

Round Top Church Christian Fellowship

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Pastor

Sermon – “God’s Change in You”

Hebrews 13:7

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[All Scripture quoted from New American Standard Bible]

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Hebrew 13:7

There are four parts to verse seven:

Remember ~ Spoken Word ~ Resulting Conduct ~ Imitate faith

Part 1 ~ Remember: Remembering is a serious problem in our society today. People go to church and remember very little of what is taught. True, it is hard to grasp everything that is taught at church on any given Sunday morning. My observation is that for a person to remember they have to know in the first place. How can they remember what they have never known or possessed? A person has to prepare themselves to receive the Word of God. If a person is so steeped in sin and/or worldly distractions that their ears are plugged and it impedes their reception, then they will not hear the Word of God. They may hear, but what they hear will just be a noise, like a distant radio. You can tell there is a noise but the words are mumbled, and there isn’t any clarity.

For the Word of God to change people’s lives, they first have to hear. I fully believe that God has spoken to people from the very beginning of time through what God has made. Paul tells the church in Romans 1:18 and following that God has communicated to people from the beginning of the creation. Everyone has an opportunity to know God through the creation. This does not mean that we worship the creation, but that we are to worship the Creator. We desire for people to hear the Word of God and be impacted. God speaks through the apostle Paul in Romans 10:19, **“But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they?”** Paul is somewhat sarcastic in his question. This question comes after Paul has asked a series of questions in the previous verses. This is like someone asking

an American, "But, I say, surely Americans did not know who George Washington was, do they?"

Romans 10:14-18

¹⁴ How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?
And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?
And how shall they hear without a preacher?

¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent?
Just as it is written,
"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!"

¹⁶ However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says,
"LORD, who has believed our report?"

¹⁷ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

¹⁸ But I say, surely they have never heard, have they?

Indeed they have;

"Their voice has gone out into all the earth,

And their words to the ends of the world."

Verse seven refers to those who learned from Jesus Christ himself. By the time the book of Hebrews was written, the apostles (those who walked and learned from Jesus) had been circulating for at least 20 years by most biblical historians accounts. These apostles, of whom we know some of their names, passed onto others by word of mouth or by letters as represented in the 27 books in the New Testament. The most recognized of these books we call Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In addition, there are Paul's 13 books which are another example of someone who had met the Lord, be it a miracle and after the Resurrection. Yes, a miracle. For what other writer do we have in the history of mankind who has penned so many books that have been handed down

through the ages and are still with us today: that hundreds of millions, and yes, several billion people's lives have been affected? This is a God thing. We need to make one point very clear, Paul and the other New Testament writers were just writers they were not the authors. God is the author.

Relating back to Hebrews 13:7, concerning the call for the recipients of the letter to remember their leaders from the past, we ask . . .

Who has served the role of leader in your life?

Did they speak the Word of God to you?

Or, in other words.

Did God use them to speak the Word of God into you?

Do you remember them because you recognize that it was God speaking His Word through them?

This brings the question. Who have you allowed to speak to you?
There are so many voices in the world; so much noise.

Have you listened to someone who spoke an alternative message to you?

Have you know figured out that you have been led astray?

The past leaders in our lives who influenced us may not have been famous, but they are recognizable. Looking at the twelve apostles, we see that they were ordinary people making a living in their day. However, they were effective in transferring the message of Jesus to the next generation. They did not lead people astray. Proof in this is that we are here today receiving their written account. Prior to the letter of Hebrews, historians have determined Paul (Pharisee of Pharisees) and Luke (the physician) were the most educated. Whoever penned the book of Hebrews was very well-educated and wrote in a high technical Greek. The end result is good news to us. God can take everyday people and turn them into leaders.

Part 2 Spoken Word

The people Jesus chose to be His disciples had a big decision to make after the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension. They had to make the decision to go and tell someone what happened to them. They had to speak the Word. They were never the same afterwards. They waited in the Upper Room for the Holy Spirit. They stayed in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost to be the witnesses Christ called and equipped them to be. These were supernatural instructions. A point we need to really understand.

