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"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

H E B R E W S 1 3.

*An Address (revised) at*

FOREST GATE, E. 7.

21st April 1912.

by

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At 61, Upton Lane,  
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(The introductory remarks were missed).

Hebrews 12 brings before us solemn realities - Moses trembling and Mount Sinai with its wondrous glories. It is fitting that we should hear the words ring out in the last verse "Our God is a consuming fire". It is fitting also that the redeemed of the Lord should be urged to serve God in accord with His greatness and glory as well as worship Him well-pleasingly with reverence and godly fear. There is need not only for the love that overflows in the expressions of the Song of Solomon but for the depth of solemnity that finds expression in the reverence and godly fear.

Chapter 13 goes on without any break - "Let brotherly love continue". In view of obedience to God it is well to emphasize service to fellow saved ones. Indeed the two commandments are linked - "Thou shalt love the Lord", "Thou shalt love thy neighbour". Thy neighbour is second but thy neighbour is not forgotten; and the primary thought to a believer in the term "neighbour" must be "fellow-believer". Hence the Divine stress on brotherly love - the love of those who are born again into the same family, the love between the blood-bought ones made near in the blood of Christ. "Brotherly love". There is a "THE" in front of the word. "THE" brotherly love, in the Greek - that well known brotherly love, that brotherly love which can be demonstrated, and so has the demonstrative "THE" in front of it - that can be pointed out for it is visible and not

merely a feeling within, THE brotherly love.

The term "Brotherly love" is from that root which has the idea of friendship. It is not only the love of pity, it is not only the love of general interest - but the love of friendliness. Let your brethren be your friends. Do not seek friendship with unsaved ones. In the family of the redeemed should be the fellowships and friendships of the redeemed. "Continue" - the word is elsewhere rendered "Abide", "Remain", "Continue": all three renderings are given in John 15. All the words bring before our minds some precious thoughts in English and perhaps we cannot do better than to combine all these thoughts to see the FULNESS of the term employed. Let the brotherly love remain - not be spasmodic; let it be abiding in the heart and in the life, so that it will be seen in all the actions; let it keep on abiding, if you will, for that is a possible rendering, emphasizing twice the continuance that God loves. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers". Here again there is a fulness which is hard to bring out in our translation. Be not forgetful. Let there not be a forgetfulness or an escaping the notice of this important service unto the Lord. It is possible to be forgetful without intending to be forgetful. It is possible that something may slip one's notice. Hence the Spirit of God warns against forgetfulness. A bad memory is sin as to many things. It is linked with a lack of interest in spiritual delights. If we are interested in the things of God we shall remember the things of God and try to do the things of God. Be not forgetful of something more than entertaining strangers. It is the LOVE of strangers. That is stronger. "Entertaining" is a word which has several special meanings in English; but not one of them is so full as the word "love". It is the same term "love" as we have in verse 1. "Let brotherly love". Be not forgetful of strangers. That

love of friendship makes strangers into friends.

Now this term "stranger" is used of guests and in other scriptures it seems to be applied to believers coming from one district to another district. You know how in the early Church a Phebe would travel from Corinth to Rome. A Timothy would arrive at Corinth. There would be travelling brethren and there would be some saved ones come from one part of the land to another part, for though there was not so much travelling in those days as there is now, yet among the believers there was a fair amount of travelling, because many of them were Jewish believers and had become used to the travelling up to the Feast at Jerusalem; and after when they were saved they were brought to travel in connection with the Lord's work and the fellowship of the Lord's people. God arranged in the early Church that there should be a great stress upon fellowship of the redeemed. You know how among Israel the only holidays they had were all going to worship God. That was the only idea of holiday in ancient times and in the early Church this was doubtless reproduced with spiritual feelings - saints uniting together in the things of God. So whether these strangers were travelling to see other saved ones or whether they were changing their locality - perhaps driven out by persecution - whatever was the cause it matters not; they would arrive where the believers were to meet, and Paul wrote and he said "Show loving affection to these guests of yours, to these who come from a distance; show the love of strangers".. The word "THE" is here again. It is to be demonstrated. It is to be evident. It is not enough to say "Oh I feel it". Feelings are excellent in their right place but there is a need for the showing forth of that which is in the heart.

Before leaving this verse let us turn to <sup>the</sup> third Epistle of John. Read concerning some who came to the

place where Gaius was; and John remarked concerning him in verse 5 :-

"Beloved one, thou doest a faithful thing whatsoever thou hast done with a view to the brethren and this with a view to strangers, that is stranger-brethren, guest-brethren, brethren who come from a distance, who bear witness of thy love in sight of a Church. Thou shalt do well when thou hast sent them forward worthily of God, for on account of the Name they went forth receiving nothing from the nations. We are therefore in debt to receive such in order that fellow workers we may become with the truth. I wrote something to the Church but the one who loveth their pre-eminence. Diotrephes, doth not welcome us. Because of this, if I shall have come, I will remember the work which he doeth prating against us with wicked words and not being content at these things neither himself has welcomed the brethren, also those who are wishing he is hindering and out of the Church he is casting. Beloved one, do not imitate the bad thing but the good thing. He that doeth good out from God is he. He that doeth evil is not in God".

