

“Let Love Continue”

Fixing Our Eyes Upon Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 13:1-6

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Jeff: Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank You and praise You for who You are, for how You’ve revealed Yourself. We know that in the garden prior to the Fall you were known to Adam by general revelation and by positive revelation. And we know that You spoke to him. We know that You delighted in Your creation and that Adam, at least for a moment, delighted in You. And yet because of the Fall, when we look at the world around us, we by nature suppress what we know about You. And so we’re thankful for that special revelation that You give that clarifies what we ought to see in general revelation and extends beyond it, telling us how now we might be saved, not in Adam the first but certainly in Adam the second. We are so thankful for the Lord Jesus Christ, for were it not for Him we could not stand. And so we stand in Him. And today we stand in Him as we pray to You, our heavenly Father, knowing that we’re heard because we have been granted introduction to Your throne of grace through Him.

So we lift up people like Kevin Kohn to you and ask for a blessing to be bestowed upon him. Lord, we ask that you’ll give him health. We pray that you’ll take away the pneumonia. We pray that you’ll heal the heart. We pray that You’ll do these things for Kevin’s good, for the good of his family, for Your glory. And yet, Father, we also pray for our brother Bruce and we pray for his continued well-being. We ask that You would sustain him, especially as he continues to be active teaching Your word. Father, we certainly pray that You will protect, that You will heal and bless these men that we love.

Lord, we pray that You’ll be with us this morning. We ask as we open Your word, as we bow our heads to look into it, that You will bestow Your grace and mercy upon us, teaching us how to live day by day, moment by moment, for we need it. Were it not for Your Holy Spirit in us leading us into Your word and the sure mercies of David therein, we would stumble and fall and not rise. But yet Your Spirit lives in us and we give You thanks for Him and for His sustaining power in our lives. Father, as we come to the end of Hebrews, we pray that You will bless us in our study. Strengthen us by Your grace. Help us to fix our eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and let us not drift. We pray these things in the precious name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right.

Don: Jeff, that wasn’t “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” by the way.

Transcriber’s Note: Referring to piano music before the prayer.

Jeff: What’s that?

Don: That was not “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” by the way. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: No, no. I could tell that. *(Laughter)* I can tell that. I think that was “I Did It My Way.” *(Laughter)* But I’m not sure. I’m not one of those musically gifted people. *(Laughter)* I thought I detected a little Frank in there. *(Laughter)* Anyway,--

Don: It was “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

“Let Love Continue”

Jeff: “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” I knew it. That was my second guess. *(Laughter)* Well, we’re going to look at Hebrews chapter 13 today. And we’re going to look at six verses. I anticipate that we’ll be finished with Hebrews in two more weeks. And then if all goes well, and hopefully it will, I think that we’ll spend a little bit of time in the Old Testament. It’s been a while since we’ve been out of the New. So I thought that maybe what we would do is look at an Old Testament minor prophet. We’ll look at Jonah, and we’ll spend a little time looking at him. So that’s where we’ll go next. But for now I want us to go to Hebrews chapter 13 and look at verses 1-6. Don, do you have that open?

Don: Yes.

Jeff: Would you read those six verses for us?

Don: Yes.

Jeff: Okay.

Don: *“Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.*

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. 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 we can confidently say, ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: All right. So I want to look at this outline today. I want us to think about some introductory things just very briefly today. Then I want to look at the context of our text. I think this is important, because when you think about the chapter we’re going to look at today, you might think to yourself that this is something of an addendum, a rash of information. But I want to show you that that’s not quite the case. So we’re going to look at *the context of the passage*. Then we’ll look at *the contour of Christian love*. And then we’re going to look at *the confession of a Christian*, those things today. And let’s get started by looking at the introduction.

And I simply want to orient you by reminding you that it feels like we’ve been running a theological marathon. I don’t know about you, but when you look at the letter to the Hebrews you could say to yourself that this is one long exhortation. Oftentimes it’s described as a hortatory epistle, or an epistle of exhortation.

And it certainly is that. I mean the writer, the Preacher, is oftentimes urging us on, calling us alongside of himself, telling us to fix our eyes upon Jesus Christ. Those sorts of things are repeatedly uttered in this letter. And so it is in one sense a very practical exhortation. That’s true.

