

The Godly Life part 2 Hebrews 13:7-16 www.bible-sermons.org December 18, 2016

In this final section of Hebrews on instructions for godly living, the author has already given us several key reminders of what the godly life looks like. The first was for brotherly love to continue. The second was to practice hospitality, which is to love strangers. The third was to remember those who are in prison and those who are mistreated. Fourthly, he exhorted us to honor Biblical marriage and warned that God would judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. The last instruction we looked at was keeping our lives free from the love of money and learning to be content with God's presence with us.

Continuing with the exhortation he tells to 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.* Hebrews 13:7 This included the founders of their church, some of whom had gone to their reward, as well as their current elders. There had been a hint of a rebuke to them earlier, for if they had firmly warned of the consequences of going back to Judaism, there would have been no need for this letter. But the author is sure that this letter will be received and that the elders will step up and lead the flock in the right way. The leaders were to proclaim the Word of God and live lives that were worthy of imitating (1 Peter 5:1-3). Paul had told the Corinthians, ¹ *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.* 1 Corinthians 11:1

We have an even greater opportunity now, as biographies of great men and women of God are available to us. I have a shelf of biographies in my library from which I keep encouraging you to borrow. They teach us about lives of faith and dedication. They inspire us to live lives of devotion to God.

Let me say a word about your elders. I'm sure I will embarrass them, but that's ok. Connie is such a joyful servant in the midst of his battle with cancer. Nearly every one of his devotions he shares with us is about love, and they all end with the responsive reading I wrote years ago reminding us of the first exhortation in this chapter, to love one another. Ryan has a most demanding occupation and yet he often has others over on Saturday evening for fellowship and teaches one of our children's classes with dedication. David also has a demanding job, but is homeschooling his children in classical education. He meets with me weekly at 6a.m. to study the Word. He stepped up not long ago and preached a sermon. All of them share with us in the call to worship. No elder is perfect, but we are striving in different ways to serve you and be faithful to the Lord. Their faith is worth imitating. Things we look for in nominating new elders is willingness to generously serve others, a love for God's Word, and faith that is worth imitating (Mark 9:35).

⁸ *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* Hebrews 13:8 How we should be thankful for this fact! In Malachi 3:6 God declared that He never changes. Being one with the Father, Jesus will never change. It is impossible for Him to change because He is in the eternal now. He is perfect. Any change would mean there was a need to change which implies an imperfection. The compassion He had for people in

Commented [PW1]: 1 Peter 5:1-3 (ESV)

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Commented [PW2]: Mark 9:35 (ESV)

³⁵ And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."

Commented [PW3]: Malachi 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed."

the Gospel record will ever be the same. The love He showed for us by going to the cross will never change. The gentleness that invited little children to come to Him is the same (Matthew 19:14). The anger He showed toward those who abused the public and who mislead others will never change (Mark 3:4-5). Every one of His glorious attributes is eternal. They never fluctuate. Every attribute is in perfect balance with every other attribute. He is never inconsistent or unfaithful. What we see in Jesus during His three years of ministry will be the same Jesus we are with throughout eternity, with the only difference being the glory He set aside to be a man is fully restored to Him (John 17:5). Thank God we change. Thank God Jesus never changes!

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. Hebrews 13:9 Dietary laws and special diets for the sake of spirituality ends up being a devotion to those rules rather than to God and appreciation for His grace to us. There are many diverse and strange teachings in the world and in the church today. Godly disciplines are helpful, but it is the grace of God that strengthens our hearts and keeps us on the path God has for us. It was the grace of God that sent Jesus to die for our sins. No special diet can add to that. Nothing can add to that. When we realize nothing can add to it, our hearts are strengthened by the wonder of that grace so freely given to us.

This is not saying diet is something to be ignored. We should eat in a healthy way for the sake of the physical body. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). We need to care for them as best we can. However, we should understand that has nothing to do with strengthening our spiritual life. You are no more spiritual if you are a vegan or if you enjoy hamburgers. Moderation is a helpful guideline. Overindulging in anything can become sinful (Philippians 4:5).

Diverse and strange teachings abound in our community. There have been those who have been with us in the past who have been led astray by them. **The main difference is works versus grace**, as the author has pointed out. Following Jesus is humbling because Someone else did it all for us (Ephesians 2:8-9). All other ways are about the pride of man being exalted through secret wisdom, enlightenment, the right mantras or actions, karma, etc. While Christians desire to know God's Word, pray, serve, and love, doing those things does not strengthen our hearts. God's grace strengthens our hearts. It's because of that grace that we want to do the right things.

¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. Hebrews 13:10. The author is drawing an analogy from these Hebrew believers' history. Priests had special rights to eat of the sacrifices the people brought to the Lord. Leviticus 22 tells of which members of the priest's family can eat of the sacrifices. New covenant believers, those who have placed their faith in Jesus, are called priests (1 Peter 2:9). Our lives are set apart to serve Jesus. Our sacrifice was Jesus. Communion represents us spiritually partaking of Jesus. The Word speaks to our hearts and we are spiritually partaking of Jesus, who is the incarnate Word. Levitical priests have no right to eat from our altar, the cross, for they have not received the sacrifice of Jesus for their sins.

Commented [PW4]: Matthew 19:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

Commented [PW5]: Mark 3:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent.

⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Commented [PW6]: John 17:5 (ESV)

⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Commented [PW7]: 1 Corinthians 6:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

Commented [PW8]: Philippians 4:5 (KJV)

⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

Commented [PW9]: Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Commented [PW10]: 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

¹¹ For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹² So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Hebrews 13:11-12. The Day of Atonement sacrifices' hides, meat, and waste were taken outside the camp/city and burned (Leviticus 16:27). The author is drawing a connection with the ritual on the Day of Atonement and the crucifixion of Jesus outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Jesus is the final sacrifice that atones for our sins.

Dr. Paul Brand wrote of the revelation he had regarding the blood of Jesus sanctifying us from sin (Hebrews 9:13-14). At first he could not understand the parallel of blood being a cleansing agent. The blood removes waste from every cell, but he thought there must be more to it. He saw the answer in our white blood cells, antibodies, and immunization. They show us an amazing parallel. Before immunization was common, it was discovered that the puss and blood from a person with cowpox could immunize a person from smallpox. Twenty orphans were recruited to travel across the ocean to immunize nations facing a smallpox epidemic. One after the other they were infected at just the time the previous boy's bumps were blistering. The final boy was infected just before arriving at their destination and then from him the antibodies that identified the virus along with the weaker cowpox virus vaccinated the region from one carrier to another saving tens of thousands of lives. What a picture of how evangelism works. We are all infected by a fatal disease called sin. We need an immunization of blood from our Donor who overcame.

Death was coming to these nations, but the blood of a donor who had overcome the illness passed from person to person meant lives were saved. What a perfect illustration of how the good news of what the blood of Christ, who took our sins upon Himself and overcame, has done for us, so that we too might be overcomers (1 John 1:7). As the Scripture says, "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 12:11a

¹³ Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. Romans 13:13 The hide, meat, and waste of the animal that was sacrificed was taken by the priest outside the camp. Jesus was sacrificed in the same manner. He was taken outside the city walls and slain. He bore the reproach of the on-lookers and endured the shame of suffering naked upon the cross. Let us go to Him. Not to some other religion in which we can take pride in our works or knowledge, and not in earning the respect of men and fitting in with the ever changing winds of our culture, but humbly going to Jesus in His humiliation and accepting that His suffering is what we deserved. Humbly receive the grace offered to you. Bear the reproach of the world in following a crucified Lord (1 Peter 4:14). One of the earliest graffiti mocking Christians was a Roman etching of a man bowing before a crucified person with a donkey head representing Jesus. It bore the inscription "The Christian bows before his god." The world will mock us because we believe that only the grace of God can save us. Accept the world's mockery as an honor (Matthew 5:11-12).

¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Hebrews 13:14 This world is not our home. We are strangers and pilgrims here. Our treasures are in

Commented [PW11]: Leviticus 16:27 (ESV)

²⁷ And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned up with fire.

Commented [PW12]: Hebrews 9:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,

¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Commented [PW13]: 1 John 1:7 (ESV)

⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Commented [PW14]: Revelation 12:11a (ESV)

¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb...

Commented [PW15]: 1 Peter 4:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Commented [PW16]: Matthew 5:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

heaven (Matthew 6:20-21). Our city, our nation, will pass into oblivion one day, but the kingdom of God is forever. In the previous passage we read, ^{26b} "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."²⁷ This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Hebrews 12:26b-27 If we could just get a glimpse of eternity, we would realize how transient the things of this world really are. Our values would shift from the temporal to the eternal. We are seeking New Jerusalem. The author is returning to a theme he brought up in chapter eleven. The patriarchs were wanderers and pilgrims on the earth (Hebrews 11:13). They were looking for a city with foundations in eternity, not the those quickly passing in time (Hebrews 11:10). Our citizenship is in that city made up of the saints who ran the race before us (Philippians 3:20).

