

34. Jesus and His unchanging Message

August 23, 2015

We are living in the age that is known as postmodern. Within the American Christian church circles, there is a lot of talk about how to reach the postmodern generations. Starting with the Baby Boomers – many of our congregation fit in this category. Then we have the Millennial Generation or Generation Y which follows the Baby Boomers. Their birth years range from the early 1980s to the early 2000s. Anyone born after that fall into the category of Generation Z. These young people in this group have no idea what an 8 track player is.

I have no idea who came up with all those alphabet soups.

Somehow there are many churches think that, in order to accommodate the new generations into Christianity, they have to alter the message or the way we approach them. I don't have a problem with the idea of using the most updated media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, website, YouTube, etc. to get connected to the newer generations. But the message of Jesus Christ should not be changed no matter which generation comes. That's NOT negotiable.

Someone will say, then, "Well, Jesus accommodated that particular generation and hung around the sinners in order to save them." No, He didn't. He had very frequent contacts with sinners, but He hung around with His disciples for most of the time. When He contacted with the sinners, either they were changed or they hardened their hearts because they chose the side of eternal death. The Lord Jesus did not change His message for them at all. As His followers we should not either.

The author of the Book of Hebrews is throwing many last minute important non-negotiable instructions to the Hebrew readers, as well as to us, before he finishes his letter. Last Sunday, we got the earful of the instructions from him regarding moral directions. But now, he switches it to the instructions of faith one last time.

A. FOLLOW YOUR LEADERS

Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

As we are about to finish the Book of Hebrews, and the entire Bible for the first time in 15 years, whether I was comfortable to teach or not, I have not neglected to teach any verses to you, unless it was repeated from the previous studies. There were many portions of the Bible that were rather uncomfortable for me to teach, but I taught them anyway.

But these two verses, in chapter 13, are the most uncomfortable verses to teach you as your pastor. Because it sound like I am demanding your respect or following. However, as I was preparing this very portion, the Lord reminded me of the verse from the Book of 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

It sounds extremely arrogant for apostle Paul to say this to the believers in the Corinth church. But in reality, they needed a physical example to follow. Paul himself knew that he followed the Lord all these years though he knew that he was not perfect, so he didn't hesitate to tell the Corinthian Christians to imitate his walk with the Lord.

So for these two verses, consider me as a guest speaker who is filling in for your pastor. Here it goes:

Obey what your pastor speaks from the pulpit as he teaches the Word of God. At the same time your pastor must live according to what he teaches. Did you notice the words "conduct" in v7 and "as those who must give account" in v17? For everything your pastor does, he is accountable to his God. The Lord puts him in a higher standard than yours, because he is your pastor and teacher. If you see that his conducts in words and deeds are right and godly, respect him and obey him, because he is trying to imitate his Lord Jesus Christ. But if not, go to another church where you find a godly word and example.

OK, I am done for that one.

B. JESUS THE ETERNAL GOD

Hebrews 13:8-14 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. 9 Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. 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 sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. 12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. 14 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

Here is a big fancy theological word for v8 – Jesus Christ's immutability as God. There is no such a thing for God to improve or learn more or evolve. There are some heretic teachers in Christianity who actually teach that God learns things as time passes. There is a Greek word for that – Hogwash!! Obviously, their god is not the same God we serve and worship.

Our God cannot change for the better, since He is perfect before the word "beginning" ever came into existence. He has never been less perfect, less holy, less righteous, less loving than He is now, or ever will be. Nor can He be deteriorated by ages. Just because we are living in the realm of mutability, we shouldn't assume that our God, Jesus would be in the same category.

It has been said, "If it's true, it's not new; if it's new, it's not true." King Solomon echoed this timeless truth in the Book of Ecclesiastes:

Ecclesiastes 1:9 That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.

We don't need any new theology or revelation that are not already in the Bible. There are many so-called Bible teachers and pastors who come up with their own concocted heresies to get attention or monetary gains. These people show up on their TV programs and blab their heresies as Bible truths. Then, there are dumber people who follow those winds of doctrines as new found truths. They are the true case of "Dumb and Dumber."

The entire Bible is about Jesus Christ who died for our sins and rose again from the dead and sat on the right side of the Father in heaven. Not foods, religious achievements, or any of our merits will ever be able to earn the way to heaven. It is only by God's grace through Jesus Christ. Don't you ever forget it. Anyone tries to add anything on God's grace is a heretic.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

The Jews at the time of this letter were proud of their city Jerusalem and the temple. But their pride and joy were destroyed before their eyes in A.D. 70 by the Roman soldiers. However, for the Jewish Christians at that time had the city and the temple could not be destroyed – God’s eternal city, the New Jerusalem and the heavenly sanctuary.

