

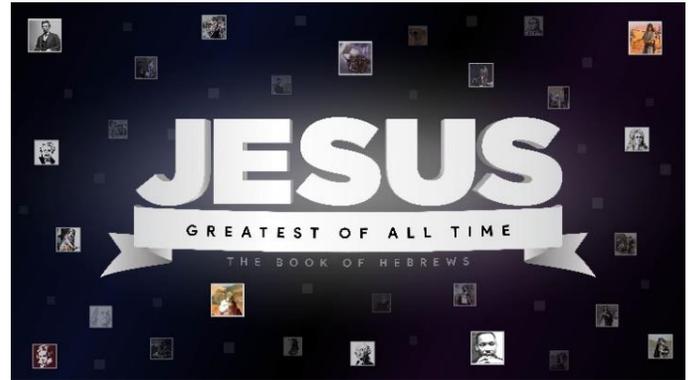


# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

## Before I Go, Don't Forget!

### Hebrews 13:7–16

Tim Badal | May 2, 2021



Turn to Hebrews 13 as we continue in our series titled “Jesus: Greatest of All Time.” We’re in the final weeks of this series that we’ve been in since last fall, looking at this letter written to Jewish Christians who had left the Jewish faith and were now getting pushback for standing up for Jesus. The author is telling them, “All this is worth it, because Jesus is superior to anything else we could ask for or imagine.” He is encouraging them to keep running the race with endurance and perseverance. We’ve looked at 12 chapters of doctrine and teaching, but now in chapter 13 he’s closing out this long sermon with some final thoughts. He’s saying, “Before I go, I don’t want you to forget some things.”

Now, if you’re a parent, you know exactly what the writer is talking about. If you’re able to leave home for an extended time, you no doubt will go over the list of things you want them to remember. In the Badal house, it usually happens with Mom and Dad in the laundry room, yelling to the boys, “Don’t forget to clean up after yourselves. Don’t forget to take the dog out for some walks. Don’t forget to feed him. Don’t forget to pick up your brother after practice. Don’t forget your homework.” We know our boys will inevitably forget to do all of these important things that impact their lives.

Last week we started Hebrews 13 and the list of reminders began. We were told we need to show hospitality to strangers and prisoners. We were reminded to live sexually pure lives. We were cautioned not to let the love of money overtake us. Today we’ll get four more reminders that the author doesn’t want us to forget, because we can sometimes do just that. So let’s start at Hebrews 13:7 where we’ll take a few verses at a time:

<sup>7</sup>Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup>Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

## Treasure those who helped to shape your faith.

The first thing the author wants us to remember is that we need to treasure people who shaped our faith. He specifically tells us to remember our leaders. Who are they? They are not church elders. They’ll be mentioned in verse 17 later on as men who keep watch over our souls.

These leaders are a different group. They’re those who had helped shape the Hebrew Christians when they first came to Christ. The author says they are to be treasured continually, based on the verb tense he uses. We’re to always remember the leaders who impacted our lives by helping bring us to where we are in our relationship with Christ. He says we specifically need to remember their past actions and words. He says they “spoke” to us, so this could mean these leaders have already died.

Look at Hebrews 12:4: *“In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”* That’s an allusion to those who gave up their lives for their faith. Maybe some of these leaders were in their churches but ended up being imprisoned or otherwise persecuted. Whoever they were, these people were being told to remember them. But how were they to remember them? Just with warm, cuddly thoughts and memories? Notice it says they were to remember the Word of God that had been spoken to them. These men and women passed along what they knew about Christ to others who came after them. They shared what they knew about walking and talking with Jesus.

Let me ask, who are some of the people who helped you reach where you are spiritually today? What Sunday school teachers or youth group leaders or other people in the church helped you in this way? Maybe it was your parents or your spouse or a friend. Whoever they are, have you ever taken time to thank them? Maybe they've passed away, but you could take time to call their family or friends and say, "I know you miss them and I do as well, because they shaped my life spiritually." In other words, remembering isn't just thinking about someone.

The author is encouraging us to go beyond just remembering to actually emulate who they were. We are to examine the outcome of their way of life, then emulate what they modeled to us. We're to watch how they lived, then mimic or follow their example. We need to intently consider how God blessed them in both good times and bad, then decide for ourselves that we want to live like they did by thinking, "I'm going to follow them. I'm going to live like them. I'm going to talk like they did. I'm going to conduct myself the way they conducted their lives." That's how we are to remember and treasure these leaders.

