



**I will never  
leave thee,  
nor  
forsake thee**

PENN FREE METHODIST CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY March 1st 2017

Hebrews 13:5-6

**THE CHRISTIAN'S  
PRIVILEGE  
OF GOD'S PRESENCE  
WITH HIM**

**v5. “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”.** ‘Conversation’ means one’s general conduct. ‘Covetousness’ is literally in the Greek ‘love of money’. This letter is written to those who have suffered vicious persecution in which they have lost many earthly possessions. The Hebrew Christians are reminded of God’s promise to be with them, even in respect of their material needs. They must not have an unhealthy love of money, nor too much anxiety over material things, because the Lord will not forsake them.

*“After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Hebrews 10:32-34).* The Hebrew believers had shown themselves willing to be identified with other believers who were making a stand and being persecuted, including Paul himself, and they did not become preoccupied with their own personal circumstances. They had rightly considered their afflictions

due to persecution as an aspect of God's providence towards them; but they had to maintain this attitude of mind. They must continue to have a loose attachment to the things of this world, lest they succumb to the temptation to put the Lord's service into a second place because of personal difficulties. In the midst of great trials, they must remember that God will never forsake them. He loves His own, and they are never outside of the sphere of His oversight and providential government, which may at times include, much to our perplexity, grievous personal tribulation. In the midst of earthly calamity, let them keep their heavenly reward always in view. Immediate material needs must never cloud their spiritual perspective.

*"Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:31-33).* One example of the outworking of this principle is how a Christian businessman regards the Lord's Day. His business might not be doing too well, but he must never be tempted to profane the Lord's Day, arguing, for example, that his competitors do so, and that he will have to join them to survive, or that he will stop trading on the Sabbath, once his business has picked up. Rather, he must put his trust in God's promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee".

*"Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6).* The Greek translated 'contentment' is literally 'self-sufficiency' or 'soul-sufficiency', It is the ability to cope with one's own circumstances as they are, without an unwholesome longing for something better. Of course, we strive to remove our problems, but never in the spirit of shaking a fist at God for having allowed the difficulties to occur. We pray that our problems might be removed, or else for grace to endure them. That person is truly rich who, cultivating this trust, is never longing for something else. This principle particularly applies to our material circumstances.

*"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Timothy 6:7-9).* Covetousness keeps the unbeliever in an awful bondage, and the love of this world can seriously mar the Christian's walk also, as the parable of the sower plainly teaches.

*"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17).*

*"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).*

*"This ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:5).* God will not tolerate the loving of created things above him.

*"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep" (Ec-*

*clesiastes 5:10-12*). Human nature is such that even if someone obtains the thing which they discontentedly longed for, they will not still be contented when they have it. Matthew Henry helpfully tells us in this context of various figures in the Bible who were never content, although they had ever so much : Haman (2nd chief man in Persia), Ahab (King of all Israel), Adam in paradise, even the angels in heaven.

*“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).*

**v5. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”.**

*“The LORD knoweth the days of the upright ... They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied ... I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psalm 37:18,19,25).* Believers are not immune from common calamities and judgements such as natural disasters and famine, but they are subject to God’s special providential care in the midst of them in a way in which unbelievers are not. A Christian may even be killed in such an event, but even then he is not beyond God’s care, but passes immediately into God’s presence.

(God told Israel concerning her captivity in Babylon), *“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ... For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour” (Isaiah 43:2-3).* We are never promised exemption from trial and adversity, but we are promised God’s presence in the midst of adversity. All that happens to us, including the afflictions, happens in the providence of God, who desires our ultimate good.

*“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).* The Christian’s trials have great potential to increase his trust in God, and to bring him nearer to him. How tragic, then, when believers turn away from God in adversity, or leave off worship, until their problems are over. No adverse circumstance can harm a believer’s soul, or destroy his relationship with God. So we must never view our afflictions as the withdrawal of God’s love.

*“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).* God will never bring us into any affliction which he will not give us the ability to cope with. Our escape from our trials is his strength to deal with them. The first thing that we should do when we, or someone else, falls sick, or is beset by a great problem, is not to pray for healing, or that the problem be removed, but for strength to endure the affliction. God may remove it, when he sees fit, for which we shall thank him, but our primary task is to bear it, as happening to us in God’s providence. We either believe in God’s presence with us, or we do not.

*“There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me (probably a physical ailment) ... For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).* Paul had to learn to trust God in the midst of much personal difficulty. Just as God was

with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace, so He is with all believers today in their great afflictions. Peter, writing to persecuted Christians, declared,

*“(We) are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ... though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations : That the trial of your faith ... might be found unto praise and honour and glory” (1 Peter 1:5-7).* Trials which test the real mettle of our faith sort out real Christians from fair weather Christians.

*“And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God” (Acts 16:23–25).*

**v5. “...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”.** Being a Christian is by definition having God with us, Christ dwelling within by his Spirit. One of the Lord’s titles is Immanuel, ‘God with us’. This verse 6 is a quotation from Psalm 118:6, a verse which begins, “The Lord is on my side”.

*“(Jacob) dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven ... And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said ... And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee” (Genesis 28:12,13,15).*

*(Moses), “The LORD thy God will go over (Jordan) before thee, he will destroy these nations from before thee ... Be strong and of a good courage ... for the LORD thy God ... doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Deuteronomy 31:1,3,6).* This may well be the passage from which Paul quotes in v5. Just as the Lord would be with Israel in the invasion of the Promised Land, so he will be with us in all our conflicts with this unbelieving world.

*“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee ... all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded” (Isaiah 41:10-11).* Here is comfort for God’s people today, despite many enemies arrayed against them.

*“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ... Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father ... Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:28-31).*

*“My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth ... (He) shall preserve thee from all evil ... He shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in” (Psalm 121:2,7,8).* The God who is for us is the Sustainer of the universe. We can never be the victims of chance. The Christian will suffer adversity, but there will be nothing penal or destructive in it, whereas the unbeliever is constantly exposed to the possibility of earthly judgements.

*“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11).* Paul was not immune from adversity, but he knew that nothing could happen to him but in God’s providence, and that all would work for his ultimate good.

**Summary**

- 1. God's presence overcomes our covetousness**
- 2. God's presence protects us in adversity**
- 3. God's presence gives us boldness and contentment**