

## “TESTS FOR CHRISTIANS”

### Hebrews 13:1-9

Message 1628

In First Corinthians 13:4, 5, we have a divine description: “Love suffers long, and is kind; love envies not; love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, Does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil.” How does your love measure up with that description? I want that truth to cleanse my love and I believe it can do the same for you.

Frequently, we get a letter from a listener who raises these questions in his letter, “Who is a Christian? What is Christianity?” Well, I am a Christian and I know there are many other Christians in the world. But all of us must admit failure. We make mistakes. We do not always live up to the high calling of being a Christian. But that in no way changes the truth. In some respects it sharpens the truth.

There are genuine Christians and I believe God can make you one of them. The Bible reveals to us the characteristics true Christians should possess. Those characteristics can be tested. Three **TESTS FOR CHRISTIANS** are found in Hebrews 13:1-9.

1. *Let brotherly love continue.*
2. *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*
3. *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*
4. *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*
5. *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*
6. *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*
7. *Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*
8. *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.*
9. *Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.*

In these verses the Apostle presents several **TESTS** Christians will pass when they are genuine Christians.

**THE TEST OF SHARING LOVE** probes the responses of the heart. “Let brotherly love continue.” Jesus once said to His disciples, “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another.” There is a sharing love among brothers as described in I Corinthians 13:4 and 5. The best test of love is how brothers relate.

Sharing love entertains strangers. Abraham was such a person as the Bible records in Genesis. Some strangers came down the way and Abraham saw them, went out to meet them, invited them in and entertained them, not knowing at the time that he was entertaining angels.

The point is, that we should be expressing sharing love. I want to bear testimony to the gracious way in which I personally have been received by the brothers and sisters of western Africa when visiting there among them. They have received me graciously, sharing love toward a stranger.

Sharing love reaches those who are suffering. This text encourages us to remember “those who are in bonds as though bound with them, and those who suffer adversity as being there ourselves.” There are many such people in the world today. In certain countries of the world, Believers are under great distress and suffering, in bonds and persecuted. We are to reach out to them and feel in our hearts as though we were passing through a similar situation. That way we can come to God in prayer for them. Yes, my friend, when our staff meets every morning for prayer, we often remember such persons before God’s throne of grace. The test of sharing love is a test true Christians will pass.

**THE TEST OF SIMPLE CONTENTMENT** probes the workings of the soul. Our writer has a good counsel for marriage. He says, “Marriage is honorable, and the bed undefiled.” That means, of course, that there are no trial marriages. There are no multiple marriages. God has established the character of the home when he brought the first woman to the first man. And God said, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined unto his wife and they two shall be one flesh.” One time when Jesus was being questioned by some of His contemporaries on this issue, He said, “In the beginning it was not so” that a man would put away his wife. No, simple contentment is very important in a marriage relationship.

There follows a counsel to trust. The covetous lust for more. We are counseled to be without covetousness and to be content with such things as we have. The reason is given that God has promised us that He would always be with us: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Contented trust in God will make a world of difference for you, my friend. Trust is the test of simple contentment.

He concludes with counsel to have courage. We can boldly say when we have simple contentment that the Lord is our strong arm. He is my helper. We can boldly say that man cannot overthrow us or overcome us. No matter what the circumstances may be, nor how difficult the conditions, we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper.” Simple contentment is a test true Christians will pass.

**THE TEST OF STABLE PURPOSE** probes the challenges of the will. We are urged to follow good leaders, “Remember them who have the rule over you.” Reference is made here primarily to spiritual leaders in the church organization. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, compared the church to a physical body with hands, feet, eyes and ears, in which each member has a particular function to perform. They are not the same, but each one must recognize the right and place of the other. This harmonizes with these instructions in Hebrews 13. So follow those who have a good record, those who speak the word to you. That will give you a stable purpose.

“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever” is both the foundation and pinnacle of stability. With such an ideal before us we can be stable in our purposes.

Faith fixed on Jesus is the best way to counteract strange doctrines. Jesus warned that, as the end of the age draws near, some will actually claim to be Christ. That is true today. But the Lord warned us not to be

carried away by strange doctrines, but to be established with grace, hold fast to grace and not be moved about.

A stable purpose is a test true Christians will pass for they have their faith anchored in Jesus and the Holy Word of God. The only true God is our helper and shield. He has promised never to leave or forsake us.

Bring your life to these tests. See how you measure up. Can you pass the test of stable purpose? You will as you walk with Jesus. He wants to challenge others through you.