

### *Hebrews 13:5-6*

...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?"

These have to be some of the most powerful and comforting words that have ever been spoken to us by the Lord. But even though He has communicated this same idea to us in a myriad of ways, He knows that we are slow on the uptake and have a hard time believing that this is our truth. He knows that because we are so fixated and obsessed with what we can see and feel that we often miss out on the supernatural reality that we are to experience in this life. He knows that too often our connection to this "world" obstructs our view of the truth and we end up living as if we are actually in threat of being rejected and abandoned.

Therefore, He comes right out and just proclaims His loyalty to us, His care over our lives, and His involvement in the details of our lives. I want you to follow me with the reasoning here. In order for the Lord to proclaim that He will never forsake us (and for us to be able to stand without fear confident in this truth), it means that He has to be involved in the details of our lives. By definition, for Him to never forsake us means that He must never turn away from us and must always be aware of everything that is happening around us, to us, and in us, so He can do His God stuff in our lives.

And the reason we don't have to be afraid of what men can do is because they can't do anything without His permission. He is the gate, He is the gatekeeper, and He is the good shepherd over our lives (**John 10:7-15**); therefore, nothing comes against His sheep (you and me) unless in His wisdom He permits it for His

purposes. If you are skeptical about His involvement in the details, consider this amazing passage in ***Psalm 139***:

### ***Psalm 139:1-6***

O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. ***You go before me and follow me.*** You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!

David knew this to be true. He did not understand it, but He was thoroughly convinced that the Lord would never leave Him nor forsake Him. And if you are still unsure about the words He has spoken over your life, just remember what it says in ***Hebrews 6:18***: ...it is impossible for God to lie—impossible!

Therefore, to drive these truths home, the Spirit follows up this great proclamation of loyalty with a 2 part argument as to why we should believe what God has said and then a 3 part discourse on how these truths should practically impact our lives. The 5-points that He makes are as follows:

1. He reminds the believers that an example been laid for them by those who once led them; therefore, it is possible for them to likewise be filled with the Spirit of God and walk by faith.

2. The same Jesus who helped their leaders will also help them; Jesus does not change as it is impossible for Him to change.
3. Religion in all of its various faces will be of no benefit whatsoever; besides what they (what we) have is so much better.
4. They need to go outside of the camp to the place of the dead and embrace this process of destruction which the Lord has been pursuing and fully identify themselves with the worthlessness of their flesh so they can be alive and find their worth in the Spirit.
5. This will all result in a joyful sacrifice that comes from Him and is offered toward Him and is then extended toward others (yes, it's we and God).

The pattern **13:7-16** follows the pattern laid out in **13:5-6**. In the Greek, in **13:5-6** there were 5 negatives ("No, I will not leave thee; no, neither will I not utterly forsake thee.")—all of which were meant to strengthen our understanding of the good news that they pronounce. And in **13:7-16** there are 5 follow up statements which reinforce these truths. 5 and 5; grace upon grace.

### ***Hebrews 13:7-16***

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods,

which have not benefited those devoted to them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.

For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

First of all, the Spirit told these believers to remember those who had led them in truth, to consider how they lived, and then choose to imitate their lives. The Greek is interesting; it literally says: “consider the end of their conversation.” This is a colorful way of saying that those who lead them in truth were now dead so pay attention to how they lived. Who knows, perhaps the Spirit was referring to Stephen, James, or some of the other martyrs who were afflicted by the Jews. We’re not really sure, but we can conclude that those leaders had gone to Jesus.

The instruction to these believers, however, is that they should look at their lives and consider the fruit that was produced from them and then imitate how they chose to live. They lived by faith, died by faith and they trod a pathway that is worthy of being followed.

In practical application, this means that you can and should carefully consider the way I have lived and the manner in which I have applied these truths to my

life and the choices I have made. You should examine the fruit that has been borne in the lives of those in whom I have invested. If it is good fruit that has been borne of the Spirit, then you should be willing to consider how I have lived and emulate me by choosing to trust yourself to the Lord as I have trusted myself to the Lord.

