

**Hebrews 13:1-2**  
**September 25, 2016**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Imagine being an Israelite. Judaism is all you've known, and all of your family and friends are Jewish as well. You've gone to the Temple each week to worship God, and you've trained your children in it. Then Jesus comes along. People are amazed at his teachings and his ability to perform miracles. Even the Jews are wondering if He is the promised Messiah. And then Jesus is ultimately crucified and then resurrected from the dead, which got the attention of both Jews and Gentiles, including some of your family and friends. Jesus was even seen by over 500 people, and he revealed himself to Mary and some of the very people he disciplined before he was crucified.

They couldn't deny what they observed! And then NT church is birthed by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost after Jesus ascended into heaven. People began following Jesus. The group was called The Way. I want you to imagine what it would have been like if you were an Israelite who was convinced that Jesus is the Messiah. You left Judaism, which means you are not worshipping with your family and friends. Your family is beside themselves! They can't understand this decision you made. You can just hear them say, "Are you crazy?!!"

But you're not crazy. Your parents and grandparents laid eyes on Jesus. They shared powerful accounts of what Jesus did among the people. You are sold out for Jesus, so you join The Way. At first this was exciting. You were willing to take the heat for this decision. But after suffering persecution for this decision and seeing how hard it is stay the course and keep following Jesus, you are tempted to return to Judaism. You are so discouraged that you are starting to drift away from your commitment to Christ. You're not even sure you care about the consequences. You just want peace and to return to a faith system that was familiar to you, whether it was broken or not.

So here you are. You're done. You want to be reunited with your family and friends. The cost of following Jesus is greater than the perceived benefits that can be gained in Christianity – so you think.

The author of Hebrews is deeply concerned that you're getting ready to make a big mistake by returning to Judaism. We have been studying Hebrews since Valentine's Day. We have watched this author work his tail off to convince you that Christ is superior over the Prophets, over the Angels, over Moses, over priests, over the Old Covenant, and over any temporal sacrifice or sanctuary.

He encourages you to ***hold fast to your confession of faith in Christ***. He goes thru numerous inductees of the Hall of Faith and reminds you of those who have gone before you as a great example to each of us. He tells you the importance of enduring in your faith, much like persevering as you run your race.

The last thing this author wants is to see a large group of young Hebrew Christians who are discouraged turn their back on Jesus and return to Judaism. He doesn't want you to even consider this! So in today's passage, the author describes ways to strengthen, encourage and support one another as a fellowship of believers.

**Transition:** *I want us to consider that all of us CAN make a meaningful difference with our fellow believers BY applying the SUGGESTIONS offered by this author.* By the time this hour is over, it is my prayer that you will know not only "what" the suggestions are, but leave with some ideas on how to best **apply** these suggestions. If all of us apply these suggestions consistently, then we will have made a meaningful contribution toward strengthening and encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's begin.

**BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Heb 13:1-2]**

V.1:

- Keep on loving each other as brothers.

V.2:

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

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.1: What is the first suggestion you see in this passage? [Keep on loving each other as brothers]

Q: What does that look like, especially among the body of Christ? [Let people engage this - The *basis* for this fellowship is brotherly love.]

Q: Let's put ourselves in the shoes of these young Hebrew Christians. What happens to a Muslim who converts to Christianity? [They are rejected and shunned by their family. Recall Dallow's story.] What do you think these Hebrew Christians were going through? [They were being rejected by their family and friends.]

Observation: So when I say that brotherly love is the basis for our fellowship with believers, the deepest kind of fellowship is not based on race or family relationship; it is based on the spiritual life we have in Christ. We are family and we interact with one another with love. It's that basic!

Q V.2: What is the next suggestion you see in this passage? [Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.]

Q: Why is hospitality important? [First, you might entertain angels without knowing it. Second, this was an important ministry in the early church because persecution drove many believers away from their homes. Also, there were traveling ministers who needed places to stay (3 John 5-8). Many poor saints could not afford to stay in an inn; and since the churches met in homes (Rom. 16:5), it was natural for a visitor to just stay with his host. Pastors are supposed to be lovers of hospitality (Titus 1:8); but all saints should be "given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13)]

Q: Now that have the “why,” what does entertaining strangers look like, especially in today’s culture? And what does “entertaining” mean?! [Let people engage this - You and I may not entertain angels in a literal sense (though it is possible); but *any* stranger could turn out to be a messenger of blessing to us. (The word “angel” simply means “messenger.”) Often we have had guests in our home who have turned out to be messengers of God’s blessings.]

**LOOK:**

The way we strengthen the body of Christ is to gather together to encourage and support one another. The undercurrent needs to be brotherly love. When the hard times hit, we want to know that all of these gatherings have allowed each of us to make a meaningful difference in each other’s lives.

**Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 326). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

**Enjoying Spiritual Fellowship (Heb. 13:1–2)**

The *basis* for this fellowship is brotherly love. As Christians, these Hebrew people no doubt had been rejected by their friends and families. But the deepest kind of fellowship is not based on race or family relationship; it is based on the spiritual life we have in Christ. A church fellowship based on anything other than love for Christ and for one another simply will not last. For other references to “brotherly love” see Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9–10; 1 Peter 1:22; and 2 Peter 1:7.

Where there is true Christian love, there will also be *hospitality* (Heb. 13:2). This was an important ministry in the early church because persecution drove many believers away from their homes. Also, there were traveling ministers who needed places to stay (3 John 5–8). Many poor saints could not afford to stay in an inn; and since the churches met in homes (Rom. 16:5), it was natural for a visitor to just stay with his host. Pastors are supposed to be lovers of hospitality (Titus 1:8); but all saints should be “given to hospitality” (Rom. 12:13).

Moses (Gen. 18) gives the story of Abraham showing generous hospitality to Jesus Christ and two of His angels. Abraham did not know who they were when he welcomed them; it was only later that he discovered the identities of his illustrious guests. You and I may not entertain angels in a literal sense (though it is possible); but *any* stranger could turn out to be a messenger of blessing to us. (The word “angel” simply means “messenger.”) Often we have had guests in our home who have turned out to be messengers of God’s blessings.

**Pentecost, J. D. (1985). *Daniel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 811). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

V. Epilogue (chap. 13)

The Epilogue can be distinguished from the body of the epistle in that the latter contains only broad, general admonitions, while the Epilogue contains specific ones. In some ways these specific instructions suggest ways “to worship God acceptably” (cf. 12:28). The Epilogue also contains the writer’s personal comments to his readers and his farewell to them.

13:1–2. The first section of the Epilogue contains moral directions for the readers. Obeying these would inculcate personal kindness to **brothers** (v. 1), **strangers** (v. 2).