

Hebrews 13:7-25
(Matthew 20:20-28)
“Remember Your Leaders”

Introduction

Leadership matters. North and South Korea share the same people and the same peninsula, but the south prospers while the north starves. The island of Hispaniola is the home to two nations, impoverished Haiti next to the thriving Dominican Republic. From the air, the one is forested and green, the other burned over and brown. Or take the financial mess of my birth state of Illinois versus the sound financial situation of my home state of Tennessee. Leadership matters.

It matters not only in government and business and education, but it matters profoundly in the church, in whether or not a congregation is faithful to the gospel, whether our worship is gospel shaped and our witness is faithful to the apostolic good news of Jesus Christ.

So it should not surprise us that our author ends this exhortation with a reminder of the importance of leadership, of the church having faithful leaders and faithful followers. He addresses three crucial aspects of leading and following well, and includes an exemplary prayer, reminding us of how we ought to learn to pray for one another.

Body

1. A leader's life: Leaders as examples (13:7-16):

- Leaders are called to teach God's Word (v.7a).
- Leaders are called to demonstrate what they teach so that others may safely imitate their faith as they follow Christ daily (v.7b).
- Specifically, leaders are called to humble, self-sacrificial service, the preeminent illustration, of course, being Jesus, who humbled himself and suffered as an outcast in order to sanctify us (v.8-16).

2. A leader's task: Leaders as overseers (13:17):

- Leaders are called to keep watch over our souls, so obey them and submit to them *as* they faithfully follow Christ and remain faithful to his Word (v.17a).
- Leaders will one day give account to the Lord for their leadership, so make their work a joy. If they are miserable, they will soon make us miserable, as well (v.17b).

3. A leader's needs: Leaders as fellow strugglers (13:18-19; 22-25):

- Pray for your leaders. The author's request for prayer is an acknowledgement of his own need for the church to stand with him so that he will remain faithful to the Word in his teaching and in his life (v.18-19).
- Greet your leaders. He singles leaders out for greeting, along with the rest of the church, because he knows that it is easy for everyone to assume that all is well with their leaders (v.24). Many a time I've sat and listened to people pour out their hearts to me while my own heart was breaking over things going on in my own life, and I have sometimes wanted to say, "You think you've got problems? Listen to this!" So pray for your leaders and greet them as brothers and sisters in the family of faith, just as in need of soul care as anyone else.

4. A leader's prayer: A final good word for all God's people (13:20-21):

- He offers this beautiful benediction on behalf of his readers. It is another illustration of how we ought to learn to pray for one another. Too often we simply offer crisis prayers for what seems the latest and most urgent thing. These people are facing persecution, but he makes no mention of that in his prayer (v.20-21).
- He prays to the Father, "the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep" (v20a).
- He prays on the basis of "the blood of the covenant," the sole basis of our reconciliation to God and our right of access into his presence to offer prayers that he has promised to hear and receive (v.20b).
- He prays that his readers might have everything they need to do everything that God desires them to do, so that they might live lives that please him, in union with Jesus Christ and for his glory (v.21). Surely this is the kind of prayer that we should learn to pray for one another.

Conclusion

So he concludes what he calls "my brief word of exhortation," a *brief* word that we have spent the past year studying together. His final words are what should always be the longing of Christians for one another: "Grace be with all of you" (v.25). It is the hope that we will not get what we deserve, but will find that our sins have been forgiven, Christ's righteousness made ours, that we be given his Spirit and begin experiencing the promises of God's grace, growing intimacy with him now as we join him on his mission of reclaiming the world and making all things new, and of one day hearing him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into your Master's joy." Amen! "Grace be with all of you."

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