

Hebrews 13:7-25

“Responsibilities To Leaders And to Laity”

As Paul was writing to the Corinthians he said, “*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*” 1 Cor 13:13 and As our time has been drawing to a close with regard to the book of Hebrews though I haven’t drawn it to our attention collectively, these last 3 Ch’s of the book of Hebrews have been highlighting those 3 principles specifically and quite practically. Ch 11 highlighting the *power* of faith, Ch 12 the *pursuit* of hope, (the idea that in hope we continue to press forward) and here in Ch 13 we’ve been witnessing the *practice* of love. Or we might consider Ch 11 the *walk* of faith, Ch 12 the *wisdom* of hope, and Ch 13 the *way* of love. Faith...hope...and love.

That our memory might be refreshed you recall that Ch 13 brings us into the final appeals of the epistle. and with regard to the practice of love, the way that love is seen and shown by the body of Christ we’ve discovered that we’re to love both the *saints* we know, and the *stranger* we don’t. Not only are we to extend ourselves to those in the body of Christ in our immediate sphere whom we know and are completely comfortable around. But we’re to reach out and extend ourselves to those in the body of Christ that we *don’t* know on a 1st name basis, we’re to extend the love of Christ with *anyone* who’s *in* Christ regardless of the fact of whether or not we know the specifically, or individually. It’s called hospitality. Remember Jesus said, “*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” John 13:35 and Of course that statement was made with in the context of loving one another the way that Christ has loved us, selflessly, sacrificially, placing our needs above His own. It’s not a *natural* thing to do, that’s what’s so distinctive and appealing about it, that’s why it’s a fingerprint of Christ in our lives, because it’s a *supernatural* work of the Holy Spirit.

It can’t be fabricated or imitated by the efforts of my own will. Oh perhaps for a week, or a month, maybe even a yr or 2 if my own will is 2nd to none with regard sheer tenacity, or resolve. But eventually you’ll cave in because you just can’t imitate the nature of Christ consistently apart from the reality of Christ in your life, abiding in Him and His word abiding in you. So the practice of love is to love the saint, the stranger, and those who are *suffering* for the cause of the gospel, we’re to pray *for* them, be compassionate toward them. and Of course we’re to love our *spouse* (we spent some time on that point last week you might grab up a copy of that study if you weren’t here). But finally we seen and spoke of the satisfaction of love, the fact that love is *satisfied*. That our conduct should be with out covetousness (that insatiable drive for more) but that we should be *content* with such things as we have. and Again this is something that I believe is really only possible through Christ, because the flesh is *never* satisfied. But the fact is (if you’re a believer) you have Christ in your life, what more do you need, ultimately, eternally...you’re set. So be content, you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you, so having food and clothing...with these we’re to be content. So with that we pick it up in Vs 7.

Vs 7

Now here what we might say (and really the principle is developed much more so in Vs 17 and so we'll consider it more fully there), but the idea that's ultimately being communicated here is that love shows *submission*. and Again we'll save *that* point more fully for Vs 17, but that doesn't leave us lacking for content here in Vs 7. We might reiterate this Vs in summary this Vs by simply saying, "Follow the leader." We are to *remember*, that is, *be mindful of, recognize, respect*, and follow after godly leadership with in the body of Christ. "Remember those who *rule* over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct."

That word, "rule" simply means "to lead" we're talking about those who are set in the positions of spiritual leadership with in the body of Christ. and Ultimately it points obviously to pastoral authority, but it definitely extends itself to include, the elders, the overseers of the church. Now, even at that there are some things that you need to be aware of and make sure of before you simply hang your brain on the hat rack as you walk in a church and just begin to blindly follow the pastor's lead, the lead of the overseers or whatever. There are some qualifying factors to be considered before you furnish the respect that this Vs commands. and By the way this is a *command*, the words "Remember" and "follow" or maybe your bible says, "imitate" both of those words are in the imperative mood meaning, it's a non-option, when a word is in the imperative mood that means that something is being required of the one to whom it's being addressed. In this case, *remembering* and *following*. and When it's a *present tense* that's in the imperative mood (which with both of these words it is) that means you're to *continue* doing these things, there's a sense of loyalty about these words, we're to be loyal to our godly leaders. (More on that in a moment).

