

It has been such an incredible week as I have been able to watch the response and heart of this particular body of believers live out what we covered last Sunday. Some of the things I cannot tell you about because they are not for all of us to know. But if you heard about the fire just outside of Battle Ground Monday, you should know that a few of our family here at Freedom received level three “go now” notifications, with six or more receiving level 1 or level 2 evacuation notices. That’s obviously not the cool part.

- Because of so many in the area having to leave their homes, I got a string of texts and calls from our church family offering their homes to those in need. *And I asked each one if it was someone that none of us had ever met before, would they still be willing.* And with the exception of one (who I determined should not do so based on some medical conditions) everyone said yes.
- That is cool on so many levels. But what I could not help but notice is that last week, in [verse 2](#), we were instructed by the Holy Spirit to not forget to be hospitable to the *stranger* who needed a place to stay. And isn’t it just like the Lord, who knows our hearts, to test us, *not so He could see what we would do (He already knows), but so that we could see what we would do.* And just to be clear, I promised to vet those who needed a place, also in accordance with our teaching last week. But what an incredible thing to witness!
- And to my great joy I was able to go to the place where evacuees were gathering and offer to provide chaplains and meals to those there if requested. Because I knew that if I sent out a request, you would love on these displaced individuals and families. And I will add that the mobile response trailer was dispatched to serve meals to the firefighters and law enforcement also.

Folks, I’ve said it before. The church is no place for pew potatoes. Even if you can do nothing physical, you can be an encourager and a prayer warrior. *God has called us into His work of letting the world know He has come to rescue those who would believe in the finished work of Jesus. And as we have been receiving the instruction from the word of God, it sure is a joy to see the way it’s impacting our lives in Him.* But there’s more. And each one of us has things we still need to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in transforming in ourselves. So let’s jump in.

⁵ Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” ⁶ So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

We find here that *covetousness* is tied to *conduct*, which brings to our attention the motivation as to why we do something. Is it because we want to get something in return? Is it because we see something we don’t have and yet want? Think about that for a minute. Does a man or woman treat someone of the opposite sex a certain way not because of pure motives, but rather simply because they want sex, money, power and/or control? *If so, won’t their conduct change when they get or don’t get what they want?* Is that what you would classify as good conduct? I hope not. But it is fairly common.

- I want to give a real warning, especially to those who are still in a place of looking for a life partner. If the one you have your eye on is not content with a simple and godly life now, don’t fool yourself. If they are not satisfied before the wedding, do you somehow believe they will be satisfied after? Up to the point of the honeymoon is when you see the best behavior. Afterward things tend to “relax” a little in the courting 😊 and intensify in the wanting. If you are not *content* before, it’s highly unlikely you will be content afterward.
- And of course, this goes so far beyond the marriage piece. *There are some who are far more materialistic than even they will admit to themselves.* But back to last week and the call for us to live as radicals, the Bible tells us it’s more blessed to give than receive ([Acts 20:35](#)). *So if you have something you have really wanted, but then encounter another who really needs it, will you give it away?*

Then take the next step, because I believe these verses are calling us even deeper than that. Recall that He is speaking to a group who were about to face far greater persecution than what had initiated this letter. Which meant real loss of the things of this world was certainly coming. As a matter of fact, remember in 10:32-34 he had already said to them, *recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated* (speaking of coming to the knowledge of salvation through Jesus), *you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.*

- I want you to imagine having a BBQ at your house or apartment, and then, because you are a Christian (or for any other reason not of your own doing) people show up and take your home, separate you from your family and even your pets, put you in a cell, and steal all your basic rights. And Jesus says to you be **content** with what you now have **because you have Him and He is going nowhere.**
- Now if you can lay ahold of Him and what He has said here, **1)** how would it impact your witness, even to those who took you, **2)** compared to what it would be if you could not get past the physical and material losses. Let me just answer for you. **If you could live out what Jesus is saying here, your account would sound like those in the Bible where the apostles were wrongly imprisoned and then used it to preach salvation to their captors and bring praise to God (Acts 5:17-42, 16:16-40, 28:16-31, Phil. 1:12-14).**
- I'll let you imagine the outcome if your focus was only on physical and material losses and how you had been wrongfully treated. But I will say that will glorify no one.

