

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} & As our time has been drawing to a close w/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 & 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) & 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, & Ch 13 the way of love. Faith...hope...& love.**

& That our memory might be refreshed you recall that Ch 13 brings us into the final appeals of the epistle. & W/regard to the practice of love, the way that love is seen & shown by the body of Christ we’ve discovered that we’re to love both the *saints* we know, & 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 & are completely comfortable around. But we’re to reach out & 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 w/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} & Of course that statement was made w/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 & 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 w/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 & His word abiding in you. So the practice of love is to love the saint, the stranger, & those who are suffering for the cause of the gospel, we’re to pray for them, be compassionate toward them.** & 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 & spoke of the satisfaction of love, the fact that love is *satisfied*. That our conduct should be w/out covetousness (that insatiable drive for more) but that we should be *content* w/such things as we have. **& 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 & clothing...w/these we’re to be content.** So w/that we pick it up in Vs 7.
Vs 7

Now here what we might say (& really the principle is developed much more so in Vs 17 & so we’ll consider it more fully there), but the idea that’s ultimately being communicated here is that love shows *submission*. & 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, & follow after godly leadership w/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 w/in the body of Christ. & 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 & make sure of before you simply hang your brain on the hat rack as you walk in a church & 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. & By the way this is a *command*, the words “Remember” & “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 & following*. & When it’s a *present tense that’s in the imperative mood (which w/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 & grow thereby, but how can I really know when the leadership is *godly*?” & 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 & 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 & follow after.

What does he say? #1 “They’ve spoken the word of God to you.” You find a place where the leaders (including & especially the Pastor) are teaching, & speaking the word of God *to* you, sharing the word of God *w/you*, the exhortation here is to get behind them, be supportive *of* them & 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 & says, “I have a word for you from the Lord.” & 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 & run. Last time I checked God knew my address, now it could be that God’s dealing w/me, & then confirms something to me through someone else. & I’m not saying you can’t listen & 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 & foremost that’s what we need from a godly leader, that’s one of the fingerprints of a godly leader. & You have to remember that access to the scriptures in the day this was written was limited at best, & 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 & 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, & 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 & 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*. & 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 & I'm out." That's not loyalty, that's instability, that's flaky, flighty & 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, & 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. & Take heed to yourself, that your practice line up w/your preaching.*" Both those things are imperative in godly leadership, & 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, & *used* by Him to impact others. (& 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 J.C. "J.C. is the same yesterday, today, & 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, & 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 w/Christ & reverting back to the law, the sacrificial system & all of that to avoid persecution. He's saying, "Hey, consider the example that's gone before you & 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. & The exhortation here is to not abandon their stance on that, because Judaism denied the Messiahship of Jesus. & 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) & will forever be to the heavenly hosts, the Messiah, the Savior." How did these guys live & end their lives? Believing that Jesus *is* the Christ, the same yesterday, today & forever.

You guys this is such good news, (& 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. & I think that this is where so many people have really gone wrong & 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, & 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 & forever, Christ is consistent. It's not like, "Well He never did that when He was on the earth, but times have changed & now He's gotten wild." Hey it's true times *have* changed, cultures *are* different, but human nature remains the same, & the need of humanity has never changed, we all need forgiveness of sin & to be reconciled to God through the blood of J.C. *Jesus has never & will never change. He remains the same, yesterday, (when else) today, & forever. Jesus is the plumb line, the standard for Christian conduct, particularly in word & 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, J.C. Listen, there's no shortage of various & strange doctrines out there to entertain you. We just mentioned a few a second ago, stay w/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 w/foods, one that stemmed specifically from Judaism which they were considering & contemplating returning to. & Again the exhortation is to remain steadfast & sold out to Jesus. It's not about my diet, it's not about dos & 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 & commune w/God from the heart, & our relationship w/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 J.C.**

& What he's saying here is that you can't have it both ways, it can't be Judaism & Jesus, they're mutually exclusive, one rejects the other by the very nature of both principle & practice. & 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 & the blood of the sacrifice, how they were handled & what was the end result & 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. & The writer here is saying "Yes, we do." Christ fulfills it all, & 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, & rather than having to do it over & 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, & never again, it's finished, the work complete.**

& On the day of Atonement when the sin offering was made & the blood of the bull & the blood of the goat administered in the Holy of Holies, their bodies would be carried outside the camp & burned. & 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 & shamed, but part of coming to Christ is bearing the reproach of Christ. & 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. & Because we don't go w/the flow we're often times the subject of ridicule, or we're made a mockery of. & People struggle w/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. & It's tragic, I mean what kind of "friend" is it anyway who would turn their back on you because of your commitment to J.C. W/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. & 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 & 16 is where we're going to dial in for a minute. & In our context of love what are we seeing? Love will sacrifice, & our sacrifice is always unto the Lord, but there's both upward & outward aspects to it. There's sacrifice directed toward God, & 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 w/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. & 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 w/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. & He's not talking there about the tithe, but a free will offering which is above & beyond the tithe (the 10% that belongs to God anyway). Here we're reading of the sacrifice of *praise* which is the 3rd way, & 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. & 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 & mind, & 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 than the happy clappy times when it doesn't cost us much because at that time your praise to God is a sacrifice. & God sees it, is well pleased *w/it*, & He acknowledges it as such. & 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 & the position of their heart. & God desires the fruit of thanksgiving to be present in our lives. God has done so much for us in the person of J.C. & beyond that by supplying us w/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 & sharing, for w/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 & intimacy, of partnership or a common gift. The idea being if I have it, & you need it, hey, have at it, be blessed by it. God is pleased when we're selfless, willing to share & 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. & 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, & a congregation to those who are their spiritual leaders. Now again this is w/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 (& 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, & get *approval* for every from your leader/leaders, that's called mind control & it's unbiblical & 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. & Every Pastor/elder, spiritual leader will give an account of his ministry. & If it's a grievous thing because you were always apart of the problem rather than helping w/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, & that kind of attitude & 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 w/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, & 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. & I don't know why but God has opted to in some way partner w/us through prayer in the accomplishing of His purposes. & 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, & 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 w/God. & Peace w/God comes through J.C. 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 J.C. He is the *good* Shepherd, He is the *great* Shepherd, & He is the *chief* Shepherd, & 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, & equipping an army for battle. & 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 & be a fisher of men.** He wants to equip you for the battles that lie ahead of you & the storms that will rage against you. Working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight through J.C. to whom be glory forever & ever. Amen.

Vs22-25

What an incredible journey through the book of Hebrews...& 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 w/you all. Amen"

Prayer Points:

God what an incredible letter You've brought us through, Your word is so rich & we pray that it would find rich ground in the soil of our heart to bring forth fruit that You might be glorified & 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 & to serve one another.

If you've not made peace w/God, you've not been reconciled, brought near to Him & accepted *by* Him through the blood of the cross of J.C. I want to give you the opportunity to accept Him now receiving the forgiveness of sins & 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. & You can receive life in His name, cast yourself upon His mercy, look to Him, & trust *in* Him & by His grace you'll be saved.