

Hebrews 13:7-17; "Follow the Leader" June 29, 2025

I. Welcome & Review

A. Good morning. "Ohayougozaimasu". Welcome to Calvary Chapel Iwakuni. It's great to be here with you all as we gather together to worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

1. *Welcome any new faces and those streaming online.*

B. Before we continue any further, let's go ahead and dismiss our elementary aged children to their Sunday School classrooms.

1. *(2nd Service; Remember to dismiss the Bible English class.)*

C. For the rest of us, we will be continuing our way through the book of Hebrews picking up where we last left off in chapter 13.

1. Last week we began the 13th and final chapter of the book of Hebrews by looking at the first six verses of the chapter in a study I entitled "Loving Out Loud".

2. In our study we noted how the author is beginning to wrap up his letter and listing out a number of short exhortations and commands for his audience. And we noted how many of these things were connected to and involved the love we are to have as followers of Christ.

a. We noted how love is something that is meant to be demonstrated in our lives, it's something that is meant to be seen by others, and experienced by others.

b. People will know that we are Jesus' disciples based upon our love for one another. And people can't see what is held in on the inside, it needs to be put out there for others to be able to recognize it.

c. Loving our loud involves a number of different things in our lives and in our study last week we noted 6 things that are involved in loving out loud.

i. We noted how loving out loud involves continuing to love and growing in it day by day knowing that it will never fail.

ii. It involves opening up our homes and our lives so that we may minister to others and pour into them.

iii. Loving out loud involves considering others and their circumstances and the experiences they go through.

iv. We also noted how even our marriages, for those of us who are married, can be a beautiful illustration of the love between Christ and us, His church.

v. We noted that loving our loud involves being content with what the Lord had provided and trusting in Him.

vi. And lastly, we noted how loving out loud involves overcoming fear and how God's perfect love working in us and through us allows us to cast out all our fears, to not worry about the things of this world because we are confident in God's love and care for us.

3. Well, this morning, we're going to pick up our account in verse 7 and we're going to read all the way down to verse 17 of chapter 13 in a message I've entitled "**Follow the Leader**".

4. If you haven't done so already, will you please open up your bible and make your way to Hebrews chapter 13?

a. If you don't have a Bible, I would strongly encourage you to get one. There are a number of free Bible apps you can download upon your phone or tablet. Of course, we have Bibles you can borrow if you'd like. They are situated underneath some of the chairs around you; feel free to reach down and borrow one for our time of study today.

5. Once you are there in Hebrews chapter 13, I'd like to ask you to rise to your feet in honor of God and His Holy Word. I'm going to read through out text from my bible, do your best to follow along in your own.

6. The author of Hebrews continues to drive home his final commands and exhortations with the following in Hebrews chapter 13 vs. 7... (*R & P*)

II. Intro

A. "Follow the Leader" was a game that I played as a kid growing up. I'm not so sure if kids today still find it as amusing and entertaining as I did. Back in my day, when dinosaurs roamed the earth, according to my kids, we found ways to entertain ourselves and be creative in having fun.

1. Even as I got older, we played variations of "Follow the Leader".

2. When I was an adolescent boy, my friends and I would ride our bmx bikes all over various trails and tracks and we would play a form of follow the leader; a trail of us all going over the same jumps, trying to pull off the same tricks.

3. Later as a young adult, I got into snowboarding and my friends and I would head down the slopes playing follow the leader where we would take turns being in front and leading our small group down the slopes, over obstacles, and cutting through the woods. It was a lot of fun.

4. That is until my friend Doug, tried to get too much air off this tabletop in Big Bear. He ended up landing flat on his back and hitting his head pretty hard on the packed snow. By the grace of God, he only ended up with a concussion and a very big headache.

5. When he hit that tabletop at the speed he was going, I decided instead of busting up my head, I would use my head, and not follow him, and I'm very glad that I made that decision.

