"CHRISTIAN STABILITY"

Hebrews 13:7-17
1/26/05

INTRODUCTION: Although devilish wiles of this world may seek to blow you off course,

***You can be a <u>stable</u> believer for Jesus Christ!**

A <u>stable</u> Christian life is a result of . . .

I. Following the Right <u>EXAMPLES</u> (v. 7-8)
(Follow the faith of the <u>Christ-like leadership</u> in your church)

II. Being Anchored in the Right <u>DOCTRINE</u> (v. 9)
(Be strengthened in your heart by <u>God's message of grace</u>)

III. Being Sanctified by the Right <u>ALTAR</u> (v. 10-12)
(Be encouraged by Christ who suffered outside the city gate on the <u>cross</u>)

IV. Enduring Reproach with the Right <u>PERSPECTIVE</u> (V. 13-14)
(Don't worry about not fitting in this world's "camp"; our focus must be on <u>our city to come</u>)

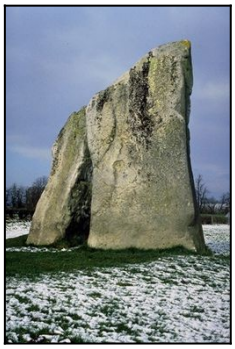
V. Offering Continually the Right <u>SACRIFICES</u> (v. 15-16)
(Offer <u>praise</u> to God and acts of <u>kindness</u> to others)

VI. Responding to Pastoral Leadership with the Right <u>RESPECT</u> (v. 17)
(Honor your church's authorities with <u>humble obedience and submission</u>)



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2/9/05



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(Follow the faith of the _____ in your church)

II. Being Anchored in the Right _____ (v. 9)
(Be strengthened in your heart by _____)

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(Honor your church's authorities with <u>humble _____ and _____</u>)

"CHRISTIAN STABILITY"

Hebrews 13:7-17

INTRODUCTION; Beware of the danger of drifting in your Christian life! Stability is most needed in these last days. Although it is not true of genuine believers, God speaks of an end-time apostasy (II Tim. 2:3) and departure from the faith (I Tim. 4:1) by professors but not possessors of salvation.

Although the devilish winds of this sinful world may seek to blow you off course,

***You can be a stable believer for Jesus Christ!**

A stable Christian life is a result of . . .

I. Following the Right EXAMPLES (v. 7-8)
(Follow the Faith of the Christ-like leadership in your Church)

V. 7

The believer's relationship to his pastor or pastors is enunciated in this chapter by these words:

1) *"Remember them"* (a call to be mindful of their faith and lifestyle) (v. 7)

2) *"Obey them"* (a call to humbly submit to their leadership) (v. 17)

3) *"Salute them"* (a request to greet them) (v. 24)

"Remember" - Call them to mind; to be aware or mindful of them so as to consider their faith and conduct.

"Them" - the plural; indicates a plurality of pastoral leadership (the larger a church grows, the more pastors are needed for the oversight of the various people and ministries)

It seems evident from the New Testament that most (if not all) of the churches had a plurality of elders (cp. *"Them"* Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; *"elders in every church"* Acts 14:23; *elders in every city"* Titus 1:5; cp. Acts 11:30, 15:2; *"elders of the church"* Acts 20:17, 28; *"the elders that rule well"* I Tim. 5:17; *"elders. . . feed the flock"* I Peter 5:1-2; *"ensamples to the flock"* I Peter 5:3).

A plurality of elders provides for:

1) mutual encouragement
2) mutual teamwork
3) mutual accountability

"The rule over you" - lit. The leadership over you not a "lordship over" - I Peter 5;3).

The elders' responsibility of service is to lead the flock. (This involves providing guidance, teaching, safety. . . direction, instruction, and protection).

"Who have spoken unto you the word of God" - This (with prayer) is the primary occupation of the pastor. His #1 job is to preach and teach the *"logon"* [the written words] of Scripture. This is why he must be *"apt to teach."* (I Tim. 3:2)

"Whose faith follow" - Imitate their faith; he does not say: "whose personality follow" or "whose style follow." Rather, God expects the congregation to pursue the same faith that the preachers have.

