

# Hebrews 13:1-19

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[ 0 : 00 ] Last week we looked at contentment from Philipians chapter 4.! And then he rung me half an hour later and he said, yes, you gave me that sermon.

And so, I've reworked it a little bit, but some of you might recognize it. Money. Money is one of those things, isn't it, that interests us the most and yet we speak about the least.

End of the tax year. It's last week. Start of the month. Payday has just happened, hasn't it? And as we gather together, I am pretty certain that every single one of us will be fully conscious of what is going on in our private financial world.

And whether this morning you feel you've got enough or not enough, you will know this morning.

Maybe some of you are wondering, how are you going to pay that bill? How are you going to pull things together to make the holiday happen in the summer?

What is inflation going to do? And then, of course, it's something, isn't it, that we each individually think about and yet we rarely talk about together.

[ 1 : 37 ] We abide, don't we, by certain social norms. No one has ever said to me over coffee after the service, so what are you on? How much do you earn?

How much did you get with your promotion? Not that I've ever had promotion. But people don't ask that, isn't it? What was your bonus? And when we bring our deep personal interest in money, but our shared reserve about money to the Bible, we find that God actually only shares one of those attitudes.

God is deeply interested in money. He's deeply interested in what you do with it. He is not remotely interested in keeping quiet about money. And so all over the pages of the Bible, God reveals that money is the very stuff of life.

And money does things. It's not inanimate. Money does things. Money sets you free. Money makes you a slave.

Money can be what God uses to bring you to the Lord Jesus. And money can be what keeps you out of his kingdom, too. It's because of all the things that Jesus talks about in the Gospels, he is not in the least shy about speaking about money.

[ 3 : 06 ] But here's the thing. When God speaks about money, he never just says, give. He never just says, give. He doesn't just say, give generously.

Because God knows that the money in your pocket and your online bank details on your phone, they are always an x-ray machine of your heart.

Money talks, we say. And that's true. The Bible would agree with that. Money reveals. Money actually takes the layers off. And money shows us where our hearts are.

So do you remember what Jesus said? Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. It's really interesting. Where do you want to find out where your heart is? Let me tell you where you find it is. You go to your bank statement.

They're like an x-ray machine. Our treasures show our hearts like nothing else. And so this morning, I want to look at contentment. I want to look at that ability, that spiritual discipline to say, I have enough.

[ 4 : 14 ] I'm fine. I'm full. No more required. One writer has said, we human beings are very odd. We buy things we don't need.

With money we don't have. To please people we don't like. And I don't know who said that, but it can be very true, can't it? Things we don't need.

With money we don't have. And God says to us in his words, stop it. Stop doing that. So come with me to Romans 13 and verses 1 to 5.

And I want to see three things about contentment. That will help us to stop doing that. Number one, contentment. Being able to say, no, it's okay.

I've had enough. I don't need it. Flows from the worship of God. So I don't know whether you noticed it as I read it. There are different commands out there. They're kind of staccato commands that come to us.

[ 5 : 14 ] All in quick succession. So, and verse 1, love each other. Be hospitable, verse 2. Remember the suffering, verse 3.

Honor marriage, verse 4. Flee sexual immorality. Keep your lives free from the love of money. Be content.

Verse 7, remember your leaders. And it goes on and on. The letters of the Hebrews, we're breaking into it in 13. Of course, there's 12 chapters come before this. And it is very deliberately argued.

It's a deliberately argued theological point. It talks about Jesus' work as the eternal son. Jesus is like a new Moses, Hebrews tells us.

Jesus is like a leader like the new Joshua. He is a priest. He is the great high priest. And now here at the end, is it that the writer says, oh yes, and there's these pile of things that I've forgotten about.

[ 6 : 12 ] Don't forget the usual. Love, good works, marriage, all of that. Are these, as one commentator calls it, the leftovers? You've done the heavy duty theology, 1 to 12, and then the end of it is just kind of the fillers.

Well, the answer is no. Here's the answer why. Look at chapter 12, verses 28 and 29. Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. The kingdom of God stands and grows forever.