This is the very thing that Paul said to the Philippians: “Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example (*Philippians 3:17*). I know it sounds audacious, but here is one thing I have learned to be true (and it is kind of a leadership principle): if my god is small then your god will also be small. I can only lead you to the place where my faith is willing to take me and no further. But if my God is more than big to me, if He is my I Am, then, if you are willing to follow in my footsteps, your God will be more than big to you and He will likewise be your I Am.

I cannot tell you how many times I have heard someone say or imply that Jesus works for me but not necessarily for them and how “I just don’t understand” that they are different than me. I guess it’s because they think they are something special (in a weird, broken, and twisted sort of way) and that my Jesus won’t work in their lives. Well the truth is not that they are too messed up or broken, but that they have been worshipping a different Jesus.

The god they know is a little “g” god and is fairly impotent and not the big “G” God that I know. But the point that the Spirit wants to make is that “my” Jesus (the living Son of God, the Creator of all things seen and unseen, the sovereign Lord of the universe) can be your Jesus and you can walk by faith in the Spirit of

God and live as I live; just like He instructed these believers to live like those who had taught them the truth.

There are none too poor, too dirty, too broken, too naked, too stupid, too drunken, to be thrown outside of His love. That is why the Spirit makes the point that Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever. He simply does not change; as it is impossible for Him to change. Immutability is part and parcel of His nature.

In other words, just as He is my I Am, and Sarah's I Am, and Lesley's I Am, and just as He was Peter's I Am, and Paul's I Am and John's I Am, He can be your I Am. Who He was then is who He is today and who He will be tomorrow. The issue is not Jesus; it is your willingness to choose to live as if He is your I Am; your willingness to bet your lives on the all the truths that He has declared about Himself. We are the problem; not Jesus; He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

But in order for us to have a taste of this amazing reality, we have to get out of the way; we have to eliminate the enemies (every single one of them) that stand in the way of our practical relationship with the Lord. We have to war against every lofty thought that raises itself up against the true knowledge of Jesus Christ; those thoughts which tempt us to follow something other than His voice in our lives (**2 Corinthians 10:5**). And this is all accomplished through faith; by our willingness to believe the truth and bet every aspect of our lives on the truth.

Now it is true that your experiences with God will likely be different than my experiences with Him, in terms of what we have to go through in this life, the way

He gifts us and uses us, and the purposes He has laid out for our lives, etc., but He will always be the same to you and to me and in that we can all trust.

So now that we have that truth firmly planted in our hearts, the Spirit exhorts us in **13:9-10** to let the grace of God dwell in our hearts and in so doing reject any teaching, instruction, or practice that that tries to blend the grace of God with anything else. And it does not matter if someone wants to mix grace with the law or with any other religious practices or diverse and strange beliefs (like the issue of celibacy we discussed last week).

You see grace simply does not mix with anything; it stands alone. Anything that tries to mix with grace will turn out to be an abomination that will maim, cripple, blind, make deaf, and overtime destroy its followers.

In making this point the Spirit relies on imagery that would have been very potent for these believers. The Jewish priests had a legal right to eat of the sacrifices and so the Spirit contrasts the so called benefits of the Jewish system with the benefits of grace. His point: when it all comes down to it, despite all the pomp and circumstance, those sacrifices only provided a meal; that is it, nothing more. They did not take away guilt, they did not cleanse the heart, and they were powerless to remove or to hinder the power of sin in a person's life. But grace on the other hand has the power to strengthen and establish the heart.

As we have discussed grace is intended to cover everything we do in this life. I know that sounds like a cliché since within the "religion" of Christianity grace has been handed out so freely with one hand and then taken back with the other hand and mixed with all manner of law. It's been a confusing concoction that keeps people bound and not free. We tell people they are covered by the grace of

God but then we strap them with guilt, duty, and a whole bunch of do's and don'ts that no one except for the super type-A personalities have ever been able to come close to keeping. And then even those folks can only white knuckle it for so long before they explode; and it seems they all eventually do in one way or another.

So we have to practically understand what it means to be established in grace. When you blow it (whether small or bad); you can just move on because you are covered by God's grace and you are forgiven. You don't need to sulk, pout, beat yourself up, run away, distance/isolate yourself, or any other ridiculous thing you tend to do. In the same manner, when you hurt someone else, you are free, in true humility, to repent and then just move on in relationship, for you are covered by God's grace. When someone blows it with you, you are free to release them because you are covered by God's grace.

