

# Hebrews 13:1-17

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] end of the book of Hebrews. The Lord allows us to. We'll see the section we have before us this morning, and then next week we'll be finishing up the book. I have enjoyed my study going through the book of Hebrews, and someone asked me if I knew where I was going next, and I always give the same answer. No, I do not. I'm not one of those disciplined pastors who can... I know some pastors who are really good at this, and they can plan out a year. They'll go away for a weekend and come back with a whole year's worth of messages planned. And I'm talking about Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday. And it blows me away, or some will be two years in advance. I'm not that good, okay? I'm not that organized. Let's just put it that way. And so I'll be praying really as we're near the end of this, and when the Lord opens it up, we'll move forward from there. But as of this morning, I'm excited. We're in Hebrews 13.

Hebrews chapter 13. We'll be looking at the bulk of it this morning, verses 1 through 17, as we just continue to make our way, really. And we are in the application process of the book of Hebrews, and we are seeing not so much the truth that is being stated, but in the application that is being encouraged. And that matters, because truth without application, as we always say, is just useless information. And while it's fun and cool sometimes to know useless facts, which really don't do you any good in your life when it comes to the gospel, we're not looking for useless information. We're looking for life's application. If these things are so, then what? What do we do? How do we respond? And that's exactly what the author of the book of Hebrews has done. He is taking the bulk of this book, and he has stated the great truth that Jesus is better. And he has made it more than abundantly clear through his numerous illustrations. He is writing to the Hebrew people, so he uses illustrations that pertain to their past, but these illustrations really have application, or at least a little bit of benefit to every person around the world. And Jesus is greater than the angels. He's greater than Abraham. He's greater than Moses. He's greater than anything that they could ever trust in. He's greater than the high priest. He's greater than the law. He's greater than the old covenant. He is greater. And then he begins to transition to, well, if he is greater, then isn't he worthy of your surrender to him, or of you dedicating your life completely to him. And then he gives us an entire chapter of Hebrews chapter 11 of what it looks like to have a life of salvific faith that is dedicated in faith to Christ. Does it look perfect? No. Is it messy sometimes? Yes. But is it acceptable before God according to scripture? Absolutely. And so you see Hebrews 11. This is what it looks like. And then you transition into Hebrews chapter 12, and he begins to make all these great truths have application about an unshakable kingdom and how we're committed to this, and we're running this race of faith. And he really just ties things up here in the final chapter, Hebrews chapter 13. I will tell you, because I know you're going to come across it in your study, because I understand that you do more than read the Bible. You study the Bible, and that is good. I appreciate you doing that. It is important to read scripture, but it is also important to study scripture. You do not read your Bibles as if you would read a newspaper or you would read a magazine. You read those in a kind of casual manner. You read your Bibles ready to learn, and you read your Bibles ready to understand, and you study them. And I'm thankful for that. And I'm making that assessment of you because I can see it in the questions that you ask. But as you study these passages of scripture, what you will notice is that some scholars will tell you that Hebrews 13 was the cover letter for the entire book. That this is what was really written and sent as a cover letter before you read the book. And so it has this overarching theme. And that may be true. We will find out someday soon when we stand in front of our Lord and Savior and all these things which we really think matter now, really won't matter then. But we can ask the author whoever he may be. Some say because of that, they feel like Paul is probably the author of the book of Hebrews because Hebrews 13 sounds very Pauline, right? It sounds very characteristic of Paul, but we don't know. But what I do know is that the application that is here in this last chapter resonates in our life and shows us really what our day-to-day life should look like. So what we're going to see this morning in Hebrews 13 verses 1

through 17 is the believer's conduct of faith. The believer's conduct of faith. If you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God found in Hebrews chapter 13 starting in verse 1 and reading down to verse 17. The author says, Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember the prisoners as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled. For fornicators and adulterers, God will judge.

