

**Love the Church | Hebrews 13:1-3**  
**Bro. Ricky**

You may be seated. Again, it's been almost a month since we've been in Hebrews. You know Brother Ricky believes that what the writer is about to say is based on what he just said.

So let's remind ourselves of the last thing the writer said. The preacher, preaching to a young Hebrew church in and near the city of Rome during a time of persecution by the Roman government—a Jewish church—said this:

**“For our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:29)**

Let that sink in.

**Our God is a consuming fire.**

My wife, Mimish, loves fire. Whenever we go camping, or even when we're at home on the back patio, when the sun starts going down, at some point she's going to look at me and say, “Are you going to build me a fire?” And she'll give me that big grin. And I'll say, “Yes.” I get big points when I start building it before she even asks.

Now, get this, guys—that's a good thing to do every now and then.

And I'll just say this: I'm an expert at building a fire. There are very few people who can build a fire like I can. Give me some lighter fluid—wow—I can build a fire. I've got the wood cut, it's seasoned, I've got the kindling. I know how to do this.

Now, my wife loves a fire late in the day because when the sun goes down and it starts getting dark, **that fire gives light**. When we're sitting out there with no lights on and no sun in the sky, we can still see because of that fire.

And if you know her, you know she's cold-natured. We tease, but it's true. In the summer at the lake, she might not take her sweatshirt off until July 31st—and then put it back on August 2nd.

So when the sun goes down and it gets cool, she loves that fire because **it gives warmth**.

So she loves fire because it gives light and warmth—but I love fire because **fire refines**.

You say, how does a backyard fire refine anything? Let me tell you. One of my favorite things is when Celisa says, “Would you like a s'more?” Oh yeah.

Graham cracker, Hershey's chocolate, marshmallow. But you don't just eat it like that. You put that marshmallow on a stick, hold it over the fire, and turn it. That fire is refining that marshmallow—getting it just right, all the way around.

You pull it out—it's on fire—you blow it out, put it on the chocolate, press it together, wait a few seconds, and that warmth melts everything together. And then—whoa, glory.

**I love fire because it refines.**

Now here's what always happens. Because Celisa loves the fire, and because I'm so good at building one, I get it going—it's roaring hot—and after a while, she's ready for bed. She just gets up and goes inside.

And I'm left with a roaring fire.

Now I have the responsibility, whether we're at a campground or at home, to make sure that fire stays contained and burns out properly. So she goes to sleep with the picture of a roaring fire—but by morning, it's gone.

Why? Because **it's a consuming fire**. The wood has been consumed.

That's the picture.

This young preacher wants his struggling church to remember:  
**God is a consuming fire. He gives light, He gives warmth, and He refines.**

Now he shifts.

He's been telling us about Jesus as the Jewish Messiah—His person, His priesthood, His people. Now he's going to talk about **the life change that should be evident in us**.

Because here's what he believed:

**A godly mind produces godly thoughts.  
Godly thoughts produce godly beliefs.  
Godly beliefs produce godly behavior.**

And now we're going to see that behavior.

You ready?

We're going to see three things that should be evident in our lives as a church and as Christians:

- **Love (Hebrews 13:1)**
- **Welcome (Hebrews 13:2)**
- **Remember (Hebrews 13:3)**

## **1. Love — “Let brotherly love continue.” (Hebrews 13:1)**

Let Philadelphia continue.

We all know that word—Philadelphia means brotherly love. There's even a city named after it. Most of us just call it Philly.

I'll never forget the first time Celisa and I went there. We had a layover, took the subway downtown to see the Liberty Bell—but I'll be honest:

**We did not feel any brotherly love.**

We turned around and went back to the airport.

Now think about that—advertising yourself as the city of brotherly love, and people don't feel it.

So here's the question:

**Do people feel brotherly love when they come to church?**

Because the church is supposed to be **the place of brotherly love.**

I saw a video recently. A man came to church for the first time. During the sermon, his phone rang. He couldn't get it turned off. Everyone stared. After the service, people corrected him—even the preacher.

He left defeated.

Later that day, he went to a bar. Dropped his drink, made a mess—and instead of judgment, people showed him grace. Encouragement. Kindness.

According to the story, he never went back to church—but he kept going to that bar.

**That's tragic.**

Paul said, "Let brotherly love continue."

In **1 Thessalonians 4:9**, he said, you've been taught by God to love one another—but do it more and more.

In **Romans 5:3–5**, he reminds us that the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

In **1 John 3:14**, John says:

**"We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers."**

That's our assurance. That's our certificate of authenticity.

Jesus said in **John 13:34–35**:

**"By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

And what was the context? He washed their feet.

He said, **"I have given you an example."**

So the question is:

**Are we willing to love like that? Serve like that? Humble ourselves like that?**

People are looking for love.

**Will they find it here?**

## **2. Welcome — “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.” (Hebrews 13:2)**

The writer shifts from Philadelphia to Philoxenia.

Same kind of love—but now directed toward **strangers**.

It means this:

**Treat a stranger like a guest.**

Not just people like you—but people not like you.

The church was doing well loving each other—but struggling to love outsiders.

Maybe because of fear. Persecution. Uncertainty.

And if we’re not careful, we can do the same thing.

But God’s command is clear:

**Love the stranger. Welcome the outsider. Treat them like a guest.**

That’s where we get words like hospital, hospice—even hotel.

I experienced this myself.

During a sabbatical, I intentionally isolated myself to study. Then a family from South Africa parked right next to me. Not what I wanted.

But God nudged me.

And over four weeks, strangers became friends. Then family. They came home with us—for six months.

And they were a blessing.

**Don’t let fear keep you from loving people God brings into your life.**

## **3. Remember — “Remember those who are in prison.” (Hebrews 13:3)**

Not criminals—but believers suffering for their faith.

We are to remember them **as though we are in prison with them**—because we are one body.

Around the world, believers are suffering, imprisoned, even dying for the gospel.

And what do they ask for?

**Prayer.**

Because they know it will take a miracle of God.

So we remember.

We don't ignore.

We don't forget.

So here it is:

**Love.**

**Welcome.**

**Remember.**

And this isn't just Brother Ricky—

**this is the Word of God.**

So let's live it.

**Let the world know who we are—by the way we love.**

\*This transcript was AI generated.