When you finally realize what the Bible says in terms of there being nothing good in you except for God, then you can relax, rejoice, and be at peace, for you will then know the depths of what it means to be covered and established in grace. You will stop your fight with God. You will stop trying to prove your worth to Him or to anyone else, including yourself. Believe me; it is glorious.

When you are covered in grace you will live by grace meaning that you will live in total neediness for Jesus in every part of your life. You will be needy for Him to live His life in and through yours. "Through Him" will become your motto. You will be convinced that only He can produce anything good from your life.

I think it is interesting the way the Spirit contrasted grace with religion. You see if grace establishes the heart, it will allow you to extend that grace to others and



from you will flow a fountain of mercy and love. But if religion is established in the heart, then from your heart will flow such nastiness as pride, arrogance, bigotry, narrow-mindedness, pettiness, insecurity, bitterness, and often times even hate.

This ugly fruit tends to show up in a myriad of behaviors. Some people become combative and argumentative. Some people tend to separate themselves or condescend to those who they think are less than them. Some are just outright aggressive and do everything they can to destroy or disparage others. This is why it is good for the heart to be established in grace.

We have to remember that the Old Covenant is abolished and, at the time of this writing, was soon to be wiped off the face of the earth. However, the New Covenant will endure forever. Therefore, we are not to attempt to re-create in any way shape or form any elements of the law. The traditional do's and don'ts, in the way we have learned them in the "religion" of Christianity, stem from the Old Covenant and are not to be rooted in the life of one who lives by faith in the Spirit of God. In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law (**Romans 3:31**).

You have to understand, the law was never intended to be a pathway for righteousness; in fact, just the opposite. Paul tells us that the law actually provokes sin within our soul (**Romans 7:5, 8**). This is because the law was given to prove to everyone the unbending truth that only God is good; that God alone is perfect and we are not and never can be on our own. Hence, our desperate need for a Savior (**Isaiah 42:21; Romans 3:19-20; 7:7-13**).

On our own, we can never keep the law. **Isaiah 64:6** says: "We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags." This is our reality without Christ; soak it in!

I have found that it is so clever all the different ways that the law worms its way back into our minds and our hearts. The enemy is always placing it before us and we tend to swallow the bait since it is usually wrapped in all sorts of religious pride, guilt, duty, and even charity—which oddly enough seems to be the bait for which our hearts have an unending appetite. But as the Spirit says, adhering to the law brings no benefit whatsoever. It is a total waste of our time and energy.

This passage also brings to mind that very difficult passage in **John 6:53** where Jesus says that we are to eat His flesh and drink His blood. When you think about **John 6:53** in the context of this verse in *Hebrews* it makes total sense. The food you eat from the sacrifices of bulls and calves does nothing but fill your stomachs. But when you eat of Jesus' sacrifice, when you allow it to fill you, you will know the joy of His grace and you will be established in His grace.

We have an altar from which those who serve at the tent have no right to eat. Do you understand; religion (in whatever form) will never bring you near to the true altar of God. There is one way and only one way to eat from the altar and that is through the grace of Jesus Christ—the grace which is to practically permeate and cover all that we think and all that we do.

This next part of this passage (**13:11-14**) is so powerful and I have been so excited to talk about it. You may not see it at first, but these verses still deal with the war and our need to let God exterminate all that is worthless from our lives, all that is not of God. It approaches things from a different angle and is intended to help us adopt God's perspective on things and invoke a permanent shift in our understanding of both worth and worthlessness.

Too many of us have strived it seems forever to prove ourselves to others: to God, to our parents, to our spiritual leaders, to our friends, and even to ourselves as we try and accept “who we are” in order to make it through this life. But the point the Spirit makes is that this has all been a waste of time. As we know, those to whom we are trying to prove ourselves never seem to be satisfied by our efforts anyways (it’s never enough), but from God’s perspective there is no way that we can make what is inherently worthless, good. We cannot fix what is permanently broken.

The Bible makes it clear: All have sinned and fall short of the glory (or the perfection) of God (**Romans 3:23**); there is no exception to this statement. The truth is that every part of our lives has been corrupted by sin. Every part of our heart, mind, and soul has been tainted. It is true that some people have more experience in terms of practically living a life of sin, but regardless we have all been corrupted through and through. This is why we can never satisfy the requirement of the law, which is perfection. This is why Jesus had to fully satisfy the requirement of the law for us (**Romans 8:3-4**).