To be a witness for Christ is all supernatural. We are His witnesses in a fallen world. We are the Lord's supernatural witnesses. The Word of God is not of this world. God has decided to use His Word in us to invade this fallen world. We are in God's redemptive plan to establish His spiritual presence in people. The Gospel's righteousness is transferred from faith to faith (Romans 1:16) in us. Yes, in us, God has decided this way of supernatural transfer. How is this possible? Paul declares in Galatians 2:10 . . .

“It is no longer I who live, But Christ lives in me.”

The Gospel is a call, a declaration, a description of God's kingdom, which is spiritual. God's spiritual kingdom is not brick and mortar.

God's kingdom is not flesh and blood.

God's kingdom supersedes flesh and blood.

God's kingdom is imperishable; whereas we are perishable.

We need to accept that our bodies are temporal, that means temporary in time.

Paul writes to the believers in Ephesus . . .

Ephesians 6:12-13

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Paul writes to the believers in Corinth . . .

1 Corinthians 15:50-55

⁵⁰ Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?"

Therefore, our leaders spoke God's Word to us and, in turn, we speak God's Word to others. We should become 'those who are remembered' one day. Not because of our personal greatness, but because God spoke through us; and we, too, join the great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews eleven. God wants all the saints to be His great cloud of witnesses.

In review of today's lesson, we read again in Hebrews 13:7, "remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, and the third part of the verse is . . .

Part 3 Resulting Conduct . . . Hebrews 13:7 part three . . .

“and considering the result of their **conduct**”

God is the God of results. God desires results in us. God desires and directs us to conduct our lives under **His light**. We bring our conduct to the light, so it can be exposed. This is unveiling and unnerving to many, but what does God say in **John 3: 19-21**

¹⁹ "And this is the judgment, that the **light is come into the world**, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.

²⁰ "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

²¹ "**But he who practices the truth comes to the light**, that his deeds (conduct) may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

To the outside fallen world, the Christian life can be a tough life to live. It is like being in the Olympics every day. Every day there is a timed event. Every day there is a measurement taken. Athletes are weighed, and they are tested for what is running through their veins. Their very blood is questioned for the whole world to see. If they pass, they play. If they fail, they are humiliated or in denial. Their conduct is exposed. What does the Christian put in their veins? The answer is simple: the faith-blood of Christ. How is this so? Paul further states:

Galatians 2:20 . . . and the **life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

Ephesians 3:17 . . . so that Christ may **dwell in your hearts through faith**; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Christ often spoke in a spiritual language. Meaning that only those whose hearts had changed could hear and see the truth in what Jesus said. One of the best examples that we have to illustrate the fallen understanding or the misunderstanding of those that followed Jesus is chronicled in the Gospel of John.

John 6:52-58

⁵² The Jews therefore *began* to argue with one another, saying,
"How can this man give us *His* flesh to eat?"

⁵³ Jesus therefore said to them,
"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man
and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.

⁵⁴ "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life,
and I will raise him up on the last day.

⁵⁵ "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.

⁵⁶ "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me,
and I in him.

⁵⁷ "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father,
so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

⁵⁸ "This is the bread which came down out of heaven;
not as the fathers ate, and died, [Exodus manna]
he who eats this bread shall live forever."

[Like the woman at the well, drink this water and you will live forever.]

John 4:13-14

¹³ Jesus answered and said to her,

"Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again;

¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never
thirst;

but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water
springing up to eternal life."

Therefore, all of this talk of living waters eating flesh and drinking blood is
often misunderstood by the world. But to the person who has surrendered to the
Lord; these words are life-defining. **They set the stage for conduct in life.** These

words describe the **transitional thought and heart process** that must take place for a person to gain eternal life and live the eternal life now.

At the time the book of Hebrews was delivered, the people referred to, “as those who led them and spoke the Word to them,” must have been known for their conduct that exemplified the life Christ calls us to live in this fallen world. They were worthy of remembering, much like the group of faithful witness in Hebrews eleven.

We live through this world for Christ. God knows it is not easy. This is why the Lord gives us an advantage.

He gives us His Holy Spirit (John 3:1-7, 20:22).

