

Lead by Mature Christian Ministry: Real gospel relationships in leadership and liturgy

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[0 : 00] But if you'd like to turn with me now to your Bibles, we're going to read together in our study for this morning, which is in Hebrews chapter 13. We're almost at the end, not quite, one more I think, but almost at the end of this great book that we've been dipping in and out of and studying over several months.

And we're going to be looking this morning at Hebrews 13 from verse 7 right through to verse 19. But I'm going to read, as we did last week, just from the end of chapter 12, which gives us the context.

The writer says, Let us offer to God acceptable worship, well-pleasing worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

In other words, take this very seriously. Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

[1 : 16] Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. So we can confidently say, the Lord is my helper, I will not fear, what can man do to me?

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

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.

We have an altar from which those who serve the tent, the temple, have no right to eat. 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.

Well, so Jesus also suffered outside the gate, in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore, let us go to him, outside the camp, and bear the reproach he endured.

[2 : 35] For here, we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then, through Jesus, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God.

That is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have. For such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch out for your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

And pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this, in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. Amen. May God bless to us his word. Well, turn with me back to Hebrews chapter 13.

[3 : 50] And we're looking at verse 7 to 19, which teaches us that worship pleasing to God must be led by mature Christian ministry.

The message of Hebrews is that in Jesus Christ, God's final and supreme word of revelation has come to the world, a world which had rejected the knowledge of God.

And that in Jesus Christ, God's finished supreme work of reconciliation has been won for a sinful, a rebellious people who had rejected the rule of God.

And so we who have come to Jesus Christ have received such a great salvation. And we must neglect it. We have a great race to run.

Chapter 12, verse 1. Let us run with endurance the race set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer, the perfecter of our faith, our great champion who leads us on.

[4 : 49] And so from chapter 10, verse 19, we have a call, don't we, to enduring worship. We have far greater privileges than any of the saints of old, as chapter 12 reminds us.

We've come already, haven't we, to the heavenly Jerusalem. But therefore, of course, we have far greater responsibilities. Chapter 12, verse 28. We're grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

And so he says, let us offer to God acceptable worship, well-pleasing worship to God, with all seriousness and reverence and all. And chapter 13, it goes on to add to the trusting faith in God above and to the solid hope in the world to come.

It adds a call to stir one another up, to love and to generous good. Now, in this world, as we live every day of our lives for Jesus, living in the present for the majesty of heaven, not just for the material things of earth, and for the permanent, eternal kingdom, not just for this passing ephemeral world.

And that is the worship that really pleases God. Living lives, he says in verses 15 and 16 here, of sacrifice. That's how Paul talks about it in Romans chapter 12.

[6 : 09] But it's the same here. Offering up continual sacrifices of praise to God from lips and lives that bear fruit in his name. And last time we saw, didn't we, in verses 1 to 6, how the worship that pleases God is much more than just sweet songs.

It's the solid substance of lives that are living out mature Christian morality, real gospel morality. Showing real gospel-shaped relationships in all of our lifestyle, in all of our loves.

Living the lifestyle of love that, remember Paul says in Romans chapter 13, is the fulfillment, the fullness of the law, fulfilling all God's commands for human life. And that's what verse 1 to 6 here is about.

It's applying in particular that love to truly loving the people of God, sharing with them, standing with them, and truly living the purpose of God for our lives in the area of sex and of substance.

Honoring right relationships in marriage and to our material wealth and substance. That's how we honor and please God through Jesus Christ.

[7 : 27] And it's how we'll be truly liberated to live in the peace of God, knowing that he will never leave us or forsake us, knowing that he will always be our helper.

That is what makes us free, isn't it, from the consuming love of money. And just as free from the crippling fear of man. Verse 6, what can man do to me?

And that's the way, and that's the only way, to a truly liberated life in this world. But the kind of worship that really pleases God with Christians and with churches continually living out that kind of mature Christian morality, that will only be evident if churches are led by a mature Christian ministry, by true gospel ministry, which is marked by real gospel relationships to the church's leadership and to the church's liturgy.