By way of example, let me illustrate with some of the leaders in my life. It begins of course with my mom and dad, Bill and Michelle Badal. In 1966, my dad immigrated from Baghdad, Iraq to Aurora. My mom is a West Aurora girl. They met and were married in 1970, then moved out west to the town of Hinckley. They had three kids. My parents aren't anything special in the sense of earthly pizzazz, if you will. They're middle-class hard-working people. But here's what I love about Mom and Dad, who are both still with us, serving and honoring God each and every day. They do this in the good times and the bad. They've been models, not only for my brothers and myself, but also for our children and our wives. They've also been models to our community in so many ways. As Paul wrote about Timothy's mother and grandmother, I too was taught the Scriptures from the time I was very young. This training made me wise unto salvation. I am who I am because of these two dear people.

As you know, leaders come in all ages and at all seasons of our lives. The second leader in my life was my older brother Chris, who was nearly three years older than me. He's no longer with us, as he was killed in a car accident after he fell asleep at the wheel coming home from a youth group event. His life, though, was awesome. He was athletic and selected as the homecoming king. He was the kind of guy most guys want to be and most girls wanted to be with. He was all the things you would want to be. But he had allowed himself to grow away from God, then in his junior year God began to work in his life and Chris decided to get serious about the Lord. Essentially Chris decided to give up his popularity and some of his bad relationships, instead dedicating the rest of his junior year to Christ. During his speech class, Chris gave a series of persuasive speeches about why following Christ was the greatest thing anyone could do, as a result, a revival began to take place in our local high school.

Now, there was a lot of pushback. Chris lost friends and his popularity. He even lost his girlfriend because he chose Christ over these other things. You could have said he gave up a lot, but it wasn't until he died that we could see the full impact he had. We knew Chris was a well-liked guy, but we didn't expect the things that happened at his wake and funeral. It was downright miraculous. Over 2,000 people attended his wake alone. It took my parents almost ten hours to shake the hands of every person who came. One by one, they spoke of the impact Chris had made by sharing Christ with teenagers my parents had never met. In fact, Aurora Central Catholic High School had a senior English project writing about the person who had most impacted their life and who they wanted to imitate.

Ten seniors wrote about my brother Chris. Eight of those ten had never met him. What began to happen was lives began to be changed. Even to this day, my parents hear about people who had rebelled against God, but the seeds Chris planted had changed their lives. These people are now in the 40s and 50s.

You see, 16-year-olds can be a powerful example of the Christian faith. I thank God for my brother. I would not be the man I am today without him. At 14 years old, I longed for the popularity he had, the girls he was around, the buddies he had and the name he had made for himself. Then to see him give that all up for the cause of Christ was simply amazing to me. I thank God for my brother. Even today, at 45 years of age, remembering him still results in lessons about what it means to follow Jesus.

Another couple who was really important in my life was my youth pastor and his wife, John and Susan Avery. Many of you know who I'm talking about, because they served as youth leaders here at Village Bible Church. They are now pastoring in northern Virginia. I love these two, first of all because they endured four years of Tim Badal. They would tell you that I pushed and pressed them more than any other teenager they've ever had in their now almost 30 years of youth ministry. I challenged them, but do you know what they always said? They told me I was loved by God and that God had great plans for me. Even though there were times when I didn't believe them, I was thankful that they endured—yes, endured—the high school Tim. They gave me opportunities and they prayed for me. More than that, these two people—who are only about ten years older than me—modeled what a beautiful

marriage looks like. Now, I'd seen this with my mom and dad, but you don't go there with your own parents. Seeing how this young couple loved one another is the way I see myself loving my wife Amanda. The way they loved their children and how they dealt with their children also impressed me. Many times when I'm dealing with my children I'm hearing John and Susan's words in my mind. I am thankful for them.

Now, are any of these individuals super-saints? Are any of them worth building statues for? The answer is no. We are to remember them and treasure them. I could also add that there are many of you here today who have impacted my life. Here's the great joy for me: I grew up here at Village Bible Church. My years of Sunday school, youth group and Vacation Bible School are the reason I am where I am today doing what I do by the grace of Almighty God, but it's also because of men and women who went before me. Because of their faithfulness, I'm now able to imitate their faith.

So who have you imitated to get you to where you are today? Stop, thank God for them, then maybe even give them a call and thank them. Tell them where you've come to and how they've had a part in that. What an encouragement that would be!

Let me also say this: who are you a leader of today? Maybe there's no one who would call you a leader. It's not because you're not gifted or you don't have leadership abilities to pour directly into the next generation, but there will be those you lead by inspiring them to imitate you, even if you aren't aware that's happening.

