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So, this is the last sermon in Hebrews.

**I feel like we should get a trophy or a t-shirt.**

Today we are covering all of chapter 13.

Which means I can't unpack everything in detail.

But I do want to touch on its main theme...

Which is living in response to the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**Now I'm not saying that we live differently SO THAT  
Jesus will save us.**

We live differently because he HAS saved us.

See, part of that salvation-package is that we are given the Holy Spirit.

He empowers us and strengthens us to live FOR Jesus.

Which means our lives start to look more and more LIKE Jesus.

Which in turn means ...

**We Live To Please God Alone**

The center of this chapter summarizes this thought ...

## Hebrews 13:15-16

**15 Through him** then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. **16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God**

We often limit worship to what we do at church on Sundays.

**But Monday morning is just as important as Sunday morning.**

**Here is the hard truth...**

**We spend most of our time where it's hard to live a life of worship that pleases God.**

**Now, we have to be careful when we say that God is pleased by WHAT we do.**

This doesn't mean that God isn't pleased with us until we do good things.

One of the freeing truths of the Christian faith is that God adopts us into his family.

He chose us ... He saved us ... He paid for your adoption through the death and resurrection of His own son Jesus.

And when you're in God's family it means His love isn't dependent on your good works.

**But that doesn't mean God doesn't take pleasure in our good works.**

Because if our good works are truly empowered by the Holy Spirit ... it means his grace is flowing through us to others.

God uses simple people like you and me to further his purpose of redemption in this world.

**God delights in seeing His will accomplished.**

And so when He takes pleasure in our good works ...

Really, he is doing what he did at Creation...

He's looking at his own work and saying 'It Is Good'.

**It's like seeing siblings do something nice to each other.**

It's a break from the ordinary.

But you get pleasure from that.

**Why?**

B/C you've been teaching and training them to be kind for years.

**And when you see it for 2 seconds ... you're like "YES!".  
[miracle]**

Two things are happening in that moment:

1. You are rejoicing in what they did!
2. But also you are taking pleasure in that your will is coming through in their lives.

You might even say “you are coming through in their lives in that moment.”

### **So the question remains, what are the things that please God?**

It’s fascinating how simple God keeps it here.

You would think there would have been a long list of things.

But at the heart of it all is an ordering of our hearts toward love, contentment and submission.

Every sin we commit denies, dilutes, or disfigures those 3 seedbed-motivations.

And the Hebrew writer calls that ancient church, and us today not to forsake them.

Here is how the chapter opens up...

#### **Hebrews 13:1**

**1 Let brotherly love continue. 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 3 Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.**

Love ... that’s pretty popular ... not very controversial.

Even if you are not yet a follower of Jesus, you probably accept that he was loving and kind.

**And if Jesus is loving it would follow that he wants his disciples to be loving too.**

I don't think anyone would argue with that.

**So we shouldn't be surprised that ...**

### **We Please God By Loving People**

There are three expressions of love in those verses we just read...

The first one it brings up is brotherly love.

The Greek word there is philadelphia ... and it refers to love that families share.

**Now I realize that not all families are very loving ...**

**Because of sin, brotherly love is often distorted into lots of dysfunction.**

**But still...**

**I would argue that 'longing to be part of a family' might be one of the strongest desires and drivers we all have.**

I am amazed at what kids are willing to forgive or overlook in busted up homes with bad parents.

The love a child has for a father and mother runs deep.

A love you have for your siblings ... it's incredible what we are willing to do for each other.

**The family of God, the church, is just that ... it's family.**

**It's not secondary family, after your own.**

**No! It's family ... [new blood line in Jesus]**

**In fact, it is the only family unit that is going to last forever.**

So, as God's family we should behave like we are family.

And not taking our cues from earthly parents and older siblings.

We take our cues from our Heavenly Father and big brother Jesus.

And they show us that a healthy family cares for each other and shows compassion.

And compassion is the other expression of love we see in these verses.

### **Hebrews 13:3**

**3 Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.**

**This doesn't mean that if you don't join a prison ministry you're a bad Christian.**

This was written at a time when the Roman empire ruled & viewed Christians suspiciously or with hatred.

**[Rumor of baking babies in pies and eating them.]**

Consequently, many Jesus followers were wrongly accused and thrown into prison.