That is, it has a real gospel character to its ministry and it has a real gospel center to its whole message and its mission. And that's what verses 7 to 19 here are all about.

You'll notice that in verses 7 to 9 and in verses 17 to 19, they bracket this section talking about leaders, leaders past and leaders present.

[8 : 53] And the focus in these verses is on the character of the ministry of a real gospel leadership. And then in the center, from the second half of verse 9 through to verse 16, the focus is on the real content and the real center of the church's mission and message.

The focus of such a church is liturgy, you might say, which is the very heart of its worship. What is at the real heart of the worship of a church, a real gospel ministry?

What is its consciousness, its concerns? What is the heartbeat of its collective life? Well, let's look at the brackets first. Verses 7 to 9 and 17 to 19.

At real Christian leadership that displays the character of true gospel ministry. Verse 7, Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.

That is, those who are now presumably dead, but those who first evangelized them and disciplined them and then led them in the way of faith. Consider the outcome, the accomplishment of their way of life and imitate their faith, he says.

[10:06] Well, I'm sure many of us look back on such gospel leaders, people who influenced our lives, maybe brought us to faith in the first place, taught us the word of life and the way of life.

And I'm sure many of us give thanks repeatedly for them, I certainly do and will do all of my days. But notice what the emphasis here is in verse 7. Remember your leaders.

And it's the same word in verse 17 and in verse 24, three times. It's a general term, notice, that he's using. There's not a specific word here about church offices in particular.

Amazing how Christians often obsess, isn't it, about terminology for particular offices in the church. Oh, it must be deacons that we have. No, no, no, no. This is somebody else.

No, it must be elders that we have. Or it must be bishops. Or it's got to be presbyters. No, no. Pastor is the right word for some. Pastor is anathema to others.

[11:04] And on it goes. We can be so silly about it, can't we? Yes, the New Testament does use all of these terms and in fact more terms than those even. But always, actually, the New Testament is far more concerned not with the offices and the structures of the church but with the function, with the content of the church's leadership.

And so Hebrews here is quite content to use just a general word like leader because he wants to focus on what that actually means and what that leadership actually does. Well, I suspect we would save ourselves a lot of distraction, a lot of confusion in the church today if we did the same.

But what does real gospel leadership do? Well, he tells us it proclaims the true faith. They spoke to you the word of God.

It leads through the proclamation of the gospel word. So a leader's authority comes not from structures but from the scriptures.

That's the supreme authority in the church of Jesus Christ. Now that's so important. You see, if you put all your focus on the structures and the offices, the danger is you are putting the ultimate authority in the church into the hands of men.

[12:23] You're saying, oh, well, elders rule the church and then some of those elders might also preach. They'll be teaching elders, we'll call them. Everybody rules, all the elders rule, but some of them will also teach.

But you see what that does? That is making the word of God merely a subset of the rule and the authority of men. No, says Hebrews. No, it's the word of God proclaimed in keeping with the unchanging gospel, which is the same yesterday, today, and forever, verse 8.

That is the supreme authority in the church, always. That teaching has full authority. Any other teaching, verse 9, strange to the gospel, differing from the gospel, has no authority.

It doesn't matter how impressive the so-called leader may be. It doesn't matter what is the name of the office he might hold. Real gospel leadership proclaims the true faith and, notice, perseveres in the true faith to the end, as these former leaders did, despite some of them certainly ending up with martyrdom.

These were not men of the world. They were men of the world to come. And they were the embodiment in their lives of that message of forward-looking faith that persevered to the end, undeterred.

[13:48] They spoke to you the true faith, he says, and they showed you the true faith. So imitate that faith. He's echoing chapter 6, verse 12, isn't he?

Don't be sluggish, but be imitators of those who through faith and patience, through endurance, inherit the promises. That's real Christian faith.

It's fixed always on the future, and it's persevering always to the end, even when it may lead to suffering, to loss, and even to martyrdom.