In verse eight we find a very famous passage of Scripture: *"Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever."* We see this on bookmarks, in pictures and even painted on walls. In our context, however, it has a meaning that we might miss when we just read the verse by itself. The author intends this verse to be a word of encouragement. As we remember those who have served us well in the past, as we serve others leading into the future by being a model of faith, the same Jesus Who moved in the lives of those who impacted our lives is the same Jesus Who gives us the ability to impact others. We can be confident that He will continue this process until He comes to take us home.

In other words, the writer is telling us, "This Christianity is never going to stop." Think about it. Almost 2,000 years later and halfway around the world, here we sit—a roomful of people singing and proclaiming the same truth about the unchanging nature of Jesus Christ, Who has saved us, Who is sanctifying us and Who has promised to take us to be with Him. Amen?

So we have some treasuring to do and we have some serving to do as well. Let us remember those who have served us by imitating their example and modeling it for those who come after us.

## Take a stand for Christ.

The writer now moves to the next verses, which may seem a little disconnected from the previous verses:

<sup>9</sup>Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. <sup>10</sup>We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. <sup>11</sup>For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup>So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. <sup>13</sup>Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.

If you're wondering what this is about, you're with a lot of people. Most commentators find this passage very difficult. Partly it's because we don't entirely understand what the writer is talking about. We do know that what he's saying in verses 9-12 are an illustration of the point he makes in verse 13. That gives us a hint about what he's thinking. It seems to involve the relationship between these Christian believers and their Jewish counterparts. He begins verse nine by warning them about strange teachings, then he says, *"...for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them."*

There was a teaching by the Jewish leaders in that day that if a person participated in the different festivals and meals that littered the Jewish calendar, and at the food connected to those festivities, they became spiritually more holy. The writer is saying, "Don't fall for that teaching. How are you strengthened? By God's grace. It has nothing to do with what you eat. What you eat doesn't make you any more holy. A holy heart is one that is given to obedience to God." He then goes on to say that the altar they now have is not one that the priests who *"serve the tent"* are eligible to eat from.

As the Jewish Christians were going into houses during the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles or any of the other festivals, the Jews would not let them share in the meals. That's why the author is encouraging them by saying that they have an altar, the food from which is off limits to those observing the Jewish holidays. They have a seat at Christ's table, where not even the high priest could join them. This created a problem insofar as it created a stronger division between believers and their Jewish families and

friends who did not follow Christ. That's why he ends this section by reminding them in verse 13 that Jesus also suffered "*outside the gate*" in order to sanctify His people. He tells the people they are called to "*...bear the reproach he endured.*" Not only were the people ostracized from the Jewish festivities, but they were also reproached for their loyalty to Christ. So let's remember the reproach Jesus Himself bore, the mocking and the scorn. Even though He Himself had never sinned, He took upon Himself our sins so we could receive His righteousness, but the Jewish people did not understand this, even though the Christians did.

What was the reproach the author is talking about? How did the Jewish people make fun of Jesus in their gatherings that would draw Christians away from Him? It's quite simple: they would mock the way Jesus died. Jesus was taken outside the city by the Romans. We don't think about this because the pictures we have of the crucifixion don't show this, but Jesus would have been stripped naked for all the world to see, He would have been beaten and bloody, and He would have died a slow death. Because of this, the Jewish people would mock the Christians, "You're a follower of that naked, bloody Jesus Who said He was God but then got killed? That's your Savior? That's Who you think is the greatest of all time? Our greatest are Moses, Abraham and David. They were great men. Your Jesus is that naked, bloody individual Who died after He said He was God. What a joke."

In those moments, the Hebrew people would begin to take a step back from following Christ. Like the disciples, they would begin to abandon Jesus. So the author is telling them, "When this is tempting you, go outside and meet Jesus in His humiliation. Take a stand for Christ. When people humiliate Jesus, and humiliate you because you're following Him, don't step away from Him, step into Him. Meet Him outside the camp in His humiliation and lock arms with Him. Stand in solidarity with Him."

You might say, "That's easy, Tim. Next time I'm at a Passover dinner where they're mocking Jesus, I'll stand up." But as Gentiles, we don't usually go to Jewish festivals. But how often have we been at parties or other gatherings where the name of Jesus has been reviled, or where being part of a church, reading the Bible or believing the Christian faith are things that are being scorned by people we know? Like the disciples, how often are we prone to wander from Jesus? If we want to live out Hebrews 13:9-13, then we must never back away from these situations, but rather stand strong for Jesus.

Yes, Jesus was humiliated and exposed, but remember, He also told us, "If you won't confess Me before others, I won't confess you before My Father." It's easy for my brother Micah to proclaim his faith in the waters of baptism here, in front of a bunch of other believers. I preach to a group of Christians and it's easy to do this. But it gets hard when we're at school or work, or when as a Christian we're in the minority. It's hard when we're the only ones who will stand up. It becomes even more difficult when we see other Christians back away. That's exactly what the writer is saying. "Don't forget, even when it's hard, to stand for Christ."