So I have to ask. Why do you keep taking what is worthless and is only good to be thrown away and burned and try and make it out to be something good? The truth is that apart from God’s love toward us, and His love in us, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing good in us. **Romans 3:10** says: “No one is good—not even one” and **Romans 7:18** says: “I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.” We must accept this truth; there is actually great freedom in giving up our fight for worth and validation accepting that Jesus has given us our worth and it’s glorious, as He alone is good.

So let's look at the imagery in this passage. According to *Exodus 29:14*, when the priest would make a sin offering (symbolic of both God's judgment of sin and His mercy to His people), he would skin the animal and take the flesh of the bull, its hide, and its refuse and burn it with fire outside of the camp (or in the days of the Temple outside of the city wall in a place called Gehenna where the fire was always burning to consume the refuse and waste).

Gehenna was essentially the local garbage dump where all that was worthless was taken and destroyed by fire; even the animal for the sin offering. Interestingly, Gehenna was used symbolically by Jesus to conjure up images of everlasting destruction and is translated throughout the New Testament as hell.

Now, for the sin offering, the priest would only offer up the fat that covers the entrails and the lobe of the liver and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them and offer them up in smoke upon the altar. The rest would be taken outside of the camp and burned.

Symbolically this communicates a powerful message. There were certain sacrifices of which the priests and the people got to eat symbolizing that there was some spiritual benefit to those sacrifices. But they received no benefit from the sin offering. Everything was burned; nothing left to eat. That is because the sin offering never really pardoned sin; it provided no true spiritual benefit. The sin offering was symbolic and pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus of which we must eat to obtain its benefit. The imagery here is so cool.

The Spirit is saying that just like the refuse and the garbage, Jesus was taken outside of the city to be tossed aside as worthless to the world. According to **2 Corinthians 5:21** the Father made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin so that we

might become the righteousness of God in Him. In other words, Jesus had to be taken outside of the city, killed, and discarded because His body had taken on the worthlessness of sin. His perfect blood was offered up to purify us from our sins, but His body was tossed aside.

And here is the thing; we are instructed to join Jesus in that place of refuse and destruction. This is how much value and worth we are to place on our flesh (or on our *Old Sinful Nature*.) It is metaphorically a carcass, some meat, and a pile of refuse. How is that for a complimentary metaphor? You know that piece of you that you have been fighting for so long to make good, and to have others accept in you as good; well it is essentially just a pile of “you know what.”

We need to proudly join Jesus outside of the city, outside of the camp, and embrace our worthlessness knowing that His perfect blood has sanctified us and He has made us the righteousness of God. In Him we are alive; in Him we find life; in Him we have eternal worth and glory. In Him we have everything; but apart from Him we are entirely worthless, good only to be tossed out and burned along with the rest of the refuse. It is a powerful picture!

That is why we must engage in this war we have been talking about for so long. We must destroy all within our soul that is an enemy of God. I know we have grown up with these enemies, we have known them so intimately, and they have convinced us that they have helped us through this life; but it is all a big fat lie. They are worthless; they are good only to be destroyed. And we must embrace this truth and identify with it. Our only goodness comes from Jesus Christ through our ***New Creation*** which has been made righteous, holy, and true (***Ephesians 4:24***) and is indwelt with the Spirit of God.

I want to try and capture this whole imagery still another way combining together some of the notions we have studied in both Chapters 12 and 13 regarding judgment, punishment, discipline, war, sacrifice, and mercy with the purposes of God for our lives which are to 1) stop the generational sin that has been passed down to you from your ancestors, 2) rid you of all the enemies of wrong belief and unbelief that live in your soul, 3) give Himself to you in order that you can learn to let Him be your God with all its marvelous implications, and 4) transform you into the image of His Son so you can enjoy your peace and rest.