[ 5 : 05 ] Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have, for he himself has said, I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you. So that we confidently say, the Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What will man do to me? Remember those who led you, who spoke the Word of God to you, and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. 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 are so occupied were not benefited. For we have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. 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. Therefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside the gate. So let us go out to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. 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. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they 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. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this day. And God, we thank you most of all for the great opportunity you give us together, together to read your word together. And Lord, as we have read the word of God and we have heard it, we pray that now that it would resonate within this place and that it would not again be the opinion or the thoughts of man, but it would be the very truth of God that speaks to our hearts. We pray, O Father, that you'd help us to see you in a greater way and that you would help us to see our lives as they should be. And Lord, through the truths contained in this scripture, that our lives would be conformed and molded more to your image and more for your glory, Lord Jesus. And we pray that you would get all the praise for it. We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. We see here in this final chapter of the book of Hebrews that because these things are true, that is that Jesus is greater, and because the individual is encouraged to place his all upon this one who is greater, that is to run the race of faith that is set before him, as Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1 says, that we are to push on with endurance, not looking to do a short sprint, but rather to enter into a marathon of endurance. And we are to devote our lives completely and totally to Jesus Christ. As it says elsewhere in scripture, we are to put our hands to the plow and not look back. We are to be all in, not just halfway in, because that is exactly who the author of Hebrews is writing to. Those who wanted to be in the world and in Christ. Those who wanted to trust in their works and to trust in Jesus. Those who wanted Jesus to pick up where they fell off.

But the reality is that scripture never calls us to do that. Scripture calls us to cast off our works and to completely cast ourselves upon Jesus Christ. And now the author of this book comes to this final chapter.

He shows us that a life that has done these things will look a particular way. And this is the truth that we see resonating throughout scripture, that those who have salvific or faith that saves. We always have to quantify or qualify faith with the word salvific faith, even though it's not a word we use often. Because if we just say faith, then we leave it kind of open-ended to interpretation. But there is a such thing as faith that believes just a little bit, but is not completely cast upon, such as the demons believe and tremble. If you were to ask that the demons who are going to spend eternity separated from the presence of God, do they have faith in Jesus Christ? Well, yes, absolutely. They believe that he is really who he says he is. This is why every time Jesus encountered a demoniac, the demons would cry out, what have we to do with you, Lord Jesus? And what have we to do with you and do not cast us out before our time? They had faith that he could do whatever he wanted to do. Was it salvific faith or faith that led to salvation? No. But was it faith that acknowledged the reality?

Yes. So when we say faith, we always want to use this description there. It is true, genuine faith that is casting oneself completely upon Jesus Christ and nothing else. That individual's life, according to scripture, will always, always, always look different. Because it is marked by character and conduct that is not natural to mankind. Because we are, as Paul says, by nature, sinners.

Every one of us have fallen short of the glory of God. In our own rights and in our own works, we all fall short. We all come short of God's standard. And none of us, by our righteous deeds, will ever perfect ourselves. And none of us, by our works, can ever clean ourselves up enough.

[10:08] We can never behave the way a true believer behaves, is a good way of saying it. So when we come here and we begin to see the believer's conduct of faith, we see what exactly that believer who's put all of his faith and hope in Jesus Christ, what does his conduct look like? I have five things that I want you to see this morning that really kind of define the believer's conduct of faith. Number one, there is always a concern for others. It is a concern for others. The author starts here speaking of the believer's conduct, exactly where Jesus Christ quite often spoke of and the apostle John spoke of more than any other. That is why he's defined as the apostle of love. He says, let love of the brethren continue. He begins to speak here of the believer's conduct and he begins at this very pivotal point, that is the believer's love for other brethren. Now this is defining it within the realm. Now, brethren in scripture, we need to go ahead and just acknowledge this. Brethren in scripture could either mean fellow countrymen or it can mean fellow believer. Here in context, it is literally meaning other believers, right? Not just your countrymen. This is not a love of country. This is not necessarily a love for the land in which you live. I'm not saying those things are wrong. I just want to take these things in truth, right? What he is saying is let the love of other believers of the household of