And yet this is a densely theological letter. I mean, it’s here that we find Melchizedek. And he says to us, “I don’t know if I can tell you about Melchizedek because I think I need to go back and talk about some of the basic things of the faith. But let me tell you about it anyway.”

“Let Love Continue”

And so he tells us about Melchizedek. He talks to us about the high priestly office of Christ. He tells us about all kinds of rich theology. And so this is a densely packed theological letter.

And I don't think that has been lost on us. There have been repeated times where we've said, okay. We've got to brace ourselves for what's coming. This is a little bit difficult. And that's what we've been looking at throughout the letter.

Chapter 13 is a little different. Chapter 13 is almost taking the foot off of the gas, at least the theological gas. There's a sense in which we back off of the tightly woven theological arguments and enter now into some practical exhortations.

Now here's the question that we have to ask ourselves about this particular chapter. Is this a chapter that has some interconnectedness to it? Or is it one of those chapters that we oftentimes think about when we think about letter writing?

I mean, back in the day when you used to write a letter,--and maybe some of you still remember this,--an email is not the same, because an email's page never ends. *(Laughter)* But a piece of paper or a piece of stationery does come to an end. In fact, if you've written some thank-you notes you know what I mean. You start off and your letters are a little bit big. And then, as you get to the middle, you say, "I don't think I'm going to have enough space for what I'm going to say." By the time you get to the bottom of the stationery you're writing in tiny script. *(Laughter)*

And that was the way it was with papyrus. Now you couldn't just add to the papyrus scroll. And so perhaps it was that the Preacher is getting to the end of his scroll. And he says to himself, "Oh, no! I'm coming to the end of myself here and I need to just jot out some things." Maybe that was the case.

Or maybe it was that the courier who was going to take this letter to the Roman Christians was saying, "Look, I'm leaving!" *(Laughter)* "You know, it's time to finish." Any number of scenarios.

But I think that what we have in this particular letter is not something of a rash of thoughts that are an addendum to what we've been looking at with the book of Hebrews. But I actually think that there is an interconnectedness. There is a tightly woven logic built into this last chapter. In fact, I want to show you that these six verses actually pull us back to chapter 12.

And then there are some other things that we're going to look at later in this chapter that are going to really summarize what we've looked at, and bring a very theological point. And it's the very theological point that we started with. It's something about Jesus Christ.

So I don't think this is what might be thought of as an apothegmatic piece of literature at the end of the book of Hebrews, or just a number of truths that the Preacher happens to be spilling out because he doesn't have time or space. I think this is part of the tightly woven argument of the book of Hebrews. So I think it fits together. Yes, Don?

Don: What was that word you used?

Jeff: Apothegmatic.

Don: What?

Jeff: That just means short snippets of truth.

“Let Love Continue”

Don: Oh, okay.

Jeff: Pithy statements of truth, you know? However, I will say this to you. We’re obviously going to gain more knowledge, right? But one of the things that we will not find, one of the things that we are not going to find in chapter 13, is necessarily more knowledge per se. I think that what we’re going to find is the knowledge we learned brought forward. What we’re going to find is more challenge. And challenge hasn’t been absent from the book of Hebrews. But it’s certainly not absent from this particular chapter. And so we’re going to find a challenge to live in this particular text.

So with that by way of introduction, let’s just look at the first point, *the context*. And I want you to notice that this is a very straightforward statement. If you open it up and look at what he says, “*Let brotherly love continue*”, it’s very straightforward. I don’t think there’s anything here that we can say that is novel in its approach. But we’re going to talk about it in just a second.

But I think that the kind of translation that’s here is helpful. But I think it lacks something. And I do think that’s part of the problem whenever you work with a translation. And that’s why it’s always good if you can work not only with a translation, but multiple translations. This is why, if you don’t know Greek, that it’s always helpful when you’re studying the Bible, when you get into that study mode, to get multiple translations, to get a translation that’s trying to give you the literal translation of the language. And then try to get a couple in between. And then try to get one that gives you more of a dynamic equivalence, in other words, a thought-for-thought translation rather than a word-for-word, because when you do that what you’re likely to find is you’re likely to find various translations that will help you to get closer to what’s being said.

Now this is not a bad translation. “*Let love continue.*” It’s very good. It’s straightforward and we all know what it means.