B. "Follow the Leader", in its various forms, whether on the playground, out on your bike, or on the slopes, or any other place you may have engaged in this game can be a lot of fun.

1. But it can also be very dangerous if the person you're following isn't looking out for your best interests or is trying to push beyond the limits, and getting people to do things they really have no business attempting.

- C. In our text this morning, the author is going to address a few different things that are bookended with exhortations towards following and yielding to the different spiritual leaders God has placed in our lives.
1. God has placed various leaders in our lives that we are to follow. In a way, life as we know it today, could be likened to one big game of follow the leader.
 2. The questions we must ask ourselves and consider in our life is “who are we following?” and “where are they leading us?”. “Do these leaders have our best interests in mind, or are they trying to lead us to places we have no business being a part of?”
- D. Let’s take a look at our opening verse once again and see what exhortations and commands he had for his audience and consider how they apply to each of us as well. Read verse 7 again with me.
- III. Hebrews 13:7;
- A. The first thing I want to highlight in our study this morning are the two commands the author gives for us in verse 7. When it comes to leaders, the author commands us to both **remember them and to follow them**.
- B. The phrase “those who rule over you” refers to those who have gone before us, those who have led the way. It speaks of leaders, and in this context, it is obviously speaking of spiritual leaders
- C. Both the words “remember” and “follow” are written in the imperative mood, meaning this is written as a command for us to follow. We are to remember and follow the spiritual leaders who have gone before us and led the way.
1. Now based upon the context of this verse, it would seem that perhaps the author has in mind, some of the spiritual leaders who may have already finished their race and gone on to be with the Lord.
 2. The readers are to remember them. The sense of this word seems to be that of holding these people in their memory, not forgetting all that they had taught them and done in helping them grow in their own walk and understanding of the Lord.
 3. The author commands them to consider the outcome of their conduct and to then follow their faith. The word “consider” means to examine closely, or to consider attentively.
 4. They were to consider the entirety of their life, their way of life, their conduct and ultimately how they ended their lives continuing in the faith.
 5. And after considering their faith, and examining their lives, the exhortation was then to follow after them. To imitate them, to do as they did. This is something the apostle Paul wrote about often.
 - a. To the church in Corinth he wrote, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” (1 Co. 11:1)
 - b. To the church in Ephesus he wrote, “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, and offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma.” (Eph. 5:1-2)
- c. To the church in Thessalonica he talked about how they had become followers of them and of the Lord” (1 Thes. 1:6a)
6. Our faith is one that has been passed down to us by others who have gone before us. And we are called to remember them, how they lived their entirety of their life for the Lord, and then we are to follow them.
- D. Now the author speaks of their conduct and specifically mentions one thing that these spiritual leaders were faithful to do and that is they were those who had spoken the Word of God to them.
1. And I cannot overemphasize how important this is. Spiritual leaders are called to faithfully preach, teach, and share the Word of God.
 2. I cannot tell you how many times I have had people come up to me through the years and mention how much they appreciate the fact that we teach the Word of God here at Calvary.
 3. And while it is an honor to teach God’s Word and I’m grateful to hear how people appreciate the word of God, at the same time, I’m somewhat baffled by the comment.
 4. Some people have been going to church their whole life and yet have never had anyone simply teach them the Word of God.
 5. I think to myself, “what else is there to teach?”. A pastor who does not teach the Word of God is failing in His calling and responsibility to shepherd the flock of God.
 6. It is my opinion that there are far too many inspirational talkers, and charismatic speakers, and gifted communicators, and passionate personalities serving in churches today, when what the church really needs is faithful teachers of the Word of God.
 7. The people of God don’t need leaders that are going to share their opinions on current events, or their commentary on pop culture, or their self-help seminars, or spiritual pep-talks. The people of God need leaders who will feed them a steady diet of the Word of God.
 8. That is our goal here at Calvary. We want to take you through the Word of God and simply teach it to you, simply. That you may leave this place having heard the Word of God and being able to apply it to your life; that you may grow thereby it.
 - a. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17)
 - b. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- c. We need God’s Word to help grow us and mature us, to equip us and make us complete in Him.

