

Outside the Camp
Hebrews 13:10-13

John 19:17-30

1 Peter 4

Responsive: Psalm 44:13-18

Turn with me this morning to Hebrews chapter 13, today we are going to be picking up where we left off last week at verse 10 and we will be going through to verse 13. Last week we focused quite heavily on verse 7, and really only touched verse 8 and 9 so in a bit of recap this morning I want to touch on those 2 verses a little bit more, so let us read this morning starting at verse 7-13

Last week we really only touched on one aspect of verse 7, which is what constitutes a good leader, and what following such a leader should look like. But I think also in this verse, and actually more likely the context here since he says, “remember those who rule over you,” is not so much a reminder of submission, but a reminder of support. Again like with each verse here so far the key being verse 1, “let brotherly love continue.” It is the same with our conduct to those who are our spiritual leaders, to those who have such authority over us. As was mentioned last week, in the church the pastor's, elders, deacons or whoever maybe a figure of authority in the body are not kings, nor dictators, but rather servants of that body.

The Pastor's ministry is to the flock that God has given him, to watch, to care, and to teach. But submission to that authority should never be an abusive or manipulative thing. For a shepherd of the local flock should be a reflection of the true shepherd of the church itself. While there is an element of authority given, it should be practiced out of love for the members. And likewise the members toward such leaders. And I think that is the point here of this verse really, The Author here is telling them to remember those who have been faithful to them in speaking God's word. It seems there are those who elevate leaders in the church to a point where perfection is expected, and when it is not achieved they believe that invalidates them as leaders. We have seen this a few times over the years, but the reality is...the leaders are people too, with their own struggles and flaws. So just as much as there is a call here to be cautious of your leaders, prove out that they may be indeed Godly men, whose faith and actions follow their teaching...but also, likewise to prop them up in their times of weakness.

In fact, we find out in chapter 6 that many of these to whom the Author was writing was indeed doing this, verse 9 of chapter 6 he says, “But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.” How can he be so sure of their salvation? Well, verse 10 shows that their faith is worked out in ways which proves its validity, he says, “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have showed toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” There is that element of God's love flowing out of them, to help one another, to bear one another's burdens...and here in chapter 13 he is telling them.. also, don't forget those who rule over you, support them, do not be a burden to them, love them, as they also love you. For we have Christ as our great example, the one true, mighty God, who came in the flesh not to lead the nation of Israel as the conquerors of the Roman occupation, but rather to serve.

The one in whom was all the promises, The King of Kings, stooped down and washed the feet of his followers. Christ is our example of leadership, and service. As verse 7 says, “consider the outcome of their conduct. Our Lord and Savior is the example of our conduct, he is the one that not only leaders in the faith should follow, but each and every Christian must follow.

I know you are probably all getting tired of my saying this for it seems to come up every week, but understanding this is central to our faith. As Paul wrote in Galatians, all of the law is fulfilled in this, that you love your neighbor as yourself...and this is not a suggestion, this is not something you do if you feel like it one day...for we are called to this ministry, and this is a ministry of such radical love for it comes from the God of Love, and mercy. Should we not also show forth the mercy of God if we claim to be children of God? Following this God truly is a life changing experience, and I wish that more Christians would understand this, the absolute power of God working in you to will and to do.

How freeing it is to not be put under a yoke of bondage, but to be bound with your lord and savior through love. So many put forth arbitrary rules for themselves and seek to also apply them to others, yet none of these things justify, none of these things truly make you righteous, for it is only the blood of Christ applied to you, because he first loved you, that you are made righteous.

This is why I have spent this time this morning sort of reviewing over verse 7, looking at it again seeing that really it isn't just talking about the leader of the church, but honestly is talking to each and every one of us. To be a servant leader, to be like our Lord, but even this is not a law, for really it is God working in us that enables us to love our neighbors as ourself. It is nothing more than the traits of his offspring, which is why, we can look at leaders in the church, or people who set themselves up as an authority and by using the "outcome of their conduct" we can rightly judge their faith. Not only does God give us this supernatural work of love, he also grants us wisdom and discernment to test and protect ourselves from those who would lead us astray, so that we may not be carried about by various doctrines and false teachers, being distracted from the substance by the shadows as so many seem to be.