And so, offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire. Worship God acceptably.

Worship God reverently. In other words, don't mess about with this God. Get worship right.

Because there are certain things God hates, and certain things God cannot tolerate, and which the burning purity of his holy love will consume.

So, how do you do that? How do you worship reverently and full of awe? Chapter 13. There's your order of service. Here's the liturgy. It's not a random collection of loose ends tagged onto the end of a letter because the writer had forgotten it somehow.

[ 7 : 29 ] No, these are the vital elements of Christian worship. So much so that if you don't have them, you are facing a God who is a consuming fire. And so, for us this morning, the challenge is, look at verse 5.

Keep your life free from the love of money and be content with what you have. For he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

So, remember this is about worship. And turn the verse with me into the opposite of what it says.

Can you see the point that the writer is making? Let's turn it into the opposite of what it says, verse 5.

Fill your life with the love of money. Harbour a low burn, constant, unhappy discontent with what you have. Do that.

If you do that, you're not worshipping God. Keep your life free from all of that. Free from the love of money and be content.

[ 8 : 35 ] If you do all that, you are not worshipping God. And when we see that this is all about worship, it's so strong, isn't it? Worship is what we're doing here together this morning.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation. He is the only wise God, isn't he? He is victorious. His name we praise.

That is worship, isn't it? Once again, I think upon your sacrifice. I'm broken inside. Is that worship? Yes, it is. Partly.

And what it's saying to you and I this morning is this. You can sing all you want. You can look for a church with the best worship in the world. You can seek out the best style of worship that you love. But where there is Sunday words, but Monday to Saturday discontent, you're not worshipping God acceptably. Monday to Saturday greed, and Sunday worship is not worship.

[ 9 : 41 ] And God never pulls his punches, does he? He loves you too much for that. His holiness and his glory are too great for that.

And so we live easily with facade, and pretense, and politeness, and turning a blind eye, but God never does that. And so you go to 1 Peter 3, and you've got this amazing verse in 1 Peter 3, where

Peter tells husbands, husbands, you live with your wives considerably.

Considerately. Treat them respectfully, and as equal heirs. And then he gives a reason why husbands are to live with their wives respectfully, and considerably, considerably, and as equal heirs.

He says this, so that nothing, nothing will hinder your prayers. So he says, do A, so that B won't happen.

Can you see that? Bully your wife at home, but never miss the prayer meeting. And Peter says, God is not listening. He doesn't care about your prayers.

[10:56] They hit the roof, and they go no further. In the book of Isaiah, we often use this, don't we? That these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, God says.

He says, stop bringing me your meaningless offerings. And when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you, and I will not listen. Take your evil deeds out of my sight. Stop doing wrong. Learn to do right. Seek justice. Encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless. Plead the cause of the widow. That is acceptable worship. Sounds like Hebrews 13 to me.

With one addition. Learn to be content. Learn to be content. Do you remember last week, Paul said in Philippians, I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances.

So interesting, isn't it? Do you find contentment hard? Anyone prepared to be remotely honest, they will say that they do.

[12:06] You're not born content. No one is born content. It's the very opposite. We are naturally discontent, and you have to learn to admit it.

Notice the main verb in Hebrews 13, verse 5. Keep your life free from the love of money.

It's like keeping your garden free of weeds. You're never done to you with the garden. Again and again and again, you've got to keep weeding.

And if you're not active in keeping weeding, what happens? The weeds grow. And if you're not active in keeping the love of money at bay, the love of money will keep you.

And so how do we learn it? Well, we begin here. We start here with worship. We learn that loving money more than God is a form of hating God. Loving money more than others is a form of hating others.

[13:16] Loving money more than being content with what we have is a profound form of ingratitude. And so these are rich words, aren't they? You want more?

Well, look at what God has already given. Look at what is already in the bank. Look at what is already in your home and on the walls. And learn to spot when a love of more is taking over your life.

Because here's a second way to learn it. Contentment treasures the promises of God. Contentment treasures the promises of God. And the passage gives us a reason for keeping the love of money at bay and being content.