## **Thank Christ by seeking after heaven, not earth.**

Why would we do this, risk our popularity, risk a work promotion or risk our standing in our community? Why would we allow ourselves to be penalized in this present day? The answer is in verse 14: "*For here we have no lasting city...*" There's nothing here for us to hold on to. There's nothing here that's going to make it into eternity. If we want to truly stand for Christ, then we need to seek heaven, not earth. We not only need to take a stand for Christ, but we need to thank Christ by seeking heaven, not earth. Why would we be willing to experience persecution and reviling from others? It's because "*...we seek the city that is to come.*"

Go back the Mount Zion that the author spoke about in Hebrews 12. This is the promise that we're waiting for. Jesus told us, "*I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also*" (John 14:2-3).

We're willing to lose our place in this world because God has reserved a place for us in heaven. And because that place will be so wonderful, we are now willing to endure 70 or 80 years of difficulty and even persecution because we have a home just beyond glory. So we thank God by not living for the here and now, but living for the promise of heaven.

How do we do that? The author finishes up by saying in verse 15 that the way we do this is to "*...continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.*" In other words, we will acknowledge His name when no one else around us will.

## Treat others well by serving and sharing with them.

Verse 16 goes on to say, *"Do not neglect to do good and to share what [we] have..."* We'll say, "I'll stand for Christ and live for the promise of heaven instead of the here and now. But you know what? If someone reviles me, I'm reviling them back. If someone mistreats me, I'm going to mistreat them back. If someone does wrong to me, then I'm going to do wrong back to them."

But we need to remember the words of Jesus, Who told us to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us (Matthew 5:43-48). The writer of Hebrews also says we are to treat others well by serving them and sharing with them. I want to remember those who served you by showing you Christ.

However, the people the writer is talking about here is the person who make your blood boil, the biggest mouthpiece that speaks against Christ. The author is telling us to treat them well, to share with them and serve them. He doesn't want us to repay evil with evil, but rather to repay evil with good. Peter tells us that when others *"speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation"* (1 Peter 2:12). Even though a person may not like us or may make fun of us, they won't be able to make fun of the good deeds we have done. So treat people well. Don't repay evil with evil, but show love and kindness to the most vocal of critics against Christ and His Kingdom. Why are we to do this? Because we'll be vindicated in the end.

On that great and glorious day, when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, that vocal person in your school or workplace will be right next to you on their knees praising the name of Jesus. The difference will be that, as they acknowledge Jesus in that moment, their rebellion will take them to a place of eternal punishment. But for us on that day of vindication, we will continue to offer praise to the God Who saved us and will experience the fruit of our labors in standing tall for the sake of Christ's name in a world that wants to knock us down.

The author finishes verse 16 with these words: *"...for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."* There's nothing greater than when we return, and everything we said as we were leaving was done. The great joy for us as parents is when our children do what we've asked them to do. When we return from our absence and see what they have accomplished, there's no greater joy.

God has asked us to treasure those who came before us, take a stand for Christ, thank Christ by seeking heaven and not earth, and also to treat others well. When Christ comes, He will be pleased when these are things we have done. How do we do this? Do we just continually say to people, "Jesus is my Savior"? That seems a little odd. Rather, the author is indicating that the sacrifices which are pleasing to God are all the things he's talked about in Hebrews 13. Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect hospitality to strangers and prisoners. Do not neglect your sexual purity. Do not allow the love of money to fill your life. Remember your leaders. Treat others well. When we do these things, we please our Heavenly Father and give Him great glory. We proclaim to ourselves and to a watching world that Jesus is in fact Who He said He was, and we show the world that we've been changed by Christ.

We're now going to move to a time of communion. This is the time Christ instituted for the church to proclaim the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. This is an opportunity for us as a church to declare Who it is that we believe and live for. That's easy to do on Sunday mornings. So as we prepare ourselves for communion, I want you to ask yourself, "How did I do this past week at taking a stand for Christ?" The Bible says that when we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Let me ask: how did we do at proclaiming the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to a watching world this last week? How have we lived for Christ? Are we bringing reproach to His name by sinning against Him?

As the worship team plays quietly during our time of meditation, let's examine our hearts and remember the grace of Jesus Christ, including the grace He gave by sending others around us to teach, guide and lead us. We need to ask ourselves, "Is my life also modeling this?" If not, we read in 1 John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

So let's take some time to confess our sins before the Lord before we partake of these elements.