Speaking of substance and shadows....verse 10 "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat." The old testament sacrifices were a shadow, and image of the coming messiah, yet so many were deceived and worshiped the shadow and not the substance. It was common practice that the priests would eat the meat of the animals that was sacrificed, God had provided for them, as they toiled in the temple doing what God had set for them to do, he provided a way for them to still receive food from the grain and animal offerings. Yet of this new offering, these who served that tabernacle are not worthy to eat. Again, this is anyone who puts their faith in their actions, and not solely upon God's mercy. For just as the sacrifices did not provide atonement for their sins but rather pointed to the true atonement to come, it is the same with our own attempt to please God through our actions. It merits us nothing, for our good works are not to gain favor, but rather it is done simply out of the love for the one who gave his life for us.

And it is only God's chosen, his elect, his children which he foreknew before the foundation of the world who have access to this altar, it is those who are of the offspring of Abraham, not by physical lineage, but by faith who have access to the altar in the true tabernacle. It is only by the blood of Christ, the lamb which was slain that we may enter into the very presence of God, by prayer we are communing with God who tells us to speak to him, he tells us to bring all our troubles, our doubts, and our worries to him, for only he is able to sustain us through this life. And if he loved you enough to send his Son to die for you....he will also bless and keep you. This life is full of trials and troubles isn't it. It seems just as one goes away 2 or 3 more arise, and often times it can be hard to keep a balanced outlook when things are tough. When depression can settle in, everything can feel meaningless, worthless, and purposeless...but thankfully how we feel or what we think about things is often not the reality for no matter the issue, the stress, or the struggle with depression the remedy is knowing that you have access to the very presence of God of the universe, and he will hear you, and that he cares for you.

Purpose and meaning in life is not what we apply to it, but rather it is what God applies to it. In short, we exist for God, he does not exist for us....and while in our finite understanding everything may seem lost, worthless, or having no purpose... ultimately we can rest in God and trust that he is working his purpose. What happened to my family is a good example of this. My dad, getting lymes disease, which ultimately took his life, without God what would this even mean? It would be hopeless, and there is no purpose to it...Yet, it was God who made the tick that bit him, it was God who allowed him to slowly fade over the course of 2 years, yet it was also God who showed mercy and took him peacefully while he slept. I bring this up to illustrate the point....in the eyes of mankind, this is a worthless tragedy which accomplished nothing good....yet, as I have said before.. every time I would talk to my mom...all she talked about was God's blessings, and his provision, his mercy, and his grace.

And my dad, remained faithful...knowing the outcome, accepting that outcome, and awaiting the day that he would be standing before his Lord. This is the whole point is it not? We have no way of knowing how this tragic event may be used to further God's purpose and plan. None of it is in vain, all of it served God's purpose, knowing and understanding this, truly, knowing and believing that even in our own despair and suffering that God is so sovereign and powerful that even such times serve his purpose. That is why James said, "brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials." No this does not mean that we should be cheering and having a party rejoicing in our suffering.. but rather understanding that God has allowed us to suffer in such a way that it is beneficial for his purpose and plan. God doesn't always allow us to know these things...but whether we know them or not does not change the outcome that all these things.

So that is why, we as Christians, no matter what befalls us we can endure...for we can come to God directly, and when we are in our weakest state, when we are in our darkest times...that is when God shines through, even if it isn't in deliverance from our troubles...he provides a supernatural understanding and peace through it all.

The Levitical priests were able to eat of all the sacrifices except the sin offering, which was burned completely, outside the camp. As it says here in verse 11, "For the bodies of those animals, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp." Likewise, verse 12, "Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate." Jesus was the true sin sacrifice that all these others pointed to, but where the priests were not permitted to eat of that sacrifice.. we are told by Jesus that his body is the bread of life, broken for us, and that we should eat, and be satisfied. Where the old testament priests eating was physical...for the Christian the eating and drinking of the blood of Christ is spiritual...it is symbolic of our need for him. For it is he, who sustains and keeps us.

Unlike the priests of old who were limited, we are unlimited, as John Brown said, "We are permitted to feast on the whole sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We not only eat his flesh, but we do what none of the priests dare do in regard to any of the sacrifices...we drink his blood. That is, we enjoy the full benefit which his sacrifice was designed to secur. We are allowed to feed upon the holiest of all sacrifices. Unlike those priests and sacrifices of old, our reconciliation with God is complete, our fellowship with him is intimate and delightful."