God, that is your brothers and sisters in Christ, continue. The first conduct that believers are defined by is their concern for other believers in a loving manner. The love one another passages. As a matter of fact, all of the one other passages that we find in New Testament, as they apply to a believer's interaction with other believers, really are amazing. To bear one another's burdens, to pray for one another, to encourage one another, to rebuke one another. That's a good thing, right? That's not a bad thing. To correct one another, to build one another up, to snatch one another out of the fire, to guard one another, to guard one another, to all these things. But Jesus says, by this will the world know that you love me. You love you have for one another. The defining characteristic of the believers is to be their pure, undefiled love for other believers. Now, does that mean that we always get along with each other? No. Does that mean that we're going to never have disagreements with one another? No. That just means that Satan cannot use these things to divide us. And that the ultimate response and reaction in all of these things should be a love for one another. Unfortunately, that which has defined the church throughout history has not always been love. As Max Lucado said, too often the world that is drowning in their own sin looks at the boat of salvation and sees the church fighting with one another and says, I'll rather take my chances in the sea of sin than in the boat of redemption.

Because if I get on the boat, I might get stabbed by someone else. At least in the sea, I'm swimming on my own. It's really a rebuking claim, right? Because rather than it being a boat full of people who genuinely love one another, it is a boat full of people who are bickering and fighting with one another. And man kind of draws away from that. The conduct of faith, which we see here, that is encouraged from the very beginning, is to let love of the brethren continue. To let it push forward. Now, he is not writing in easy times to be a believer. He is writing really in most difficult times. Some of the greatest suffering the church endured in the Roman Empire is yet to come, many believe, during the writing of the book of Hebrews. It is still ahead of them. This is why the author says, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood, but those days will come. And he says, through all those things, the conduct that they are to have in concern is that they are to love one another. Not only that, he moves down to verse 2, speaking of their concern for others.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers. So now we are moving beyond our concern for our brethren, that is other believers, and now to our concern for all mankind. It says, do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, because some have entertained angels without knowing it. We know that Abraham did that. We also know that other people throughout the Old Testament did that. They entertained angels and had no idea. We don't understand these things. They kind of seem mysterious to us, but we do know that all throughout the New Testament, even all throughout Scripture, God encourages people to be hospitable. God's people are to be the most hospitable

people in all the world. And that hospitality is encouraged to people who you don't know.

[ 14 : 55 ] Because Jesus says, if you host a party and you invite only those that you expect to invite you to their parties, then you have not practiced biblical hospitality. I'm not saying that if you're having a party, don't invite me because I'm going to invite you to my party, but let's make sure that we have an open invitation, right? Because I want to come celebrate with you, and I'd like for you to come celebrate with me. That's love. But hospitality, biblical hospitality, is that which welcomes in the unknown, that which is extended to those outside of our circle, if you will. I believe it was Mother Teresa who once said, and I have to give my wife some credit for this because she wrote it down and gave it to me and put it in my office, and I have all these great sayings that sometimes come to my mind, and I tell you quite often, my mind's like a Rolodex, so sometimes things are just spinning around in there, and a finger will stop on one. But Mother Teresa once said that instead of having a smaller circle, we needed to build a larger table to extend our table so that more people could sit around it instead of confining our circle so that we have a table big enough for those sitting there.

It is hospitality. It is welcoming in those. As a matter of fact, the qualifications for elders or pastors and deacons both include what? Hospitality. They ought to be hospitable.

It is something that is set very clear in Scripture, but that does not mean that the rest of the church will say, yes, the pastor and the deacons, they need to be hospitable to other people because here we see the admonition that our concern for others as a church body means that as individuals we ought to practice hospitality. So we see this concern is do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Now we move on to verse 3, still looking at our concern for others. Remember the prisoners as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves are also in the body. Now, to put it in context, in context, the author of Hebrews seems to be implying, remember the prisoners who are imprisoned for their faith and their suffering for their faith. Okay? That does not mean that we shouldn't do prison ministry for those who are not there. It does not mean that we should discount those because absolutely, I mean, Chuck Colson through prison fellowship ministry shows that there's a great ministry there.