Many others were beaten or had their property & possessions taken from them.

They suffered all kinds of injustice simply B/C they believed and followed Jesus.

So these verses were a call to remember those mistreated.

**[NOT, glad that wasn't me!]**

Jesus wants us to remember the victims of injustice. [he does]

But compassion goes beyond remembering ...

It compels us to take on their injustice like our own.

**“...as though in prison with them” it says**

**[My family sponsors a Compassion Intl child ... while we support with money ... not quite nailing the compassion part... I can't say we remember her too often or have taken on her poverty as our own.]**

**BTW -- Compassion Sunday coming up July 25**

Compassion for people flows out of a revelation that God's family is knit together.

So when one of us suffers ... we all suffer too.

I would say to the church, our job is to have our eyes open and intentionally look for those suffering.

That's what Jesus did ... he was always looking ...

To quote Paul Miller, "Looking shapes the heart."

When you see someone suffering it moves your heart with compassion.

And that means we don't want them to suffer alone.

**Side note: if you are suffering ... don't hide it.**

**I'm not putting the burden on you, but don't burden yourself with hiding your suffering and facing it alone.**

**When it comes to suffering we need to recover the COMMUNAL LAMENT.**

This is wisdom right from the Bible.

When people suffered, the community surrounded them.

**Lamenting is a community project of compassion.**

And this means we have to get comfortable joining people in their pain.

We don't like doing that B/C we often don't know what to say.



**But here's the beauty of Compassionate Lament ...**

**You don't have to fix the situation ... you just need to be there.**

Weep with those who weep.

Cry with them ... acknowledge the pain and hurt.

**[Widow ... support in court]**

**I'll admit that is stretching for many of us.**

**But love will stretch us out of our comfort zones.**

**It not only drives us to reach out to the hurting within the family ...**

**It also reaches out to welcome the stranger.**

### **Hebrews 13:2**

**2 Do not neglect to show **hospitality** to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.**

Hospitality is the THIRD & final expression of loving people we see here.

The greek word literally means love for the stranger or outsider.

**My dad grew up in a relatively poor family.**

But one thing he knew is that he could bring any friend to the dinner table any time.

They always had room for one more, and they always cooked for one more.

That's what hospitality is.

It's a heart that always has an extra seat around the table, and food to share.

**Since writing this sermon, I've literally thought of keeping an empty chair & place setting during dinner to symbolize this idea of room for one more.**

**Loving people this way isn't easy to do ...**

**You will lose time, energy, sleep, resources...**

**And that can easily make you bitter.**

**Unless you learn contentment.**

**We Please God By Being Content In Him**

Let me be clear ...

This goes beyond being content with what God's given you.

We need to get to a place where He is enough.

And that is what verses 4-6 are getting at.

### **Hebrews 13:4-6**

**4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. 5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” 6 So we can confidently say,**

**“The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear;  
what can man do to me?”**

**You might be thinking, “What does a person’s sex life have to do with contentment in God?”**

I would argue there is a significant link between the two.

**Contentment in God means you accept His gifts and guardrails.**

**And God never gives gifts without guardrails.**

Even in 1 Corinthians 12, when it talks about the various spiritual gifts, the guardrails are ... “Do everything for the building up of the church ... and let everything be done decently and in order.”

Whenever God puts a gift in your hand ... he has a purpose for it as well.

And sex is a gift.

God made us sexual beings.

But his guardrails for sex are within the marriage covenant between 1 man and 1 woman.

That's it.

Contentment in God means that I follow that regardless of what my preferences are.

**God gave Adam and Eve the gift of the garden of Eden.**

His guardrail was don't eat from 1 tree.

See, at the root of sin is discontentment with God.

Adam and Eve were not content with the guardrail and so they broke through it.

When it comes to sex and sexuality in our age ... we are not content with God's guardrails and we've driven right through them ...

In so doing, we've distort, dilluted, and disfigure the gift of sex.

And sex is not only thing.

Greed for more and more money is another biggie.

**Our society worships at the altar of wealth.**

We want more money because we think it will get us more security, more fun, more pleasure, more stuff.

**Instead of following God's guardrail of generosity -- where money flows through us to bless others ... We hoard it for ourselves.**

**At the heart of that is a lack of contentment in God.**

And underneath the surface of our discontent is a greater struggle.