If you cannot grasp contentment now, with so much at your disposal, how will you do so in the trials? On the other hand, if your focus is more on Jesus than the perishing things of this world (including your physical body and the bodies that currently house your loved ones) (Heb. 2:14-15) **you will know contentment that confounds, witnesses, and even ministers to those around you.**

- Are you an overt, covert, or even self-deceived materialist? How do you know? If it all disappeared tomorrow, **would you be content with simply knowing no one could ever take Jesus from you, because He is going nowhere? And one day He's going to gather you to be with Him forever?**

⁷ *Remember those who rule over* (lead) *you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*

As you know, words can have more than one way to be defined. And although I really like the NKJV, this is one place I think they created controversy that does not need to exist in the use of the term, "*those who rule over you.*" And it appears in verses 17 and 24 also. But since I'm going to say that, I need to make my case and then tell you why this is important. **1)** Let's start with the word "*over*" not appearing in the Greek text at all. That alone changes the tone here. **2)** But then also consider that the 1611 KJV (where this rendering comes from) has a note saying the word "*rule*" might better be translated, "*are the guides.*" Therefore, I believe translations like the NASB, NIV, and ESV have it right in using some form of **leader** rather than ruler.

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- And the reason this matters as a starting point is because **what the rest of scripture tells us about leadership of the church** (considering the law of noncontradiction). But since we are going to get into this more next week when we come to **verse 17**, we will deal with heavy-handed leadership there and see how the Bible is **not** advocating for that at all. And this is a real problem within some segments of the church. So I hope you will join us next week when we deal with that (you can read ahead - [Mark 10:42-45](#), [Luke 22:25-26](#), [2 Cor. 1:24](#), [1 Pet. 5:1-4](#), [Rev. 2:15-16](#)).
- With that, let's get back to the instruction given here. Which is **Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their way of life, imitate their faith.** (NASB)
- And although God has given us a list of types of ministry gifts, this remembrance and consideration is for those who teach the word of God. And as you can imagine, this is a little awkward for a Bible teacher to teach about. Or at least should be.

And we have three actions given here, which are **1)** to **remember**, **2)** **follow** (or imitate their faith), and **3)** **consider**. The remembrance is to be of those individuals. And while some believe this is because perhaps these leaders had since passed or died by martyrdom, **I believe it speaks far more to 1) remembering the things they shared from the word of God** (if they were faithful in actually teaching and giving counsel from the word of God), **2)** in their needs, and **3)** in prayer.

- I say in needs and prayers because there can be this strange thing that people do in making the pastor somehow more or less than human. And in doing so, you can leave him isolated and vulnerable. That really isn't the case here at Freedom. And I'm so grateful for that. I feel as equally cared for and covered in prayer as any other member of this body of believers. I am certainly treated like a real person who is also a child of the King of Kings.
- And what he is calling them to do is consider the faith they saw their leaders walk in, as they too lived in a fallen world. But what he is not saying is the leaders who taught them did it perfectly ([Phil. 3:12](#)), but rather that they actually lived it out right before them. When they dealt with loss, death, frustration, victories, affluence or poverty, children, their own parents, work, witnessing, humbling themselves, sacrificial giving, loving the other believers, hospitality to the stranger...**what they said they believed was revealed to be true.** And again, not without fumbles and necessary course corrections, but ultimately turning over all things to the will of the Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit to perform it, **because their lives were in Jesus.**
- And that is the way it is to be with each and every one of us. Paul tells us this very thing in [1 Cor. 11:1](#) saying, **"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ"**. **And those you disciple, including your children, are to imitate you as you imitate Christ.**

Folks, there is only one original in this equation, and that's Jesus. All of the rest of us are just to be imitating Him so that the one who is even just one step behind you in their maturity and development in Christ can be imitating you as you imitate Him.

⁸ *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.* ⁹ *Do not be carried about* (or "misled") *with various and strange doctrines.*

There are those out there who are preaching all kinds of unbiblical things while adding God's name to their delusions and deceptions. And one way to identify these is to see if it's new. The old adage of, "If it's new, it's not true," turns out to be a fairly good tool in determining if it's of God. So look at Jesus' ministry.