He's shown throughout history and even as it resonates, there's a great ministry there reaching people inside the prisons with the gospel and doing the prison fellowships. Those are important. But in context, and we always want to make sure to be biblically accurate here, he is writing to those who are suffering for their faith. You understand, all around the world today, there are men and women, brothers and sisters, who are suffering for their faith in prison.

And our concern for them to be as in prison with them, who are suffering. But it is easy on this side of the world or in this locale to not really carry that concern, right? That's not our weight or our burden.

[ 17 : 56 ] Well, according to the book of Hebrews, it is. Because that is our conduct of faith. It is to have this type of concern. We ought to let love of the brethren continue. We ought to show hospitality to those around us. And we ought to remember those imprisoned and suffering because we are in the same body. We are members thereof with them. The believer's conduct is first defined by a concern for others.

Number two, there is a character to be guarded. That is, there is a character of one's life that must be completely guarded. Verse four says, marriage is to be held in honor among all. Marriage is to be held in honor among all. So now we are moving beyond our concern for others to the character which we possess. Now, in the Roman Empire, marriage was not really that honorable, right?

Marriage was something that you would just do for a political benefit or an economic benefit. And it was something that could be easily broken, something that could be cast over here, or something that really just doesn't really hold that much esteem. By the way, history has a way of repeating itself. And we see it resonate throughout history. In today's time, we understand it too often.

Marriage is not held in honor. It is just held in convenience. When it is okay to do, then we will do it. But we understand these truths.

The scripture here says that as believers, marriage is to be held in honor. So he is putting in stark contrast the conduct of the believers with the conduct of the world around him. And he is writing to believers who are scattered throughout the Roman Empire. And what he is telling them, that though in the society in which you live, these things seem to be based upon convenience or benefit, make sure that you are holding them in honor. He is setting their character above the character of society. And he is showing them that character starts, first of all, in that covenant relationship they have

entered into with another individual before a holy God. Because as Paul says in Ephesians 5, marriage really isn't just about a man and a woman. It's not. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 5 that your marriage that your marriage is a reflection of Christ's love for the church.

And therefore, husbands bear that responsibility. Now I understand, friend, listen to me. I understand that it's not easy and some things move beyond that and there's brokenness and we live in a broken world. But that should be held in honor. Because when I as a husband realize this fact, that my marriage is to be a picture of the world of Christ's love for the church, the way I love my wife should testify to the world how much Jesus loves his church, now all of a sudden I go, woe is me.

Because I'll just be honest with you, okay, if I can be honest. I want Jesus to love me so much better than I show my love at times. Because we're all imperfect. But we see this. It is something that is held in honor. It is not something that is the world's renown. It is not something that is of convenience or something that is of political alignment. It is not something for economic gain.

[ 21 : 14 ] It is something that is a picture that has got the blessings of heaven rained down upon it. And that is a character issue. Marriage is to be held in honor among all. And the marriage bed is to be undefiled for fornicators and adulterers. God will judge. That puts it right there. God's judging the marriage, not man. So he says, your character should be according to God's judgment, not man's opinions.

Listen, man will give you any opinion you want to hear. Because if you don't like the opinion of this one, I don't care if he's of a professional realm or just a friendship realm. If you don't like this opinion, go somewhere else and you're bound to get another one. But there's one judge that we have to do with. And we see this. God will judge. But that is not the only character issue.

Because now look at verse 5. Make sure that your character is free from the love of money. Again, something else that is a character issue. Because in the society in which they live, and even in the society in which we live, economic gain reigns king. Right? Move forward. Press on.

