

HEBREWS – LEVITICUS

“Remember”

Hebrews 13:7-14

December 17, 2023

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⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

⁸ **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** ⁹ Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹ 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. ¹² So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³ Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.¹

The final chapter of Hebrews is considered an epilogue for the letter. As we read it, it can seem a bit disjointed as there are portions of the chapter that appear disconnected. Yet, for those reading it initially and receiving it from the writer in the first century, the closing thoughts connect with their current struggles well and likely felt as a wrap up of a long conversation that was taking place, within the letter and outside of the written words.

This portion of the book flows from the command to remember.

Remember four specific things:

- 1. Remember the Leaders.**
- 2. Remember the Savior.**

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:7–14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

3. Remember the Truth.

4. Remember the Sacrifice.

If you read this and think “Well, yeah. Remember. That’s obvious.” I believe there is more here than you may realize.

Why such an emphasis in the Bible on remembering?

- Jesus gathered his disciples for the last supper and commanded them to repeat the meal in the future and to do so as a remembrance.
- The psalmist wrote about remembering God’s name and his benefits.
- The Israelites were commanded to remember their bondage in slavery in Deuteronomy.
- Christians are to remember their bondage to sin as Paul wrote to the Romans.
- The promises of God are the focus of remembrance in Joshua.
- First century Christians are reminded over and over again of the hope they have in Christ and commanded not to forget this reality.
- The church is told to remember that Christ said he would return and to watch and wait.
- And more.

We are told to remember so often because, and this is profound, we are prone to forget.

If not totally forget, then to not focus on what God has done, who he is, and his sovereignty. Thus...remember.

REMEMBER THE LEADERS

Hebrews 13:7

⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.²

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Remember the leaders or more pointedly, remember *your* leaders.

Leadership is huge business. There are over 60,000 books on Amazon right now with the word leadership in the title. Whether a corporate mogul, successful coach, leadership guru, or any number of other expert out there, it does not take a genius to see the market for leadership help.

Yet, this passage is not about the latest principles, the laws, the manifesto, the servant leadership guidebook, or principles to succeed. This is a focus on the people who have given, sacrificed, and taught in the past and the present.

And even this comes today with some red flags for many. Why? Because we do not have to think very long to come up with a list of terrible leaders. If we simply stayed in the business, sports, or celebrity culture world, we could easily find examples of leaders whom we would rather forget.

But, here it gets more personal. In the church world the list of those who claim a calling of servanthood who have easily slid into a category of self-righteous “men of God” intent on power (even among a small group of people) have left far too many wounded, hurt, and traumatized.

Yes, this is real.

But we are also in an era where the good leaders in our stories are often ignored, or worse yet just clumped in with the bad so that accusations of protecting the religious cash cow and the brand of the “ministry of the day” can be perpetuated.

No wonder some have drifted and walked away. Yet, thankfully, the statistics tell us that the percentage of those who have hurt others through their spiritual leadership role is small. I guess that is a good thing. Unless you are the one who was hurt, right? Even if it is 2 percent nationwide who have been harmed, it is still 100 percent of the one who

was hurt. For those who have been hurt, taken advantage of, sold a bill of goods with just enough Jesus on it to make you think it's Christian, and have been left in the wake of poor, ungodly leaders...I am so very sorry. Truly. Your hurt is real. And it matters.

But there are some, maybe even here now, who wish I would just stop bringing that stuff up. Sorry, wounded sheep are the calling of the shepherd and if we cease to acknowledge real pain (even when it not advantageous to the brand) then we are eliminating a huge portion of the gospel (meaning we've eliminated the gospel entirely.)

So, today, regardless of your personal story, let me take you to a word from God's Word. It may be easy for some to handle and difficult for others, but thanks be to God, it has been given to each one of us as redemptive truth, power, and healing.

It is a reminder to me that there have been many who have come before to teach, lead, train, and disciple. It is a reminder to me that even those who seemingly were not listening, ignored the teaching, no longer care to attend church, that resilience on our part and perseverance is needed.

This this epilogue states to the persecuted and fearful Hebrew Christians who read it first to remember. Remember your leaders who spoke THE Word to you. Not THEIR word, but THE word. Even if you didn't want to hear it.

Not only speaking with words, which is essential, but modeled in actions.

Thus, they didn't have to write a book on servant leadership. They just served, for that is what godly leader does. They didn't prop themselves up, but God, for that is what a disciple does.

The right leaders, called by God (not motivated by selfish gain,) and qualified by Scripture have been placed by God in the lives of his people for his glory...and our good. Leaders have a particular responsibility for

the lives of those under their authority, and if the readers obey the gospel, the leaders will rejoice instead of groaning.³

Later in this chapter, leaders are mentioned again, but that seems to be a different group. These are the ones to remember, not obey.⁴

Remember is a strange word here. We would likely think words like honor, or respect them, but it does not. It could be that these leaders who were so bold in their faith, in the age of very-present martyrdom, had given their lives for the sake of the gospel.⁵ This is not unlike hearing some to “Not let them have died in vain. Say their names.”

It is clear the faith these believers were so close to abandoning had been provided for them in good teaching by those who also were facing hard times, but persevered. So, when you want to quit...remember those who did not. This is motivating and valuable.