But I want you to think back to Hebrews chapter 12 verse 27. And do you remember what he said there? The argument really was that there are going to be some things that remain. But there are going to be some things that are shaken away. And he says that the things that are going to be shaken away are things like the temple and the priests and the vestments and the incense and all of those things. All of those things are going to disappear. But what’s going to remain is Christ and those who are in Christ. That was the wonderful argument of that particular chapter.

But here is the astounding thing that I think that we miss in a translation like this, the word *remain* in verse 27. There are going to be things that remain is the very word that we find translated “*continue*” in verse 1. And so the point is that here’s the way we translate it and should translate it. “*Let the love of the brethren remain.*”

In other words, you get the idea. The idea is that there are going to be some things that are shaken away. But the thing that ought never to be shaken away is your love for one another.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: Now I don’t know about you, but there’s a sense in which we learn a little bit there. But I think we are challenged far more than we learn when we look at a text like

“Let Love Continue”

that and understand how it’s translated. *“Let the love of the brethren remain”* despite the things that will be shaken away.

Now I asked you earlier. Is there a randomness to chapter 13? And what I really want to ask you right now is this. Is there a randomness to verses 1-6? I mean, if you look at 1-6, well there’s a sense in which it looks pretty random. I mean, there are things like the marriage bed. There are things like loving the brethren. There are things like angels. There are all sorts of things in these six verses of chapter 13. And you think to yourself, yeah, this is pretty random.

But I want you to catch something. I want you to catch that this is not as random as we might think. If the love of the brethren is to remain and not be shaken away, then there is something else that’s here that helps us to understand that this particular section is actually about love. And what is it? I’ll tell you what it is. It’s an inclusio. Love is mentioned at the beginning of this set of verses and is mentioned at the end of this set of verses.

Brave Man: What was that word you said?

Jeff: An inclusio. Let me use my markers. *(Laughter)* Now this is a great word. An inclusio is really book ends. When you think of an inclusio you think of book ends. So, for instance, love appears at the beginning and love appears at the end of this particular section of the text.

Do you remember what I told you earlier? I said that if you look at chapter 5 and chapter 6 *“dull appearing”* roped off a particular section in that chapter. Now for us that same word was translated in two different ways. But it was the same word. And the author to the Hebrews uses the method of inclusio a number of times. In fact, it’s actually throughout the letter. I really haven’t used it enough.

But the idea is that there is a section roped off. And that literary device is saying, look. This is something you ought to pay attention to. There’s something here that I’m trying to say in a very poignant way that you need to listen to. Let me just stop there. Do you have any questions about it?

Ted: Where is the other book end?

Jeff: Verse 5.

Ted: It’s not about the love of the brethren or of God. It’s about the love of money.

Jeff: Well, that’s the thing. *(Laughter)* You know, you are good! *(Laughter)* I stopped short of saying that this particular love does not have to be what this particular love means here. But here it is. I’ll just go ahead. *“Let the love of the brethren remain.”*

But love is not indiscriminate. In other words, let love remain. But do not let all love remain. In other words, you may have inordinate love, in this case for money. And that can’t remain. But I’ll tell you what must remain: love for the brethren.

Now I don’t know about you, but boy, that’s a challenge to me. Go ahead.

Matt: It’s almost like the Ten commandments. Loving God is the first commandment. And then *“Thou shalt not covet.”* So you’ve got adultery in there, too.

Jeff: Yes, that’s a really good thought. Thank you for that. Anybody else?

“Let Love Continue”

So love needs to remain, but not indiscriminate love. I don't know about you, but that's a challenge, right?, because there are things in the self that need to die and are dead in Christ. But I'm progressively maturing.

Do you know what, Bill? I want to tell you something. *(Laughter)* There is a book out now called *Maturity*. *(Laughter)* Have you seen it?

Bill McCoy: No.

Jeff: It's by Sinclair Ferguson. It's an old book.

Bill: It must be a good one.

Jeff: It is. *(Laughter)* Anyway, we're not to love indiscriminately. That's that.

There's another thing too that I think that we need to learn when we look at this text and we think about this first point. The context will help. I think we need to understand that our love has an aim. And I want you to notice that. I want you to go to Hebrews 6, verses 9 and 10. Go back for just a minute. Hebrews 6:9 and 10. I'll read the whole thing to you. But I want you to catch this.