So let's think about it this way. ***Ephesians 5:1*** and ***1 John 2:6*** say that we are to emulate Jesus in all things—follow His example. Therefore, it would make sense that His children must also sacrifice in the same way He did. Jesus did not sacrifice His body for His own benefit; rather, He sacrificed His body for ours. We deserved Gehenna, everlasting destruction; but He took the wrath of God upon Himself and gave up His life so we might live. And I believe that He calls us to do the same thing; to give up our flesh (our *Old Sinful Nature*) so others might live and not be judged.

So speculate with me for a moment. What if the Lord looking out over time (remember He sees the beginning from the end) decided that He is going to judge a family and mercifully put an end to the generational sin that has been passed down from one generation to another—the sin that has wiped out person after person in that family.

We actually see God do this in how He deals with nations. We are told that nations have what we might call a cup of wrath and when they finally fill it with their atrocities and wickedness, He then says enough is enough and brings about

His judgment to purify the land and to preserve the few who have not been completely defiled by such wickedness. In essence, He empties the cup. This metaphor comes from **Genesis 15:16**. So perhaps He deals with families and their generational sin in the exact same way.

Therefore, in looking out across time He sees you, one who would be His child, one who could complete the task, one who could follow in His steps and in so doing be a giver of life placing an end to sin and destruction. So He picks you knowing that He will 1) never leave you or forsake you, 2) equip you to handle what He has called you to accomplish on behalf of others, and 3) strengthen you to be the sacrifice; to bear the reproach that He endured (**13:13**).

So in His wisdom He allows the accumulation of all this generational sin in your life so He can gather it all together, judge it, and put an end to it. You see, if He does not do that with you; He might just have to judge the family at large and the consequences of that could be wide spread and horrific. His great mercy limits this judgment to you in the same way He limited the eternal judgment of all true believers to only His Son.

As a result you grow up enduring tremendous suffering and atrocities at the hands of sinful men and women. You react to this sin in all the ways that would be expected. You do things that just prove that there is nothing good in you and you are capable of every bit of evil of which those who harmed you are capable. This is done so that the fullness of this generational sin will have run its course in you.

Then He starts to actively move in your life and bring judgment against this sin (or we can substitute for the word “judgment,” the words: correction, discipline (as a Father loves a child), or punishment; they are all synonymous). And in so

doing, God starts to wage war against each and every area of your life that is caged in wrong belief and unbelief; every area that has rejected Him as Lord. He starts to war against it all for the purpose of putting an end to the power of this sin in your life and in so doing set you (and those who will follow you and walk in your footsteps) free from its devastating destruction.

During this war, He works to make you His ally so you will join Him in this war. He helps you understand that He loves you and explains that what He is doing is not because He is mad at you and it is not because you have been bad. Rather, He wants you to emulate Him and let yourself be taken outside of the city stripped of your *flesh* (your *Old Sinful Nature*) so that all of it, carcass, meat, refuse, and all, could be judged and destroyed. He does this so others might live free because of your sacrifice. In this whole process we truly walk in His footsteps and are thereby transformed into His image.

Thus, God moves in the midst of all your circumstances (every little detail) to effect this destruction in your life so you can not only become like Him in His death but through His death come to know the power of His resurrection. Paul captures this kind of thinking and describes his experience this way:

***Philippians 3:7-11***

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes



through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Everything that we have loved and held onto in this world, including our identity, our self worth, and all the ways we have tried to make ourselves good and righteous by “being good,” is just rubbish. It is only worthy of being nailed to the cross. So we need to let this truth transform our minds and let go of it all. As it says in **13:14**, here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. This is not our home. This is not where we belong. This is not where we get our validation and our worth. The world has nothing to offer us. We belong to God and to each other.

We get the privilege of suffering with Him and experiencing death with Him so that way we can live in this world, under the direction of His Holy Spirit, as unique people who know His power and who are simply no longer controlled by the things of this world. The sin that once ruled and dominated you will essentially be powerless. The bitter fruit that once poured forth from your life will be forgotten. From you will flow the sweet fruit of the Spirit. And the best part is that everyone else will know it for you will be a living miracle as one who has literally been raised from the dead.

Like Jesus, we literally are called to sacrifice our lives for others so that way they can have an opportunity at life free from the weight of the big snowball of sin and wickedness that has been passed down from generation to generation.