The community where I live is quarreling over wanting a gate and not wanting a new cell tower. Emotions run high and harsh words are spoken. Yet, it is all so insignificant. We can get so worked up over little events in our daily lives when that eternal view shows them to be opportunities to focus on what really matters. A person cut you off in traffic. So what does it really matter? Even if they ran into you and caused you to spend time getting your car repaired, what does it matter? God has opportunities in it all and has allowed it for our good. **Cling to the eternal perspective. Ask God what He is showing you. Look for God in it all. Be at peace.** Remember the reason for our contentment that was shown in verse 5 of this chapter. Jesus will never leave us or forsake us. Since we have Him we have every good thing.

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.* Hebrews 13:15 This verse has really been speaking to me. How often we complain about such insignificant things. This verse tells us that if we acknowledge the name of Jesus, we should be continually offering up a sacrifice of praise. That should be the fruit of our lips. I've got a long way to go! How are you doing at living this?

Remember our Thanksgiving message. We declared that we would do what David did. ¹ *I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.* ² *Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.* Psalm 145:1-2 This verse in Hebrews is encouraging us to take it a step further than daily, but instead to praise God continually. We praise Him for the grace He has given us and the price He paid for our redemption. We praise Him for the fact that He never changes and His love is unending. Praise Him for the promise that we will be with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17). It is through Jesus we offer this praise to God, for it is in Jesus, in His words and actions, that we see the goodness of God. Every good gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights in whom is no variation or shadow due to change (James 1:17). He is worthy of our continual praise.

The author is telling them to consider all their blessings. The persecution hasn't hit yet, but even when it does, they have so much for which to be thankful. If we focus on the pain and trouble, we probably won't be praising God. If we focus on what God has done

Commented [PW17]: Matthew 6:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Commented [PW18]: Hebrews 11:13 (ESV)

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Commented [PW19]: Hebrews 11:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Commented [PW20]: Philippians 3:20 (ESV)

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Commented [PW21]: Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)

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."

Commented [PW22]: 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Commented [PW23]: James 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

in Jesus and what He is teaching us through our difficulty, we will be positive and encouraged. Then we can offer a sacrifice of praise. The Jews could no longer offer sacrifices shortly after this letter was written, for the temple would be destroyed. The author is giving the Christian Hebrews a new way to sacrifice. It is for us as well. Praise God in the difficulties because you know God is using them for your good (Romans 8:28; James 1:2). That is our sacrifice of praise.

¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:16 He gave them two more ways to offer sacrifices that are pleasing to God. Those Jews still worshiping in the temple were no longer pleasing to God, and maybe that is a subtle point the author is making. The priests had rejected the sacrifice of Jesus and were still looking to animal sacrifice to atone for their sins. But there was a sacrifice that God would accept from followers of Jesus, praise, doing good, and sharing what you have with those in need (Luke 3:11).

We have had several in our congregation going through a difficult time with their health. A number of you have stepped up to give them rides, to cook meals, to visit them in rehab, and to just show you care by being there. I have a word for you. God is pleased with those sacrifices. You did something selfless and loving because you cared about your brother or sister in Christ (1 John 3:17). You've purchased the gifts that the homeless at Hope Cottage need. Well done. There are more needs to be met. I can give you a bunch of options. Some people need you to share what you have. Other people just need a visit. Some need help around the home. Do you want to please God, not for your salvation, for He has taken care of that, but just because you love Him? Here is how! Praise Him. Do good. Share what you have.

We are strangers and pilgrims in the earth, and we belong to another kingdom, but we have everything in Jesus. We have the blessing of fellowship with His body, our fellow believers. We have an eternal hope. We have God given leaders whose faith we can imitate. The unselfish people of God step out of this world's expected behavior and bear the shame and reproach of Jesus, gladly accepting the grace of God. They sacrificially praise Him continually. They do good and share out of the overflow of Christ in their hearts. This is God's call to us as His body to represent Him in the world. Will you respond to God's love by accepting the call of God to live a selfless life of joyful service?

Questions

- 1 What were the previous instructions?
- 2 How can we practice verse 7?
- 3 Why does Jesus unchangeable nature encourage us?
- 4 What strengthens our hearts?
- 5 Discuss the shadow and reality of verses 11 and 12.
- 6 How can we get an eternal perspective?
- 7 Why should we always be at peace?
- 8 How often should we offer praise to God?
- 9 What are the three sacrifices we can bring?
- 10 What are some needs within the body? Can you help?

Commented [PW24]: Romans 8:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Commented [PW25]: James 1:2 (ESV)

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

Commented [PW26]: Luke 3:11 (ESV)

¹¹ And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."

Commented [PW27]: 1 John 3:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?