Osaka International Church Rev. Alistair McKenna Sunday 29th December 2019.

Bible Reading: Hebrews Chapter 13: v. 1-9. (New Living translation)

Theme: **The Fruits of Faith**.

Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. 2Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! 3Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.

4Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.

5Don’t love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said,

“I will never fail you.  
    I will never abandon you.”

6So we can say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper,  
    so I will have no fear.  
    What can mere people do to me?”

7Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.

8Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. 9So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your strength comes from God’s grace, not from rules about food, which don’t help those who follow them.

**Introduction**

The book of Hebrews was written to encourage Jewish believers to value the New Covenant. God had made a New Covenant for the Jewish people through His Son Jesus Christ.

The writer explains in Hebrews that Jesus Christ is the once and for all perfect sacrifice for our sins.

The Old Covenant relied upon the continual sacrifice of animals to cover mankind’s sin.

Jesus Christ was now God’s way of providing **atonement for mankind’s sins.**

Some Jewish believers found it difficult to accept the Grace and mercy of God in this New Covenant.

Under the Old Covenant there were plenty of things that you **had to obey and do** in order to be **acceptable in God’s sight.**

There was obedience to the **10 Commandments** to start with.

Then there were all the **Jewish food laws** and everything else we find in the first **5 books of the Bible.**

**Everybody failed** in at least one of the 10 commandments.

The 10 Commandments was a way of showing mankind that however hard they tried, they could not measure up to **God’s standard of Holiness.**

However, the **New Covenant was different**.

It was about believing by **“faith**” in what God had done **through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ.**

When this was done in **“faith”** and with **pure motives**, Jesus Christ would send His **Holy** **Spirit** to dwell in their hearts and lives in order to help achieve the Holiness of life that could not be achieved through our own efforts.( John 14: v. 25-31)

This was a much **better covenant**, but it did remove the need for Priests, the sacrificial system, and for Judaism as a religion.

It did not destroy the Jewish Festivals or the promises that God made to His chosen people.

It was just a better covenant that God had previously promised through the prophets.

**Jeremiah Chapter 31: v. 31-37 in the N.L.T.**

31“The day is coming,” says the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. 32This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife,” says the Lord.

33“But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the Lord.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,” says the Lord. “And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.”

35It is the Lord who provides the sun to light the day  
    and the moon and stars to light the night,  
    and who stirs the sea into roaring waves.  
His name is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies,  
    and this is what he says:  
36“I am as likely to reject my people Israel  
    as I am to abolish the laws of nature!”  
37This is what the Lord says:  
“Just as the heavens cannot be measured  
    and the foundations of the earth cannot be explored,  
so I will not consider casting them away  
    for the evil they have done.  
    I, the Lord, have spoken!

These verses are very convicting if you are a Christian believer and hold to what is often termed **“replacement theology**”.

Some of you don’t know the meaning of this word, or about the world-wide effort by many Christians to replace the promises that God made in the Old Testament to His chosen people.

Basically **“Replacement Theology**” is this.

God has replaced the promises that He made to Abraham and his descendants, that is the Jewish Nation, and they now apply to the Church. That is all of the born-again Christians in the world. This means that God no longer has a purpose for the land of Israel and for His chosen people, Israel.

Just reading that verse in Jeremiah would be enough to convince me that this teaching is not correct. However millions of Christians are persuaded to think differently.

On the 19th January I start my last series at O.I.C. which will be designed to educate you about the truth concerning the Church and Israel.

God has convicted me to do this series because not only is it something I have yet to teach fully here at O.I.C. but I think it will be essential as we move nearer the second coming of Jesus.

So as we look forward to a New Year, let us always be mindful of the **New Covenant of Grace that God has for each one of us.**

We serve God, because **we love the Grace** that He has poured out into our lives through Jesus.

It is about a **“relationship**” and **not a set of rules.**

In the last chapter of Hebrews the writer is reminding the readers about what the **fruit of their faith should look like.**

On a human level, **fruit is a natural result of a good plant.**

It doesn’t matter if it is an apple tree or a Mango tree.

When there is very little fruit, or no fruit, then there is something wrong with the plant.

**Good plants produce fruit without effort.**

However good plants need good soil, sunshine, rain, and some human management in pruning and care.

It is the same in our Christian lives.

**The good soil represents our heart**.

If our heart is not right with God**, there can be no fruit.**

**It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit working in our lives that produces things that God desires for us in 2020.**

If the Holy Spirit is not in our hearts, there can be **no spiritual fruit.**

There may be lots of other good things that we can do and display, but these are **NOT the fruit of the Holy Spirit.**

Anybody can do these things, without the Holy Spirit.

