

Hebrews 13:7-12
“Positional Security”

I. Introduction

II. Vs. 7-9 Don't covet their position, imitate their faith

III. Vs. 10-12 We have an Altar

I. Introduction

Last week we began our look at the authors 2nd exhortation and how the Church and Christians needed to be viewed in society. The content of this view was through the lenses of persecution as the Christian was being exhorted to, *not let their life be consumed with the pursuit of financial gain as a means of escaping unfavorable circumstances, instead they were to continue to depend upon the Holy Spirit to strengthen them.* As noted the exhortation was followed by the reason for it as well as the consequences of having heeded it. *The reason for the exhortation was the guarantee of God that is established upon a positive double impossibility:*

1. **That God will never let you slip from His grasp; He will always uphold you!**
2. **That God will never let you down, leave you or abandon you!**

The consequences of believing those promises is given to us in the form of a quote from Psalm 118:6 as we boldly ask in light of those promises: “*The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*” It is here that we discover that **the immediate consequence** for our believing God’s promises is a security that can not be broken as we will be people who have found that true, “**Contentment is not in having what you want; it is wanting only what you have.**” **The promise of God is that He is our great and unending resource and will never fail us.** It is this promise that causes the Apostle Paul to write in Romans 8:31 “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” This is also what Abraham was saying in Genesis 14 when he said, “**I will only take what God is content to give me. I don't want riches from any other source.**” This kind of contentment causes the believer to not only be content but also, uncritical to those who have been granted by God to have more possessions. That exhortation based upon God’s promise not only covers the *pursuit of financial gain as a means of escaping unfavorable circumstances* it also includes *the pursuit of another person's position as a means of escaping unfavorable circumstances.*

II. Vs. 7-9 Don't covet their position, imitate their faith

Vs. 7-9 **The second area that we deal with the covetousness is in the area of position.**

The exhortation is to remember how those leaders who have died lived and spoke the word of God to them. Verse 8 This verse is commonly translated out of context but doctrinally correct. Yes, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever but what is at issue is not the unchangeableness of Jesus but rather the faith of those who had held of to Jesus as the Messiah even at the cost of their own life.

The body of Christ is full of diversity and as Paul would write in Romans 12:4-8 that, “**we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,** so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” There need’s to be diversity without division as we are inter connected to each other by the gifts that God has given to each believer.

The first thing we discover is that there is a structure of leadership within this body.

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. Verse 17 we remind us to, “*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*” The writer says that the readers were to “remember the lives of those who poured the word of God into you, who they lived their lives among you.” ***Don’t covet their position, imitate their faith!*** That’s the context of the statement about Jesus Christ as being the same yesterday and today and forever. What Jesus was to people who went before us is tremendous encouragement for us today as those saints went through like trials. It is this changeless Jesus that those who went before us found as the great refuge for believers in a changing world. It wasn’t the “***powerful faith***” of the Luther’s, Wesley’s, and Moody’s, it was the ordinary faith in a “***power filled God***” that made all the difference. Life in the body of Christ also involves a simplicity of belief.

The final warning in covetousness is with teaching and to be taking captive by strange teaching that would bolster or benefit someone’s adherence to it. The word here is “*stop being carried away*” by false teaching that apparently emphasized external religious activity. These religious teaching of works seemed to offer to those under going persecution a “technique” or practice that they could do to change their situation. It appears many of these were tied to dietary restrictions that some taught had spiritual value. Over the course of church history, we have seen these fades come and go such as “*as giving up meat for Lent, burning candles for certain observances, counting beads in the rosary*”. Through this letter the writer told us again and again that such biblical observances were shadows pointing towards the substance in Christ and that the shadows had no real value other than that.

III. Vs. 10-12 We have an Altar

Vs. 10-12 Chapter 13:10-14 are some of the most difficult to interpret in entire book of Hebrews, the reason for this is that they are written to Jew’s very familiar with the sacrificial system and would have comprehended the point the author was trying to make. The author reminds his readers that you can’t have both “***shadow and substance***” religion and relationship.

First in verses 10 we read, “***We have an altar***” the author says, “*from which those who those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.*” At issue in this statement is who is the “WE” that the writer includes himself as and what altar is he referring too described as “*those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.*” I believe that the “WE” is Christian Jews and the altar mentioned is the specific sacrifice of Christ in which none of the sacrifice was to be eaten afterwards. That sacrifice was the atonement for sin in which the remainder of the sacrifice was to burned outside the city. This took place on the “*Day of Atonement*”! It seems as though the believers are being told that Jesus’ sacrifice was being placed by some of the Hebrews as being less than an atoning sacrifice and as such they could still believe in Jesus and the Levitical sacrifices as well. The author of Hebrews makes it clear that those Jews who persisted in adhering to the sacrifices can and will have no part in the blessings of the New Covenant. These two sacrifices as a basis of right standing before God are mutually exclusive. The writer uses the phraseology of the ritual of partaking of the sacrificial meal.

There are far too many that were following religion that was pointing to the reality in the symbols which was Jesus and decided follow the symbols! The writer is asking his readers to look carefully at those following symbols instead of the substance and see if they are better off? With all those dietary restrictions are they indeed healthier? Does following their legalism make them more loving are gracious towards their fellow man? Their diets didn’t strengthen their hearts, build up their love but following the substance which is Jesus does! Grace accomplishes what legalism never can but you can not follow the symbols once the substance has come; if you value the temporary and the external than you will never find the reality in the eternal and the substance!

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The writer uses the illustration of the tabernacle, when the sin offerings were brought into the tabernacle the priests were forbidden to eat of them as the sacrifice was the sin offering and were taken outside the camp and burned there. The priest could eat of the meat of the burnt offerings, and the other offerings, but not the sin offering. Those bodies were cast outside the gate and there burned. Thus it was with the Lord Jesus when he came. They took him outside the city of Jerusalem and put him to death on a cross outside the gate. The point is that religion puts its emphasis upon the external and is ignored by God. We can only experience our proper function when we receive what God has done in Christ, without any need for religious observances, lighting candles etc., but by a quiet act of faith. That is the simplicity of belief in Jesus Christ. It is so uncomplicated, so simple, so available to all.