

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Hebrews 13:1-3 & 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, September 30, 2012
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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, September 30, 2012**, is from **Hebrews 13:1-3 & 1 Corinthians 13:1-13**. You might like to study (or mention in your class) all of the “**Let us**” verses in the *Letter to the Hebrews* that are listed below. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at <http://InternationalBibleLessons.org> and in *The Oklahoman* newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Hebrews 13:1-3

(Hebrews 13:1) Let mutual love continue.

Jesus commanded His followers: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). The apostle John wrote “Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action” (1 John 3:18). The Apostle Paul wrote, “But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). Love among Christians is commanded throughout the Bible, in addition to loving God, our friends, and our enemies. The *Letter to the Hebrews* uses the pair of words “let us” to teach more about the loving concern we should have for one another as Christians. See the list of “let us” verses below for further study or discussion on how we should live together as believers in Jesus Christ.

(Hebrews 13:2) Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

In a land where few inns, motels, or hotels existed, people depended on the hospitality of others when they traveled. In some areas, hospitality can only be shown to those who have valid references, after much prayer for guidance and protection. People need to pray for God’s guidance before opening their homes to strangers, for just as they might entertain angels, they might also entertain thieves, murderers, or demons. Prayer for God’s guidance and protection in all

situations at all times is wise. Refusal to show hospitality at all may prevent someone from meeting an angel. We may meet angels unawares in this world.

(Hebrews 13:3) Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.

The writer continues to talk about some examples of mutual love or love between and among the followers of Jesus Christ. Mutual love enables Christians to extend hospitality to other Christians, even if they are strangers. During times of persecution, some Christians would draw the sign or symbol of a fish to more safely identify one another, especially when hospitality was needed. The Greek word for fish included letters that could be used as an abbreviation for: “Jesus Christ God’s Son Savior.” The Holy Spirit helps Christians recognize other Christians through their love and faith in Jesus Christ. Some Christians were thrown into prison and tortured for their faith: Jesus, Stephen, Peter, Paul, and others were tried, tortured, imprisoned, and killed. Rather than ignore those who suffer for their faithful testimony regarding Jesus Christ, we need to feel so close to them that we will do what we wisely and prayerfully can to follow the Golden Rule that Jesus gave, “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). Times can be so dangerous that some in prison can only be remembered in prayer, and especially and most importantly in persistent prayer for their protection and safe release.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

(1 Corinthians 13:1) If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

The Apostle Paul wrote “The Love Chapter” (1 Corinthians 13) in his letter to the Corinthians. Paul addressed the issues of speaking in tongues and interpreting tongues (languages others probably could not understand, unless they were speaking a foreign language for people who would understand that foreign language, as on the day of Pentecost). Paul said some accused him of being a poor speaker. Paul began chapter thirteen by saying that someone can speak with eloquence and sophisticated spiritual languages; but, if they do not have love for those they speak to; then, they will eventually sound like an endlessly repeated noise that can give people a headache.

(1 Corinthians 13:2) And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

Some Christians claimed to be able to foretell the future. They could proclaim the gospel message with power and sound reasoning. Some claimed to understand the spiritual realities that most cannot comprehend. Others claimed to be able to

know things that others could not know. Some claimed to have enough faith to work astounding miracles. Even if these claims were true, if they did not have love for others, they were nothing.

(1 Corinthians 13:3) If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Paul argued that we can make any sacrifice, even sacrifice our own body by giving it over to torture, imprisonment, burning, or martyrdom as an expression of our faith, but if we do not have love, we will gain nothing. “Having love” means more than doing a “loving or caring” action from time to time. “Having love” is having something we possess. “Having love” means this: the mainspring or supreme motive or ultimate intention for all of our actions is love for God and others.

(1 Corinthians 13:4) Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant

Paul defined love and listed the attributes of love to make clear the kind of love he meant. When love is my motive in the way I treat others, I will choose to be patient with others. If I fail to treat others with patience, I will repent and strive to be patient because I have love for all people. Love will motivate me to treat people (and even animals) with kindness. Love will lead me to rejoice in the good others receive, rather than resent them for the good that comes to them.

(1 Corinthians 13:5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

No matter what the situation, love will restrain me from being rude towards someone – even when provoked by them to treat them unkindly. Love will motivate me to seek what is best for all concerned, to listen to other points of view to learn from them and show them consideration. Love will restrain me from expressing irritability or resentment and move me to pray and seek ways to develop healthy personality traits.