For those who profess to be Christians and don’t have God’s Holy Spirit in their hearts, it is impossible to live the Christian life **in the way that God intended it to be lived.**

You must be born again by God’s Holy Spirit **in order to display Christian fruit.**

Although it is not my message today, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is pointed out in Galatians **Chapter 5: v. 22-23.**

**(in the N.L.T.)**

22But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

So as we look forward to 2020, I ask the question, “**what fruit of the Holy Spirit should we grow in our lives with God’s help?**

The writer to the Hebrews points out at least 9 things in this passage that, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, we should be working on next year.

1. **Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. - v.1.**

**1 Cor.13: v. 4-7. In N.L.T.**

4Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 6It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

God’s Holy love is very different from human love.

Human love is influenced by our sinful nature. It does not require supernatural influence and ability.

It is very easy to love a lovely person who appears to do nothing wrong, is attractive and beautiful in every way.

However when that person behaves badly towards us, it is not so easy to love them in a human way; **in fact it’s very difficult and quite impossible**.

But we can love them in a **supernatural way with the help of God’s Holy Spirit.**

God says in His word that He **disciplines those people whom He loves.**

Therefore although we keep loving people that behave badly towards us, they may be subject to **God’s discipline,** in order for them to **repent and be changed by God’s Holy Spirit.**

God’s love requires supernatural ability from His Holy Spirit; therefore it is different from human love.

The challenge for all of us in 2020 is to **love one another through the power of God’s Holy Spirit, and not by human love.**

The greatest example of supernatural love is Jesus Christ.

(Romans 5: v.6-11 in the N.L.T.)

6When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. 7Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. 8But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. 9And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s condemnation. 10For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. 11So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

1. **Practice Hospitality – v. 2.**

When this letter was written it was essential to provide hospitality to Christians when they were traveling anywhere.

There were no Hotels as we know them today.

There were no Air B n B’s, or even business hotels.

The only option was what was called an “**Inn**.”

It was a place where you could keep your donkey or horse, and then you could also have a room to sleep. However the people who stayed in these places were **not very nice**, and the places themselves were often not clean.

Although today, we have hotels and nice places to stay when we travel around, they cost money and not everybody has the money needed for these places.

This is especially true for Christians who travel for the purpose of preaching, teaching and evangelism.

Providing hospitality for a preacher or teacher of the Bible can be a great blessing.

**Example**:

I want to tell you a true story about a lady who offered hospitality to a traveling preacher.

She was married and quite wealthy so was able to offer good food to God’s servant.

In fact when the preacher was in the area, he kept coming back to get hospitality, it was so good.

One day she said to her husband, this preacher keeps stopping by when in the area, so why don’t we build a small room in the roof.

This would make it easy for him to drop by anytime without disturbing us.

Her husband said, “ That is I great idea. I can never get in the shower room when he comes. Could we put a shower in there too!

So they built a room in the roof and the preacher thought it was really great.

One day the preacher said to the lady, “ you have been so kind to me, what can I do for you?”

The lady said she was well provided for and didn’t really need anything.

However the preacher knew that what she really wanted would be normally impossible to ask for so she asked for nothing.

She wanted a son, but she was now too old to have a child.

The preacher thought, I have faith in God, so I am going to pray to God that she will have a son.

In fact the preacher had so much faith in God’s ability to give her a son, that he told her that in 1 year, she would be holding her own son in her arms.

**This actually happened!**

But the story doesn’t end there.

The child grew up and used to help his father on the family farm.

One day the child got very sick and died suddenly.

The woman was devastated.

She and her husband immediately travelled to another town to find the preacher who had prayed for her to have a son.

Eventually they found the preacher and he returned to the lady’s home.

The preacher arrived at the lady’s home and went into the room where her son lay dead.

The preacher was sad but didn’t give up.

He prayed earnestly for the child to be raised from the dead!

He even lay on top of him praying!

Eventually the child came back to life. It was an amazing miracle and the woman was very happy.

**But that is not all**. The story continues…

The preacher was made aware that a 7-year famine was coming to the area where the woman lived.

The preacher advised her to escape to another area in order to be safe and where she could get food.

**She trusted the preacher, and left all her land and possessions and went away for 7 years and things went well.**

But that’s still not all. The story continues…..

When she returned to her own land after the 7-year famine, somebody had taken over her house and her land, **and they had nothing.**

However the preacher had connections with the King of the land and soon all of her land and property was restored to her!

**And that is not all.** The story continues……

The King arranged that the money made by selling produce from her land over 7 years would be given to her to help her set up her faming business again.

What a wonderful story!

**I know that this is a true story because it is found in the Bible.**

( 2 Kings 4: v.8-37,& 2 Kings 8: v. 1-6 )

All the lady did was to **offer hospitality to a traveling preacher**.

It just happened to be that the preacher **was Elisha, who had a double portion of God’s Holy Spirit.**

I am not going to promise you the same blessing as the woman in the story but I can say that you will be a blessing to the person whom you offer hospitality, especially if they are one of God’s preachers or teachers.

Not only will you be a blessing to them, but they will be a blessing to you.