Look at verse 5. Keep your life free from the love of money and be content with what you have. For he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

And what we want most in life and what you want most in your life is relationships. End of story. And money goes wrong when we put money before relationships.

[14:35] I think you can see that on a micro level and I think you can see that on a macro level too. When we put money before relationships with God and before we put and when we put money before relationships with others.

One pastor said this. He said, I've never yet had a young woman come into my office and say, I'm so messed up because my dad used to drop me off to school in a beat up old Ford that kept breaking down.

Oh the shame. I've never recovered. But he said, I've met plenty of young women who are all over the place because their dad had enough money to pay for the whole school to go on a skiing trip but never enough time to spend with them.

And we often use money to cover our lack of relationships. But in fact, it is relationships that breed contentment.

when you have someone's attention, when you have someone's devotion, when you have someone's love, contentment grows.

[ 15 : 43 ] And you and I, if we have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the strongest, most precious, most long-lasting, most unbreakable relationship of all. It's true, isn't it?

If you live long enough, you will be forsaken by those closest to you. If you live long enough, you will be forsaken by those who are closest to you.

Death claims them and takes them. Or you will do that to others and you will forsake them in death. But you and I have someone with us now in life and someone who will be there with us in death and someone who will hold us from life to death and be with us on the other side.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose. He'll never, no never forsake to his foes. That soul, though all hell, should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, never forsake.

And there's nothing more precious than that in all the world, is there? When Bill Gates dies, the obituaries will be written and everyone will want to know, won't they, how much did he leave?

[ 17 : 03 ] How much did he leave? And there's only one answer, isn't there? He left everything. He will leave everything. One day, the richest man in this world, whoever it is, his money will leave him.

One day, the richest person in the world, their money will forsake them. And like you and I, the richest person in the world and the poorest person in the world will all face the God of chapter 12, verse 29.

And the only thing that counts, the only thing that matters, will be having Jesus Christ at your side or not. Contentment treasures the promises of God. And you are not alone if you've trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, you don't have X, whatever it is. Yes, you'll never have Y. But you're not alone. You see, get the promise right.

Notice what it isn't. Be content with what you have because I will provide for you. Well, yes, possibly. And yet, those beautiful verses at the end of Romans 8, do you remember them?

[ 18 : 14 ] They teach us that the life of the Christian is one of suffering now and glory later. But they teach us that trouble and hardship and famine and nakedness and sword and cancer and ill health and bereavement may very well be our lot.

And none of that can separate us from Him. Your head might be separated from your body, but you cannot be separated from Christ. And I think constant, slow, deliberate treasuring the promises of God will nurture contentment in our hearts and slowly, bit by bit, will prise our fingers open around our money and will leave us looking at it with a shrug of the shoulders.

Augustine said this, He who has Him to all things belong has all things. I've only ever stayed in the home of somebody who is fabulously wealthy maybe for a couple of nights.

because I was an invited guest, because I was asked to stay there, because I was in a relationship with them, all that was theirs was mine for that night.

I loved it. And so Christ is the King of the universe and He is yours. And what is His is yours.

[ 19 : 51 ] And one day you will inherit. What does Jesus say? You will inherit the earth. And so why be discontent with what we don't have of things that will never last?

I love these words of John Wesley, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, the great 18th century preacher. He says this, I was in the robe chamber adjoining to the house of lords when the king put his robes on.

He saw him getting changed, he saw him getting dressed. His brow, the king, was much furrowed with age and quite clouded with care. I thought, is this all the world can give even to a king?

All the grandeur it can afford. A blanket of ermine around his shoulder so heavy and cumbersome he can scarce move under it. A huge heap of borrowed hair with a few plates of gold glittering stone upon his head.

Alas, what a bauble is human greatness. And even this will not endure. Teodrich Bonhoeffer said, Christianity preaches the infinite worth of that which is seemingly worthless and the infinite worthlessness of that which is seemingly so valued.

