

Hebrews 13:7-25
Identify Fully with Christ and He Will Gladly Identify Fully with you
20171231

You are radically different, so be radically different, for Christ's blood has made you so!

Introduction:

In the Spring of 2001 I was fresh out of The Basic School, a newly minted 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. I had been in the Marines for 9 months and really had no idea who I was, what my identity was within the organization. Yes, I knew the rank structure, I knew the way the organization was to function, but you see the whole time I had been in I had been with others just like me. First other Officer Candidates and then when I was commissioned with other newly commissioned officers.

But now 9 months after I first put on the uniform I finally begin to realize who I was in the broader organization of the military. I was down in Pensacola FL, my second assignment in the Marine Corps, I was there in the Panhandle of Florida for another training school. I had not yet earned a real job, but as a commissioned officer I was qualified to do all kinds of things. Namely I could stand duty. It was on my first tour as the Group Duty Officer that I recognized who I was and how I was to be identified in the Marine Corps and in the Navy. What was it that helped me learn so much in one day? It was the way people reacted to me as a Marine Officer, not just as another student.

I really wasn't very effective as an officer, I just saw myself as a student, trying to advance through one more training cycle, I was really just focused on myself. I wasn't even thinking about how much influence I had over the lives of others simply by the position I held as an Officer, as a leader of Marines.

This is what happens to us as believers as well. We fail to recognize how truly different we are because of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Because of this, our inability to recognize our difference we flounder, we stagnate not really going anywhere, we are tossed about to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Eph 4:14) and are led astray by whatever course culture takes. Our soul may be secure, but our Christian witness is worthless because we don't know what we are even to stand for.

To close out the letter a final message needed to be heard by the original recipients and much the same needs to be heard by us. The main idea from our teaching today is that as a believer: **You are radically different, so be radically different, for Christ's blood has made you so!** Our radical differences show up in the way we worship, the way we serve, the way we love, the way we relate, and whether or not we are content. All areas Ben covered last week in vv1-6. This week we are picking up from there and moving through other areas that are vital to acceptable worship. The author of Hebrews concluded ch 12 with an acute focus on worship with reverence and awe vv28-29 *"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving..."* Those two verses describe very well the direction the Holy Spirit takes with the remainder of the book. *The description we see here makes me think of an arrow leaving the bow, the author is nocking an arrow, marking the trajectory for the life of the believer and confidently letting it fly. You see once God does a saving work through Christ in your life, then you have been fired straight away towards your eternal reward in the unshakable kingdom, and your flightpath is to be steadfast, straight towards your objective, and it is kept on course by acceptable and constant worship.* But in reality, we act more like a sheep than an arrow in flight. We look at what other sheep are doing and go there, or we get distracted and wander off, our view is very limited and we miss out on nourishing pasture and clear streams of refreshing water settling instead for barren wilderness ranges and stagnate water.

We know who we are, we are sheep in need of shepherds (vv7-9, vv17-19)

1. **v7** *"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome..."* Our Heavenly Father is so tender and wise. He has ordered his church in such a way that leaders are present.
 - a. We use the term shepherds to describe these leaders. They know the flock they are over and the flock knows them. They guide the sheep to rich, green, and nourishing pastures. That is a steady diet of God's word through preaching and teaching. That is where their authority comes from, it is the very basis, the foundation, if you will, of how they lead.
 - b. This will bear itself out over a lifetime & will be observable by those they have led.