As for now we need to be aware of these qualifications. Because perhaps you're thinking, "Ok, I can get behind that, I can see how we need godly leaders setting an example for us that we're to follow after and grow thereby, but how can I really know when the leadership is *godly*?" and That's a great question, he sights 2 tangible sources or pieces of evidence that you can consider as you evaluate a man's life to see whether or not he qualifies as a godly leader whom you can respect and follow after his lead, both of which you should demand from any man (in the body of Christ) whom you're going to stand behind and follow after.

What does he say? #1 "They've spoken the word of God to you." You find a place where the leaders (including and especially the Pastor) are teaching, and speaking the word of God *to* you, sharing the word of God *with* you, the exhortation here is to get behind them, be supportive *of* them and follow after their example.

Just for the record allow me to clarify what he means when he says that they've "Spoken the word of God to you." What he *doesn't* mean is that awkward moment when someone comes up to you and says, "I have a word for you from the Lord." and Then they commence to speak to you what they believe to be a word *from* God *to* them *for* you. As a general rule when that happens just turn around and run. Last time I checked God knew my address, now it could be that God's dealing with me, and then confirms something to me through someone else. and I'm not saying you can't listen and weigh in the balance what someone says to you, just be careful not to abandon your own set of senses, or dispose of your discernment just because someone says, "Thus says the Lord," or "I have a word for you from God."

What this is talking about is one who instructs you, or instructs me in the written word of God, the logos. 1st and foremost that's what we need from a godly leader, that's one of the fingerprints of a godly leader. and You have to remember that access to the scriptures in the day this was written was limited at best, and to sit under the waterfall of the written word was a priceless opportunity. Today we take for granted the riches of God's word, most homes have multiple bibles laying around in them, many of them never opened. But in that day to have someone who would take the time to teach you concerning God's written word was invaluable (sadly it seems that today simple teachers of the word of God are an endangered species as well, you find one, value what God has given you, that's what this is saying).

So a godly leader will speak to you God's word, what else are we looking for? The outcome of their lives? The results of their conduct, how do they live their own life, is their witness parallel to their word? I'm not saying they have a life of sinless perfection, but is there sincerity of purpose regarding the life that they practice and the word that they preach? If so, there's a godly leader for you, stand behind them, be supportive of them, be loyal *to* them, and follow after their example.

Before we move on here let me say a quick word regarding loyalty, because that's a concept that's been all but completely abandoned in our day and age. What does it mean to be loyal? Someone who is loyal is one who is *unswerving in allegiance*. Not knocked off course when things weren't convenient anymore, or exactly like *I* think they should be. and It's just too easy anymore to say, "Well, I'll listen to you, or sit under you, but the 1st time you step on my toes, or say something I disagree with, you offend me once and I'm out." That's not loyalty, that's instability, that's flaky, flighty and all that. It's like this, where God *sends* you, you need to *go*, but where God *plants* you, you need to *grow*.

But the word, and the witness. Those are the 2 things you need to be looking at. That's what Paul told Timothy. He said, "*Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*" 1 Tim 4:16 "Take heed to the doctrine, make sure you're teaching sound doctrine, you're rightly dividing the word of truth for the people God brings into your midst. and Take heed to yourself, that your practice line up with your preaching." Both those things are imperative in godly leadership, and when you get those 2 things together, God's going to honor that. People lives will be changed, they'll see Christ, be drawn *to* Christ, saved *by* Him, disciples *in* Him, and *used* by Him to impact others. (and What's the end of their live, the outcome of their conduct, well done, enter into the rest)

Vs 8

Couple of things here, #1 This is love's *source*; the fountainhead of love is found in the unchanging well spring of Jesus Christ "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Now I want to bring out what I believe to be the interpretation, but then I also want to make another application for us out of this Vs before we move on.

As for the interpretation we're seeing here that the leaders over them taught them, lived their lives, and ended their lives in full confidence of the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, always has been, always will be, nothing will change that. Remember he's writing to a group of people who are considering compromising their walk with Christ and reverting back to the law, the sacrificial system and all of that to avoid persecution. He's saying, "Hey, consider the example that's gone before you and stay true to it." Understand that "Christ" isn't Jesus' last name, Jesus is His name, "Christ" is who He is, the anointed One, the Messiah, the Savior, He's Jesus the Christ. and The exhortation here is to not abandon their stance on that, because Judaism denied the Messiahship of Jesus. and The writer here is saying, "Jesus needs to be to you today, what He was to them yesterday (the thought is that some of their leaders had perhaps died) and will forever be to the heavenly hosts, the Messiah, the Savior." How did these guys live and end their lives? Believing that Jesus *is* the Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.