The OT Jews, and even the current orthodox Jews, considered the brazen altar was the place for offering blood sacrifices, and the golden altar before the veil was the place for burning incense in the temple. Even Christians would refer to the place near the pulpit as an altar. But they really are not altars in the biblical sense. Because Christ’s sacrifice has been made once and for all and God the Father accepted His perfect sacrifice and there is no more need of sacrifice.

According to the Book of Leviticus 16, the sin offering must be taken outside of the camp and burned completely.

Leviticus 16:27 The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal.

Jesus Christ, our perfect atoning sacrifice, was led out to Golgotha that was located outside of Jerusalem and He took all of mankind’s sins upon Himself, suffered, and died. Spiritually speaking, all born-again Christians must go out to Him to the place of reproach and rejection. We don’t need to stay within the city when Jesus has done away with the law.

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

C. YOUR SACRIFICES OF PRAISE TO OUR GOD

Hebrews 13:15-16 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

The author of this Book lists two sacrifices of praise to our God here:

The first one is with “words.” Please take a short time to ask yourself this question, not to someone else, “When was the last time that I praised the Lord for who He is without asking for my petitions?” I am not saying that it is wrong to ask for our needs. It is a biblical thing to do so. But how about just a simple thanksgiving to Him? After all, our God is more than our spiritual 911 operator, don’t you think?

Of course, it is easy to praise the Lord, when everything is going well in our ways. But what about the time when the things go haywire at every turn? That will be a real sacrifice of our praise for us to concentrate on who our God is. The Book of Psalm is filled with encouragement and admonition to give glory and praise and thanks to our Lord. But you will never find anywhere in the Bible that says, “Give glory to Him when you feel good.” We ought to give Him praise, not because we feel good or things going in our ways, but because He is worthy of our praise and adoration.

And the second one is good works of sharing. We have already learned about the hospitality to others, especially to strangers; the ministry to prisoners; helping the needy; sharing money; volunteering in the church ministries, etc.

From time to time, I am absolutely dumfounded when I encounter some believers who absolutely would not do anything for others, or if they ever do, they do it very reluctantly because it interferes with their selfish life. If you are one of those people, I am telling you this now so that you cannot claim that you've never heard it from your pastor. When you get to heaven and stand in the presence of God, I guarantee you that you will regret that you didn't serve Him while you were on earth.

I remember two brothers who passed away. The first one is J.D. Seeley, our sister Colette's late husband, and the second one Jack Sutton, our sister Barbara Sutton's late husband. They both had a lot of physical limitations. But when we had church work days, they showed up. J.D. couldn't do anything, but he was there with smiles. The crazy Jack, he did everything he could and even more. Then, next day, he suffered. They both were such encouragers. I miss both of them very much.

D. PRAY FOR US

Hebrews 13:18-19 Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. 19 But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

I said this before, but it is worth repeating. Prayer for the sake of prayer doesn't do any good for us, like faith in faith as the Word of Faith movement teachers teach this in their heresy. They claim that if you have enough faith in your faith, God has to do everything you want. A total absurdity and heresy.

It has been said, "Prayer changes," or "Prayer has power." I am sure that you've heard them from other pastors and teachers say these things. I know what they mean. But theologically, they are incorrect. It almost sounds like we have the power to change.

Listen, our prayer itself changes absolutely NOTHING; our prayer itself has absolutely NO POWER. Our prayer is nothing more than a desperate plea of the people who have no power to change anything. But the One who hears our prayers has all the power in the universe to do everything according to His will. So if our prayer aligns with His will, it will always be answered according to His timetable.

E. BENEDICTION

Hebrews 13:20-25 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. 22 And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. 23 Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly. 24 Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you. 25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

I had to laugh because of v22. This author wrote a letter that spreads through out 13 chapters and he said that he wrote in few words. A true preacher. What can I say!?!?

At the beginning of this Book, I told you guys that no one knows who the author of this Book is. But many Bible students believe that it was apostle Paul due to the style of the writing. V23 and 24 give more convincing evidence to think that it was Paul who wrote this Book. But it is not important. If it was important, the Holy Spirit would make sure that we would know about it.

Now, that is the end of the Book of Hebrew. And I have taught you guys the whole counsel of God from this Book, the Bible.

Next Sunday, we will study the Book of Psalms for a few chapters. But starting the first Sunday of September, we will study the Harmony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in chronological order. I will email you guys the chart this week. For those who still live in caves and use smoke signals, I will have a few paper copies available for you. The chart is a copyright free, so you are welcome to distribute it to others freely. But if you make money out of it, I want a half.