- c. It is my hope that you have already experienced this in your life. That you can think fondly of a leader, or leaders, who have led you consistently in the truths of Scripture.
 - i. Being exposed to these types of leaders brings encouragement to those who have been fed from the word of God by them. Do you see that here even at the start of our preaching passage this morning?
 - 1. Remember your leaders. This is an active verb, a continuing to remember those who have spoken the word of God to you. These leaders are then to be considered as examples to be followed.
 - 2. Their way of life should point to what we see in **v8** *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”* It is Christ who is always consistent, and it is Christ who the leaders put their hope in for salvation. Faithful Christians leaders will have spent a lifetime pursuing the unchanging Savior, Jesus Christ and encouraging others to do the same.
- 2. Godly leaders will provide warnings about danger, just as we see here in **v9** *“Do not be led away by diverse...”*
 - a. We have covered this previously in the book of Hebrews, **Heb 2:1-3a**
 - b. Godly leaders in the church will continue to preach and teach the truth of Scripture. *The message of God’s grace will saturate the air and will be the elixir of strength that we each need when we are tempted to sample from the platter of diverse and strange teachings which will only have the subtle yet dangerous effect of leading us away.*
- 3. **v9** reminds us to be strengthened by the free gift of God, the gift of his Son Jesus Christ, to receive the grace of God through Christ, but it also reminds us that our strength is not derived from foods.
 - a. This verse is not talking about our caloric need for food to keep the functions of the body working. Rather it is speaking of religious and ceremonial foods, the Jewish people were able to eat and partake in many such foods, so were the people surrounding them who were not Jewish, but pagan worshippers. They could buy food sacrificed to idols in the market and similar to those who practiced Judaism would have meals of religious significance.
 - b. *You are thinking, okay, not a problem today let’s move on. I agree, but the concept is still with us, still hinders us. If you were to analyze your faith, your experience with God what is present that is outside of God’s grace that you count as necessary to experience him? Maybe it is a devotional book that you feel you must have, or a certain place you must pray, or a certain order to your morning that is absolutely necessary for you to have a quality encounter with the Lord. Let me put it this way, if you were stripped of everything, given a pair of inmate pajamas, and put into solitary confinement would you be able to worship God in that place?*
- 4. As we continue looking at the importance of leaders in our text, it is not only our past leaders that are to be remembered continually and their example of faith imitated, but the leaders that are present. The leaders present are to be obeyed and submitted to. **v17** *“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over...”* Yes, this is another command. The author of Hebrews is telling the recipients of the letter to obey their current leaders and submit to them.
 - a. Church if we were to take **v17** and overlay it here locally and follow it as a command that means you would have to trust three men who have been appointed as leaders as undershepherds, you would have to obey and submit to them, that is your elders and by extension, at times, the assistants to the elders, your deacons. The leaders understand that they are also under authority, they are to be held accountable to God for the work they do.

- i. What does this obedience look like practically speaking? First and foremost it is not obedience to commands that are apart from God's word. God's word is where the authority held by the church leadership is derived from. That means instruction given needs to be grounded in God's word.

- 1. How are you to submit to that type of leadership? *By allowing yourself to be sanctified through the exercising of your faith. You hear a message preached, you understand it is from the word of God, you notice your life is not in conformance with what is clearly presented in God's word, so you confess, repent, and continue growing in your faith.*

- ii. Believe me when I say we each are acutely aware of the verses in the Bible that say we will give an account for the way we lead. Such as this verse here in Hebrews another is **James 3:1** *"Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness."* Many Scriptures that condemn poor leadership.

- 1. **Jeremiah 23:4 & 1 Peter 5:1-3**

- b. You might be asking yourself, how do I obey and submit so my leaders are able to give an account with joy, and not with groaning? It is simple, be known. Remember your undershepherds take their cues from the Chief Shepherd Jesus, he said in **John 10:27** *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* How are we able to lead you and give an account of that leadership with joy?

- i. By knowing you, by seeing you follow faithfully God's commands. *That doesn't mean you are perfect and pretending to be perfect definitely causes groaning, when you hide, when you are unknown it causes groaning. So, dear brothers and sisters be honest and open, reveal areas that are being worked over in your life as you are exposed to the word of God.* Being this way will bring about joy as your progression in sanctification is steadily observed. This is because you are not viewed as static, but each day you are embracing what it means to be radically different because of the work of Christ.

5. **vv18-19** *"Pray for us, for we are sure that we have..."*

- a. Pray for us is another command, like we looked at with remember your leaders from **v7** and obey your leaders in **v17**, here we see the command to pray. He is demonstrating the character traits of a shepherd leader. He wants to be with these dear believers. To be near them, to answer their questions, to show them with the countenance of his face, the expression of his eyes, the inflections of his voice, that he earnestly wants to see them grow in their faith in Christ, to not be carried away by strange and diverse teaching, to be steadfast in the face of persecution.
- b. Church we are to follow this command as well. We are to be in prayer for the leaders of the church. It is so heart warming and encouraging to know that many of you are praying for us, praying for our families, praying for our protection, praying for our sanctification and development, and praying for the powerful proclamation of the Gospel to occur through the preaching of God's word.