As Jesus said in John, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever, and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." And again, he goes on and says, "Truly Truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day, for my flesh is food indeed, and by blood is drink indeed.

Christ himself and only he is our sustaining substance. Verse 63 Jesus tells his disciples who were quite confused by his statements about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, he says, "It is the spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." So this is not some sort of mystical cannibalism such as the Catholics believe with the Eucharist, believing that the communion wafer, and wine is transformed into the flesh and blood of Christ, but it's meaning and purpose is spiritual. For Christ is indeed food, and drink for our soul, his word is sustenance, we must metaphorically feed on him through studying his word, through prayer, and worship. These things are just as important to the Christian as good and drink is to the body.

IF we are not consuming the word, if we are not drinking in the presence of God in prayer then our soul starves, our growth is stunted. Maturing and growing in Christ is how we endure, relying solely on him is how we make it through each day. Christ himself is the life sustaining source that we need, without him we are dead.. Therefore we must go with him, outside the gate as it says here in verse 13, bearing his reproach. Christ was, and is rejected by the world, his death is foolishness to them, how can the Son of God die, he died because he laid down his life so that we may live. He gave of himself, and his body was broken for us so that the punishment of our sin maybe paid. The righteous requirement of God for the atonement of sin has been fulfilled, it has been completed in Christ. And we who are his go outside the camp with him, that is we accept the reproach, the ridicule, and the persecution because the atoning work, the lamb of God is more precious to us then all that this world has to offer.

Helmut Koester, the Professor of New Testament studies at Harvard said, "To leave the camp, even in the performance of holy duties, rendered a man unclean and excluded him from the holy fellowship. The writer of Hebrews, however, insists that the sacrifice of Jesus was performed outside of the holy place, that is the city of Jerusalem, and it is this sacrifice which sanctifies his people. This act of sanctification marks the abolition of the necessity of the holy places for sanctification." But suffering outside the gate, Jesus identifies himself with the world in this unholiness. While we are unable to draw near to God because of our sin, God draws near to us in the person of his Son who on our unholy ground makes his holiness available to us in exchange for our sin which he bears and for which he atones on the cross. By the shedding of his blood on the cross, outside the camp he sanctifies his people, he makes them holy, making us acceptable to God through the removal of the the sin and guild by which we are enslaved, thereby setting us apart as holy, by his blood making that which is unholy to be holy.

The following of Christ involves going outside the camp to where the cross is which is to shameful to be placed inside the camp. Which signifies the necessary seperation not only from, but to our previous life, we no longer seek the acceptance of man inside the camp which is seperation from God, but instead turn to God, and follow him outside the camp associating ourselves with his shame, becoming like Moses who, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater then the riches in Egypt, left all that the world see's as success and follow Christ. These Hebrews to whom this Author was writing at this time were being tempted to find an easier existence inside the camp, returning to some of the old beliefs and practices.

Going outside the camp to Christ means a departure of the old ways, a departure of the traditions and sacrifices to which these Hebrews were raised in, and it also may be that they were looking toward a restoration and purification of Judaism such as was believed by the adherents of the Dead Sea Sect. But Moses was summoned to leave behind Egypt and follow Christ into the wilderness, now these Hebrews are being urged again to turn their backs on Sinai and earthly Jerusalem, to reject from Judaism, and to bear the reproach and follow Christ outside the camp.

This same principle applies to us, there is no ceremony, tradition, feast, law, or religious practices which can save our souls, except that which is found in Christ, upon the Cross. Therefore we must like these Hebrews, leave all else behind and follow him, it is only Christ who can sustain and keep us, set aside your laws, your moralism, and all the things that you believe make you right with God, and go to him outside the camp, bearing the scorn, and the ridicule from all those who call themselves holy, and righteous and seek Christ alone, whose body was broken, and blood was shed so that we may be the redeemed and holy Children of God. So many people want to make Christianity complicated by bringing back in laws, and traditions...but it really is simply living a life consumed, and consuming Christ. He is all that we need, for in him is life everlasting, and peace beyond understanding.

He calls us to bear the reproach of men, and also gives us the strength to do so. He calls us to suffer for his name sake, and gives us the hope to bear through it, he calls us to love those who hate us, and he gives us the ability to do so. He calls us to follow him, and he gives us the strength and understanding to do so. All things are given to us, through him, so let us boldly go with him, outside the camp, and stand with him.