Like Mallory and Irving, the famous duo who died trying to conquer Everest. And it was said of them, wasn't it, that when they were last seen, they were still climbing, still heading upwards.

So learn from such true leaders past, he says to them. And, verse 17, he says, be loyal to such true leaders in the present.

[14:52] Obey them and submit to them, he says. It's interesting, actually, that the word that he's chosen there, which he's translated obey, could perhaps be translated, be persuaded by them.

In other words, submit not just to them because of statute or because of structures, but because of their same persuasive preaching of the same truth, and their same persevering focus on eternity.

Let their same genuine gospel ministry persuade you to submit to their leadership, because clearly it is true gospel leadership. For, verse 17, you see, they really are keeping watch for your soul.

That is for what really matters. They're watching for your eternal life and future. They're the ones who will keep you alert to the most important things in the whole of life.

The word isn't actually watch over, as it is translated now ESV. It's not oversight in that sense. Literally, the word means staying awake. It's what Paul says when he talks about sleepless nights because of the burdens that he bears for the church.

[16:07] What gives true gospel leaders sleepless nights is care for your eternal salvation. That's what matters above all other things. So, of course, leaders like that can't be ever just man-pleasers, can they?

Because they know it's to God that they'll give account. Verse 17 says it. And he means in the judgment to come. You see, only that kind of ministry can keep you for eternal life.

And just as your former leaders exemplified true, forward-looking gospel faith, he's saying, so your present leaders, who share the same ministry, they will encourage you in that same forward-looking faith.

So that on that day of judgment, they will be able to give an account of you with joy, not with groaning and grief. It's just what Paul says, isn't it, to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 2. That it's those saved believers on that day who will be our joy, our hope, and our crown before the Lord Jesus at his coming. So you see in verse 17, he's not saying, submit to your leaders to make their work of leadership now a joy and not an agonizing burden.

[17:24] Although, let me just say as a pastor, I'm all for that as well. But what he's saying is, let them have joy in your salvation on that day because you were led by their true gospel ministry to the end.

And so that on that day, they will not find something that is also of no advantage to you. Groaning loss. Nothing could be more important than that for them and, of course, for you.

So learn, he says, from your true leaders in the past and be loyal to such true leadership now because they're the ones who will lead you on to the summit at last.

Not lead you back down towards base camp to give up. Because, look at verse 8, you see, they preach the same gospel which is the only gospel.

Jesus Christ and his message is unchanged. It's the same yesterday when the leaders of the past spoke it to you. It's the same today when these present leaders exhort you and it will be the same forever. Whoever must lead you in the future.

[18:34] That's what they preached. A full, final and sufficient salvation in Jesus Christ alone. And that's what we preach, he says, in verse 18. Look, we've got a clear conscience.

We're doing it honorably. Notice he's linking himself in, isn't he, with these present leaders. And he's saying, we all need your prayers to keep us to this true ministry.

And he says he's very anxious to be with them again in verse 19. What's the urgency for this prayer, for their ministry, and for this desire to be with them again? Well, of course, because there were other leaders who were departing from the true unchanging gospel.

Verse 9. Into strange teachings, diverse teachings, away from the unchanging gospel of the grace of God and the cross of Christ. But no, that is the unchanging truth that whoever leads God's people, they must be proclaiming.

That's the character of true gospel ministry. And only that is true gospel leadership. See how clear it is.

[19:44] Real Christian ministry is not about performing worship in church. It's about proclaiming the word to the church. It's not about a few priests ordering liturgical worship.

It's about leading all Christians to life worship and on to eternal life. Real Christian ministry is not about catering to felt earthly needs accountable to man.

It's all about caring for future eternal needs accountable to God. And that, and only that, that kind of real gospel ministry will lead the church to real gospel maturity.

Obviously. An unchanging gospel with an unchanging, eternal focus. Jesus Christ is forever.

And an unchangeably sufficient gospel, Jesus Christ is the same. His priesthood, His sacrifice alone is all that we need. And that never changes.