You guys this is such good news, (and this is the application I was talking about) Christ is the same, unchanging in His nature, He's not fickle, doesn't change His mind, His agenda, His intentions to serve a varying mood. Because Jesus is God, the nature of God *never* changes, the bible college word that would describe the nature of God would be what? "Immutable." Which means exactly what I've been saying, He doesn't change, doesn't mutate, He stays the same.

However don't misunderstand this to be saying that because Jesus always healed everyone who asked Him to heal them when He was on the earth that He's still going to do that today. There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord (1 Cor 12:5). We might understand it like this; He won't always *perform* the same, however His *person*, His *personality* will *always* remain the same. and I think that this is where so many people have really gone wrong and done an injustice to the Lord.

How many people, or groups, or organizations over the years have been guilty of character assassination when it comes to the nature, and the character of Christ. Jesus hasn't gotten weird or wacky over the last 50-60 yrs; do you understand what I'm saying here? When you're evaluating a ministry a very valid question would be, "Could I see Jesus doing that?" Knocking people over, throwing the Holy Spirit out to people like He's a football or something, barking like a dog, laughing uncontrollably, being disorderly, just generally chaotic or weird... As I study the word of God those things don't show themselves in anyway as emulating the character of Christ, Jesus never did those things, never wierded people out, or acted all out of control. Do you know what that means? He won't do that in me either, He's the same yesterday, today and forever, Christ is consistent. It's not like, "Well He never did that when He was on the earth, but times have changed and now He's gotten wild." Hey it's true times *have* changed, cultures *are* different, but human nature remains the same, and the need of humanity has never changed, we all need forgiveness of sin and to be reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus Christ Jesus has never and *will never* change. He remains the same, yesterday, (when else) *today*, and forever. Jesus is the plumb line, the standard for Christian conduct, particularly in word and in worship. Now that leads us into Vs 9

Vs9

I guess if I had to attach a word to this Vs to summarize it, I'd say *stability*. Which is connected directly to the source, Jesus Christ Listen, there's no shortage of various and strange doctrines out there to entertain you. We just mentioned a few a second ago, stay with solid balanced biblical doctrine. Did Jesus teach it, do you see it practiced in the book of Acts, is it reinforced in the epistles, that's solid doctrine. Other than that don't even entertain it, just stay away from it. Here he mentions a doctrine dealing with foods, one that stemmed specifically from Judaism which they were considering and contemplating returning to. and Again the exhortation is to remain steadfast and sold out to Jesus. It's not about my diet, it's not about dos and don'ts. Now if you feel led to eat certain things, great, feel like God has directed you to avoid other aspects of food, that's fine. But don't think for a second that those things will *establish* you, or gain you a greater access to God than the one who doesn't do those things. Because God's primary pursuit isn't your outer man but rather what? What does it say? "For it is good that the heart be established (not by dietary codes or an emphasis on externals) by *grace*." You make contact and commune with God from the heart, and our relationship with God is predicated not upon our *greatness* but rather His *grace*. That's why Paul told Timothy, "*You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*" 2 Tim 2:1 It's good that the heart be established (strengthened) by grace, not by foods that don't profit those who are preoccupied by them.

Vs10-13

Now this may seem a little bit difficult to follow, the way a couple of these comments just seem to be tucked in here but the basic idea that's being communicated is *separation*, *sanctification*, setting ourselves apart unto Jesus Christ

What he's saying here is that you can't have it both ways, it can't be Judaism and Jesus, they're mutually exclusive, one rejects the other by the very nature of both principle and practice. and He's reinforcing the fact that all of the things that those who were practicing Judaism were doing was merely foreshadowing all that was fulfilled in Christ. He brings up the altar, the bodies and the blood of the sacrifice, how they were handled and what was the end result and shows its fulfillment in Christ.

Those practicing Judaism were calling Christians into question because they seemingly had no altar, no sacrifice, no blood being offered. and The writer here is saying "Yes, we do." Christ fulfills it all, and some see the cross as the altar, some see Christ Himself as the altar through which we come to God, I don't see a real issue either way. Christ is our sacrifice, His blood makes for our atonement, our forgiveness, and rather than having to do it over and over again like animal sacrifices (showing that it didn't really get the job done that's why there has to be another offering) Christ's blood was spilled once for all, and never again, it's finished, the work complete.