I know in Japan it is difficult to offer hospitality, especially if you have a 1 LDK, but if you have a very small guest room, I am sure you can bless somebody one day.

I know that Wendy and myself have been privileged to rent a large house up a mountain in Ikoma, Nara.

We don’t think that we have entertained Angels and some people were not very angelic. Nevertheless in the main it has been a blessing us and to those who have been our guests.

However the McKenna Hotel is closed during February!

It opens again in England next August!

1. **Support Christian people in prison and those who are mistreated. v.3.**

In the N.L.T. it says, “Remember also those being mistreated as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.”

As Christians we are part of a very large family. When somebody is hurting in that family, we are also hurt through God’s Holy Spirit.

This connection is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is not natural to be affected by the unfortunate circumstances of people we don’t know.

However God’s Holy Spirit connects us with God’s family and we must help them if we can.

There are missionary societies that focus lots of their attention in countries where Christians are in prison for their faith.

We are very close to North Korea which is one of the worst places for Christians to live in. Q. How can we help them next year?

1. **Keep sexually pure. – v. 4.**

In v. 4 we have a challenge to married men and women to keep faithful in their marriage. We are told that God will judge those who commit adultery.

King David was a faithful King, but he committed adultery and he was judged very harshly by God.

It is important for husbands and wives to go on a date at least once a month or once a week if that is possible.

**Husbands**, purpose to take your wives out once a month for a date in 2020. **Try to please them** and do something that they will enjoy even if it’s not what you like!

**Now for the wives!** Be a **godly wife**, and you will be both physically attractive, and emotionally attractive to your husband.

Having said that, wives should make the **best of their appearance**, and seek to **please their husbands**.

If you want any advice on how to improve your love life, please read:

**“Song of Songs**” in the Bible. It comes after Ecclesiastes and just before Isaiah. Try the New Living Translation. It seems to put it quite well.

If wives and husbands **seek to please one another** and **make the effort in their relationship, there is less chance of adultery.**

Communication is the key to a good marriage relationship.

1. **Trust God to provide what you need financially. – v. 5-.6**

The first challenge in these verses is NOT to love money.

**1 Timothy 6: v.6- 11. In N.K.J.**

6Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. 8And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

11But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

The writer to the Hebrews says that we need to be satisfied with what we have because that is God’s provision for our needs.

He quotes Psalm 27 v. 1 and Psalm 118: v. 6.

As we look forward to 2020, we also **as believers in Jesus Christ**, and as **children of God**, can **trust Him to supply our every need**.

1. **Support and respect your Church leaders. – v. 7.**

Remember this is fruit of the Holy Spirit.

If you are being disrespectful to your Church leaders, in our case, any Church Council member at O.I.C. or the Pastor, then you are certainly **NOT displaying the fruit of the Holy Spirit.**

1. **Remember that Jesus Christ never changes. – v.8.**

There will be changes in 2020, but Jesus Christ will never change. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

That is a wonderful truth.

Everything that the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ and what He has done in the past is true and that will never change.

The person of Jesus Christ, as He relates to you today, will never change.

The Bible teaching about Jesus in the future is truth and that will never change.

**People change, but JESUS NEVER. Glory to His name!**

1. **Don’t be deceived by false teaching, trust God’s grace. – v. 9.**

**False teaching** about how to live the Christian life, and what to believe about God and Jesus has been around for 2,000 years.

The way to stand firm against false teaching is to **“know the truth**” yourself.

By knowing, believing, and remaining true to what the Bible teaches about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, you are less likely to be influenced by false teaching.

Christian Doctrine is very important.

In 2020 why not read through a free book which you can get on the internet called **‘The Great Doctrines of the Bible**” by Evans.

If you read it through and look up all the verses, it will probably take you about 1 year.

It took two years for me to work through this book at Bible College, by attending lectures and studying the doctrines. That was 1985-1987.

I still have the book, 35 years later and would not part with it.

Recently when we studied about Angels, I read other books about Angels but the doctrine of Angels was much clearer in this book. I recommend it!

There are lots of false cults about in Japan. **Beware!**

There are lots of professing Christians and preachers who may not teach or preach the truth; **beware of these people too!**

**Beware of the internet**, it is a false teachers fishing ground!

The final exhortation is to **trust God’s Grace!**

We can be rich, spiritually in 2020 if we know God’s GRACE.

We can be poor spiritually if we don’t really know God’s GRACE in our lives.

Q. **What does it mean to know God’s Grace in your life?**

Well it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

If the Holy Spirit is living in your heart, He will show you God’s grace, and what it means in your life now, and in the future.

If you are not a Christian, then you will never know about God’s grace personally in your heart.

Why not trust Jesus today? You will never regret taking a step of faith to believe what the Bible teaches about Jesus.

It is a Gospel of Grace, not of works.

**Ephesians 2: v. 4-10 in N.L.T.**

4But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) 6For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. 7So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

8God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.