[20:51] Not ever. So don't be led away by strange and different messages that might tell you that, well, yes, you do need to add something more to what Jesus has done.

You need some new experience. You need some new super theology. You need some new, more exclusive church association or whatever it might be. Or indeed, don't be led away by anything that

subtracts from the challenge of the true gospel.

And so the call to obedience somehow could be blunted and changed. No. Don't be led away by anything that deviates away from the true and biblical gospel.

Now we've seen, haven't we, that all through Hebrews there's a great warning of the danger of drift, of falling away, of turning away.

But here he's saying that one way that that drift begins is with drift in the message, a message that leads people away. That's a very great warning, isn't it, to all preachers and teachers in the Christian church.

[22 : 00] And that's why he says prayer is needed in verse 18 for all such, to keep them to the path, to keep them in that honorable ministry with a good conscience.

It's very easy in Christian leadership to begin to see yourself not accountable to God, but accountable to people. Because you want popularity, you want praise, you want acceptance now, you want to give people what they want.

You want to make it all about their felt needs, not about the forgotten needs of eternity, which is their real need. Very, very easy, friends, in Christian leadership to become a politician winning votes, not a pastor winning souls.

That's our national leaders problem today, isn't it? The science that you choose to be led by as a politician, is bound to be influenced greatly, isn't it? By the public and by the polls that are voting for you, of course.

Not so in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The character of true gospel ministry is led by the word of God, by the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ.

[23 : 17] The same, yesterday, today, forever, always. And that's real Christian leadership. leadership. It always displays the character of true gospel ministry.

And that will produce, in the church, true gospel liturgy, the kind of worship that really is pleasing to God because it's driven in everything by that true gospel message.

That's what we see in verses 9 to 16 here. Real Christian liturgy, worship, that is devoted to and driven by the center of the real, true gospel message, which is the grace of God, the cross of Christ, and the obedience of faith.

You see, first of all, at the heart of all true Christian worship is the truth that we have fellowship with God by grace alone. Verse 9, we are strengthened by grace, not by foods which are of no benefit. That is, it's the grace of God alone which sustains us in our Christian lives, not any earthly associations, not the traditions, the institutions of earthly religion.

[24 : 31] Grace alone keeps us in fellowship with the Father through the unchanging gospel of Jesus. And we must be aware of anything different, anything strange that teaches us, look, yes, the simple gospel is great, it saves you, it begins you, but of course, if you want to really be strengthened, if you want to really go on, you need that vital connection with the true, the authentic spiritual movement, the things that will really strengthen you.

The foods that are mentioned here very probably means things to do with Jewish rituals and Thanksgiving meals, things that were connected with the temple in Jerusalem, the true mother church, if you like.

And so those things offered a great sense of assurance, a sense of belonging to something solid, something impressive, something historic. And, you know, it is very reassuring, isn't it, to have those sorts of visible and tangible and sensory things.

The very things that institutional religion offers because it feels real, it feels impressive, it feels enduring, it's the real deal. Any of you who have ever been to Rome and visited the Vatican, you'll know exactly what I mean.

It is overwhelmingly impressive to the senses. And it's incredibly easy to go there and to feel, wow, this is the real deal.

[26 : 00] The vast basilica, all these Bradley-robed priests, the astonishing artwork, the marble, the frescoes, the painting, and all the rest of it. And you go from that off to some little Protestant hall in some small town in a little back street and there's nothing in there apart from some chairs and a lectern and a book.

And it's very easy to think, wow, this is nothing compared to that. Makes no visible impression at all. Now that is exactly how these first century Christians felt.

That was their little church versus the great, astonishing, impressive temple and its claim to be the mother church of true Israel. The pagans, the Romans, in those early times of the church actually called the Christians often atheists.

Seems strange to us, but the reason was they had no temples, no religious trappings. And so, well, they thought they had no religion. They had no God at all. In the 16th, in the 17th century in Scotland when Archbishop Lord came to visit Scotland with King Charles I, he said exactly the same thing of the Scots and their reformed church.