On the day of Atonement when the sin offering was made and the blood of the bull and the blood of the goat administered in the Holy of Holies, their bodies would be carried outside the camp and burned. and We read in Vs 12

Vs13

Now the camp he's referring to is the camp of Judaism (that's the interpretation) he's saying that they're going to have abandon that completely, it'll cost them extensively no doubt. They'll offend people, they'll be ridiculed, scorned and shamed, but part of coming *to* Christ is bearing the reproach *of* Christ. and This is a hurdle that's hard for a lot of people to overcome.

Because for them "the camp" that they had to forsake was Judaism. But in reality the application to us is whatever it means to be accepted by the masses. Christ calls us outside the realm of the pop culture, or whatever seems to be acceptable in our society, bearing His reproach, suffering shame for His name. and Because we don't go with the flow we're often times the subject of ridicule, or we're made a mockery of. and People struggle with this, they don't want to suffer shame, or perhaps offend a so called friend in going a different direction.

I'm just going to say it, there are people who will go to hell because they're worried about offending their friends. and It's tragic, I mean what kind of "friend" is it anyway who would turn their back on you because of your commitment to Jesus Christ with friends like that who needs enemies? Probably best that they go down the road anyway in that case. I have some friends who don't know Jesus, they're not "believers" but when I'm around them I don't sacrifice or compromise my commitment to Christ. and If they want to reject me because of who I am in Christ they're free to do that but He (Jesus) is my priority. "Let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach."

Vs14-16

Vs 14 is all about eternal perspective, Vs 15 and 16 is where we're going to dial in for a minute. and In our context of love what are we seeing? Love will *sacrifice*, and our sacrifice is always unto the Lord, but there's both upward and outward aspects to it. There's sacrifice directed toward God, and sacrifice directed toward man in our service *to* God, remember we serve God through serving others, we developed that last week.

In Vs 15 we note once again that we don't approach God with out a mediator, we're sinful, He's holy. It's in Christ that we come to Him, it's by Christ that we're able to offer the sacrifice of praise to Him, which is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

Just because we don't offer blood sacrifices doesn't mean there's no sacrifice offered by the believer today. and Just to clarify a *sacrifice* is something that costs you, if it doesn't cost you anything it was no sacrifice. Remember David said he refused to offer burnt offering to the Lord by that which *cost* him nothing. If there's no real value to it in your eyes, there's no real meaning behind it, no heart behind it, you could take it or leave it. That's not what God desires from you in your relationship with Him, He desires that what you do *for* Him, what you give *to* Him come from your heart. Remember we talked about that in Vs 9, it's the heart God is after. But we're able to sacrifice to God in no less than 4 ways, #1 In our *person*, Romans 12:1 tells us to present *our bodies* to God as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to Him, it's our reasonable service. 1st Cor 8 speaks of sacrificing our *purse* or quite frankly, financially. and He's not talking there about the tithe, but a free will offering which is above and beyond the tithe (the 10% that belongs to God anyway). Here we're reading of the sacrifice of *praise* which is the 3rd way, and then in Vs 16 we see the sacrifice of *performance* which we'll touch on momentarily.

So sacrifice is a regular part of our Christian service as unto the Lord. and You know we don't always feel like *praising* God, but I suggest to you that the times that you don't really feel like it, but you buckle down, give God the attention of your heart and mind, and you praise Him not because of how you *feel* but simply because He's worthy, more than likely those times of praise (though they may not've done much for you) mean more to God then the happy clappy times when it doesn't cost us much because at that time your praise to God is a sacrifice. and God sees it, is well pleased *with it*, and He acknowledges it as such. and We begin to note the sacrifice as well in the exhortation to praise God *continually*, an attitude of praise is not easy to continually cultivate. It demands sacrifice.

Now why is praise called the *fruit* of our lips, because it's the outcropping of what's being cultivated in our heart. Remember Jesus said, "*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*" Matt 12:34 So when you've been around a person long enough that they let their guard down around you, the way they speak is a good indication of the condition and the position of their heart. and God desires the fruit of thanksgiving to be present in our lives. God has done so much for us in the person of Jesus Christ and beyond that by supplying us with resources to eat, a place to live, clothes on our back, yet how often do we truly take the time to be thankful?

Those things are upward, as for the outward (Vs 16) doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased, the sacrifice of *performance*. We read in Psalm 50:23, “*Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God.*” The word “Share” here is the Greek word *Koinonia* which simply speaks of fellowship and intimacy, of partnership or a common gift. The idea being if I have it, and you need it, hey, have at it, be blessed by it. God is pleased when we’re selfless, willing to share and do good unto others in His name.

