

Worthy Examples to the World

Hebrews 13:1

Alexander Maclaren

“Let love of the brethren continue” (Hebrews 13:1).

To be a testimony to the world, Christians need to live what they profess.

The nineteenth-century preacher Alexander Maclaren once said, *“The world takes its notion of God most of all from those who say they belong to God’s family. They read us a great deal more than they read the Bible. They see us; they only hear about Jesus Christ.”* Sound biblical doctrine, as important a foundation as it is, is inadequate by itself to influence the world toward Christ’s gospel.

Christians today could learn much from the early Christians, whose lives were such a rebuke to the immoral, pagan societies around them. Unbelievers in those cultures found it extremely difficult to find fault with Christians, because the more they observed them, the more they saw believers living out the high moral standards the church professed.

Christians in those days were obedient to Peter’s instruction:

“For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Peter 2:15).

They also heeded Paul’s advice to Titus:

“In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us” (Titus 2:7-8).

Jesus commanded His original disciples and us,

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

Of course, Jesus had in mind good works that were genuine and that came from a foundation of good teaching. These verses ought to remind us, therefore, that doctrine and practice must go hand in hand. The author of Hebrews shifts naturally from doctrine and general exhortation to the specific admonitions of chapter 13. Love among believers is his starting point, and it should be ours as we seek to have a credible and worthy walk before the watching world.

Suggestions for Prayer

Ask God to help you maintain a scriptural balance between doctrine and practice. Pray that He would correct specific areas in which you have been living out of balance.

For Further Study

Memorize James 1:25. Use a Bible with good cross references, and look up other verses that deal with “the law of liberty.”