You can see the point. John knew all mentioned to be brethren, who were travelling in the Lord's work and two at least came to where Diotrephes and Gaius lived; and Gaius welcomed them though they were strangers from a distance and showed love to them; and John said "You are doing a faithful thing in doing that. They went forth for the sake of the Name. They would not take anything from the Gentiles. They did not seek earthly things but went out in the Name of the Lord and you have done a good thing to welcome them".

Turning again to Heb. 13 we find there is a further reason given to encourage the entertaining of strangers: "For thereby some have entertained angels unawares". A wonderfully full statement. Thereby some have entertained - have received as guests, messengers or angels; they have received messengers (that is to say) those who have been sent forth from Churches; they have received delegates of assemblies, and those who are ambassadors from the Lord. But more than that, they have received angels. We think of the ~~ident~~times when angels appeared and when friendliness was shown to them as by Lot in Sodom. The word "unawares" is from the same root as the word "forget". Let it not slip your notice.

or let it not escape your attention to show love to strangers for thereby some have received angels as strangers while it was escaping their notice. An extraordinary statement. The Apostle says "Do not let it escape your notice to do this, because if you always keep it in your eye to receive the strangers you will find something else will escape your notice which it is worth while to have had escape your notice and that something else will be that you received better people than you thought you received, without knowing it - angels when you thought they were men - Not that the Apostle exactly means that angels will come to men as they did to Abraham and to Lot; but he gives a side-glance at the thought: that as God in the olden times gave people more than they expected, so does He now. If there is receiving of guests in the Name of the Lord, there is a receiving of the Lord. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "He that receiveth you receiveth Me". Thus it is important for us to realise that to receive His representatives is more than to receive even angels. Hence the Lord encourages His people to show "brotherly love" not only to those they have seen but to those they have not seen before. "Remember them that are in bonds";- "Do not forget" (v.2); "Do remember" (v.3). Keep on remembering. The term implies "continuance". Yes, keep on remembering. It is easy to have emotion for a few minutes. Most things are worked up at the present time in connection with temporary emotion. The Lord's Word is connected with spiritual continuance - a going on. A keeping on remembering. Keep on remembering them that are in bonds, as bound with them. What does this mean? Does it mean you are bound with them? Not primarily, there is the word "as". What then? That you are to remember them as though you have been bound with them? Yet stronger - reckon yourselves so linked with them that you view their bonds as your bonds,

their trials as your trials; as those who have been bound with them in your experience - not in effect but in experience. We shall see another thought as to effect in a moment or two. Let us take this thought first. Live then, as those who have been bound, know that which they feel yourselves, realise that your brother's pain is your pain, and your brother's suffering is yours.

Here we see the effect of brotherly love - not only the laying down of the life for the brethren but a feeling at all times better than mere sympathy. Remember, therefore, and show your memory. We come to the second part of the verse and the apostle intensifies the thought - "Them which suffer adversity" (or those who are held by evil) "as being yourselves also in the body". Now this at once shows us that beyond the primary thought of the word "as" there is another. "As" here means "since"; so we will read the first clause with the other meaning, "Remember those that are bound since you have been bound with them." As it IS thus: since you are in the bundle of life with them, since you have been bound with them in salvation, enter into their bonds of suffering; since you are in the "bond of peace" with them as Eph. 4 puts it, linked in one communion with the Lord Jesus Christ; since you are united to them and with them because united with Him, remember those that are in bonds.

Then we have the other clause to explain - "Since ye yourselves are in the body". Because we feel a strain and pain, we can enter more fully into other Christians' feelings of strain and pain. Our frail bodies ought to make us sympathetic. Physical sufferings are with a reason. They are not only to chasten us, not only to teach us to rest on the Lord still, but to teach us affection. If we have everything going easily we shall be unsympathetic. Trials ought to make us cautious in our manner towards others. Difficulties are to prevent us being indifferent to the needs of others. But is that all? Surely not. When Paul was on this earth he emphasized a vast manifest

unity of the Lord's redeemed which we do not see now. There was the unity of all saved ones in a marked manner and they were in the body of Christ. So we have a two-fold reference to Eph. 4. not only to the "bond of peace" but to the "one body". "As being yourselves also in the body". It is this that leads up to the teaching of the next verse, because in Eph. 5 God goes on to speak of the marriage union between the Lord and His people; for Hebrews and Ephesians always go together. Ephesians speaks about the Lord's people made near in the blood of Christ; and what does that signify? Why, going into the holiest. Ephesians 2 has the TEMPLE symbolism, Hebrews has the Tabernacle figures, "and being made near" reminds of "having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh". Hebrews and Ephesians always go together. They seem to have been written somewhere near the same time and seem to bring out the same parts of God's teaching: though the letter to Ephesians was specially written for Gentile believers and Hebrews for Jewish believers. Hence the differences in dealing with the same subject - Ephesians to draw the Lord's people away from Gentilism to Christ, Hebrews from Judaism to Christ. So there is the allusion here by contract to that honourable and glorious marriage relationship to Him who is the bridegroom. The practical aspect is, of course, dealt with as well.