[ 21 : 08 ] Christianity preaches the infinite worth of that which is seemingly worthless and the infinite worthlessness of that which is seemingly so valued. number three contentment thrives among the people of god contentment thrives among the people of god i don't know whether you noticed it but chapter 13 is all about relationships it's all about relationships and money itself is described in relational terms notice we're not told are we keep your life free from money that's that's impossible there's bills to pay there's mouths to feed there's good things to enjoy and benefit from no keep your life free from the love of money keep your life free from a certain kind of relationship to

money and here's how you do it you replace it with another kind of love you love something else more than money and that's what the writer is saying here love the people of god more than money look at the criss-crossing multi-layered network of relationships and if you put your life into loving others like this well the problem isn't going to be not having enough money to spend on yourself it will be a desire of wanting to give it away to others and you will find you learn contentment this way that's the straight command in verse one isn't it look at verse one let brotherly love continue love each other as brothers we are family i love my human brothers deeply and they know it and they can tell that some of the time and and god tells me to love you like that and you should know it and you should feel it from me and i should know it and feel it from you i'm not really sure what verse two means are you do not neglect to show hospitality that's pretty clear to strangers okay for thereby some have entertained angels unawares well at the very least it means this if you're interested in the supernatural if you're interested in the realm of angels it tells you this stop gazing out of the sky and get out of church get home and open your cupboards and make someone some beans on toast get some of the neighbors around who you've never spoken to or really met what's the worst that could happen well you might be entertaining angels unawares what about verse three so beautiful isn't it remember those who are in prison as though in prison with them and those who are mistreated since you are also in the body we get the weekly prayer emails from barnabas fund like you do we pray for folks like that now and again no but what are you actually doing about it giving to them because you can't actually visit them in prison as if you were actually in chains with them taking their suffering into your hearts as you pray for the persecuted when we read of the church in Ukraine we don't read it as a distant observer no you worship God as you remember them as if you were in prison too that we are to feel the pain and enter into their suffering and the suffering of others and then the love of money for ourselves will slowly and surely begin to dissipate because what is happening there is as you feel the pain of others you form an orientation to your life which is other people centered and other focused than from yourself and I think the danger in verse three is kind of limiting the application to thinking right persecuted church which it is about that but also it's written isn't it to a local church family of those who are struggling and those who are suffering it's so striking that verse five follows right on the heels of verse four verse four where for marriage we're against adultery but we tolerate greed no the writer of the Hebrews is saying to you and I it's saying both are about the love of others bed hopping is lust not love and it doesn't put the needs and hopes and feelings and dreams of others first and greed greed is discontentment not love it does not put the needs of others first look at verse 16 do not neglect to do good share what you have for such sacrifices are pleasing to God quite simply love other people love other people more and you'll love money less and so as I finish

Christian people should be the ad man's nightmare shouldn't we I think the Lidl magazine is one of the most addictive things to read each week isn't it I love it coming through the door isn't it and I do it that you go to Lidl I quite like going to Lidl and the middle of Lidl is sensational isn't it I think I've told you before isn't it last year I went in for a red pepper and came out with a ear and nose trimmer for £2.50 I found myself once looking at a unicycle thinking I could I could do with that I could buy I could buy a unicycle and as you read the Lidl magazine each week with the kind of totally random things you know a wetsuit and an angle grinder next to each other and the point of those magazines is to get you to buy isn't it and you and I should be a nightmare for Lidl you and I should be an advertising person's nightmare the point of advertising is to sell how does it work yes how does it get you from A to B and the ad man he sells you discontentment and so you think my life is not great without that look how clean and cool look how neat and tidy look how perfect and polished and as you look at it you should smile and sometimes it's right to buy sometimes it's right to buy definitely but here's the test to never be upset when we don't that a love of our life is not missing when we don't have it and so be content with what you have and how do you do that you do that by worshipping God by treasuring his promises and loving his people do those and contentment will grow in your heart let's pray let's pray let's pray let's pray let's pray let's pray let's pray let's pray let's pray let's pray let's pray