He said, I saw they had no religion at all as far as I could see because they had no priests, they had no pomp, they had no altars, they had no sacrificial mass. Because, of course, the evangelical reformers had brought real Christian leadership and real gospel ministry recovering the true and unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ which had been led away by the medieval church in all kinds of strange and diverse teachings.

[27 : 46] And they liberated the people to the joy of the true gospel of God's grace alone. But no such earthly association with self-professed mother churches brought any benefit.

In fact, that was what led away from the true gospel of Jesus. Because we've seen it, haven't we, all through Hebrews. The earthly altars of the Jewish mother church, the temple, they were just shadows which have now been fulfilled in the coming of Christ and in his great sacrifice.

So, to keep those things standing now in opposition to the reality of Christ must make them anti-Christ. because once in those ancient days when they were filled with the promise, there were shadows promising the Christ to come.

Well, now they were empty because the true temple has come in his flesh. And so, when the new has come, the old has been made obsolete, says Hebrews.

And worse than that, he's now saying, actually leads you away from real fellowship with God. So, to seek assurance of fellowship with God by any of these earthly sensuous things now, that is so dangerous, it's so deceiving, is what he's saying.

[29 : 10] And that's why there is today real danger whenever Christians become drawn to the sensuous, whether it's beautiful classical music or whether it's blaring contemporary music, whether it's the cathedral dome or it's the cacophony of drums that makes you say, oh, I feel so close to God in this kind of worship.

That's dangerous. That thinking will lead you away from the true gospel of the grace of God alone in Jesus. Look at verse 10, you see, he says it's either grace alone or not at all.

Those who cling to the temple, to religious rituals, to sensuous spirituality, he says they have no right to eat at the true altar of heaven, which is the only place of true peace and fellowship with God. You exclude yourself. See, by trying to add to God's grace, you actually lose everything because nothing earthly can ever have a part in our salvation.

Restoring us, you see, to real fellowship with God permanent, complete fellowship. That required something far, far beyond any mere earthly religion.

[30 : 29] It required divine, heavenly intervention and that came once and for all and forever in the only true and sufficient sacrifice for sin forever.

And that was through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that's the second great central truth of all true Christian worship. we have full and lasting fellowship with God because we have full and lasting forgiveness in Christ.

We have forgiveness from God through the cross alone. We have forgiveness from God through the cross alone.

Verse 10, we have an altar, a truly heavenly reconciliation salvation because, verse 11 says, just like the animals on the day of atonement, Jesus also suffered, verse 12, outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

That is, it's the blood of Jesus Christ alone that sanctifies us and no earthly altar ever. The cross alone can bring true forgiveness from God.

[31 : 45] We have an altar, he says in verse 10. He's echoing chapter 8, verse 1, we have such a high priest seated in the majesty of heaven ministering for us in the true tent, the one that the Lord made, not man.

That is, in Jesus Christ, you see, and through his sacrifice on the cross for our sins, we have at last the real thing, the substance, no longer just the shadow.

The whole Old Testament order was a shadow, it was prophetic, yes, it promised forgiveness, yes, but as we've seen in chapter 9, verse 9, do you remember, unable, totally unable to perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but now Jesus has done for all his people, once and for all and forever, exactly that.

Chapter 5, verse 9, through his suffering and death he has become the source of eternal salvation. By a single offering he has perfected for all time, those who are being sanctified, chapter 10, verse 14.

So where there is forgiveness, he says there is no longer any offering for sin, chapter 10, verse 18, no altars. Christ alone is both the sacrifice and the sustenance for his people, as F.F.

[33 : 08] Bruce has put it, forever, once and for all forgiveness has opened the way for once and for all fellowship with God the Father. And that is what you're denying yourself, you see, if you try to cling to earthly religion with all of its rituals, whether it's ancient ones or modern versions of that.

