

Hebrews

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Hebrews 13:7-14



Vss. 7-8

- These two verses are all about Christian leadership. Christian leadership is different than business leadership or military leadership, or virtually any other kind of leadership. No one disagrees that General Patton and Henry Ford were both great leaders. Patton's nickname was "Old Blood and Guts", to which his troops would reply, "Yeah, his guts and our blood". Very often Patton would take strategic risks that would have high casualty rates. He would give orders that his troops were compelled to obey and he got the results he was looking for. But Christian leaders work with volunteers who cannot be *compelled* to do anything by their leaders. Henry Ford did not have near the absolute power over his employees the way Patton did over his troops, but he did hold considerable authority. One way he demonstrated brilliant business leadership was by dramatically raising the pay of his employees. With one move, he created a new category of customers who afford to buy his cars AND he made it so that his employees could not find other jobs that would pay so well. It was said that Ford had "Golden Handcuffs" on his employees so that they could nothing else but follow wherever and however Ford led.
- For the Christian leader, it is not about him or his word, but it is entirely about Christ and His Word. The Christian leader preaches and teaches Christ and lives a life that models Christ, so that when he speaks people only hear Christ and when he acts people only see Christ. The goal of a true Christian leader is to completely hide himself behind Christ, so that it is only Christ, not a person, who is recognized as the real leader.
- The preacher here then wants to drive home a vital thought. It is the way of all flesh that each generation has their day, but then they must leave the stage for the next generation to come forward. But **HOW** they leave the stage is every bit as important as everything that came before. In fact, how one exits can either validate or entirely invalidate everything that came before. So as the congregation is approaching a time of persecution, the Preacher tells them to remember those who first brought them to Christ and led them in the beginning and specifically remember how they died, "the result of their conduct", and imitate their faith, for they stayed true to their faith even unto death and inspired the church to stay true as well.

Vss. 9-14

- Here the preacher shifts from external threats to an internal threat that is already undermining their faith.
- To the Preacher the most important key to the heart of a believer was the grace of God. But to the Jews and to some Greeks, food was a major issue. Remember that it was a dream about food and how God had made all things clean that was a turning point in Peter's life as a disciple (Acts 10). It is in Leviticus 11 that all the major food laws are laid out. The Jews quickly came to believe that they could not serve God in any way if they ate the wrong foods. Some Greeks, especially Pythagoreans and Gnostics, were always keen on eating very strictly so as to not be contaminated. But there was a pagan Greek idea that as you ate the meat that was sacrificed to a given god then you were eating the god as well and digesting the power of the god into your being. This seems to be the issue here. It may be that as people were taking the Lord's Supper, the Body and Blood of Christ, that they believed that they were ingesting the power of Christ. So the Preacher tells them in Vs. 9 not to be carried away by strange teachings, so that their hearts are strengthened by grace, not by foods.
- A thought comes to the Preacher. Just as the Old Testament gave strict instructions on how the sacrificial animals were to be slaughtered and burned outside the camp, so the camp would not be defiled by the blood and the dead carcass, so too were crucifixions done outside the city walls of Jerusalem. This is why Jesus had to carry the cross to Golgotha, outside the city. "So let us go outside the camp with Jesus", he tells his church, because the Way of the Cross is the only way to the City of God that waits for us at the end of our journey. Keep your eyes and focus on the cross, so that you will not be led astray.