Hebrews 6:9 and 10. *“Though we speak in this way, yet in our case, beloved, we feel sure of better things, things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work, and the love that you have shown for His name in serving the saints, as you still do.”*

Do you see that? The love which you have shown toward His name in serving the brethren, serving the saints. In other words, the idea is *“let the love of the brethren remain.”* And when you let the love of the brethren remain, what he leaves out of this is that that love has a previous aim, a target. We are aiming our love Godward as we serve our brothers. I think that's really important because I think it provides us with a motivation for our love.

You know, sometimes you know as well as I do that it's not always easy to love the brethren, right? But it is easier if I begin with God. If I say to myself, “What does God want me to do? God wants me to love the brother. And how is it that I love the brother?” That's another question. But I know at least that He wants me to love the brother.

I'll tell you what else He wants me to do. And I think that this has proven vitally important for me over the years. What He wants me to do is that He wants me to see Christ in the brothers before I see anything else about the brothers. If I see Christ in my brother before I see anything else then what am I going to do? I'm going to love my brother. And I'm going to overlook certain things about him that I should overlook, like romans 13 says I should.

And so there is a way of doing this and being helped to do it by God as we do it. So that's the context. Love again is the context of all this.

And the question that we really have to ask ourselves as we come to this particular point is what do you love? Isn't that really the practical question at the end of this particular point? What do I love? If I must love the brethren, if that must remain, but there are loves that need to go, I need to ask myself what it is that I love. I think that's a particularly powerful point. Any questions on that or thoughts you want to share? Yes, Sig?

“Let Love Continue”

Sig: I have a simple question. I hope it’s simple. I’m curious. Why do you distinguish between loving the brethren and just loving your neighbor who may not be a Christian? Is that an important distinction that the writer is making?

Jeff: Yes. I mean, you know, there is that—

Jim: Jeff?

Jeff: Yes, go ahead.

Jim: You know, this has struck me only in the last few years in John, when Jesus said “I have a new commandment for you.”

Jeff: There you go.

Jim: He would say, “Love the brethren as I have loved you.” And I think, well, why is that a new commandment? You are to love your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. You love your neighbor as yourself. I think He’s actually calling us to a whole new level of love for the brethren. You love your neighbor as you love yourself. But “you love your brethren as much as I love you. And I died for you.”

Jeff: There you go. Got you. You know, did you ever hear that story? The man and the woman are in for marriage counseling. And the woman says, “I’m done with him. I’m done.”

And the marriage counselor sits there. He says, “You know what the Scripture says. The Scriptures say that you must love your husband.”

She says, “But he has not been a husband to me. I’m done.”

The marriage counselor looks at her and says, “Well, surely he’s your neighbor. And the Bible says, ‘Love your neighbor.’”

And she says, “Frankly, I hate him.”

And the marriage counselor says, “The Bible says, ‘Love your enemies.’” *(Laughter)*

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: In that scenario that one person is all things to that woman.

Ted: Then what happened? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I made it up on the fly; it worked. *(Laughter)* But hold on. Let me make my point because I’m getting to that point and then I’m going to forget.

Brave Man: Well—

Jeff: Okay, go ahead.

Brave Man: One of the ministries that I do is divorce care.

Jeff: Okay.

Brave Man: So often in the divorce care process we find that these women really shock their husbands. Throughout the process, which takes about 13 weeks, they will often still say that they love them. They just can’t be together. They fight, but they still love them.

Jeff: Yes. I meant that to be a little more funny. *(Laughter)* Thanks. I appreciate that. *(Laughter)* But I do think that there’s a distinction. For instance, I will say this. And there’s a point that I want to get to that’s very close to the point that was already made.

But let me say this. You know, when you gather in church and you take the Lord’s Supper, depending on what your tradition is, one of the things—and in that sense it really doesn’t matter,—but here’s the thing. Jesus said in Luke’s Gospel, when he hands the

“Let Love Continue”

disciples the cup, He says, “Take it and give it.” And the idea is that the disciples are taking and drinking and passing it along.

Now I want to say something to you that’s not necessarily theological, but it’s very practical. If that cup that you’ve been handed is the cup of forgiveness, and it’s the Lord who handed it to you because He’s the host at the table and you drink it, and then you hand the cup of forgiveness to your neighbor, what you’re saying is, “You know what? I just drank from the cup of forgiveness that the Lord has provided me. You drink from it.”