REMEMBER THE SAVIOR

Hebrews 13:8

⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.⁶

What an incredible verse!

Change is part of life, right? People change their looks. Neighborhoods change. Communities change. Relationships change. Everything changes except God.

God the Father does not change. The Son does not change. The Spirit does not change. The word is immutable – unchanging. And the immutability of God is revealed throughout the Old and New Testaments. So, even though our Savior has died, was buried, rose again,

³ Schriener, Thomas R. *Hebrews: Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 417.

⁴ Schriener, 417.

⁵ Mohler, R. Albert, Jr. *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Christ in Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: Holman, 2017), 226.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

and has ascended to heaven and dwells in that splendor...he is who he always has been and always will be. He is the same. The same in his wrath. The same in his mercy and love and compassion and tenderness.⁷

YESTERDAY – as stated in Hebrews 5:7 he “offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death.”

TODAY – he is a high priest before the Father who is able to sympathize with our weakness in every respect, as it states in Hebrews 4:15 that “in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

FOREVER – the same Jesus, as stated in Hebrews 7:25 “always lives to make intercession for” us.

Thus, we do not serve simply an historic Jesus, a contemporary Jesus, a relevant Jesus, or any other weak adjective added to Jesus, but we have a savior, to remember, to know, to rest upon who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Any church seeking to “make Jesus relevant” has already stated their irrelevancy as a church.

For our Savior is remembered for who he is – Son of God, God the Son.

REMEMBER THE TRUTH

Hebrews 13:9

⁹ Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.⁸

The command is to not be led away by diverse and strange teachings. Seems easier said than done, right?

⁷ Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 455.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

This is why the godly leaders are to be remembered, for they taught the truth. They taught the gospel. They planted the seeds, watered the seeds, and many who received the letter initially were the fruit of the labors of many who had come before.

So, when the command to remember the leaders of old, as well as the godly ones presently was given, it was not to pump up the cult of personality, but to show that there have been many whom God has called and placed over his sheep. Some were pastors, elders and overseers. Others were historic leaders whose stories were shared over and over.

But...there have been and always will be those who show up with a “new revelation” or a new illustration or point. Illustrations are not inherently bad, but eventually, all illustrations fall apart.

Personalities sometimes can hide dark hearts.

False teachers always show up. Sometimes in the church. Sometimes in places of prominence. At other times, just as snakes in the henhouse asking questions that sound far too much like another snake who asked a woman and man once “Did God really say...?”

Cults abound. They always have. False religions pop up on the scene all the time. Those are often easy to spot. But how?

The only way to spot the fake is to know the truth. Thus, remember the truth, but you cannot remember what you never knew. This echoes what I spoke of two weeks ago.

REMEMBER THE SACRIFICE

Hebrews 13:10-14

¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹ 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.¹² So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

¹³ Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come⁹

This points the readers back to the Old Testament, the book of Leviticus, the sacrificial system and the need for the blood of animals for atonement.

But the sacrifice to remember is not simply that of the bulls and lambs of old, but the ultimate sacrifice. This is a contrast passage.

Animals suffered and bled and were sacrificed in the Old Testament as God required, for the “wages of sin is death” and the penalty of sin is severe.

Perhaps we have turned sin into “no big deal” with a “my bad” perspective rather than a fear of the wrath of God that requires a significant payment? The Israelites knew this, at least they were taught this. Yet, even for many the sacrificial system became routine and the severity forgotten. So...we are all forgetful people.

But notice in this passage the emphasis on being outside the camp, or outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

The holiness of God is not up for debate or minimization. This passage echoes Psalm 50 where the ultimate desire of God is clearly not sacrifices. That is mind-blowing, especially with all the detailed instructions given by God on how to make the sacrifices.¹⁰

But listen to this well – God does not desire the sacrifices. Somehow, people think they’re actually sacrificing something they alone own (it’s

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:10–14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁰ Schriener, 423.

their own bull, goat, lamb, or bird, right?) but God makes it clear that he owns all of those animals anyway. So, the gifts sacrificed for sin are gifts given to the one who ultimately already owns them.

So, why the sacrifice? Because in the sacrifice, we experience the severity and reality of the impact of our sin.

Yet even these old covenant sacrifices were outside the camp, just as Jesus himself was sacrificed for all, on a cross, in a place called the Skull...outside the city.

In the Hebrew system of laws, on the Day of Atonement a bull was slain to atone for the sins of the priest and his family. A lamb was slain to atone for the sins of the rest of God's people. The blood of these slain animals was taken into the Holy of Holies, but the carcasses were taken outside the camp to be burned (Leviticus 16:27). Thus, under this system, the people could not partake of the this great offering – only the priest.¹¹

But we no longer have a need for a sacrifice for atonement. Why? Because Christ is the Lamb of God who died to pay the ransom for the sins of all who would receive. And...he did so outside the city. Significance? Because his sacrifice was open for any...for Gentiles and Jews...for you and me...for all who would receive. The Christ is our accessible Savior who is the WAY, TRUTH, & LIFE.

This is why we no longer offer sacrifices for atonement, but only sacrifices of praise.¹²

Remember this and know. Remember and received.

¹¹ Hughes, 457.

¹² Schreiner, 423.