

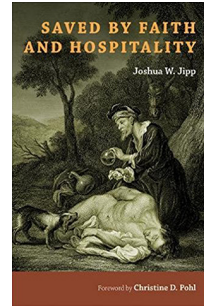
Book Review

Joshua Jipp.

Saved by Faith and Hospitality

Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2017,
220 pp. £13.98. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7505-1.

Reviewed by, Anthony Royle, Tutor at King's Evangelical Divinity School



Joshua Jipp is an assistant professor of New Testament studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Jipp credits his interest in the subject of hospitality to his engagement with Greco-Roman customs during his doctoral studies. This research led to the publication of *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts: An Interpretation of the Malta Episode in Acts 28:1-10* (NovTSup 153, Leiden: Brill, 2013). In *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* Jipp has provided a more accessible book for biblical scholars and serious lay people to not only demonstrate hospitality as a key biblical theological concept, but also provoke readers to consider the application to society in North America. Each chapter concludes with a series of questions that help readers consider the subject matter at greater lengths. The book is also ideal for small groups and perhaps even an undergraduate seminar class.

The title stems from Clement of Rome's first epistle to the Corinthians where the author exhorts his readers to show hospitality. The author of 1 Clement uses Abraham, Lot, and Rahab as examples of hospitality to strangers that resulted in blessing and salvation. Jipp is aware that the provocative title may be controversial to those who hold the view of *Sola fide* (xii); however, he places the words

of Clement alongside James who wrote that Abraham was justified by faith and works (p. 5). Jipp's thesis is not a theological treatise between the faith/works paradigm, but rather it is a thorough demonstration that biblical faith expresses itself by showing hospitality to the other. The challenge Jipp raises in the book is: to be inhospitable with tribalism and xenophobia is unchristian (p. 9).

The book is divided into two sections; Divine Hospitality and Human Hospitality. This flows from the concept that human hospitality derives from divine hospitality. God demonstrated his love to those who were far off (strangers) by invitation of His Son, therefore, Christians must imitate God's hospitality to others. The early chapters provide interpretations of biblical texts where Jesus bestowed hospitality to those who were social outcasts and were invited into the Kingdom of God. Later chapters challenge Christians in North America to implement these principles locally and globally.

Part one begins with explaining Jesus's fulfilment of Isaiah 4:18-19, "the year of the Lord's dektos (welcome)" through His hospitality and shared meal time with sinners (pp. 19-22). One of Jipp's strengths in the book is connecting Isaiah's prophetic vision with Jesus's ministry of inviting the orphan, widow, and alien into the Kingdom of God. Jesus is depicted as subverting stereotypes and embracing stigma. The book continues to follow the Luke-

Acts narrative and highlights that the same approach was practiced by the early church, especially through their hospitality at the Lord's Table where the breaking of bread pushed social boundaries between Jew and Greek and rich and poor. Jipp explains that he is not arguing for the absence of boundaries or limitations to hospitality. He concedes that the Scriptures call for moral boundaries (1 Cor. 5:1-8, 6:12-20; 2 John 1:7-11) and commendably states that the Christian should not compromise their allegiance to Christ or water down the message (p. 40). Furthermore, Jipp notes that Paul had an open table policy but forbade in sharing in sacrifices to other deities and sexual relations with cultic prostitutes (p114). Unfortunately, Jipp is hazy in his distinction of moral and social boundaries, especially in regards to hospitality towards transgendered people (p. 39).

In this book, Jipp acknowledges that sin separates human beings from God and that God has made a way through showing hospitality through His Son's death and resurrection to have fellowship with Him (p. 35); however, the need for repentance, which is a key component of God's invitation, is absent from Jipp's analysis of Jesus's ministry. One may argue that the acceptance of the invitation implicitly demonstrates repentance; however, as illustrated in Jesus's parable of the Wedding banquet, there are those who accepted the invitation, but did not wear the right clothes and were expelled (Matthew 22:11-14). Evidently enough this parable does not feature in this book, nor does the Matthean invitation to "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2, 4:17), or the Johannine instruction to "go and sin no more" (John 5:14, 8:11). Jipp may recognise the problem between sin and hospitality; however, he does not call for the other to change.

Part two questions how the church and the individual Christian should engage with others. These three chapters focus on the attitude of tribalism (against those of other faiths), xenophobia, and economic greed. Jipp's premise is that the Christian is the stranger, the guest, and should play this role humbly when encountering people in order to win them to Christ (p. 99). He argues that placing ourselves in the position of host we are in danger of being condescending in helping others and may see those in need as inferior to us in some way (ibid). Jipp provides some social commentary to areas he argues North America is failing and provides approaches he contends are more biblical. The arguments and proposals provided will divide opinions in the current polarised American political climate. The tension in some of these issues is between the American Christians desire to be an American host, wanting to preserve their identity, borders, values, and fellow citizens and also a Christian pilgrim who must love their neighbour and enemy in a sacrificial way. This juxtaposition is not viewed as two equally valid moral equivalents wrestling in application; rather, Jipp claims the tension as deriving from misinformation and fear by "poor analysis" and "use of low quality data" (p. 125) on issues such as immigration and the economy.

Jipp seeks to provoke Christians to think about legal justice and oppression of the vulnerable people caught in a system and provides some practical guidance on how Christians can be actively involved in helping them; however, it is surprising that Jipp neglects to raise the issue of abortion considering that approximately one million terminations occur every year in America. The vivid picture of a mother/host and unborn child as guest provides a beautiful illustration that would enhance Jipp's

thesis. The absence of this issue limits the scope of the book and calls into question why some issues are preferred over others.

Jipp is aware of the controversial nature of his political discourse, especially his views on illegal immigrants and re-offending criminals, as he states in his epilogue that some will not be convinced (p. 177). This is not because Christians do not accept that the Scriptures exhort hospitality to the stranger, but rather because the application and extent of that hospitality is often ambiguous. The application of hospitality is not as straightforward as suggested. The final three chapters would

benefit from looking at alternative scenarios while comparing the positives and negatives for a thorough analysis of the scope of hospitality and its application in the modern world.

Saved by Faith and Hospitality is a compelling argument for the importance of hospitality to the Christian faith. Although I question some of his application to the modern world, I believe this book is an excellent exhortation to the Church to reach out to the other. There is certainly room for discussion on the issues raised and I am thankful that Jipp has brought them to the attention of Christians today.