Implicitly what I’m saying is this. I’m not just saying, “Yes, you know, enjoy the forgiveness of the Lord.” What I’m saying is, “I forgive you and you forgive me,” right?, because we’re sharing the forgiveness of the Lord with one another. That’s the thing that doesn’t happen outside, in the world with my neighbors.

Sig: Right.

Jeff: I think that’s a crucial difference. The means of grace that we enjoy together as a family, as a body, as a church, that’s a significant difference in terms of setting us apart from the world.

Ted: Passing the cup is significant. I love that illustration. Of course, it’s not when you pass thimbles of grape juice.

Jeff: As long as you pass the tray—

Ted: No—

Jeff: Come on, here; help me out. (*Laughter*) All right, anybody else? Yes?

Ted: The one thing that I want to say is that the love of the brothers throughout history is just formed, it’s just made. It’s part of who we are as humans that we clan together. We clan together as a family and an extended family. That is just the nature of what we are as humans. But that clan is based on human resources. It’s only when we’re bound up in the Spirit of Christ that it indeed becomes in fact a real brotherhood.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: Mohammed attempted to do this with the idea that all Muslims are brothers. But there’s no real spiritual connectedness. It’s just that we all say the same thing. We practice the five pillars of Islam. But there’s no spiritual substance to it.

Jeff: Yes. And you know, think about it. The world wants to promote individualism. So, you know, the car commercial says, “Be a renegade”, you and the thousands of people who will buy this make and model of this car. You know what I mean? We’re calling you to an individuality, yet a commonality, right?

It’s sort of like the tribalism that you see in post-modernism. It’s like the skaters who all use the same skateboard, who kind of gather around, right? That sort of thing; there’s a tribalism. We’re just going to bond around the skateboard type that we use. You know, that sort of thing. But you know,— Yes, go ahead.

Brave Man: How does one react to this? Is the word *love* the same as representing brothers and neighbors, or is there a nuance—

Jeff: Yes, I’ll tell you what. Let me get to that in the next point because I think that’s true. I think there is something to that.

Bill Stolze: So there are two things that you mentioned. How do we here as men love one another? And when have you seen that applied in your ministry?

“Let Love Continue”

Jeff: I think, for instance, that we all belong to churches. And even though this is a great place for us to gather and to encourage one another and it's a source of strength to us—and please come back! (*Laughter*) I mean, even though this is a wonderful place to be, this is a letter written to a church. And so one of the things he's saying is, don't forsake the assembly. He's not saying, “Don't forsake Brave Men.” He's saying, “Don't forsake the gathering of the saints as the church.”

And one of the things that I think is crucial is that he says, “Stir one another up.” You know, it's the same word as when Paul and John Mark have that battle. Well, actually it's when Paul and Barnabas have the battle over John Mark. It says that there was division between them. There was strife between them. But the word is the word that we have here in Hebrews where it says, “Stir one another up.” In other words, there's a vigorous emotion that needs to be drawn out of us.

And I think that happens when we see each other on Lord's Day morning. Or it even doesn't exclude a time like this when a guy comes walking in and we see him downcast or sullen. And we go up and say, “What's the matter, brother? Come over and talk to me here.” There are ways just to get into people's lives that are really important.

Look. I don't know about you. I'm not sure how it is with you. But I think that men have a tendency—some men, not all men, I guess; I guess whatever you are you have a tendency to put on other men. But I have a tendency to be a bit of a guy that enjoys going off by myself. But I was recently reading C.S. Lewis's *The Four Loves*. And Lewis talks about how the guy who is alone cannot be in good spiritual condition. And I've been really challenged by that statement. And I think we all ought to be challenged by that statement.

And yet one of the things that's most difficult for us (and I think it's difficult for me, and maybe it's just because of that propensity in me), because when I see another guy who's a little bit sullen, I tend to leave him alone, because I want to be left alone when I'm feeling a little sullen. But he needs just like I need for somebody to come up to me, put his arm around me and say, “Hey, what's up? What are you doing? What's the matter? What are you thinking?”

And I think that's a good thing. I think that's one of the ways that we can love one another. And I think it's a vital way.

You know, I've seen it practiced in a number of ways. And I'll just tell you that again, talking to you men personally is a hard thing. It's a hard thing when you don't have a tendency to be sort of in the mix of things and want to be sort of in the mix of things, right? That's a difficult thing. And I think that more men struggle with that than just me.

Jim: To add to that, the Scripture says that they will know we are Christians by our love.