- d. And God promises in Isaiah 55 that “as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” This is a promise of God pertaining to His Word. (**Is. 55:10-11**)
- e. If we will simply share God’s Word, it will go forth and accomplish that for which God sends it. It will not return void. There is no such guarantee on any of the words I speak. Or the words that I speak about God’s Word. God’s Word is the only one that comes with a guarantee to work in our hearts and lives, to accomplish God’s plans and purposes in us and through us.
- f. So, we place a high priority on simply going through the Scriptures and teaching them simply. So that we may know God and His Word and His will for our lives.

E. Back to our text. Let’s look at our next verse and see how it relates to the idea of following the leader. Read with me verse 8.

IV. Hebrews 13:8;

A. The next thing we must note when it comes to following the leader, is that ultimately Jesus Christ is our greatest leader; He is the ultimate leader.

Our **focus must be upon Him as our greatest example**.

1. Jesus is the head of the church; He is the senior pastor if you will. I am just an under shepherd blessed to serve part of His flock. Jesus is our greatest leader and following the leader means that we focus our hearts and lives upon following Him.
2. I am reminded of what the author wrote in our last chapter at the very beginning of chapter 12. He wrote how we are to be “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,” (**Heb. 12:2a**)
3. While it is great to have such a great cloud of witnesses from Hebrews chapter 11, those heroes of faith to look up to. And it is wonderful to have spiritual leaders who have gone before us and faithfully shared the word with us. The truth of the matter is that none of them can compare to the author and finisher of our faith.
4. He is the only leader who ever lived a perfect life. All the others fell short in one way or another. They weren’t the perfect example, because they were fallen and sinful people unable to live according to the perfect standard of God and His righteousness. But Jesus did. He lived a perfect, sinless life for us and He is the author and finisher of our faith the one we can always look to and focus upon throughout our walk here on earth.

B. The author highlights how Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

1. Jesus does not change. His love for us does not change. The same love He had for you yesterday, is the same love He has for us today,

and is the same love He will have for us forever. It does not change because we have been good or if we’ve been bad. His love is constant.

2. His grace towards us does not change. His mercy does not change. His Word to us does not change. It will always be the same.

C. And how comforting it is to have Jesus as the anchor of our souls. For most of us, our lives are in a constant state of flux. Our lives are like a roller coaster filled with all sorts of ups and downs, twists and turns, and loop de loops that make it feel like our lives are turned upside down.

1. But in these crazy lives we live, we have one constant that we can cling to, a constant that will never ever change no matter how crazy life gets.
2. Jesus is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. When life brings change, different seasons, and rotating problems, the one constant we have is Jesus Christ. He is our rock, our fortress, our strong tower; He is our anchor in the midst of the seas of life and He holds us steady.
3. We can count on Him. We can rely upon Him. He isn’t going to let us go. He’s going to be with us each and every step along the way. He will never leave us nor forsake us, as we noted last week.
4. In the midst of all the uncertainty and change, may we keep our focus upon Jesus Christ as our ultimate leader. He heart, His plans, His desires for us will never change and He will see us through.

D. May this truth comfort us and encourage us in our walk with Him.

E. Let’s continue to our next verse. Read verse 9 with me.

V. Hebrews 13:9;

A. Our verse opens up with yet another command, an imperative to not be carried about with various and strange doctrines.