The exhortation is qualified: ***"Considering the end of their conversation"*** (looking at the outcome (result) of their manner of living; looking at the fruit of their conduct and then follow the beliefs which led to such fruit).

Fruit is always the result of faith. Don't follow a man's faith if he hasn't produced good fruit!

Whom you follow will determine what you will become!

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov.)

"Evil communications corrupt good manners" I Cor. 15:33

V. 8

Verse 8 is an abrupt, interjected truth, which evidently applies to both 7 and 9.

It applies to verse 7 by demonstrating that a person's conduct ought to be consistent like that of Jesus Christ.

It applies to verse 9 by showing that just as He never changes, neither should we. We should follow Christ's eternal stability: He does not change with time; both His nature and moral character remain constant. He has been the same past, present and future (NOTE: This does not mean that the way He operates in people remains the same. He has used *"diverse manners"* to authenticate His spokesmen through history (Heb. 1:1).

Just as there is a stability in the character of Christ, so there should be in our lives.

II. Being Anchored in the Right DOCTRINE (v. 9)

(Be strengthened in your heart by God's message of grace)

"Be not carried about" - Don't allow yourself to be lifted up and swept away by any new teaching.

Doctrinal error has a way of sweeping people off their feet and moving them away from a stable doctrinal foundation. Don't let any *"wind of doctrine"* (Eph. 4:14) move you from the fundamentals of the faith.

"One of Satan's most subtle approaches to the Christian is to move him away from sound doctrine, to get him wrapped up in beliefs that are unfounded, uncertain, and changing. Bad doctrine results in bad living" (MacArthur, p. 435).

[EX.: The Galatians - Gal. 1:6-7]

"Sometimes false teachers are kind, likable, and perhaps even sincere. It is often difficult to believe they would teach anything false or misleading. But we are to judge doctrine by God's Word, not by appearance or personality of the person who holds it (cp. Gal. 18 - neither Paul or an angel from heaven)." (MacArthur, p. 436).

EX: How little children swallow most anything.

What kind of doctrines should we be wary of?

"Diverse" - Doctrines which vary (are different) from those which are clearly enunciated in Scripture.
"Strange" - Alien or foreign doctrines which have not been commonly held to by God's people historically. Beware of doctrines which are supported by only one verse of Scripture (EX: Mormons - *"baptism for the dead"*)

"If it's new, it's not true; and if it's true, it's not new!"

Ways to test a doctrine:

--Can it be supported elsewhere in Scripture?

--Does the teaching suit the context of the passage it is derived from?

--Would it exalt Christ and His finished work at Calvary and His offer of salvation by grace?

--Would it contradict a clear teaching of Scripture?

--Would it promote Godliness (holiness) if believed and acted upon?

--Has anyone else ever discovered that truth? (There is nothing new under the sun)

--Does it glorify God?

--Where will it lead you in the Future?

Established with grace - lit. To make stable or firm.

Our hearts are strengthened (not by legalism, man-made rules, and regulations for attaining spirituality), but by teaching about the grace of God through Jesus Christ!

"Meats . . . have not profited" - Food restrictions do not benefit people spiritually. Old Testament restrictions (Heb. 9:10) were not given as a means of salvation but as a means to distinguish Old Testament Israel from the rest of the pagan world, and perhaps for health reasons. However, such rules never changed the heart of man; this is only accomplished by grace through faith.

(Beware of cults and "isms" which base spirituality on the food you eat or don't eat.)

III. Being Sanctified by the Right ALTAR (v. 10-12)

(Be encouraged by Christ, who suffered outside the city gate on the Cross)

V. 10

"We have an altar" - Our altar is not made of stone but wood; our altar did not have a beast slain upon it, but the precious Son of God.

A new-covenant Christian's altar is the Cross of Jesus Christ, for it is through His death at Calvary that we offer our *"spiritual sacrifices"* to God through Him (Heb. 13:15; I Peter 2:5).

The Old Testament Levitical priests were told by God to eat of the sacrifices they offered (I Cor. 10:18; Lev. 7:6). They would consume a portion of the animals they offered in sacrifice.