Jeff: Yes.

Jim: It's not natural. I think it becomes supernatural. It's beyond what you see in the normal gatherings of people. This is a higher standard.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: But that's in the context of the church, always.

Jeff: Yes, sure.

“Let Love Continue”

Ted: And what we find today is that evangelicals try to substitute other things for the congregation.

Jeff: Now I would say (and I’m agreeing with Ted; I think he’s right; it’s in the context of the church.) I think that something like we enjoy here is something that we might call the invisible aspect of the church. We all belong to different visible churches. But there’s a sense in which we all belong to the body of Christ, the invisible aspect. And so we get together and encourage one another. But the invisible can never replace the visible. The invisible has to be part of and one aspect of the visible.

In my first pastorate I knew a guy who continually told me, “I’m part of the invisible church. I don’t need to come to church.”

I said, “Well, what do you do about the sacraments?” Do you know what he had to say in the end? He had to say in the end that those were for the first century church, not for today.

I said, “That’s great! At that point you’re giving away God’s word so that you don’t have to attend church.” You know, it’s that simple. Don, go ahead.

Don: Jeff, some people talk about the problem of cliquishness in the church. You know, so many Christians get into cliques.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: Yet didn’t Jesus have Mary and Martha, and the twelve apostles, and the three within the twelve and the one, John, within the three? Can you address that?

Jeff: Yes, I can. I want to and I’m glad you asked me that, because I think that when you think about the church you ought to think about it as a family. And when you think about the church as a family, think about being at a family reunion.

And when you’re at a family reunion what happens? I mean, maybe it has been a while since you’ve been to a family reunion. I don’t know if they have them anymore. I think Facebook has taken over family reunions. *(Laughter)*

The family reunions that I used to attend were interesting because all of the cousins would get together. All of the siblings and all of the cousins would get together. Then they would parse off into groups. And then the older generation would get together. And what you would find is that you would find groups at family reunions.

Brave Man: Yes.

Jeff: Now I want to tell you something. If Grandpa was hobbling along with his plate of potato salad back to his seat and he took a spill, everyone was gathered around him, trying to help him out, right? But that doesn’t mean that once they got him up and found out that he was okay, maybe the littlest ones would go get him another plate of potato salad. The big people would help him sit down, and so forth and so on. But the point is that everybody is willing to help immediately. But once that was settled, everybody kind of went back to their own groups.

Nobody says, “Hey, this family reunion is cliquish!”, accusing people. Now it can become that. What happens is that let’s say there is this extended scenario. One of the couples adopt a child as a teenager. And the teenager is brought to the family reunion and the cousins exclude that new adopted child. Now that would be a clique. But a healthy family would enfold.

“Let Love Continue”

And the church is the same way. A church is always willing to enfold into the family, not willing to keep people out. If the church keeps people out, then that’s not a healthy scenario.

Ed: I just wanted to throw this out there. If I’m thinking right, love is a choice. I had an adopted son who was profoundly mentally and physically challenged, with the capacity of about a five-year-old. When he had learned to speak he was 38 years old.

Jeff: I’m sorry.

Ed: I was looking at the Scriptures. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 Paul says that “God has sanctified the body, soul and spirit,” which is a trichotomous view. And so if you look at the soul as where an individual can accept or reject God, when I look at Jeffrey and his life, what that said to me was that he would never have the moral capacity to accept or reject Christ. And so when God created him, when He was looking at him, God said, “He’s Mine; I chose him.” And so, you know, that to me is an example of how we’re supposed to be as far as the love God gave us after Him.

Jeff: Yes. And I want to extend it just a little bit, okay? And I want us to think about this, because in your particular scenario there was a mental handicap. For instance, if there’s a physical handicap in other scenarios, you have to say that those are exceptions. When God loves, He loves by choice, right?

But when you bring that into our scenario, I increasingly find it really difficult to divide the rational from the emotional. I just find it really hard to say that I can act absent from emotion. I just can’t. I think that emotions ought not to rule me. My mind ought to rule. But mind and emotions are so intimately connected that I can’t parse them out. And I more intuitively know when I’m being led by my emotions than when I’m being led by my mind. But I’m acting on both.

And the reason I want to say that is because I want to bring it back, for instance, to love between a husband and wife. You know, if your wife asks you, “Honey, why do you love me?”, and you say to her, “It is my duty to do it,” (*Laughter*), right? I mean, yeah.

