

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Hebrews 13

We are going to finish up the book of Hebrews this evening

This letter that was written to a group of Jewish believers – men and women, who were contemplating going back to Judaism.

And so the writer of Hebrews has made the argument to them and us – that Jesus is greater than anything they were thinking about going back to –

He reminds them of the sufficiency of Jesus

All we need is Jesus

Jesus is enough

We don't need Jesus + anything

Just Jesus

And so - he exhorts them not go back legalism and religious formalism.

He tells them that following a list of do's and don'ts is not going to help them grow spiritually –

That is what he tells them and that is what he tells us today.

And he encourages them to persevere – by faith

In our study this evening, the writer of Hebrews is going to conclude his letter – by exhorting the believer to protect their relationship with the spiritual leaders that God has given to you and to me.

Let's pray...

**[Heb 13:7-25 NKJV] 7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of [their] conduct.**

The word remember here – goes much further than simply “don’t forget.”

It means to be mindful or to keep in your mind.

It includes the idea of a fond remembrance.

So the writer of Hebrews is exhorting the believer to have “that type” of remembrance for the spiritual leader that God has placed in our lives.

In other words – we are to remember those in our lives that were faithful to speak God’s word into our lives, those that opened up the scriptures to us and told us what the Word of God has to say about this life and our future life.

Don’t get tripped up over the phrase – “those who rule over you”

The phrase means those that go before you – those that lead.

Turn to Mark 10 –

Because Jesus speaks about those in leadership position -

**[Mar 10:42-45 NKJV] 42 But Jesus called them to [Himself] and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 "And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**

So the spiritual leader is supposed to set the example for the believer to follow.

They are supposed to lead and continue to lead in such a way that it reflects the character of Christ and the Word of God.

And notice that the writer of Hebrews gives us the qualities that these godly leaders are suppose to have.

1. A godly leader is a person of the Word – the pastor's job is to feed the flock of God, the Word of God.

It is not to entertain the flock of God.

It is to open the Word of God and tell the flock what the Word of God says about who He is and what He has done for us and about our life and our circumstances.

**[Heb 4:12 NKJV] 12 For the word of God [is] living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

We study His Word, we believe His Word and then we apply His word in our loves – that is how He transforms us – through His word.

**[Psa 119:129 NKJV] 129 Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul keeps them.**

What God has to say about things is the most important thing that can be said.

The leader that doesn't love God's Word and refrains from giving God's word or refuses to honor God's Word – that individual isn't a leader.

2. A godly leader is a person of faith

He sets the example of how to walk by faith

We see how they respond to trials and we follow

3. A godly leader must live as an example.

Paul - **[1Co 11:1 NKJV] 1 Imitate me, just as I also [imitate] Christ.**

Do they practice what they preach?

The writer exhorts his readers to take a look at the conduct of those who have preached to them.

If their conduct has been consistently faithful and godly, then follow their example.

If they haven't practiced what they've preached – it's probably best to not give too much credence to their preaching.

This is why it is so important to be in fellowship with the brethren and attend church services regularly – not only are we fed the Word -but we can also examine the spiritual leader's lifestyle and see if it corresponds to what is being taught.

And if it does – we follow their example.

### **8 Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, today, and forever.**

Jesus is unchanging

He was God, is God, and always will be God.

Because He never changes, we can always depend upon Him.

When He says He will never leave us nor forsake us, He doesn't change His mind after a few years of tolerating us.

The same way we read in the gospels of the tenderness and compassion that He had for sinners – He is the same way with you and me – because He never changes.

He cannot change and He will never change.

He alone is the solid rock upon where your life and mine is built.

And this is encouraging for us – especially during the times that we live in today where we see these radical changes in our culture – where our culture moves from one sin to the next sin.

Our culture changes – but the church continues to be the salt – because that is what we are called to be.

And we will continue to be the salt as long as we keep our eyes on Jesus – because He doesn't change.

His help, His grace, His power, His guidance are permanently at our disposal – therefore, we don't lose heart.

Now, keeping it in context -

Remember, this group of Jewish believers are under heavy persecution –

So the writer of Hebrews reminds this group of Jewish believers and us the following –

Jesus is the one who provides grace and mercy to those who love Him

If we found grace and mercy in the past, then there is grace and mercy in the present and there is grace and mercy in the future – because Jesus doesn't change.

One of the things we have to remember is that in the early church – there were legalists that were pushing for rules and regulations – they wanted to incorporate some of the rules from Judaism into Christianity – but the writer of Hebrews warns them they must not go back to the law now that they've found grace.

**9 Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For [it is] good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.**

What happens to the believer that doesn't protect their relationship with the spiritual leader that God has put before them –

They become susceptible to false doctrine

This is what happens when the Word of God is neglected, ignored or rejected.

They receive false doctrine which will include anything that is contrary to the Word of God.

They will receive doctrines that are established by things that are not grace.

They will require that you follow a list of do's and don'ts to be saved

They will require that you follow them blindly

But that is not what the bible teaches

Because if Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever

Then it is Jesus who saves us, and it is Jesus who keeps us, and it is Jesus who sustains us

And the doctrine of grace is established in Christ.

**[Eph 4:7 NKJV] 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.**

What perverts grace – when one adds anything to grace

The false teachers were adding to grace. You are saved by grace + keeping dietary laws. No bacon, no lobster

The Christian is under no such law.

The substance and the stability of our life comes from the grace of God, not just in knowing the grace of God but in receiving the grace of God and living in the grace of God.