Vs17

You see how this relates to Vs 7? Love shows *submission*. There are certain arenas, certain spheres in which God has ordained a standard of submission. and We don’t have time to expound on them all but God has ordained that the wife submit to her husband, the child submit to their parents, the employee submit to the employer, and a congregation to those who are their spiritual leaders. Now again this is with the understanding that the spiritual leaders qualify according to Vs 7.

But when a leader is speaking on the authority of the word of God (and that’s a huge key) there is every right for them to tell you how you ought to live. Now don’t misunderstand this isn’t speaking of shepherding, having to run every decision, and get *approval* for every from your leader/leaders, that’s called mind control and it’s unbiblical and ungodly.

But if you’re being instructed in the word of God, you have an obligation before God to be obedient. We’re not talking here about giving way to an opinion, but the authority of God’s word.

In every arena that God ordains an order of submission it’s because God is going to call the one to whom we submit to account. Notice, “For they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.” It’s a whole lot easier to *win* souls (if you will) than it is to *watch over* souls. and Every Pastor/elder, spiritual leader will give an account of his ministry. and If it’s a grievous thing because you were always apart of the problem rather than helping with the solution, if you were a burden as opposed to a blessing, that’s not going to be on him, it’s going to be on *you*. He was teaching the word, he was giving you an example, you wouldn’t follow suit, and that kind of attitude and rebellion just doesn’t pay on that day. It won’t be profitable, I’m not saying you won’t make it to heaven, but as for your reward, it just may go up in smoke. Exactly how God will handle that I don’t know, what I do know is that it won’t be profitable for you if your overseer has to give account of his ministry with grief *because* of you. Because when you submit that’s not your service to *them* that’s your service to the Lord. So evidently God takes our attitude toward submission in whatever arena it may be personally. That pretty much closes up the doctrinal portion of the letter, now he just has a few closing comments.

Vs18-19

You know a good conscience makes for a soft pillow at night, and how important that we desire to live honorably. But what I want you to see here is the power of prayer. He believed whole heartedly that prayer would expedite his coming to them personally, remove any roadblocks so to speak. and I don't know why but God has opted to in some way partner with us through prayer in the accomplishing of His purposes. and Prayer will move the hand of God, often times God is *wanting* to do something, but no one will pray so God doesn't. That's what the bible teaches. How important that we be a people of prayer, standing in the gap on behalf of others, that's what he was looking for here.

Vs20-21

What a beautiful benediction, and you could really make an entire study out of just these Vs. But I just want you to see a couple of things briefly. #1 We note that God is the God of peace. But here's the deal, you can't know the peace *of* God, until you've 1st made peace *with* God. and Peace *with* God comes through Jesus Christ Rom 5:1, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" Of course Col Ch 1 tells us that nothing is reconciled to God apart from the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ He is the *good* Shepherd, He is the *great* Shepherd, and He is the *chief* Shepherd, and the Overseer of our souls. We are the sheep of His hand, made complete through the blood of the everlasting covenant. That word "Complete" in Vs 21 speaks of setting a broken bone, mending a torn net, outfitting a ship, and equipping an army for battle. and That's the work of our Great Physician, to set our broken bones, to bring healing to our brokenness, to restore to order that which was ruined. He wants to mend those torn areas in the "net" of your life that He might use you to win souls and be a fisher of men. He wants to equip you for the battles that lie ahead of you and the storms that will rage against you. Working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Vs22-25

What an incredible journey through the book of Hebrews...and What a fitting conclusion to such a wonderful book, oh how we need it, draw strength *from* it, serve God *through* it, never lose sight *of* it "Grace be with you all. Amen"

Prayer Points:

God what an incredible letter You've brought us through, Your word is so rich and we pray that it would find rich ground in the soil of our heart to bring forth fruit that You might be glorified and magnified through our lives. We thank You for the precious gift of Your Son, our High priest, our great Shepherd...our Savior. Teach us to submit to Your word and to serve one another.

If you've not made peace with God, you've not been reconciled, brought near to Him and accepted *by* Him through the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ I want to give you the opportunity to accept Him now receiving the forgiveness of sins and newness of life. Jesus has already done the whole thing, He paid the penalty, He bore the full brunt, the total impact of the wrath of God on our behalf. and You can receive life in His name, cast yourself upon His mercy, look to Him, and trust *in* Him and by His grace you'll be saved.