

TEXT SUMMARY

It was customary to close an epistle (a formal letter) with an epilogue containing various moral exhortations and personal greetings. Our text, <u>Hebrews 13:1-3</u>, opens the epilogue of the letter.

INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

- 1. What are the three exhortations in our text? (There is one in each verse.)
- 2. Who are the objects of those exhortations (that is, who would be on the receiving end of the actions)?
- 3. One of the exhortations (v. 1) has no modifiers; it stands without comment or elaboration. The other two exhortations have modifiers:
 - What modifiers (explanations) accompany the exhortation to show hospitality to strangers (v. 2)?
 - What modifiers accompany the exhortation to "remember those in prison" (v. 3)?

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

- 1. In the first century Roman world, there were very few inns or hotels. Most travelers stayed in private homes. How would the original audience have understood the exhortation to "show hospitality to strangers" (v. 2)?
- 2. In the first century Roman world, prisons didn't assume responsibility for providing basic living supplies for prisoners. It was up to loved ones on the outside to provide whatever a prisoner might need, including daily food. How would the original audience have understood the exhortation to "remember those in prison" (v. 3)?

DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE



SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

- Our text instructs us to "let brotherly love continue" (v.

 This implies that brotherly love already existed in the fellowship but that it cannot be assumed that it will continue without effort and attention. This is one of the things about Christian fellowship that confounds and sometimes offends others: we are part of a spiritual family, with bonds sometimes even closer than our physical family.
 - What evidence have you seen of this deep familial affection in our fellowship?
 - What are some of the reasons that we cannot assume that such affection will continue without effort and attention on our part?
- 2. There is a built-in tension in v. 1-2. The first verse encourages us to commit ourselves to one another within the fellowship, while the second enjoins us to be hospitable toward "strangers." (One translation renders v. 2, "Don't forget to be friendly to outsiders.") The more we do of v. 1 (affection toward one another), the less we're likely to do of v. 2 (friendliness toward outsiders).
 - The last time you experienced another church's meeting as an outsider, did you feel welcomed?
 Why or why not? What did the people in that church do/not do to make you feel that you belonged there with them that day?
 - Which do you think we do better in our fellowship: maintain good relationships within the fellowship or cultivate kind attention toward outsiders? Why do you think this?
- 3. What do you know about the persecuted church (our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering for their faith)? What can you do to "remember" them?