**10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. 11 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. 12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. 14 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to**



**come. 15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of [our] lips, giving thanks to His name.**

I grouped these verses together for a reason –

The writer of Hebrews is making a contrast –

During the time that this letter was written, the temple had not been destroyed.

There were still sacrifices that were being brought to the temple

The Jewish believers – because of their faith in Christ – they were not allowed to partake in the religious ceremonies.

So what the writer of Hebrews is saying here is –

Those that have rejected Jesus as their Messiah – they are simply going through the motions worshipping at the altar in the temple.

However, the believer – we have our own altar where we worship

Ours is a heavenly altar

We don't bring animal sacrifices to the altar – we bring our own lives to the altar

And we express this in our praise and worship –

We express it in the fruit of our lives and lips.

And he makes it clear in verse 16

**16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.**

The writer is not inviting the reader to participate in a Christianity where all we have to do is go to church – have a smile on our faces and sing worship songs – there is so much more

Yes, we worship God with our lips

Yes, we worship God with all of our heart

But we have to remember that our spiritual worship leads to works

**17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.**

Back in verse 7, the writer of Hebrews exhorted the reader to remember the spiritual leader that God put before them.

Here in verse 17 – he tells the reader to follow them.

To obey them

To make their job a little easier

And here is the reason –

They will have to give an account to God on how they tended the flock.

How do they watch for your souls?

He must prepare spiritual food

He must watch out for wolves and thieves that may attack the flock

He must warn the flock of dangers

He must seek to keep them from stumbling

He must be ready to help them spiritually

And therefore – the responsibility of the flock is to be submissive –

In what sense?

That they watch over us

because God had appointed them to be our spiritual leaders.

And because in doing so – we bring them joy.

How so?

Turn to 3 John – (only one chapter)

**[3Jo 1:4 NKJV] 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.**

Obedience is the greatest joy

And this is what the writer is referring to

Don't make life miserable on your leader by continually refusing to walk in submission and obedience.

**18 Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. 19 But I especially urge [you] to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.**

The writer basically says, "we deserve your prayers"

We have a good conscience before God about how we have led you

This doesn't mean that the leader is perfect

It just means that the leader has been faithful

And a faithful leader deserves your support

The point is, when a leader is faithful to follow God,

Then he has earned your support.

It is deserved.

- If you have a person who is willing to watch out for wolves...
- If you have a person who is willing to correct bad doctrine...
- If you have a person who is willing to lead you correctly...

- If you have a person who will enter that spiritual battle for you...

THEN THEY DESERVE YOUR PRAYER SUPPORT (they need it!)

**20 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom [be] glory forever and ever. Amen.**

I love the picture these words paint –

God is at work in His people,

and because of this in-working, they have what's necessary to accomplish every things He's set before them!

And the goal of it all is that God would be glorified in His Son.

In v. 21 he says that God will make us complete.

Some translations say that God will equip us.

The word means to make something good, to mend.

It's the picture of something incomplete or broken being filled out and fixed so that it can fulfill it's purpose!

God doesn't make us perfect in that we're going to be sinless and flawless.

But He wants to make us what we ought to be in the work that He has for us.

We need to realize that God is using all sorts of things in our lives to mold us and shape us.

**22 And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.**

The writer of Hebrews is appealing to this group of Jewish believers to receive this letter with an open heart and an open mind –

To carefully consider what he has written in the last 13 chapters

That Jesus is superior to everything and everyone

The doctrine of salvation – that we are saved by grace through faith

To not walk away from Jesus

To continue to persevere through the hardship

To understand that persecution will take place

To realize that we have a superior tabernacle in heaven

To recognize that Jesus is a greater sacrifice than animal sacrifices.

To realize that the sacrifice of Jesus provides everything that we need

To realize that the suffering and the hardships they are going through right now don't even compare to the wonderful rewards that await them in Christ.

We need hope – we find it in Jesus

Forgiveness? There is forgiveness in Jesus

**23 Know that [our] brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.**

The phrase set free – is a reference to be released from prison.

So the writer of Hebrews reminds this group of Jewish believers – that it is not all bad.

When we read 1 and 2 Timothy – we find out that Timothy was in the same boat as these Jewish believers.

He wanted to quit

He was facing enormous opposition to his ministry.

In 2 Timothy Paul asked Timothy to endure and face that opposition anyway,

Much in the same way the writer of Hebrews asked these Hebrews to do.

**[2Ti 1:8 NKJV] 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,**

Well it is apparent that Timothy did what Paul asked, suffered for it,

But now had “been released”

**24 Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.**

Not only are they supposed to be encouraged that Timothy was released – they are supposed to be encouraged of the universal presence of the church

This group of Jewish believers – they were not alone in their struggle –

- Others are facing it as well.
- Others are enduring.
- Others are gaining victory.

It is encouraging to know that other believers across the world

Are facing the same difficulties you are facing and are finding victory.

**25 Grace [be] with you all. Amen.**

- Grace is more than just a form of favor that allows God to forgive sinners.
- Grace is also a source of power that allows believers to endure various trials.

**[2Co 12:8-10 NKJV] 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,**



**for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

We are reminded that there is always grace and grace is enough.

It is a final encouragement that good does come,

There is a church to encourage, and grace is always available.

These Hebrews who faced such hardship for their decision

Have now learned that despite their struggles

They have gained something of far more value.

**THEY HAVE GAINED CHRIST!**

He is greater than any aspect of Jewish religion they have ever known

And through Him they are not only made pleasing to the Father,

But through Him they can also now live pleasing to the Father.

Knowing that He supplies the strength to continue to walk in obedience through His unfailing grace.

And that is how we conclude our study in Hebrews

Amen

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