Transition: We are sheep who need shepherds to guide us through life with the nourishing word of God, the shepherds would have no function apart from pointing us to Christ. Christ is central to the text we are covering this morning as he is rightfully central to the whole story of the Bible.

We know who Christ is, so we follow him (vv10-16, vv20-21)

- 1. How are we to know who Christ is? Through the special revelation of God's word. Look with me at some of the descriptive and figurative language describing Christ in **v10** *"We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat."*

- a. What does it mean when it says we have an altar? A big clue is the “we” is first person. The altar is something that belongs to Christians, the author is saying we, which includes himself and the believers he is writing to. By extension of them being believers, and those of us here who are believers, we also can say we have an altar.
2. Let’s then look at the next part of the verse, it says **v10b** “from which those who serve the tent have...”
 - a. The “those who serve” switches to third person, someone else, no longer we as believers, but those who serve at the tent or at the tabernacle; which of course had a physical altar. The altar there was used for offering sacrifices.
 - i. Some of the sacrifices could be eaten by the priests and the Levites, and others could not.
 - b. **Leviticus 16:27** “*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.*”
 - i. That is the context for **v11** “*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.*”
 3. What then is the author saying in **vv10-11**? We have an altar that is like the altar in the tabernacle, but it is exclusive to Christians. The altar we have excludes practicing Jews, in fact excludes any who would add anything to being saved by grace alone in Christ alone. What could this altar possibly be? It is a metaphor for Christ, figurative language that speaks of one thing that was common and understood by the people, that being the altar for animal sacrifice, and substituting what was widely known, the altar, with Christ, our altar. The author is saying **You are radically different, so be radically different, for Christ’s blood has made you so!**
 - a. He is driving home the message of the whole letter that Christ is superior in everyway to the shadows, to the copies, of the things that were used previously. The curtain was torn in two, the old covenant was done away with and the new covenant was established in Christ. The people no longer had to worship God in the manner they had previously and they should no longer want to because they have experienced Christ.
 4. **vv12-14** “*So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify.....*” Radically different. Who would want to identify with the portions of the sacrifice that were burned outside the city gate? Those portions were unclean, those were the parts that were unacceptable to God, they were not even able to be partaken as food for the priests because of their association with sin.
 - a. But church don’t you see? Christ, our altar, our sacrifice for sin, did away with the punishment for sin by being the perfect sacrifice, and by taking the punishment upon himself. So, now we want to identify with him, because it is in him that our atonement is permanent, when we place our faith in Christ we know he is guaranteeing our entry into the city that is to come.
 - b. We are willing to live differently, behave differently, and suffer the consequences of being different because our citizenship is no longer here! No, praise be to God through the blood of Christ our citizenship has been transferred to the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - c. Realizing we have an altar in Christ, a once and for all altar, we willingly identify with Christ. We don’t count it as strange to be treated with contempt by those outside of the Kingdom. We humbly bear the reproach he endured and rejoice to be considered worthy to suffer for his name (**Acts 5:41**).
 5. In this state and with our altar being Christ we continue our acceptable worship differently. Look with me at **vv15-16** “*Through him then let us continually offer...*”

- a. When we know who Christ is we are able to follow him. The author of Hebrews is appealing to this truth. He is saying recognize the huge difference between you in Christ and those who are apart from Christ. No longer attempt to worship as you once did, but worship as Christ would have you worship.
 - i. Offer up a sacrifice of praise to God by acknowledging the name of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. We are to be known by our praise. **Psalm 50:14** *“Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High,...”*
 - ii. Do good & share what you have. These are our acts of love.
 - 1. As John Piper defines love, our joy in God overflows to meet the needs of others.
- 6. I’m so grateful these things do not need to be done, and should not attempt to be done in my own strength, they don’t need to be done in your own strength, but masterfully written in **vv20-21** we see God works **through** his faithful servants to be this way. *“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead....”*
 - a. We identify with Christ, who God brought from the dead. God also brings us from the dead when we place our faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b. He makes us part of the eternal covenant.
 - c. We are then equipped with everything good in order to please God as we serve in our acceptable acts of worship. Offering sacrifices of praise, doing good, and sharing what we have through Jesus Christ, he is our altar, our conduit for right worship.