That is what Paul meant in *Philippians 3:10-11* when he says that he is willing share in Jesus' sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible he may attain the resurrection from the dead. I want you to understand this. He is not talking about eternity, he knows he is going to heaven; he is talking about how he lives in this life. He wants to live as one who has literally been raised from the dead.

This was a long hard and slow lesson for me to learn. When I was in the midst of this war in my own life, I was not an ally of God. I fought Him tooth and nail, which just caused Him to fight even harder. He knew what He wanted and He was not going to relent until He got all that He wanted.

He knew that I would have to get through this so that way you could follow in my footsteps and choose to trust yourself to Jesus believing that He is all that He said He is (your I Am), notwithstanding your circumstances. And I don't say that arrogantly, I say that as one who has been through a brutal bloody war that has many, many casualties. But He told me to lift my drooping hands, strengthen my weak knees, and make straight paths for my feet, so those who are weak and lame may not fall but become strong and become healed (**12:12-13**).

So this is why you have been chosen to suffer so much through your life. This is why He has asked you to go outside of the city and bear the disgrace He bore. He has marked you to truly know Him—to be like Him. To know Him in death so you can know Him in this life, so others might live. It was my *flesh* for your life; and that is an exchange that was entirely worth the suffering and pain. And I know that when others are able to follow you, you will likewise declare it was worth it; your *flesh* for their lives. It's a great exchange.

**13:15** says, “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.” Our sacrifice of praise to our God comes through Jesus; He is our source of everything—even our praise! I have said this before and I will say it again. If you struggle during worship I believe it is because you have not yet yielded to His control over your life; for when He does possess you He will release a sacrifice of praise through your body and you will love to worship Him. It will be your joy!

The kind of sacrifice from our lips that can praise Him both in the midst of extreme difficulty as well as in the midst of great blessing must be a fruit of being possessed by the Spirit of God. It has to be; otherwise we would be too self-obsessed to give Him this kind of acknowledgment. But the Lord is glorified when we open our lips, truly relent of our fight and our control, and acknowledge His name, which as we know from **Exodus 3:14** and **John 8:58**, is “I Am.” Proclaiming who He is to us is a lovely offering in the eyes of the Lord.

You see every bit of our goodness and our joy comes from being filled with the Spirit of God. This is why the war is necessary. It is necessary for us to be found with Him outside of the camp. It is necessary for us to emulate Him and die so others might live. It is necessary for Him to make us into His image so we can live free in the power of His resurrection, no longer bound by the power of sin in our lives. It is all necessary so the world will know and be thoroughly convinced that He lives. And for that we can offer up our thanks and our praise; for He truly is our I Am.

Now, the final statement in this passage in **13:16** is not communicated too well in the ESV so I am going to quote it from the Young’s Literal Translation. It literally

reads: “and of doing good, and of fellowship, be not forgetful, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased.” I want to note that “doing good,” and “of fellowship” are both nouns and not verbs. In other words, this is not a command to go do something; rather, these serve as indicators. Let me explain.

Another sacrifice that will come from our being filled with the Spirit is relationship with one another; and this is a command we are not to forget. God’s Agape love is expressed in charity and in connectedness. We care for those who need care. We help provide for those who need provision. We communicate with those who need to hear the truth. We give tender love to those who are in pain. We treat older men like fathers, younger men like brothers, older women like mothers and younger women like sisters, in all purity.

We go out of our way and make ourselves available for those in our body who need our help. We fight for each other. We war with each other against our *Old Sinful Natures*. We celebrate our victories with each other. We praise Jesus together and we lift up our voices in adoration for He is our amazing God.

If this is not how you are presently living, then I can probably safely say that you are still living for yourself and not letting the Spirit of God control and move you in His way; at least that is what the indicators say. There are still far too many enemies in your land and you need to go to war; you need to identify with Christ and go outside of the camp and die. It is time.

The fruit of our lives—the fruit of being filled with the Spirit of God—should be “we and God” as evidenced by our fellowship and our caring for one another. In closing I want to read a short passage from the Psalms just because I really like what it says and I think is a fitting ending.

### ***Psalms 138:1-3***

I give you thanks, O Lord, with all my heart; I will sing your praises before the gods. I bow before your holy Temple as I worship. I praise your name for your unfailing love and faithfulness; for your promises are backed by all the honor of your name. As soon as I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me strength.

Let's pray.