

## Hospitality

There are just four verse in the New Testament where there are two Greek words used to denote 'hospitality'.

1. The first two verses we will be looking at, it is the Greek word - philonexia - that is used, once as 'hospitality', and once as 'having a love for strangers'.
  - a. "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality", Romans 12.13.
  - b. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares", Hebrews 13.3.

It is here that we are encouraged to seek the opportunity to show mercy, but that we follow in the footsteps of the 'father of faith', Abraham, who whilst not looking for travellers in the desert, seized the chance to entertain three male travellers who advanced toward his tent door, Genesis 18:1.

Lot, Genesis 19:1, was not sitting in the gate at Sodom in the hope of giving a traveller sanctuary for the night, but as an elder of the city, but he immediately offered the two male travellers sanctuary for the night.

Yet some four hundred and fifty years later, Moses was to write, "Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land", Deuteronomy 15:10-11.

Jesus said, "For ye have the poor always with you...", Matthew 26:11.

For those who are truly walking with the Lord, they have the song of praise in their hearts, and they never look forward to the Sabbath, for every day is a day unto the Lord.

Dear reader, you cannot complain that there are no opportunities, for as Paul wrote, "Distributing to the necessity of saints...", Romans 12.13, it was not a food parcel here or there.

It was not a financial hand out here and there.

It is to stand with the person in their hour of need, whether it be spiritual or physical.

It is to be there at a time of emotional problems.

It is to be there to encourage them to have a song of praise in their heart.

It is to walk with them spiritually, and help them make every day a day

unto the Lord.

Thus this first example relates to hospitality being a ministry - NOT A CHORE.

2. The second two verses we will be looking at, the Greek word - philoxenos - is used, once as 'given to hospitality', and once as 'generous to guests'. As I closed above with the statement '...hospitality is a ministry - NOT A CHORE, so also these verses relate to a ministry of desire to please God.
  - a. "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers", Titus 1:7-9.
  - b. "Use hospitality one to another without grudging", 1 Peter 4.9.

Thus when Paul - writing to the Galatians - penned the following words, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law", Galatians 5:22-23, he was Spirit led, and God powered.

A bishop - although in the position as a teacher to guide and lead the people - was never anymore than a steward of God. A steward is a person acting on God's behalf in this world, and expected - by God - to perform the Heavenly Father's desires in a Heavenly Father manner, hence Jesus' Words, 'Follow Me', John 12:26.

The only real way this can be done is to "Hold fast the faithful word as we have been taught..." Titus 1:9, making us faithful and trustworthy according to the teaching and actions of Jesus.

Yet the message from both Paul's letter to Titus regarding the Gentile Church, and Peter's letter to the dispersed Jews in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia embody the same principal, all hospitality - whether it be for spiritual or physical needs - had to be manifested by an inner spiritual desire, and ministered by an inner spiritual love.