Climb the corporate ladder. Move on up. Do the best you can. Get the most you can while you can. And the saying is because you only live once. Right? Well, the problem with that is you don't only live once. You live once eternally, or you live once temporarily, then you live once again eternally. And what you do in the temporal always dictate what happens in the eternal. And we see this reality is here. He says, make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have. Does not mean that you shouldn't do the best you can where you're at. We looked at that attribute in another section of scripture that we are to be the best workers that we can ever be wherever we're at because that's where God has put us. And if God sees fit to increase that, then praise God for that. And that's not even saying that the increase is a bad thing. But it is not. It is the character issue of a free from the love of money, being content with what you have.

[ 22 : 57 ] For he himself has said, I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you. So that we confidently say, the Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What will man do to me? Here's the character to be guarded. Do not be conformed to the world's standards.

In your private affairs or even in your public life. Guard your character. Number three, we see in the believer's conduct of faith. And this is probably the most important one. That's why I like the fact that it's in the central passage of scripture here in the passage we have before us. Number three, there is a conviction to be held. There is a conviction to be held. Verse seven says, remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Verse seven says, remember the believers who went before you. He could be pointing back in mind to chapter 11. He could be pointing back in mind to those who are of that local body, wherever that would be. But what do you say is, remember the people in faith who went before you. You're not the first ones to travel on this journey. You're not the first ones to walk down this path. He says, look at the ones who went before you, especially those who taught you the word of God. That does not always have to be a pastor, by the way. Some of us have been taught the word by individuals very near and dear to us. And then he says, and do this very thing. Consider the outcome of their faith. Look how they finished the race. Look at their faithfulness.

And he says, imitate them, mimic them. Do you know why I think that church history is so important? Because many of the questions, I had opportunity this week, and I sat down with some young men again, and we went through a question and answer session, by the way. I love those things. And we're there.

I was getting asked questions here in 2021. I was getting asked questions about the faith in 2021. You know, the same questions that were being asked in 2021, that is today's time, were the same questions the early church was asking in like 120 or 130. And we can look back throughout church history and see how these believers wrestled with these questions, how they answered these questions according to scripture, reading the same scripture we had before us, and see what the outcome of their faith was. We can see either the joy, hope, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that led them into eternal life, or we can see this internal destruction, how they broke down and fell apart, because they got this one thing wrong. We can read those things. We can see, can prayer be trusted? I mean, is prayer real? Friend, you have just the unlimited possibilities to go back and to read the accounts how God can answer prayers.

[ 25 : 41 ] And you can go back and read the words of Andrew Murray on praying, or George Mueller, see how God provided, or Hudson Taylor with China Inland Mission. Or before that, you can go back and read of the sisters who, one of the ones was bedridden, and all she could do was pray for her local church.

So she spent her time in London, England, and praying, and praying, and praying, and her sister would go to church, and the sister would come back and be like, oh, well, service was kind of dead. And she was like, well, she was so sick, she couldn't get up, so she would pray, and she would pray, and she'd pray, and she'd pray. And the sister would come back and say, oh, he's kind of dead.

I don't know. The pastor's really not that good. He's kind of boring. He doesn't really expound a word. And for over a year, that sister laid and prayed, prayed, prayed, prayed, prayed. And then one day, this unknown guy named Dwight Lyman Moody shows up in London, leading a YMCA meeting, because he's big in YMCA in a place called Chicago, Illinois.

And he goes into this church, and he preaches a message, and over 100 people come to faith that Sunday morning, who are faithful church members. Because that lady prayed.

Do you want to know if prayer really works? Read history. Consider the outcome of their faith. I promise you, it'll put you on your knees. Do you know if these things are true? Can I trust in these things?

[ 26 : 53 ] Listen, the believer's conduct of faith is based upon conviction. An opinion is something you have that can be changed. A conviction is something that has you that cannot be changed.

And all believers live with a settled conviction. And I don't mean this, it's going to come across rude, and it may come across frank, and I don't mean this this way. When it comes to your faith in Jesus Christ, I really could care less about your opinions.

I want to know where you stand in your convictions. Because this whole world is full of opinions, and everybody has an opinion about Jesus Christ, but opinions don't lead people to crosses.

Opinions don't lead people to burning at the stake.