So we also in a sense "eat" of the sacrifice of Christ. By faith we internalize the Son of God -- not in communion or the Lord's Supper, but in believing on Him. And we derive our eternal sustenance via our relationship with Him in our hearts (SEE: John 6:53-63).

V. 11

The Levitical required that "sin offerings" be burned *"outside the camp"* on a pile of wood (Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:12, 21, 9:11).

"On the Day of Atonement the sin offering was taken outside the camp and burned completely (Lev. 16:27)" (Wiersbe, p. 153).

V. 12

The purpose for which Jesus suffered was to sanctify (or make holy) sinful people. He died a bloody death on Calvary to cleanse us from all sin, and He accomplished this sacrifice outside of the Temple area, actually outside the city gate. Our altar at which we are sanctified was not in the Temple, but on a hill called Golgotha (Calvary).

"Without the gate" - Outside the city gate. Just as *"sin offerings"* were burned outside the camp, Jesus (our sin offering) was crucified outside the Gates of the Old City of Jerusalem.

[NOTE: It is my belief that the Via Dolorosa path which Jesus traveled did not lead to the RCC site of the present day "Church of the Holy Sepulcher," but rather He walked northeast from the Antonia Fortress, went outside the City Gate (outside of the present "Damascus" gate) and was crucified on a hill called Calvary (near where the garden tomb is located today).

IV. Enduring Reproach with the Right PERSPECTIVE (v. 13-14)

(Don't worry about not fitting in this world's "Camp"; our focus must be on our city to come)

V. 13

"Let us go forth . . . to Him" - Let us not with fear and shame (like Peter) follow Him afar off. Let us not think we have to linger by the big "dignified" religious establishments of the day, but let us be willing to leave behind dead religion and dead ritual and be (as it were) outside the camp of this world's system and be counted as a set-apart disciple of Christ.

Though the world mock us for our separatist stance, though they disallow us in their camp, we gladly suffer reproach (shame) as Jesus did (if God calls us to such).

Are you willing to suffer adversity and tribulation for Christ?

"God now does His work completely outside the camp of Judaism" (MacArthur, p. 441).

Are you willing to carry the weight of whatever shame the world may spew at you?

Or are you concerned about what others may think?

The fear of man will ensnare you; you will be unstable if you succumb to it. You will vacillate to the shims and wishes of everyone who puts pressure on you, mocks you, pokes fun at you -- if you cowardly give in!

v. 14

Our perspective cannot be this world or the things you might forget of this world. If this world rejects you, remember, this is not your final home anyway!

This world will pass away; our City (*"the New Jerusalem"*) is coming one day! (Rev. 21-22)

To be stable in this life, you must focus on things above, the eternal.

V. Offering Continually the Right SACRIFICES (v. 15-16)

(Offer praise to God and acts of kindness to others)

v. 15

Because our eyes are fixed on the eternal not the temporal, the spiritual not the material, we can rejoice and thank God despite our earthly circumstances.

"By him" - Through Jesus Christ's enabling power we can offer NOT bullocks and lambs but sacrifices of praise.

"Continually" - Not just once a year on Yom Kippur – all the time, every day!

"The fruit of our lips" - Only fruit should come from our lips!

Not foul garbage (Eph. 4:29), not bitter poison nor cursing or bitterness (Rom. 3:13-14).

Fruit is sweet (what comes from our mouth ought to be sweet).
Fruit is beneficial (if our words don't build up, we should shut up!).
Fruit is healthy.

The fruit of thanks which flows out of our mouths, comes from a thankful heart (thankful that God saved our souls).

A thankful Christian is a stable Christian! Reason: He is not covetous but contented with what God gave him.

v. 16

"Do good" - helping, being kind (expending energy by our actions)

"Communicate" - sharing, giving (expending <u>resources</u> by our money and material goods)

"With such sacrifices God is well pleased" - It brings pleasure to God's heart when we meet the needs of others. He is always satisfied when His children express care for each other in tangible ways (ILUS: how parents feel when their kids share and get along as opposed to fighting).