1. The idea behind this word is like being driven by the wind, tossed to and fro like a small vessel riding upon the raging seas.
2. Ever since Jesus first came and established the truth of the gospel, the enemy has been doing his best to sew counterfeits, to spread false teachings and various and strange doctrines. And unfortunately these various and strange doctrines are still prevalent even today.
3. Often times they are really the same sort of things that have been taught since the first century but just repackaged in a slightly different way. The enemy is good at sewing false doctrines. Doctrines that are completely contrary to the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ.
4. Back in the first century there were these people going around called Judaizers. They were trying to claim that in order to be truly saved, you needed to not only believe upon Jesus Christ, but also had to adhere to and continue to follow the Law of Moses.
 - a. And this sort of stuff still gets shared today. People today teach and think that we should be following the Law; that we should be keeping the dietary restrictions of the Law, that we should be keeping the

feasts, and that we need to keep the Sabbaths and that we should worship on Saturdays instead of Sunday.

- b. Paul the apostle said, "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind." (**Rom. 14:5**)
 - c. Those things aren't that important. Observing special days, or eating special foods, don't make you more holy, and they certainly don't save you. These things were only shadows of things that were to yet to come. That is what Paul said in his letter to Colossians.
 - d. He wrote, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." (**Col. 2:16-17**)
 - e. It's all about Jesus. Those other things aren't that important.
5. Obviously, some of the audience the author writes to were being told that they needed to abstain from certain foods. They were being told that they needed to follow the dietary restrictions from the Law.
- a. But those things were of no effect. They were unprofitable. They did absolutely nothing to help all those people who were occupied with following these dietary laws.
 - b. The dietary laws were powerless to address our true problem. Our problem is one of the heart, it is our sinful nature. And the food we put into our bodies does nothing to remedy that problem. It has no power, no benefit spiritually whatsoever.
- B. Instead, our hearts **must be established by grace**. That word established carries with it the idea of being set firm, strengthened, or to be steadfast.
1. In the midst of our crazy, topsy-turvy world, we can be set firm and made steady by the grace of God; strengthened by the grace of God.
 2. The grace of God is what saves us and it is the grace of God that establishes us.
 3. How important it is that we stick to the unchanging gospel of grace. Various and strange doctrines will blow through, often times trying to lead us away from grace and into some sort of works based religion.
 4. But we are established by the grace of God. We are strengthened by grace, not by the works of our flesh.
 5. God's grace, His unmerited, undeserved favor, is what we cling to. It's all about Him and the grace He has lavished upon us.
- C. Let's continue in our text by taking a look at the next few verses; vs. 10-12.
- VI. Hebrews 13:10-12;
- A. Here in these verses the author once again brings up some of the rituals and statutes that were associated with the Law and compares them to the work of Jesus Christ.

1. The details from these verses are speaking about the events that would transpire on the annual Day of Atonement. The details of which are found in Leviticus chapter 16.
 - a. The priests would offer all sorts of sacrifices daily for all sorts of different reasons. Most of the time the animal, or at least part of the animal, the meat, would be placed upon the altar and burned as a sweet smelling aroma before the Lord.
 - b. But not so on the Day of Atonement. On the Day of Atonement, only the blood of the animals slain would be brought into the sanctuary, into the Holy of Holies, by none other than the high priest.
 - c. And the high priest would then proceed to sprinkle the blood of the animals slain for the sins of the priest and the sins of the people upon the mercy seat which sat upon the ark of the covenant.
 - d. The animals that were slain as part of the Day of Atonement were taken outside the camp and their bodies were there burned. They were seen as defiled, as unclean, since they believed the sins of the people and priest were transferred to them when they laid their hands upon the animals and confessed their sins.
 - e. So these animals were unclean, they were stained with sin, and they were removed from the camp and burned outside the camp.
 2. This annual feast would happen each year during the late harvest and each year the high priest would have to go through this ceremonial act of atoning for his own sins and the sins of the people.
- B. In contrast, Jesus took His own blood instead of the blood of goats and bulls, and gave His own life as a sacrifice for sin once and for all.
1. Hebrews 9 explained all of this to us. How Christ came as "High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (**Heb. 9:11-14**)
- C. Not only does the author highlight the contrast, but he also draws a parallel. Just like how the sacrifice from the Day of Atonement was taken outside of the camp, so too Jesus was in essence taken outside the camp when He went to the cross of Calvary.
1. The cross of Calvary was situated outside the city walls. John's gospel tells us that Jesus, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgatha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center." (**Jn. 19:17-18**)

