

The author concludes his letter with a series of short exhortations – divided into three sections – which all flow directly out of his command in 12:28 to “...*serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*” (KJV) or “*let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe*” (ESV).

The “worship” he is exhorting them to is not the gathering for public worship in the context of other believers. It is the worship first defined in Romans 12:1-2 which “present(s) you body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable into God which is your reasonable service” (KJV) or “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” It is the personal and sacrificial offering of the whole of our being to God.

This personal worship has both positive and negative implications:

- Do not be conformed to this world
- Be transformed by the renewing of your mind

This personal worship has one objective:

- Discerning the will of God as it relates to what is good and acceptable and perfect and living accordingly

The admonitions found in Hebrews 13 unpack what it means to serve and to please God in three areas:

1. Expressions of Love within the Body of Christ: 13:1 – 6
2. Submission to Leaders over the Body of Christ: 13:7 – 19
3. Provision for Acceptance in the Presence of Christ: 13:20 – 25

Practical Expressions of Love

“*Let brotherly love continue.*” 13:1

This *general exhortation* to persevere in love for others within the body of Christ will unfold into more *specific expressions* of love in the verses 2 through 6.

Pink observes that “brotherly” has “lower” and “higher” applications:

1. Lower: Their brothers “according to the flesh,” which would be their Jewish relations, many of whom would have ostracized the Hebrew Christians for following Christ. They are exhorted to not “behave in a less kindly manner” toward their unbelieving relatives, to not retaliate against them, but rather to extend grace to them in the same way that they are the recipients of the grace of Christ (compare 1 Peter 2:21-23).
2. Higher: “...that special and spiritual affection which is to be cultivated between and among God’s children.” Pink cites Calvin: we cannot be Christians without loving the brethren (John 13:35; Gal 5:22; 1 John 3:14; 5:1).

The author has already alluded to the active presence of this love among these Hebrew Christians: 6:10 which expressed itself in serving the saints, and here in this closing exhortation he presses upon them the necessity of *continuing* or *persevering* in that love.

Our love for one another in the body of Christ must be ***intentionally practiced*** in acts of service but also ***diligently guarded*** lest our unkindnesses and harsh words toward one another cause our love to become cold.

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers...” 13:2

Love manifests itself in showing hospitality to others. The opening of homes and the sharing of resources is a characteristic virtue of the early New Testament Church (Luke 24:28-29; Acts 2:42-47; 16:15; Romans 12:13).

In the wake of the persecution these Hebrew Christians have endured, many of them had lost their property and livelihood (Hebrews 10:32-34). They were therefore dependent upon the hospitality of their brothers in the community of Christ.

“...for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” 13:2

The reference is to Abraham and Lot showing hospitality to strangers who turned out to be angels (Genesis 18:1-8; 19:1-9). Indeed, when we care for the material needs of the stranger, we are caring for the Lord Jesus Christ himself (Matthew 25:34-40).

Caring for the stranger is not without its expenses and inconveniences (see Luke 10:33-35), which is the chief deterrent to our performing this duty. But the eternal rewards we receive in return far exceed the losses we may have incurred (compare Matthew 25:34). Indeed, in many cases we give that which we ourselves depend upon for our own living (see 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 and Philippians 4:10-19).