

MAY 29, 1988

## DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

In today's world of the possible and the practical, we often want to concentrate on the heart of the matter or how a certain situation impacts on the final outcome. Many times that is referred to as the "bottom line". In a financial statement, the important thing is whether there is a profit or loss and how much--that's the bottom line. Over the past several weeks we have been studying the letter to the Hebrews and looking at the superiority of Jesus to all previous things related to God's dealing with man. We have seen that Jesus is greater than the prophets, the angels, that His New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant, that His sacrifice of Himself is greater than any animal sacrifice, that He is a greater priest than any of the descendants of Levi, and that He is greater than anything that could come along in the future. We have looked at the necessity of faith and the fact that we can have complete confidence in this "Superior One" who demonstrated that victory is possible in this life by being the pioneer of our faith. So today we come to the "bottom line" of how does all these things work out in Daily Christian Living. Yes, this is where it is happening--in the everydayness of our lives. Many people keep waiting for the big opportunity to demonstrate that God is working in their lives and then they can provide a good testimony of their salvation. The opportunities are there everyday.

**HEBREWS 13:1-6** Relationships! You cannot escape dealing with other people if you are to live a normal human life. There are people such as Howard Hughes that tried to escape from humanity and to live his life in isolation--that's not really living. Since we will have relationships with other people, then we should consider how we can make these most successful. In other words, how can we implement the fact that we are "saved" impact those relationships?

The first area to consider is with those that are very close to us--our brothers. This does not limit us to those that are blood relatives but also includes those that are fellow Christians, especially those that are in the same congregation. The term brotherly love implies a more affectionate love than just a self sacrificing love. I might do something for someone that I hardly know out of an agape type love. This is why people give to world hunger or world missions or to the community chest. This is why missionaries devote their lives to helping win the lost. A deeper kind of love that cherishes and shows affection needs to develop with those that are really close to us if we want to enjoy the full blessing of relationships. Most of us do not ever develop such relationships in our entire lives. Most of our relationships are just superficial. We do not really get close to each other and this closeness does not happen even between husbands and wives in many cases.

Another level of relationship is with those that happen to close our paths as we go about our daily routines. These are referred to as strangers. The admonition here is to be courteous and hospitable. The reference to entertaining angels and not be aware of them being angels is probably referring to Abraham's experience of being visited by angels. I would like to expand that idea a little further by realizing that the word angel in the Jewish language literally meant messenger. In the Old Testament translations into English, the translators were careful to reserve the word "angel" for those considered to be supernatural beings that were messengers and to use other terms for human messengers. I guess the point that I would like to consider is that God might be sending a message to you by someone that you meet in a chance encounter.

There is another group of people that are separated from us that we are not likely to come in contact with. Those that are in prisons, those that are removed from society for whatever reason. Here the reference is likely to be to those that are fellow Christians that have been jailed for their

beliefs. Even though we do not see this in our country, it happens in other parts of the world. While we are not likely to find a fellow Christian confined to jail, we might find one confined to a nursing home.

The most significant relationships in our lives are in our families and many times we tend to take those for granted and do not spend the time and energy necessary to cultivate and grow those to the utmost benefit. Really intimate relationships between a man and a woman must be in the context of marriage. Some that are married ignore their promise about forsaking all others and many of our younger generation ignore the idea of marriage altogether. The message here is quite plain--God will judge.

Many times the thing that hinders our building relationships in whatever context of life is our preoccupation with material things. We are not content with what we have no matter how much we have. Instead of loving people and using things we tend to love things and use people. If we would but realize that our security rests not in a bigger bank account nor is our self worth measured by the size of our automobile or house, but instead is dependent on God, then we could be freer to concentrate on the real things of life.

**HEBREWS 13:7-8** The necessity of real leadership in the church to the success of Christianity in the community cannot be overemphasized. The leaders must set the example and this example must be based on the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. When the pastor is not committed to teaching the word of God (Jesus is the Living Word) but gives out nothing more than pop psychology, then the influence of the individual Christians in their communities, family and work place is going to be diminished.

**HEBREWS 13:9-14** Some so-called theologians would bring strange teachings into the church and this has happened in many areas. When we get away from concentrating on the "cross" and the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, then we miss the essence of our salvation. Salvation is not in rituals and religion. Jesus was sacrificed outside of the gates of Jerusalem and this is to show us that formalized religion cannot contain the salvation that is ours in Jesus. We are to take our salvation beyond the walls of the church building and put it into practice in the home and the workplace even if it brings persecution and reproach. The thrust of our lives must be spiritual for the true values of life are there. We cannot be contained by the physical world for this is not our destination in life.

**HEBREWS 13:15-16** In Jesus the old system of sacrifices of animals was ended; however, there are spiritual sacrifices that we can offer as a part of our worship of God. One that is acceptable to God is the sacrifice of praise. Recognizing God's goodness to us and giving Him the thanks and appreciation for it is appropriate. We need to communicate that to God and to others.