
EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

"...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE..." ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

VOLUME 3

NOVEMBER 12, 2017

ISSUE 20



DON'T NEGLECT HOSPITALITY

By Andrew Dow

Although the book of Hebrews has no author's name attached to it, there are a few things we can deduce from its contents. As the title suggests, the book is written to Jewish Christians. The original readers were enduring persecution (cf. Heb 12:4) and considering a return to Judaism (cf. Heb 10:23). This letter is written to remind its readers that Jesus and the Gospel are far greater than the Law of Moses. As the book draws to a close we find this reminder: **"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it"** (Heb 13:2).

We think of *hospitality* as having people over to our house to share a meal and visit together. This is colored by our modern definition of the term. The term employed by the Hebrews' author refers to *loving a stranger or foreigner*. Biblical hospitality, therefore, is not about having our friends over for an evening of fun (although that is a good and important thing to do). Rather, true hospitality is about showing love to those who you don't know.

Contextually I think the Hebrews' author is describing our need to be hospitable toward Christians with whom we may not be familiar. Just before the instruction to be hospitable he wrote, **"Let love of the brethren continue"** (Heb 13:1). Immediately following the instruction

to be hospitable he wrote, “**Remember the prisoners... and those who are ill-treated**” (Heb 13:3). In the face of present persecutions, the reader is instructed not to forget his Christian family. Love them and remember them even though they may be strangers.

Christian should show love to strangers, “**for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it**” (Heb 13:2). The rationale provided by the author may seem odd. Is he suggesting that we might really house an angelic being? Possibly. God could certainly send an angelic being to your home if He so pleased. Even so, trying to determine when God may be doing this would be of no value to us and ultimately misses the point of the text.

The author of Hebrews is, I think, most likely alluding to Old Testament stories of hospitality. Perhaps most notable is the story of Abraham showing hospitality to three “**men**” who turn out to be angels from God (Gen 18). Two of these three “**men**” are called “**angels**” in Genesis 19 when Lot takes them into his house and protects them. Gideon, the judge of Israel, showed hospitality to an “**angel of the LORD**” (Judg 6:11–18). Samson’s parents also showed hospitality to an angel, though they “**did not know that he was the angel of the Lord**” (Judg 13:2–23). God’s people entertained angels on multiple occasions in the Old Testament and each time brought blessings from God. To these Jewish Christians (who are contemplating a return to Judaism) the author says, *if you want to be like the great men and women of the Old Testament, show hospitality to your fellow suffering Christians.*

The lesson for us is the same: “**Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have**

entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb 13:2). We may not currently be facing the kinds of persecutions that were faced by these original readers. The government is not expelling Christians or forcing them to leave their homes. Regardless, the need to show love to strangers is still true for us. We live in a mobile society that sees Christians on the move almost constantly for work, vacation, medical needs, etc. When you meet Christians who are strangers to you, take them in and show them love. The love that we share for one another is further proof that Christ and the Gospel is superior to the Old Law.

PRAYING FOR FORGIVENESS

By Andrew Dow

The book of Acts conveys a story in which Simon, a magician who was recently converted to Christ, falls into sin (8:4–24). To understand this story, it is important to realize that a magician back then was not a like a magician today. Today, magicians are those who use sleight of hand and misdirection to cause fascinating illusions. This is generally harmless entertainment. On the other hand, magicians in the ancient world were those who used drugs to control the minds of their audience in order to cause them to believe that he had powers from the gods. This is why the Israelites were told to stay away from sorcery; not because they might waste their time, but because they might come to revere the gods of the Gentiles.

Simon, who had amazed the people with his magic (8:9–10), came to realize that the miracles of Philip were greater than his own tricks and was immersed into a relationship with Christ (8:12–13). When Peter and John

came and began laying hands on these new disciples in order to give them miraculous power from the Holy Spirit, Simon saw this as an opportunity to make a name for himself again. **“He offered them money, saying, ‘Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit’”** (8:18–19).

Simon’s pride and his desire for his own glory over God’s glory was evidently a sin that severed his relationship with Christ. Peter tells him directly, **“Your heart is not right before God”** (8:21).

In this situations we learn the way to become right with God after severing our relationship with Him. Peter instructed Simon, **“Repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you”** (8:22).

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:
Elders: Who Are They? (Part 1)

PM LESSON:
Paul’s Prayer for Philippi (Philippians 1:1–11)

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)