

LOVE'S JOURNEY "Love's Walk"

A while back, I did a teaching entitled "Love's Motivation." It's primary thrust can be summarized in one verse.

1 John 4:19 "We love because he first loved us." NIV

The reason we can do anything at all is because God loved us even when we were sinners and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sin. When we accept His payment for our debt, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our hearts. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the capacity to love as God loves.

Rom 5:5-6

5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. NKJV

The practical implication of having our hearts full of God's love is that we need to share it! John makes this clear a little further down in his epistle.

1 John 4:20-21

20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. NIV

In Hebrews 13, we are given four primary characteristics of a life of love. The two primary Greek words used in the New Testament for love are αγαπαο and φιλεο. The first is the word for love that deals with God's love, the second deals with brotherly love (Philadelphia). We need to be in the place in our Christian walk where phileo love is energized by the agapao of God. We so often think in terms of either/or that we think we must forsake phileo in order to walk in agape. This is not the case. Our souls must be subject to our spirits and our spirits must be subject to the Spirit of the Living God. His love in our spirits should be the life and power behind the emotion and love of our souls.

1 Cor 16:22 "If anyone does not love [φιλει] the Lord—a curse be on him. Come, O Lord!" NIV

Another way of reading this verse could be, "If anyone does not love the Lord in his soul, is not in friendship with Him, he will be cursed at His coming." These are strong words indeed. What is the fruit of the love of God in our hearts? How do we love the Lord Jesus? Hebrews gives us some answers.

Heb 13:1-4

1 Keep on loving each other as brothers.

2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

- 3 Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.
- 4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. NIV

The writer of Hebrews gives us four steps in love's walk. These are: the love of the brethren, hospitality to strangers, sympathy with the persecuted, and the purity of love in marriage. I owe a debt of gratitude to Andrew Murray (may his reward be full) for his insights on this section of Scripture in the book The Holiest of All. Let's look at these steps individually.

I. The Love of the Brethren – Heb 13:1

We've already read in 1 John that he who loves God must love his brother. The practicality of loving our brothers and sisters in Christ keeps us from a religious spirit. Christianity isn't about empty liturgy and feel-good Sunday meetings. It is a family living and growing together, each part supplying what the other lacks.

Listen to how Andrew Murray put it:

“He that enters the Holiest finds there the God of love. The life and the blessing he receives is nothing but the nature of God, the love of God shed abroad in his heart. He cannot truly enter the presence of God or enter His love without finding his brethren there: he cannot but prove his love to God and his joy in God in love to his brethren. On Mount Sion is the city of God, where God makes the solitary to dwell in families: we cannot share its blessings in any way but as we share them with our fellow-citizens.”¹

The Apostle John records how this is to take place.

1 John 3:16-18

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. NIV

We are to love in action and truth! Hebrews 13:1 in the KJV reads, “Let brotherly love continue.” Love in action is something we should be walking in continually.

II. Love to Strangers, Hospitality – Heb 13:2

Heb 13:2

Do not forget to **entertain strangers**¹, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. NIV

The writer of Hebrews tells us to be mindful to entertain strangers. We need to look at this in the Greek to get a greater appreciation of what that means and then look at how to carry it out.

¹ Andrew Murray, *The Holiest of All*, Whitaker House, New Kensington, PA, 1996 (edition), p. 518

Thayer's definition-

NT:5381 – **filoxenia**¹, filoxenias, hee
love to strangers, hospitality: Rom 12:13

Strong's definition-

NT:5381 – **philoxenia**¹ (fil-o-zeh-nee'-ah); from NT:5382; hospitableness: KJV - entertain stranger, hospitality.

NT:5382 -- philoxenos (fil-ox'-en-os); from NT:5384 and NT:3581; fond of guests, i.e. hospitable: KJV - given to (lover of, use) hospitality.

NT:5384 -- philos (fee'-los); properly, dear, i.e. a friend; actively, fond, i.e. friendly (still as a noun, an associate, neighbor, etc.): KJV - friend.

NT:3581 -- xenos (xen'-os); apparently a primary word; foreign (literally, alien, or figuratively, novel); by implication a guest or (vice-versa) entertainer: KJV - host, strange (-r).

Bullinger's definition of ξένος: “not of one's own family, stranger; a guest, a stranger; a friend who lived in a different city or country, allied with another for the purpose of affording mutual entertainment when traveling.”

The English words “entertain strangers” are one Greek word in the text, φιλοξενία. This Greek word is a compound of φίλο, love and ξενος, stranger. [Read Bullinger's definition]. We are to remember to show hospitality to those we don't know (believer and unbeliever). Showing hospitality is listed as a qualification of leadership in 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:8. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:8-10 that hospitality without grumbling makes it possible for us to share God's grace with one another. But here in Hebrews we are given an almost startling enticement.