Opinions don't lead people to suffering. Opinions don't lead people to glory. But a conviction will.

And until your faith rests on a conviction, you'll never do anything with it.

If you're walking by, I think so, maybe, might so, opinions, you'll just sit still the rest of your life. But when you know that you know that you know that you know, these things are so, and you are convicted to the very depth of your core, and you know this reality, look at verse 8, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

[ 28 : 05 ] And that what he did then, he can do now. And you are convinced of that thing, and you have a conviction to that truth. Then you will trust him to do what he has always done. And in verse 9, do not be carried away by buried and strange teachings.

I don't know if you are aware of it or not, but it would be very easy to be carried away by strange and buried teachings. And the teachings that scare me the most are not the teachings that resonate from our pews, but rather is the teachings that resonate from our pulpits.

And there are strange and buried teachings that resonate from our pulpits. And unless the people in the pews know without a shadow of doubt what the Bible says, they will be carried away too. Do you know how I know that is so?

Because that was my life. I sat in a pew, and I took for granted what the man behind the desk said, and I thought I was okay until I opened up the Word of God, and all of a sudden the convictions began to grip my heart and my mind.

It is one that has a conviction to be held. The reason I love the Q&A; time, the reason I love to talk to things of faith, is because I want to know what convictions you have.

[ 29 : 08 ] These things I believe. I encourage every believer to do this, and I know I'm spending some time on this, but it's worth spending time on. I encourage every believer to do this. Many of them do not take me up on that. Some of them do.

But I want to encourage you and encourage you and encourage you until each and every one of you do. Go home. Take a spiral notebook, a piece of paper. I actually typed mine out and printed it out. And at the top of that, they put, These things I believe.

And then begin to define what you believe. What do you believe about heaven? What do you believe about hell? What do you believe about salvation? What do you believe about the afterlife? What do you believe about love? What do you believe about marriage?

These things I believe. And belief is based upon conviction, so therefore, not your opinions, but you base it upon the Word of God. And when you can put a heading here, This is what I believe about heaven, because this is what the Bible says.

This is what I believe about hell, because this is what the Bible says. this is what I believe about love because this is what the Bible says. This is what I believe about the church because this is what the Bible says. Because again, I really don't care what man says about the church. I want to know what God says about the church. So if I can put this is what I think the church is because this is what the Bible says, then if I walk into a church and it's not yet what the Bible says, I have to ask myself, God, if you want me here, it's either because you're leading me to lead this church back to a biblical church or you're calling me to do it. I don't let man define what church is for me. And you let these things be what you believe and then so reorient your life around what you believe. And friend, listen to me, your life will be radically different. If you ever want to see mine, I can take you into my office and I can pull it off the shelf on the bottom of my right and decide where my computer is. It's pieces of paper that are stapled together and I can pull it out and I can hand it to you. This is what I believe.

[ 30 : 43 ] As a matter of fact, if I'm not mistaken, the pastor search committee here or this local body got a copy of that when I sent my resume to them. These are what I believe. They are core to who you are. There must be a conviction to be held because if you are not held by conviction, then the world is holding you by opinion.

And that's a dangerous place to be. So do not be carried away. Number four, we see a confession to be shared because if you have a conviction, then you will make a confession. And confessions are always resonating within you to be shared.

It says in verse 15, through him, that is through Christ, then let us, because it says we're going to go out to him, outside the city, right? Outside the gate. Those things had direct application to Jewish society and we could break them down, but it really based upon the conviction that they were holding. It says through him, then here's the confession. Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. That is the fruit of lips to give thanks to his name. Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise that give thanks to his name. The first profession or confession that we share is a confession of thanksgiving. We ought to live lives of thankfulness because no matter how bad it is, we have so much to be thankful for. 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. Our mouths ought to be proclaiming our thankfulness. Our mouths ought to be proclaiming our thanksgiving because of who he is, not because of where we are, right? It is our thanksgiving rests in his position, not in our current circumstances. Then verse 16 says, and do not neglect doing good and sharing for with such sacrifices.