2. Just as the slain animal was judged to be defiled and stained by sin, and cast out of the camp, so too the people judged Jesus as being defiled and unclean, deserving of destruction outside the camp, outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.
 3. The altar the author speaks of points to Jesus Christ and the cross of Calvary. The altar was the place where the sacrifice was made. And Jesus' sacrifice was made upon the cross of Calvary outside the walls of the Temple Mount and outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem.
 4. The author states we have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. Why do they have no right to partake of the altar, the cross of Calvary?
 - a. Because they serve the tabernacle. Because they are clinging to and believing that following the Law will sanctify them, that it will make them holy and pure. You can't serve the tabernacle, or better understood as the Temple, for it was the Temple that eventually replaced the tent Tabernacle; you can't serve at the temple going through all your religious works and at the same time partake of the grace that came through the altar of the cross of Calvary.
 - b. You can't have it both ways. If you serve the tabernacle, meaning, if you serve the Law and attempt to adhere to it, then there is no place for grace. You have to fulfill every single aspect of the Law in order to fulfill it. Fail in one tiny little area and you're done, you're guilty of breaking the Law and you'll have to make another sacrifice there at temple if you want to try and atone for your sin.
 5. **We follow Jesus** because it is only through faith in Jesus and His completed work upon the cross that we can be sanctified. That we can be made clean and purified.
 - a. The word "sanctify" speaks of being made holy. God calls us to be holy for He is holy, and our only hope of being holy is found in and through the sanctifying work of Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary.
 - b. Hebrews 10:10 affirms this stating, "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (**Heb. 10:10**)
 - c. Hebrews 10:14 proclaims, "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." (**Heb. 10:14**)
 - d. Through His sacrifice upon the cross, Jesus sanctifies us. He sets us apart and cleanses us from the stain of sin, He purifies us from our own sinful nature, and He makes us holy before the Lord.
- D. Which leads to another important point the author brings up in verses 13-14. Take a look at those verses with me.
- VII. Hebrews 13:13-14;
- A. Here the author calls out his audience and draws the proverbial line in the sand. It is time for them to stop toying with the idea of going back to

Judaism, it's time for them to stop trying to have one foot in Christ and the other in Judaism. They must choose to go forth to Jesus and expose themselves to the reproach of Christ.

1. Following Jesus will cost us. Following Jesus we lead us to **hearing the reproach of Christ**. And this was the one of the biggest concerns for these people.
2. The author is writing to a group of people who were raised in Jewish homes, who had converted to Christianity, abandoning their old way of life and their family traditions, and it was causing problems for them.
3. We know this because the author already told us so back in chapter 10 when he wrote about how they were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations while they became companions of those who were so treated. (**Heb. 10:33**)
4. They were being tempted into returning to forms of Judaism simply to relief themselves of the pressure and persecution they were experiencing because of their faith in Christ.
5. What they were experiencing was the reproach of Christ. Jesus Christ was reviled, He was despised, He was rejected and persecuted.
 - a. Jesus warned us that this would happen. He taught His disciples, "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." (**Jn. 15:20a**)
 - b. That's a promise from Jesus Christ Himself. It's not one we like, but it is one we can count upon.
 - c. It was true back then in the first century and it's still true today. In today's world it seems as though you can have any sort of belief system, any sort of religious beliefs, and you'll be championed and supported in your views.
 - d. But the moment you identify as a believer and a follower of Jesus Christ, then immediately there is a target on your back. And this world will call you all sorts of names like intolerant, racist, sexist, homophobic, religious extremist, bigots, and a whole host of other slanderous labels.
6. Standing for Christ will make you enemies in this world. But that's just it, we're not of this world, this is not our home and we shouldn't be looking to be made comfortable here. For we are living for our future heavenly city that city whose builder and maker is the Lord as discussed back in Hebrews 11 with Abraham.
 - a. "By faith", Abraham "dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (**Heb. 11:9-10**)