Transition: When we know how Christ is and we follow him we will naturally notice others who are doing the same and we will desire to flock together in fellowship. That desire is beautifully described in the last three verses of chapter 13.

We know who the flock is, so we desire fellowship (vv22-25)

- 1. **vv22-25** *“I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation,.....”*
 - a. Have you noticed the great amount of tenderness the author has used in this whole book? Even here at the end of the letter, he gives this personal appeal, to bear with his word of exhortation. He doesn’t want to let this group of Christians to be led astray, to become ineffective in their faith.
 - i. So, the Holy Spirit impressed upon him to pen a letter that is fully inspired and included in the canon of Holy Scripture. We have benefited from the study of this book, but it was not written apart from the use of a man devoted to God who wanted to work out his faith with others. A man who fully recognized the costs of being associated with the name of Christ was becoming increasingly perilous.
 - b. He shared nourishing instruction with the people, but also here personal details that would also be an encouragement. Those people would have known of Timothy’s imprisonment, and now it is an answer to prayer to share that Timothy has been released. In addition to that a trip to see them in person as soon as God would allow is to be anticipated.
 - c. Greet the leaders, great the saints, that is the Christians. Other saints, some that they may know of or may not, but what matters is that they are all living for the city that is to come, so the author sends greetings from those who had come from Italy.
 - d. Finally, the last verse in the book, the close of the letter Grace be with all of you. Because apart from the Grace of God we have nothing. Praise God for the Grace he has shown through Jesus Christ. It is what binds us together across time and space as believers. It is what allows us to flock together in fellowship under our Chief Shepherd.

Conclusion

How do we remember this book of the Bible? How do we remember and apply what we have studied this morning at the end of the book and at the start of our new year? I ask those questions because I don't want us to be like I was as that 2nd Lieutenant, who was ineffective as a leader. Remember my ineffectiveness was not due to my position, that had been declared by the President of the United States with my commission. It was my own inability to embrace my position that had made me so ineffective, I wanted to just identify as a student.

But what about you believer? Are you ready to go to Christ? That going to him means you go to him outside the camp, outside what is comfortable, outside what is mainstream, and you bear the reproach he endured.

Seth, shared a few months ago about the Christian concert he was attending, waiting in line with those who were ready to go into the venue, but separated were the street evangelists. The picture painted of the scene was indicting. It reminded me of Jesus' indictment of the Pharisees when they picked at him for not conforming to the traditions of men, he said you honor me with your lips, but your heart is far from me and in vain do you worship me (Mt 15:8-9).

That is not to be you dear brother and sister, for you are to go to him. Go to him where? Outside! To embrace who you are as a new creation and offer up the sacrifices that he desires, praising the name of Jesus, doing good, and sharing what you have. Yes, you will bear reproach, you will receive scorn, you will become disgraced, but it doesn't matter! For the joy that is set before you friend is an eternal city that is yet to come, a kingdom that is unshakable, that is your target, you are in flight and your trajectory has been set. **You are radically different, so be radically different, for Christ's blood has made you so!**

Family

Table Talk



December 31, 2017



GOD'S TRUTH

You are radically different, so be radically different, for Christ's blood has made you so!

Family Discussion

1. Do you know who the leaders of your local church are? What qualifications are required for them to be leaders in the church? Ask your parents if they remember any leaders who spoke the word of God faithfully, and what in their way of life was worth imitating.
2. Leadership plays a prominent role in life. In the passage covered on Sunday three commands were given to the recipients of the letter in regards to their leaders. Those three commands were: remember, obey/submit, and pray. Look up the passages that go along with those commands and discuss how they are being worked out in your home. How are you practicing obedience to your parents? It is good practice for life!
3. When you are young you may long for days filled with adventure. Does that describe you? It may seem like being brought up in a Christian home is not all that exciting, but did you ever think that you are able to live for a city that is yet to come if you identify with Christ as your Savior? That sounds really adventurous!

Key Verse



"Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."

Hebrews 13:13-14 (ESV)

TABLE READING

Lead your kids further into God's Word...

1. 1 Tim 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, Hebrews 13:7

2. Hebrews 13:7, 17, 18, Colossians 3:20, Ephesians 6:1

3. Hebrews 13:12-16, 2 Corinthians 1:8-11



Scripture Memory: Hebrews 13:16

"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." - Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (ESV)

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