said He will judge fornicators and adulterers. Obey God and His word.
 - b. Seek to draw as near to God as you possibly can in this life by pursuing purity of heart, singleness of mind, and holiness of life.
 - c. Respect the fact that it is God who so created us as to make a man and a woman one flesh through sexual intercourse.
 - d. Do everything in your power to remain married and faithful to your spouse.
 - (1) Nurture love toward your spouse – working each day to preserve the we and kill off the I.
 - (2) Do your best to resolve every conflict or dispute in a manner that seeks the good of both.
 - (3) Flee every kind of immorality, including those hidden forms that no one but God sees.
 - (4) Get outside help when necessary.
 - (5) Never neglect prayer – for yourself and for your spouse.
 - e. See immorality as a huge temptation that requires working together. It is God who says both spouses are to make a sincere and understanding effort to overcome this temptation.
 - (1) **I Corinthians 7:3-5** . . . The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.
[4] The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.
[5] Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- f. Stand against divorce and immorality of every kind wherever you find it – be it in yourself or in your spouse or in your Christian brothers and sisters.
- g. Keep God at the top of your life, so nothing transcends His place in our heart, mind, choices and behavior.

III. Conclusion

- A. It is God who tells us that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. In that same way, a little immorality effects you, your marriage, and the church.
- B. We are not simply fighting for our own spiritual well-being in this matter or for the health of our marriage. We are also fighting for the spiritual health and power of our church.