But if you tell her, “It is my duty to love you and it’s my delight,”—

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: Then now you’ve included both the rational and the emotional aspect into your answer, which is or ought to be true. So yes, I think it has to be there.

We often hear that. And I think that the reason why people stress that love is a choice is because they don’t want love to be governed by emotions, which is right.

You know, way back when, back in Puritan England, I can’t think of who it was now. He wrote *The Christian Directory*. Richard Baxter. Richard Baxter has this huge volume of counseling. And what he says is this. He talks about what would become in the Bronte Era as romantic love. But he comments on it before Charlotte gets on the scene and starts writing romance, right? And you can tell that he’s talking about what would become this romantic love in *Wuthering Heights*, and so on.

And what he says is this. He says, “*This is a mild form of insanity.*” (*Laughter*) I’m not kidding you. It’s great! I like to pull that out on my wife every now and then. (*Laughter*) Anyway, go ahead.

“Let Love Continue”

Bob: Just a comment back on what you said about the duty and delight. I don’t think there’s a place for the duty. Why does there have to be a duty involved in loving my brother and loving my wife? I want to.

Ted: Right.

Bob: It has nothing to do with a duty.

Don: We’re commanded to.

Bob: I’d like to throw the duty out. I may be commanded to, but I don’t think that has a place.

Jeff: I understand what you’re saying. But you can hear the guy in front of you saying that if these are imperatives, then it is a duty because it is a duty to follow the commands. But I see what you’re saying. What you’re saying is that if I begin there, well that’s not really authentic. I want to do this, and that resonates with me. That’s sort of what I’m trying to get at when I say that I don’t want to create an unnecessary division between mind and emotions. What I really want to do is that I really want to desire to love my brothers. I mean, the fact is that I sometimes need to come back to the fact that I’m commanded to love my brothers. Or maybe it’s more specific. I need to love this brother who I’m finding it difficult to love, that sort of thing. And that’s where the duty I think comes in a very, very practical way. But I get it, I do.

Brave Man: Slap him and see if he still loves you. *(Laughter)*

Jim: The way you said “desire” made me think of the way we’re desiring of God. That’s our conversion. I guess that would overflow into the same rhythm.

Jeff: Yes. Go ahead. That’s all right.

Ted: Just as I said before, I’m uncomfortable with the word *emotion*. I like the word for the Christian experience of *affection* or *desire*.

Jeff: I agree.

Ted: That’s better than *emotion*. *Affection* has kind of a compulsive nature to it. You can’t help yourself.

Jeff: I agree. You guys know. I think I’ve explained this to you before. I think that *affections* and *passions* are really more of a helpful way to talk about—

Brave Man: Tomato, tomato.

Jeff: Hey, come on, now! You’re right; we’re talking about emotions. I get it. But think about it. If those emotions are stirred from within me by the Spirit to love my brothers, versus when I see the guy come walking in the door and he angers me, he’s working on me from without. I need a little more work from within. That’s kind of the angle. So that’s the tomato/tomato. I like that. Good. *(Laughter)*

Bill Stolze: So first off, I love your picture of the family, know the core values, faith and family. Faith is formative once families are started. So having five married children, 25 grandkids, twelve of them adopted, I love your picture, because when we get together we see that. It comes naturally.

I have a statement. Let me pre-shoot it and then I want to ask a question. Going back to the church defining what the truth is, we are all men. I believe God calls us to lead. If we belong to churches, He calls us to lead. So if there’s something that isn’t right, we’re the most responsible.

“Let Love Continue”

Jeff: Yes.

Bill: So in the context of today’s American churches, the American church doesn’t care about serving, as in the New Testament. How are we to excuse that family environment where we worship? Is that happening, or are we just running in, hearing a good message, feeling good and running back home? (*Unclear*)

Jeff: Well, let me tell you this. I find increasingly that when I’m asked a question like that, I can only answer it with how I see it happening in my own congregation. Please remind me to say something about leading too in just a minute.

But for instance, our congregation is not a program-driven congregation. We talk about how we expect people to be there on the Lord’s Day. If it’s the Lord’s Day you shouldn’t be anywhere else. This is the Lord’s Day. You should be involved in Lord’s Day activities. That’s the expectation that the session has for the congregation.