As in Ephesians, so the allusion here - to love in the home. There God commanded godly love, there godly obedience, there He dealt with little things, details and trivial matters; though there is nothing trivial with our God. But there is the further spiritual parallel. It is ever linked and ever emphasized with the daily relationships that we all have. Verse 5 continues: "Let your conversation

be without covetousness". The actual meaning is more emphatic - "without a love of silver let your turning-about be". The term "love" is the same that we have in Hebrews 13. 1-2. We have the love of brethren, the love of guests, and NOT the love of silver. LOVE, LOVE, LOVE. The friendly term - Do not be friends to silver; let your whole turning about, let your whole manner of life be without this love of silver. "Be content with the present things": this is more emphatic than "such things as ye have". A child of God is to be content with such things as he has. The expression concerns money, but that is not all. Be content with the present things, with the sufferings, with the losses, with the difficulties that ye have in the present time, with the physical strain, with the mental strain, with every strain all rolled into one; be content with it. A complaining child of God is acting very sinfully. The children of God have no reason to grumble - being content and keeping on being content with such things as they have. The Holy Spirit suggests that if we are saved from the love of that which is sin we should be content; for what is contentment? It does not depend on quantity of possessions but on the state of heart. Contentment is not possession SO MUCH. A man may possess millions and not be content; a man may possess nothing and yet be content. Paul said "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." We increase our troubles by our wishes. You wish to do a thing and there will be a fretting and grumbling if you are hindered in it; only wish to do God's will and it settles all grumbling; only wish to do God's will, it brings contentment. Be content with such things as ye have. A child of God has never permission to worry, never authority to dispute the position in which God has placed him. Be content. Now notice the added words - "For HE hath said" - so emphatic; He himself hath said "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee": so that we may boldly say "The Lord is

my Helper". Be content with the things that are present, that He Himself hath sent. Not "Being content with the things that are present because of what they are, but because of what He is." A child of God is not to be simply one filled with indifference who says "Oh I don't mind what comes, I can get along with anything". Nay, it is because He hath said, "I will never leave thee" that the child of God can be content. There are some people who have not enough enthusiasm to get cross and they think they have a good temper. There are some people who have not enough energy to worry and they think they have very peaceable minds; but there is something corrupt in a state like that. The victory for the child of God is when he realises the difficulty and realises the strain yet looks to God and all difficulties are swept on one side, and all difficulties are swallowed up in the mighty power of the mighty God. He Himself hath said; and the word of God will stand against all the words of man; and the power of God meets all the trials that may surround. He Himself hath said with a fixity - as the tense implies. He hath said with unalterable undeniable certainty. He Himself hath said "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"; and in that sentence we have five times over the word NOT. "NOT NOT will I leave thee, NOT NOT NOT will I forsake thee". God's NOTS are unbreakable. The intensified form of the negative here used, is used by man in different places but wherever man uses it, his word is broken. It is a very strong negative. But wherever God uses it, His word is unbroken. I WILL NOT NOT NOT. God's NOTS will never be changed. God's certain words will never be made uncertain. And notice the precious THEE, twice over: I will never leave THEE nor forsake THEE. The word "forsake" is that used in Matthew "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me". He, the Beloved One of God was, as it were, forsaken that His people might never be forsaken. He took judgment that they might be delivered from judgment;

and so now they are never left in judgment, never left in wrath. Though they may be left in trials the Lord in His love is at their side, and His care, though perhaps unnoticed, is fully determined to bring them safely through and He will with the temptation make a way of escape that His people may bear up under it. "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent". Let us rest on His all-sufficient word and whatever men say, since He has said something else, let us boldly say in response to God's utterances "The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear; what shall a man do unto me?" The thought here is "The Lord versus a man". The **6**reater against the created. "The Lord is my Helper; what shall a man do unto me?" The contrast is that of Romans 8. "I am persuaded" says the Apostle "that neither this thing nor that thing shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord". He adds "Nor any other creation shall be able to separate me". You see the thought: everything outside God has for its highest word "creation" and He Himself is CREATOR: and therefore all the things of man must be laid low for He will not fail: He is over all God Blessed for ever and He will keep His Word. As Isaiah 51 puts it :-

"I even I am He that comforted you: who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed and that he should not die in the pit nor that his bread should fail. But I am the Lord thy God That divideth the sea whose wayes roared: the Lord of Hosts is His Name! And I have put My words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people".

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