God is pleased. So here is our confession. We confess with our mouths thanksgiving, and we confess with our lives deeds of good doings. It says, let us not neglect doing good and sharing for with such sacrifices. God is well pleased. Here is the confession that has made it as much like in the book of Acts. You remember when we went through the book of Acts, there are a couple of phrases that repeat themselves throughout the book of Acts. But one of them is, is that they came to believe in Jesus Christ based on what they heard and saw, what they were saying and what they were seeing.

When they proclaimed that Jesus Christ was a Savior who loved them and was drawing all men to themselves, and they would look at the church and see the church doing those things, people were drawn. The confession is always one of saying and living. It is a confession to be shared with those

around us.

[ 33 : 29 ] I have one more, and I will wrap that up, and I'll be honest with you. As a pastor, it's hard to preach that verse, but it is one that the scriptures before us, so we preach it. Not only is there a concern for others, a character to be guarded, a conviction to be held, a confession to be shared. Number five, there is a commitment to the body. The believer's conduct of faith is defined by its commitment to the body. Verse 17 says, obey your leaders and submit to them. First of all and foremost, I want to say this.

There are two things that are implicitly clear in this passage. Number one, there is a such thing as leadership within the body of Christ. Number two, that leadership does not rest in a single individual because leaders plural and them plural. It's just a matter of way God works. God works in perfect order, and we've said this before, especially going through the book of Exodus and even into the book of Numbers, and we need to be careful here because I don't want to sound dogmatic. It is not autocratic. It's not like there's an authoritative design because it is a multiplicity of leaders, but what we see here is it is not always majority rule, okay? We see that at times in scripture. It is majority concern. You'll see this in just a moment, but we ought to be commitment to the body. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who would give an account. So first and foremost, you see this, that the leaders are not necessarily there to be those who have rulership authority, but those who carry a burden of responsibility. The leaders of the local church, the plurality of leaders known as elders and deacons throughout scripture is always spoken of as a multiple number, not as an individual number. Each local church you ever find has a plurality of leaders. There may be only one pastor slash teacher, but there are a multitude of elders who serve in that position, and this is just something that we grow and understand in our scripture. But we understand this, that these are the individuals that God has called to bear the burden of souls, not necessarily to make every single decision. The decisions are to be based upon a burden for souls and the concern and care for souls on the account of others. They are to be those who lay awake at night and those who lay with concern on their hearts in a spiritual sense. And our response to that is in the latter half of that verse. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. Let them do this with joy and not with grief. We ought to be so committed to the body that those who are in position of leadership within the body are there with joy, not with grief.

And it is one that is a believer who is committed to the body of Christ, serving, not doing everything, but doing the one thing God has gifted them to do. Because I want to tell you, there's so much joy that being a part of a church where you see other people fulfilling their biblical spiritual giftedness. There is rejoicing in that and understanding what God is doing through them. And you celebrate with them in that. And it is the believer's conduct of faith that leads them to live life differently. And one closing aspect of that is to be committed to the body of Christ and to be committed with joy. So we ask ourselves as we finish up this passage, does the conduct that we possess match the conduct that has been defined? And if not, we have to ask ourselves why. First and obvious answer is, am I a believer? And if we can say, yes, I'm a believer. I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins and without a shadow of a doubt, I've given my life to him and I've surrendered my life to him.

[ 37 : 21 ] And the second question we have to ask, am I fully surrendered? That is, am I allowing him to have absolute and complete control? Because when he has control, these things are put on display for his glory.

These are not natural. These are spiritual. And they are put on display for his glory and not ours.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. We thank you for your word.

Lord, we pray, Lord, as we have read your word and studied it together now, that it would resonate within our hearts and minds. Lord, that it would bring conviction where conviction is needed. It would bring edification where that is needed. Lord, that it would draw us closer to you, not push us further away. Lord, may it be the very thing which draws us closer to you and closer to one another for your glory. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.