Those who serve the tent, those who serve the earthly temple, verse 10, have no right to eat of this true heavenly altar of real forgiveness because they've excluded themselves from that true and ultimate day of God's atonement for sin through Jesus.

The illusion there in these verses about the eating at the altar is that although the priests did eat from many of the meat of many of the sacrifices in the tabernacle and temple, they didn't eat and couldn't eat of the sacrifice of atonement which was a sign that only in its fulfillment in Christ could any eat the fruit fully and freely of forgiveness.

But you see they were excluding themselves from that and from him by wanting to cling to what was obsolete, which is now complete. But the writer is saying very clearly you cannot have Jesus and a religion of earthly rituals.

They have not benefited those who are devoted to them. And friends there are plenty of folk, you may be one of them, perhaps you've met some of them, who testify to the bondage, to the guilt, that that kind of pseudo-Christian religious upbringing gives to them.

[34 : 56] No benefit and often sadly very great harm. And there are many, many people in the world today who have totally misunderstood what the true Christian faith is because they have been led away by strange and diverse teachings, often in so-called Christian churches, away from grace alone, away from Christ alone, through all sorts of religious altars, religious associations, religious ablutions.

Christians. I remember many years ago in the old building down in Buchanan Street, and I think she was an Italian tourist lady came in and she was wandering around and came up to me and said to me, looking rather confused, but where is the church?

And I said, well, we're standing in the middle of the church building. And she said, but there are no candles. I suppose rather naughtily, I said, no, actually we've had electric lights in this country for a very long time.

And she still looked bemused. And she said, but there's no altar. How can it be a church? No, there is no altar because it is a Christian church.

Because the true gospel tells us we have an altar forever, the permanent forgiveness that was won for us only and forever through the blood of Jesus Christ, which gives us permanent fellowship with the Father in heaven.

[36 : 30] Jesus has ended the place of every earthly altar. Look at verse 12. He suffered making atonement to sanctify us by his own blood.

He bore our sin because, well, he bore our shame, cast outside the camp, just as the sacrifices of old pointed to.

His sanctifying work was done outside the whole realm of earthly religion and rendered all of that absolutely obsolete forever.

So either, you see, you cling to the old order, the earthly Jerusalem, which Paul says in Galatians 5, doesn't he, is no longer anything other than a place of slavery, not of salvation.

Either that or you take your side with the Jerusalem above, which is free and which truly is our mother. You see, real assurance, real assurance of forgiveness with God and of fellowship with God comes from no earthly sanctuary, no earthly sacrifice, no earthly city, not Jerusalem, not Rome, not Mecca, not anywhere else or anything else or anyone else, but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

[37 : 53] his death, his own blood, which was shed to save, to sanctify, to bring to completion forever those who come to God through him.

But of course, many, many people just can't accept that and won't do that. The world rejects and scorns that altar because, of course, it's an altar that we can bring no contribution to. It's an altar that humbles us utterly. So people hate it and have done from the very beginning. Christ crucified? It's a stumbling block, says Paul to the Jews. They can't stomach it. It's utter foolishness to the Gentile Greeks. They mock it. And yet it is the power of God and the wisdom of God for salvation alone. But that's our problem, isn't it? You see, it's not our power. It's not our wisdom. And we hate that. You see, religion lets us involve our power and our wisdom and our self-righteousness.

[39 : 00] And that's what the human heart loves. I was struck, I'm sure you were, by our Prime Minister's statement this week after that international meeting about the virus.

It's humankind against the virus and we shall overcome. But it's got to be our way. It's got to be our plan. It's our victory, you see. It's not looking too impressive at the moment, is it?

And yet dissenting voices are not tolerated from that. You're very quickly cast outside the camp.

And all the more so if you see a gospel that says, no, it's not your way.

It's God's way alone. No, it's not your earthly associations, your traditions, your triumphs. It's grace alone. No, it's not your earthly altars.

It's not your offerings. It's not your ritual. It's not your recitation. It's Christ and his cross alone. You are utterly redundant in this whole procedure. So as Peter Adam has said, you see, to be a Christian is not only to be given heavenly access but also earthly disgrace, you see.