He gives us Holy Spirit gifts (1 Corinthians 12).

He gives us Holy Spirit fruit (Galatians 5: 22-26).

Yes, and even now with these advantages, we struggle. However, through this set of circumstances due to our being sealed in Him with the promise of the Holy Spirit, we have rest. Paul delivers this message to the believers in Ephesus . . . 1:13-14¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,
¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

And therefore, we go time and time again to **1 John 1**. Remember, this letter is written to believers who are struggling in the word, just like we are.

³ what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

⁴ And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

⁵ And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

⁷ but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1Jo 1:3-10 NAS)

Part 4 Hebrews 13:7 imitate their faith.

The fourth part of this verse simply directs the recipients to imitate the faith of those who led them, those who spoke the Word to them, those whose conduct is to be emulated. This is very challenging in the first century. God called for the Hebrews to turn from their understanding and application of God's covenant given to Moses. Remember, Jesus himself stated that He did not come to change the Law, but to fulfill it.

Matthew 5:17-18 ¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.

¹⁸ "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

This statement was surely confusing, because Jesus taught with this statement that a person's righteousness had to exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees or they would not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20).

It is obvious that Jesus came to clarify and correct their understanding. "You have heard that the ancients were told, but I tell you" (Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43) are words from God in the flesh, as Jesus Christ, who taught the Hebrews at the mountain where He gave his first major address and is recorded for us.

Therefore, the Hebrews in the first century were called to transition to a life being justified; that is, being made righteous to God by faith, instead of the strict adherence to the Law of Moses. We have the same challenge today. We are witnessing to people to transition from a worldview that justifies their life by self-

justification. In other words, if their actions are right for them, then they are okay. This secular view, devoid of God's teaching, does not call for actions and worldviews to be balanced with the Word of God. This is basically the world of "if it feels good, do it."

The Word of God we are to imitate is not out of date, as so many in the popular culture of our time proclaim. In fact, the popular culture of any time-frame in history is just a repeat of what has happened before. The technology may change, but the failed heart-condition is the same. There is nothing new under the sun. But what **is** new is the new understanding and acceptance of God's love and sacrifice for our sins.

We are to imitate the faith of those witnesses who came before us. We see their lives lived out in the Word of God.

Remember ~ Spoken Word ~ Resulting Conduct ~ Imitate faith

We remember those who have led us, because they spoke the Word of God to us, and we saw the results of God's Word in them, because their conduct reflected what was in their hearts. We are challenged and called to imitate their faith.

Therefore . . .

Hebrews 13:⁸

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today,
yes and forever.

AMEN

Additional Scripture in Hebrews 13

⁹ Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the **heart to be strengthened by grace**, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited.

¹⁰ We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

¹¹ **For the bodies** of those animals **whose blood is brought into the holy place** by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, **are burned outside the camp.**

¹² **Therefore Jesus also**, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, **suffered outside the gate.**

¹³ Hence, **let us go out to Him outside the camp**, bearing His reproach.

¹⁴ For here we do not have a lasting city, **but we are seeking *the city* which is to come.**

¹⁵ Through Him then, let us continually offer up a **sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, **the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.**

¹⁶ And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such **sacrifices God is pleased.**

¹⁷ Obey your leaders, and submit *to them*; for they keep watch over your souls,

as those who will give an account.
Let them do this with joy and not with grief,
for this would be unprofitable for you.

¹⁸ Pray for us,
for we are sure that we have a good conscience,
desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.

¹⁹ And I urge *you* all the more to do this,
that I may be restored to you the sooner.

²⁰ Now the God of peace,
who brought up from the dead
the great Shepherd of the sheep
through the blood of the eternal covenant,
even Jesus our Lord,

²¹ equip you in every good thing to do His will,
working in us that which is pleasing in His sight,
through Jesus Christ,
to whom *be* the glory forever and ever.
Amen.

²² But I urge you, brethren,
bear with this word of exhortation,
for I have written to you briefly.

²³ Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released,
with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you.

²⁴ Greet all of your leaders and all the saints.
Those from Italy greet you.

²⁵ Grace be with you all.