**"Who gets to be in charge of my life?"**

As you mature in the faith, you'll begin to see that most of your sin issues have this same root:

You don't want to be submitted to God or anyone else.

And that is antithetical to a life that pleases God.

**We Please God By Being Submitted To Him**

This doesn't mean that following Jesus turns you into a doormat that everyone walks over.

Nor does it mean that everything is worthy of submitting to.

First and foremost, there is Jesus ...

Of course, if you are a Jesus follower that's implied.

You are FOLLOWING Him, which means He's the leader.

And so you submit to Him as Lord.

And one way we do that is submitting to the truth He's given us in the Gospel.

### Hebrews 13:7-9

**7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. 9 Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.**

There is a significant implication to the statement, "Jesus never changes."

It means His truth never changes.

The Gospel doesn't submit to the tides of philosophy & culture.

And to be a follower of Jesus means that you don't live by YOUR truth.

There is ONE truth, and only ONE truth.

Until recently, a truth was accepted as something universal and applicable regardless of time and place.

**Gravity is a truth that is the same for those who lived in 800 B.C. China as it is for us in 21st century America.**

But today we have a concept of relative truth.

Truth that is good for you, but not for me.

**We've turned our personal preferences and desires into truths.**

There is a reason for that.

**It gives credence and a pseudo-moral high ground to our passions and desires.**

A universal principle we all share is that denying truth is bad, and pursuing it is good.

So it naturally follows that turning your passion and desire into "your truth" becomes a new pathway to a false righteousness.

**And truth in this sense is always changing: from person-to-person, and from generation-to-generation.**

**But truth that changes is a self-defeating proposition.**

**However, Jesus never changes.**

So what he taught, how he lived, his death and resurrection ...

All those are part of a truth package that is as pertinent today for you and me as it was back then.

**And when you study Jesus' life, and listen to his words you realize that He lived in submission.**

**Living submitted or “under authority” is an unchangeable truth.**

**Luke's gospel tells a story of Jesus as a young 12-year old boy teaching in the temple.**

It's a bit of a funny story b/c his earthly parents lose him for a couple of days and then find him again.

**But it says in verse 51 that Jesus returned with them and was submissive to his parents.**

Think about that...

The perfect son of God was submissive to imperfect parents.

And even when he grew up and left his parent's home, he was always submitted to His heavenly Father.

### **John 5:19**

**So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.**

To our modern ears this sounds like an emotionally unhealthy codependent person.



Because our modern gospel says,

- “Write your own story.”
- “Live life on your own terms.”

Sinatra even had a hit song, “I did it my way.”

**But the Gospel tells us “to imitate/to follow is truly to live.”**

**And, imitation is submission in its purest form.**

So God gave us leaders in the church to imitate since Jesus isn't here in the flesh.

Paul the apostle confidently said, “Follow me AS I follow Christ.”

There is an implication that Paul was submitted to the truth of Jesus ... and therefore he was a leader worthy of being submitted to.”

This can be one of the toughest parts of being in a church family.

Being submitted to the leaders.

After all, we are human ... imperfect ... prone to making errors.

Yet, the command is to obey & submit...

## Hebrews 13:17

**17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.**

I'm sure there are more than a few of us thinking ...

**“Is there any reason to stop submitting to church leadership?”**

‘Yes’: if they intentionally stop imitating Jesus, whether by their teaching or their lifestyle.

**Let me bring this to a close ...**

Love, contentment in God alone, Submission to God and Leaders...

These are things God is pleased with when he sees them in our life.

Now, if you're here and not yet a Christian ...

Don't start with trying to do all that.

Start with submitting to Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

His invitation always stands. His door is always open.

**BAND COME UP**

If you are a Christian, I want to remind us where we started at the beginning of this sermon.

We can't do this without God's help.

And the Hebrew writer knew that...

And so he ends with a simple prayer.

I'm going to pray it for us today.

Agree with me as I pray.

### **Hebrews 3:20-21**

**20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.**

## **COMMUNION**

As we take communion today ...

Let's thank Jesus that God's pleasure is not dependent on our doing, but what Jesus has done.

Taking communion is a recognition of his love for us, being content in Him above all ...

And it is a recommitment to being submitted to following  
Jesus and His perfect will.

Body / Blood

**BAND LEAD US 1 MORE SONG**