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- Because God is eternal and everywhere all at the same time (“omnipresent”—making it impossible for Him to change). So what was true thousands of years ago is still true today. No matter how enlightened someone might think their generation is or their education has caused them to be, **truth doesn’t change, because the author of truth never does.**
- I watch these crazy videos of what is labeled a Christian church service, and **1)** in addition to being shocked by the insanity that is being pawned off as God’s word, **2)** it really saddens me that so many people are accepting it as truth about God. **3)** But there’s another side to this. For God said in the last days *the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.* (2 Tim. 4:3-4) There are some who want to be deceived so they can be told what they want to hear.
- I think another group is **4)** those believers who are looking for something more sensational than they have already experienced. They are constantly needing a more “moving experience.” Therefore, they seek the sensational or crazy instead of what is real. **But Jesus, and therefore the truth, will never change!**

^{9b}*For it is good that the heart be established (strengthened) **by grace** (emphasis added), 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.*

Now these verses are directed toward The Day of Atonement, for in most cases **the animals that were sacrificed were given to the priests for food.** But in Lev. 16:27 we’re told on The Day of Atonement the animals’ bodies were to be taken outside of the city and burned, but the blood was used in the sanctuary.

- And those who continued to go to that altar of that sanctuary in attempts to make atonement for their sin, **could not also come to the heavenly one where Jesus’ blood was spilled for this very cause.**
- And for these Jewish Christians who were considering going back to Judaism in order to escape persecution, he also points out that **Jesus was treated as refuse.** And if they wanted to follow Him, they would be treated no differently. **Even bearing His reproach among their families and fellow countrymen.**
- Now **1)** this is a hard sell for those who are covetous for the things of this world (including reputation, respect, and acceptance). **2)** But not so hard for those whose hearts are firmly established in heaven. And we find here they are also reminded that their inheritance (and ours) was not in the temple and its systems, which would be completely physically demolished and had already been retired when Jesus was crucified. But was in the one, which to this day, **is still to come and has no end.**

You see, **they had to exit the old system to be with Jesus, and the same is true for us today.** You can’t have the old (or some other way) and the new. And often, when we choose Jesus, the world thinks we are throwing our lives away.

- But that’s because they are focused on the high places, position, and possessions on earth instead of the eternal.
- **That earthly temple sparkled and had all the trappings men love to enter into—prestige, power, earthly riches...**

But it had no substance any longer. And it would be wise to ask ourselves if **the focus** of our lives is on the trappings of this world or the eternal—**it can’t be on both!**

¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. ¹⁵ 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.

A few weeks ago, we were reminded that everything which is material is in for one final shaking when the Lord Jesus executes judgment on a sinful and fallen creation. **Nothing of the natural creation will be spared from this shaking.** But when you and I came into a relationship with God through Jesus, we moved from the natural to the supernatural. Sure, we are still housed in our natural bodies, but at the same time we are presently seated in Jesus in the heavenlies ([Eph. 2:6](#), [Col. 3:1-3](#)). And our forever home does not consist of the things of the natural, which are observable now. We seek the city and creation to come ([Heb. 11:10](#)).

- And with that reality emblazoned on our hearts and minds continually, the natural outworking of that would be exactly what he tells us here. **We should be those constantly 1) praising, 2) thanking, 3) and serving the Lord by caring for others.**
- Look, if you are having to muster up some desire to do these things, it's because you have not fixed your mind on residing with Him in heaven forever. But when that is the reality you live in anticipation of all the time, rather than being covetous for the things of this natural and perishing world, you won't be able to help praising, thanking, and serving Him.
- **You don't have to muster it up if you are constantly looking up** ([Col. 3:2](#)). It's just going to be the desire of your heart. Because He is the desire of your heart. Oh, for sure we can all have those moments when we get off course and then come back. But if you do really desire Him above all else, it won't be too long before you do come back.

So, where is your heart? What or whom is it you desire most? What you treasure is where your heart will be. Where is your heart focused today?

CROSS REFERENCES

Heb 13:2 NKJV - Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.

Act 20:35 NKJV - "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Phl 1:12–14 NKJV - (12) But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, (13) so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; (14) and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Heb 2:14–15 NKJV - (14) Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Heb 13:17 NKJV - 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.

Heb 13:24 NKJV - Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

Mar 10:42–45 NKJV - (42) But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. (43) "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. (44) "And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. (45) "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Luk 22:25–26 NKJV - (25) And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' (26) "But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.

2Co 1:24 NKJV - Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

1Pe 5:1–4 NKJV - (1) The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: (2) Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; (3) nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; (4) and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Rev 2:15–16 NKJV - (15) "Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. (16) "Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

Phl 3:12 NKJV - Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

2Ti 4:3–4 NKJV - (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; (4) and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Lev 16:27 NKJV - "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.

Eph 2:6 NKJV - and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Col 3:1–3 NKJV - (1) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Heb 11:10 NKJV - for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.