

Honor Faithful Leaders who Genuinely Follow Christ

Hebrews 13:7-8; 2 Corinthians 8:16-24; Philippians 2:19-30

Facilitator: Rev Vera Rhyne

I. Historical Background and Biblical Context

The writer of Hebrews closes this final chapter of this epistle with encouragement for them to continue to show brotherly love. This brotherly love will be reflected in their hospitality to strangers, remembering those in prison and those being persecuted because of their faith, holding marriage in honor by maintaining sexual purity, and having a lifestyle free from the love of money. In Hebrews 11, the writer presented great examples of leaders of faith. The encouragement to faith is presented in Hebrews 12, and the evidence of faith that should appear in our lives in chapter 13. It is a good thing to honor faithful leaders who genuinely follow Christ.

II. The Lesson: Honor Faithful Leaders who Genuinely Follow Christ

A. Hebrews 13:7-8.

“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Minister Joseph Williams stated in a previous lesson he taught, “Looking back is not a bad thing, it’s depending on what you are looking back for.” Looking back in remembrance in this chapter is a good thing. Here in these verses the Christians are told to recall to mind their leaders who ran the race well. The leaders here are not the current leaders. The writer speaks of the current leaders in verses 17 and 24. He is now speaking of those past leaders that previously ministered among them and taught them the Word of God. These leaders have left a wonderful legacy of faithfulness to Christ and the gospel. These believers were not only to

remember what was taught to them but also how these leaders had lived out the faith. The leaders had not only talked the talk, but they walked the walk. The purpose for the continual remembrance of these leaders was to encourage these believers as they were going through persecution and challenges to their faith. The leader's lives and teachings were to be remembered as examples to be followed. The Word of God teaches us that the observable way we live is intended to bear witness that God exists and is the rewarder of those who seek Him. Leaders, no matter what capacity of life, are expected to be examples of having lives that reflected the meaning of living by faith, to the end that others would desire to follow Christ because of the teaching and preaching the Word of God as lived out. We see a great display of this in Chapter 11, faith heroes who persevered despite great difficulties and adverse circumstances. They believed God and His promises. Though they did not see them in their lifetime, they never wavered from trusting in God.

The writer encourages believers to know that leaders come and go. Leaders past on but the One in whom we believe, the one who redeemed us, who is ever present with us is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Jesus never changes. They were wavering and needed something reliable upon which to cling. They needed to remember that Jesus who was with the heroes of old, is the same Jesus with them and as He is with us today. He is always faithful.

Jesus the perfect High Priest does not change. His promises, His purposes, His provisions, and His protection are certain and secure. Jesus is eternal Word of God, Who from eternity past been the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature – love. Jesus exists in all of eternity at once with no reference to time. He is the same yesterday, He is the same today, and He is the same forever. Jesus the same for the forefathers, as He was with the present generations and as He will be for generations to come. He will never change; therefore, we can stand unmovable and abiding in the Word of God taught to us.

B. 2 Corinthians 8:16-24.

"Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man. In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it."

God put into the heart of Titus concern about the people in the Corinth church. Titus was very enthusiastic. He was not recruited by Paul but participated in the work of the ministry willingly and took the initiative to do so. In addition to him, there were two other unnamed men. They were in charge of collecting the offering. Like Titus, they were zealous for the work of the Lord. They had a good reputation. Their concern was not only doing right in the eyes of the Lord but also in the sight of the people.

C. Philippians 2:19-30.

"I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served

with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore, I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad, and I may have less anxiety. So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.”

At the time of this writing, Paul was in prison. Paul and Timothy had served together on several missionary journeys. Paul knew that Timothy could be trusted and loyal. He knew that he counted on him. Timothy cared not only but he was supported and encouraging to Paul. Timothy more concerned about the cause of Christ than he was of himself. Paul’s desire was to send Timothy as a channel of blessing to the church as well as check on their welfare.

Epaphroditus was another brother in Christ, companion in labor, and fellow soldier, who minister with Paul on the behalf of the church. Even though he had been seriously ill, he did not give up. His illness was near fatal, but God had compassion on him. To Paul, the death of Epaphroditus at this time, would have been grievous to him in addition to what he was already going through. Paul encouraged the church to receive him with gladness and to hold him in high honor.

For all the saints, who from their labors rest, all who by faith before the world confessed, Your name O Jesus, be forever blest. Alleluia!