(1 Corinthians 13:6) it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.

Some people rejoice when they see someone doing wrong; especially if that wrongdoing is done against someone they disagree with or hate. Some people will rejoice when they see someone doing wrong, because they too want to enjoy doing that wrong. Love helps us restrain ourselves whenever we see any wrong being done. Love rejoices in the truth, even when it may prove that our beliefs or someone else’s beliefs and loyalties are wrong.

(1 Corinthians 13:7) It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love bears or keeps on loving when things go wrong, when suffering, when under attack. Love believes all things that are according to and consistent with the truth (see verse 6 above). Of course, love will not choose to believe falsehoods or the idea that by doing wrong we will not hurt others or ourselves. Love continues to hope for the best, because love for God moves us to trust God. Because we love and trust God, we can endure suffering.

(1 Corinthians 13:8) Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.

God is love. God loves us, enough for Jesus to die on our behalf to forgive us; therefore, for these reasons and more love never ends. Prophecies will end after they are fulfilled. Speaking in tongues will cease, because someday we will all understand what others speak. Knowledge (claiming to know special or hidden truths unavailable to others) will cease. Paul did not mean that believers will not grow in the knowledge of God forever, as they continue to understand more about the infinite God throughout eternity.

(1 Corinthians 13:9) For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part;

Our true knowledge is not exhaustive knowledge. Truths that we know to be unchanging truths can be found exclusively in the Bible as infallible truths. Sometimes we learn infallible truths from observing what God has created. Still, our knowledge is not complete. Only the infinite and personal God knows all things. Some prophecies are not fulfilled yet; and these prophecies will not be fully understood by us, even if they are fulfilled in our lifetime.

(1 Corinthians 13:10) but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

When Jesus Christ comes a second time into our world to fulfill the partially fulfilled prophecies about Him, then the complete has come. When we remember and learn more about the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled the first time He came, we love God and Jesus our Savior even more. When we see how all of the prophecies about Jesus fit together as a whole, we will love the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit even more.

(1 Corinthians 13:11) When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

Paul reminded his readers to think about themselves when they were children. Children think, act, and speak according to their nature and age level. Unhappily, some old enough to be adults remain childish. Paul wanted adults to act like

adults. New believers need to grow into spiritual maturity, and their actions will demonstrate the level of maturity.

(1 Corinthians 13:12) For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Even though we may be spiritually mature, we need to remain humble. Eventually, we will know ourselves as we really are. God the Father and Jesus Christ know us fully. Someday we will know ourselves fully as they know us. Love motivates God to love us even after knowing us as we are. God knows what we will become through faith in Him and love for Him.

(1 Corinthians 13:13) And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

These three attributes or qualities of life continue among all true believers in Jesus Christ. They may all continue throughout eternity. We will see the reality of what God has promised, and what we have hoped for when God fulfills our hopes – these experiences will increase our love for God and thanksgiving for what God has done and does in our lives. Throughout eternity, God may say and do things that further develop and increase our faith, hope, and love. Love motivates us to trust in and obey God; love is the greatest of the three attributes of Christian living.

“Let Us” in the Letter to the Hebrews

(Hebrews 4:1) Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest is still open, **let us take care** that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

(Hebrews 4:11) **Let us therefore make every effort** to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.

(Hebrews 4:14) Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, **let us hold fast to our confession.**

(Hebrews 4:16) **Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness**, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

(Hebrews 6:1) Therefore **let us go on toward perfection**, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God,

(Hebrews 10:22) **let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith**, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

(Hebrews 10:23) **Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope** without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.

(Hebrews 10:24) And **let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds,**

(Hebrews 12:1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us also lay aside every weight and the sin** that clings so closely, and **let us run with perseverance** the race that is set before us,

(Hebrews 12:28) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, **let us give thanks**, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe;

(Hebrews 13:13) **Let us then go to him** outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.

(Hebrews 13:15) Through him, then, **let us continually offer** a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. In what ways can mutual love among Christians be expressed?
2. In a society where Christians suffer persecution, in what ways can Christians love one another while protecting one another from being persecuted or arrested for their faith?
3. Why is love more important than persuasive speaking skills? In what ways can persuasive speaking skills without love be dangerous?
4. Consider various faith communities today. Which faith communities emphasize the love Paul commended to his readers?
5. Read through the “let us” verses. Which one speaks the most directly to you. Why?

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