A giving, sharing, caring Christian is a stable one. When you help someone else with their problems, you don't find yours to be so bad.

Your preoccupation with serving Christ keeps you from discouragement and idle time which invites unsettling trouble into your life.

God "demands sacrifice [today] <u>not</u> in the form of a ritual or ceremony, but in word and in deed" (MacArthur, p. 443).

VI. Responding to Pastoral Leadership with the Right <u>RESPECT</u> (v. 17)

(Honor your church's authorities with <u>humble obedience and submission</u>)

Now the writer of Hebrews returns to where he began in verse 7, showing the church members responsibility toward their pastors.

Honor them for their work's sake (I Thes. 5:12-13).

"Obey" - (from *peitho*) - obedience as a result of faith or an inward persuasion; not the more common term –*hupakuou*—obedience as a result of listening (Vine, p. 796).

What God is saying here is this: <u>Trust</u> your pastor and then respond in obedience to truth he imparts and the direction he gives.

There exists much skepticism today regarding the clergy (and much distrust is not without warrant). God, however, expects His people to allow pastoral leadership to lead, and the people to respond with trust to such leadership.

"Rule" - lead (as in verses 7 and 24)

Excursus -

The congregation is not to rule (lead) the pastors, but rather the pastors are to rule (lead) the congregation (cp. I Thes. 5:12).

The leadership proposes the direction the church should go, and the church in urn voluntarily agrees to the decision. If they appeal a point made by the leaders, the leaders should review the point and if they agree, they may change their original decision. But the final decision (as in the home) should rest with the leadership.

[NOTE: When appeals are made (as at church business meetings), they should be made according to the order described in I Cor. 14:33-40.]

A dual accountability exists between the leadership and the laity. The laity is responsible to the leadership and the leadership is responsible to the laity (cp. I Tim. 5:19-20).

If the pastor has no accountability to congregation and can lead unchecked, what you have is a cult. However, (the opposite extreme) if the congregation is not accountable to the leadership and everyone does what they want, what you have is chaos (anarchy).

Pastors are not puppets responding to all of the strings pulled by the members. However, any wise and good pastor will seriously consider the validity of suggestions made by the congregation.

"Submit" - *(hueiko* - lit. *upo* = under; *eiko* = to yield) To give in o or yield (the opposite of stubborn rebellion).

This word is not the more common word *"hupotasso"* - to rank under, a positional rank under an authority.

What God is referring to here is a spirit or attitude which gives way to an authority rather than an attitude which contests or challenges or defies the authority.

"Watch" - *agrupneo* - from *agreuo* = to chase; *hupnos* = sleep; hence, to chase after sleep; to be without sleep*;* to be sleepless (Reinecker, p. 720; Vine, p. 1213).

The word metaphorically means to stay spiritual awake and alert so as to keep watch over the spiritual needs of the flock.

Not only does a pastor literally forfeit leisure or sleep so as to stay up late at night for teaching, discipling, visiting and studying; but he also must keep his eyes wide open to the attacks of Satan toward God's sheep.

"Quite frankly, it is much easier to "win souls" than it is to "watch for souls" (see Ezek. 3:16-21)" (Wiersbe, p. 151).

"They. . . must give an account" - All pastors because of their responsibility for tending to God's flock, will one day be held accountable to God for the type of job they did.

It's an awesome matter to be a pastor! We will receive the *"greater condemnation*" - James 3:1.

Note: At the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will be held accountable <u>not</u> for how the sheep turned out per se, but rather how we did our job of watching over them. However, it is no joy to a pastor to have rebellious, unteachable, "untendable" sheep. It's a grief, a burdensome, groaning experience.

"That is unprofitable for you" - Not only will the under-shepherd answer to God for how he watches over the sheep, but the sheep will answer for how they responded and respected the undershepherd.

Thee is <u>NO</u> benefit to being a stubborn sheep. There is <u>ZERO</u> advantage to being rebellious toward your pastor. It is harmful to you. Much of the stability of the flock is determined by their submission to the shepherd! If you go astray, I will grieve; but you will face the consequences!

"A person who never brings joy will never have joy" (MacArthur, p. 448).