Heb 13:2b “for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” NIV

Several examples of this come to mind from the Old Testament. In Genesis 18, the Lord visited Abraham in the company of two angels. Abraham made haste to receive them and offered water to wash their feet. He had a meal prepared and they ate together. It was at the end of this meal that the Lord confirmed His promise to bring Isaac. These two angels then went on to Sodom to rescue Lot (Genesis 19).

Gen 19:1-3

- 1 The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.
- 2 "My lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning." "No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square."
- 3 But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. NIV

I cannot help but wonder what Lot's lot would have been had he not been “given to hospitality.”

Judg 13:8-11

- 8 Then Manoah prayed to the LORD: "O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born."
9 God heard Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman while she was out in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her.
10 The woman hurried to tell her husband, "He's here! The man who appeared to me the other day!"
11 Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, "Are you the one who talked to my wife?" "I am," he said. NIV

Judg 13:15-23 NIV

- 15 Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "We would like you to stay until we prepare a young goat for you."
16 The angel of the LORD replied, "Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD." (Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the LORD.)
17 Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?"
18 He replied, "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding. [Heb. *wonderful*]"
19 Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched:
20 As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground.
21 When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD.
22 "We are doomed to die!" he said to his wife. "We have seen God!"
23 But his wife answered, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this."

We may never know this side of heaven if and how many angels we've fed. We do know, though, that showing hospitality to strangers is taken very personally by our Lord.

III. Love to the Persecuted, Sympathy – Heb 13:3

Heb 13:3

Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. NIV

Heb 13:3

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them--those who are mistreated--since you yourselves are in the body also. NKJV

Sympathy is the act or capacity to understand and share the feelings of another. It is a relationship between persons wherein which what affects the one, affects the other. In physiology, it is a term used to describe the mutual influence of different parts of the body on each other. We are one body. What affects one of us, affects all of us.

1 Cor 12:26-27

26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. NIV

We need to understand this with regard to those who are being persecuted. Their pain is our pain. If we made it a point to remember those in bondage, we might be able to even bear a measure of their pain and share in fellowship of the suffering of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:10). We need to keep incarcerated saints in our prayers. [Plug Voice of the Martyrs]

Acts 12:1-17

1 It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them.

2 He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.

3 When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.

7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

8 Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him.

9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision.

10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.

13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door.

14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

15 "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

16 But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

17 Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place. NIV

Before, we had angels being mistaken for men. Here we have a man being mistaken for an angel! We need to remember those in bondage, that they may be sustained and set free!

IV. The Love of Spouse, Honor and Purity – Heb 13:4

Heb 13:4

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. NIV

Heb 13:4

Honor your marriage and its vows, and be pure; for God will surely punish all those who are immoral or commit adultery. TLB

To honor is to deem something costly and precious, of great value. Husbands and wives should consider each other and their relationship as precious and of great value. Not only should they consider themselves that way, but all in the body of Christ should hold marriage in high esteem. Our culture is at war with the marriage covenant. We need to stand in the gap and hold marriage in an honorable state.

Husbands and wives are to honor each other and keep their relations pure. The language used in this verse in the Greek gives me the sense that it was directed primarily toward the man. We are responsible for keeping ourselves pure and not defiling our wives. We are to wash them with the watering of the word. Why is God concerned for marriages?

Eph 5:25-32

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-

30 for we are members of his body.

31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

32 This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church. NIV

God instituted marriage in the beginning to show us what His relationship would be with His people. Married couples are to be living examples of Christ and the church. This puts the onus on the man to behave toward his wife like Christ behaves toward the church.

1 Peter 3:7

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. NIV

By doing these four things, we will be well on our way in love's walk. We need to continue to love the brethren. We need to be hospitable to strangers. We need to remember those in prison and those being persecuted. We need to hold marriage in high esteem and remain pure (that goes for married and single alike).

In summery, I'd like to look at two other sections of Scripture that reiterate these principles.

Rom 12:13-16a

13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

16 Live in harmony with one another. [read "marriage"] NIV

Matt 25:34-45

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,

36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?

39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

45 "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' NIV

Love's walk is manifested in the care of the needs of the brethren, in the hospitality shown to the stranger, in the ministry given to the prisoner and the persecuted, in the honor and purity held in marriage. In Hebrews we learned that some had entertained angels unawares. The Lord tells us plainly, what we do for the least we do for Him. Let us be found on love's road, ministering to the Lord in deed and truth by taking heavenly love into earthly action.

Amen!