- b. He lived as a sojourner; as one simply passing through, choosing to dwell in tents, in temporary structures, for he knew that this world was not his ultimate home.
 - c. The Scriptures describe how our citizenship is in heaven and how we eagerly wait for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 3:20)
 - d. We are citizens of heaven. We long for and look forward to the day we get to inherit that eternal city with our Lord and Savior in heaven; the new Jerusalem created by the Lord Himself.
- B. The author is calling these people out of the shadows. It’s time to come out of the city, outside the camp, to come out of the old religious ways of Judaism and make their stand with Christ and let the chips fall where they may.
1. If they end up bearing the reproach of Christ, then they shouldn’t feel bad about it. They should be blessed.
 2. Peter writes in his first epistle, in chapter 4 vs. 12 “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters.” (basically don’t bring the reproach upon yourself by your own sinful behavior). Verse 16 continues, “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.” (1 Pt. 4:12-16)
 3. Being persecuted for the sake of Christ is a blessing; it is us partaking of, in a small manner, the sufferings of Christ. And we are told that the Spirit of God rests upon us and that we can actually glorify God in and through these sufferings, these reproaches.
 4. It was time for them to fully commit to living for Jesus no matter what would happen to them. And the application for us is the same.
 5. We can’t keep one foot in Christ and the other foot in this world. It’s time we live fully for the Lord. No more compromise, no more half-hearted devotion.
 6. God is calling us to serve Him, to live for Him, to glorify Him, and this may cause us to lose some friends, and this may cause us to have to make some changes in our own behavior and lifestyle.
 7. We need to come out of the city, outside the camp, outside the false sense of safety this world tries to offer and live boldly for Jesus Christ; to deny ourselves, pick up our cross daily, and follow Him. (Lk. 9:23)
- C. Let’s continue in our text, before we run out of time. Take a look at what the author writes in verses 15 and 16.
- VIII. Hebrews 13:15-16;

- A. Here the author brings up the kind of sacrifices we are to make as part of our faith in Christ. The Jews were all about making sacrifices; whether that was animals or dietary restrictions, or tithes of herbs and mint, they loved to present their sacrifices to God.
1. But none of those things were beneficial to them. God did not take pleasure in them.
 - a. Psalm 51 states, “For you do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.” God wants our hearts first and foremost. (Ps. 51:16-17)
 2. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders for their outward displays of righteousness because their insides were corrupt and evil.
 - a. He said to them, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness.” (Lk. 11:39)
 - b. And He continued proclaiming “woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God.” (Lk. 11:42a)
- B. So we understand that God wants our hearts; He wants us to love Him, to follow Him, to live for Him, to please Him. And here in our text the author gives us two kinds of sacrifices that God is well pleased with.
1. Number 1, we see that God is well pleased with our sacrifice of praise.
 - a. Praising God is something we ought to do all the time; the author says we are to do so continually.
 - b. We have so much to be thankful for when it comes to Christ and what He has done for us. He has forgiven us our sins, He has paid our debt, and He has given to us His righteous standing before the Lord. If that doesn’t cause you to want to praise Him, then I don’t think you understand the magnitude of what that means.
 - c. Without Christ we would be hopelessly lost in our sins and destined to spend eternity in a place that was created for the devil and his minions; a place the Bible calls hell. The fact that Jesus Christ saved us from this eternal judgment and damnation ought to cause us to praise Him each and every single day.
 - d. Praising God involves giving thanks to Him and His name. And for some of us it may be a sacrifice. It may be difficult, it may be costly, it may make you feel uncomfortable. But don’t let that keep you from offering up your sacrifice of praise.
 2. Number 2, not only is God pleased with our sacrifice of praise, but also through our sacrifice of good works and sharing with others.
 - a. Ministering to the needs and cares of others. Doing good, loving your neighbor, ministering to the hurting, reaching out to the lost. All these things are things that God is well pleased with.