Midweek stuff is an encouragement. We encourage people to be in Bible studies. Being in a Bible study helps you. It’s a spiritual benefit to you. But we don’t raise midweek stuff to the level of expectation like we have for Lord’s Day activities.

So I was recently talking with somebody. And he was saying to me, “I just don’t feel like I’m serving enough in the church.”

Now here’s what I said. While I was on the phone, I said, “What do I hear in the background?”

“Children.”

“They’re not your children, are they?”

“No.”

“Who’s children are they?”

“Well, I’m watching them for” (So-and-So) “in the church.”

“Where are you going this afternoon?”

“I’m going over to” (this family.)

“For what?”

“Well, they need help with their home school project and I’m enlisted to help them with it.”

“Oh! Well, it sounds to me like you’re part of the family. It sounds to me like you’re part of the church family,” right? You don’t need to be involved in a program in order to be part of a living family, and have a living family experience.

Now this is what I said to this person. I said, “You’re thinking with the wrong paradigm here. If you’re thinking, ‘I need to be involved in more programs,’ then what’s going to happen is that you’re going to heap guilt upon me as the pastor for not having enough programs for you to be involved in. But if you’re thinking about the church as a living, breathing family which you’re involved in, (and I have no idea what you’re doing day to day, week to week), but you’re involved in the life of the family, you’re doing exactly what I hope you would be doing. I’d rather you think about it like that than think about it in terms of that we need more programs so I can check my boxes.” I think that’s how the family lives, at least in my context.

“Let Love Continue”

You know, I’ll tell you what. You said something that’s really good. And I would just encourage you men to take heart. And that is that there is nothing like men leading their families in the worship.

Brave Man: Yes.

Jeff: That cannot be replaced. In our church context we talk about the importance not only of ordained leadership, but the importance of unordained leadership. And do you know what? I’ve come to believe that the unordained leadership is just as, if not more important, than the ordained leadership, because when unordained men are leading their families in worship, and doing what they’re supposed to be doing, there is no substitute for that kind of leadership. There’s just no substitute, because people see that and they follow that. They admire that, they respect that, and so on. Bill?

Bill Obaker: Can you clarify that this is something that is not just in the church, but leading in worship daily?

Jeff: Yes, for sure. That doesn’t just mean the expectation of being involved on the Lord’s Day, but when men are day by day—and sometimes that means only three days out of the week, right? But there’s an expectation on our part that men will open the Word with their families and read the Word with their families and pray with their families, and that sort of leadership from Sunday to Sunday and in between.

Brave Man: I was just going to say that when you do, just expect mass chaos when you see a bunch of kids going all over the place. You say, “Well, this is going to be wonderful worshipping together. *(Unclear)*”

Jeff: Yes, but do you know what? I want to tell you something. The church isn’t a lecture hall, either, right? For instance, our church really believes that kids ought to be in the worship service. So we have a nursery for people to take kids out, you know, and to help train them and stuff, and bring them back in. But you know, for the most part our church is a quiet place. But it’s sort of like a living room, right? There are kids in there. And sometimes, you know, you hear the kids, and so forth. But I want to tell you something. I’d rather hear the kids than not hear them.

Sig: Amen.

Jeff: So it’s a good thing, right? And you know, in the service, when a mom is sitting there and keeping the kids quiet, she’s not listening to the sermon, right? And I tell her, “You know what? It’s a season of life, unless you’re going to have about ten of those. And that’s fine. But you’re not going to listen for about ten years. That’s okay. You can listen to it on Sermon Audio.” *(Laughter)*

Bob: Jeff, I wanted to talk about this sign of leadership. I want to talk about the Mangus family, Doug Mangus and his kids. I mean, he is an example of that kind of leadership within the family. And I just look to him and all he has been doing.

Ted: Doug makes me feel guilty. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Just don’t look at him. *(Laughter)*

Sig: Can we hear that from his sons?

Jeff: No. *(Laughter)* Not till they’re 30. *(Laughter)* You know, I’ll tell you what. Never mind! *(Laughter)* You know what? We may come back here next week. *(Laughter)*

“Let Love Continue”

Why don't we pray? Father in heaven, thank You for this day. And thanks for the reminder to love. We need it. Sometimes we love, but we love the wrong things. And Lord, help us to unhand those things that we ought not to love, and help us to love what we ought to love. And let us start by loving You and then the brethren, and so on. Lord, bless us this day. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)