- b. When we do good, when we follow our Lord and do the good things He has left for us to do, it brings pleasure to our Lord. We not only bless others, but we bless the Lord through our actions.
 - 3. And so, **as we follow the Lord**, may we continually offer up our sacrifices of praise to Him and continue to do the things He has asked of us, to love others and do good unto them.
 - C. Take a look at our last verse and we'll wrap up our time of study. The author comes back to spiritual leaders and concludes with the following...
- IX. Hebrews 13:17;
- A. Here the author gives two more commands once again pertaining to spiritual leaders.
 - 1. It would seem that the spiritual leaders from our opening verse may have dealt with those leaders who had died and gone on to be with the Lord, while the spiritual leaders mentioned here in verse 17 more than likely pertain to their current spiritual leaders, the pastors and elders of the church.
 - B. The two commands the author gives as it pertains to the spiritual leaders in our lives is that we are **to obey them and be submissive** towards them.
 - 1. Now, to some of you that may seem a bit scary or make you feel a little uncomfortable. Being asked to obey and submit to others isn't something that most are real keen on.
 - 2. But listen up church family, it doesn't have to be something you worry about and are concerned about as long as you have placed yourself under good spiritual leaders; spiritual leaders like the ones we've already talked about at the opening of our text, spiritual leaders who speak, teach, and preach the Word of God to you.
 - 3. If you are in a church where the emphasis is upon teaching the Word of God and you are sitting under good, solid, spiritual leaders, then you need not worry about having to obey them and submit to them, for they will simply be relaying truths and commands that come from the Word of God. They're just telling you what God has said, and we don't need to be scared of listening to, obeying, and submitting to the Word of God.
 - 4. Good spiritual leaders are those who watch out for our souls.
 - a. The phrase "watch out" in the original Greek is a compound word that literally means without sleep. The idea is that they are watchful, they are awake and attentive to the needs of the church body. They are concerned about us and even lose sleep in their ministry unto us.
 - b. And they do so with the understanding that they will be held accountable by the Lord for the way in which they ministered to and tended to the needs of God's flock.
 - c. As I mentioned earlier, I'm just an under shepherd here. This isn't my church. This is Jesus' church.
- d. I've just been given the opportunity to serve Him and pastor over a small portion of His flock, and I will one day have to stand before the Lord and give an account for my stewardship of His church.
 - i. I take this very seriously. I know the warning from James 3 which reads, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." (**James 3:1**)
 - ii. I'm going to be held accountable for the things that I say standing behind this pulpit. And so I spend a lot of time in study of God's Word to ensure that what I bring forth is the truth and not just my opinions or my thoughts or ideas.
 - iii. I'm going to be held accountable, and I want to make sure that whatever I say is in accordance with God and His word.
- 5. Now the author ends with a nice little thought of letting our spiritual leaders lead us with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for us.
 - a. By the way you respond and treat your spiritual leaders you can make their job a joy, or you can make it a misery; you can make it a blessing or a burden.
 - b. If you will come alongside them, and pray for them, and partner together with them, then you will make their service a wonderful joy and blessing.
 - c. However, if you constantly complain and ridicule and undermine their authority. If you only take, take, take, without ever giving back. It can make things an incredibly challenging thing. And then nobody benefits in that situation.
 - d. For the ministry becomes a burden, and often results in a work of the flesh and nobody gets blessed when we're operating in the flesh
 - 6. My exhortation and encouragement, if I may be so bold as to make a request, is that you all do the former, not the latter.
 - 7. I can honestly say that I am blessed to serve this congregation, and it is a joy to partner together with so many of you. I appreciate you all and hope you know that you are a huge blessing to me and my family.
- C. Let's pray.