[40 : 12] To be sanctified, to be set apart for Jesus will mean being scorned by the world with Jesus and like Jesus, received by him but rejected by this world.

And that brings us to the final emphasis that shall never be hidden in real and true gospel ministry. And we'll be clearly at the center of everything that drives real Christian mission.

And it's this, that we can be fruitful for God only through faith, through true faith in Christ alone. And that really does serve him and not earthly acceptance and earthly acclaim.

Verse 13, let us therefore go to him outside the camp bearing the reproach that he endured. The grace alone brings us into real fellowship with God.

And the cross alone brings us real forgiveness from God. And it's faith alone that brings us to be really fruitful for God.

[41 : 21] Remember chapter 11, without faith it's impossible to be pleasing to God. And real faith, he is telling us here, is costly. costly. And true leaders and true gospel ministry will teach that and will exemplify that and will lead others in that right to the very end.

Disciples who have a real Christian faith will have to leave behind this world's respectability, this world's security, and endure with Jesus the reproach of Christ.

And the severance of many worldly ties, many social ties, even family ties. Read Jesus in Matthew 10, verses 35 to 40. The world's way, you see, is religion and respectability.

Christ's way is reproach and shame. And that is what it really means to worship him.

That's the only way of fruitful, God-pleasing faith. We looked last time, didn't we, at verses 15 and 16, which speak of the continual living sacrifice of real praise to God through Jesus.

[42 : 45] Lips that acknowledge him proclaiming Christ alone as Savior to the world, which is hated. And then lives that adorn him in generous partnership of life with other gospel people, sharing your substance, all you have with them for Christ's sake.

And that faith is costly, obviously. It will involve earthly loss. And it always has. Chapter 11, you remember, by that same faith, Abraham went out and lived as a foreigner.

By that same faith, Moses refused Egypt's treasure and chose rather the reproach of the Christ to come. And so it is today that faith will mirror exactly the same pattern.

The faith that bears fruit in lives lived with Jesus will be outside the camp, verse 13, bearing the reproach that he endured.

Because, he says, here, in this world, we have no lasting city. The true home that we seek is in the world to come, the city that's to come.

[43 : 58] That means we don't belong here, do we? We're outsiders. And our world doesn't like outsiders. Especially when their presence challenges the cultural mainstream, the religious mainstream.

even as Christian faith, real Christian faith, must always do. Because a gospel of the grace of God alone, which ignores any moral contribution from us, and a gospel of the cross of Christ alone,

which highlights the moral corruption in us, that is beyond the pale in our world.

That is outside the camp of a kind of religion that this world can tolerate and accept. Never mind, acclaim. But just like way back in Exodus, chapter 33, remember, God's response to the idolatry of the golden calf was to go outside the camp and place his tent there, away from man's corrupt religious thinking.

Well, so today, in exactly the same way, to find him truly, and to serve him truly, with a faith that really does please him, that's where we will find him, outside this world's approval and acceptance. And that's why it's so tempting, isn't it, to turn back. Because we want those things, approval and acceptance. And there will be Christian leaders aplenty who will happily lead you back there.

[45 : 34] perhaps it will be by blunting the challenge of Jesus on some of the culture of our days, most treasured idols, the whole area of sexuality, for example.

Or it will be tempting with the other great idolatry mentioned along with sex, remember in verses four and five, the temptation of wealth and money. But all of these, you see, are lures to lead you back, to invest your life in a world where we have no lasting city and no lasting reward.

But there is reward. There's great reward, there's everlasting reward in the city that's to come, in a kingdom which will never, ever be shaken. So keep listening to and keep being loyal to leaders who proclaim to you the whole gospel, the true gospel.

Who won't hide that it's integral to all real faith, to real discipleship, to real well-pleasing worship in Jesus that you share in the shame and the scorn and the stigma of Christ with him in this world.

But who encourage you also that that is the place, indeed it's the only place, where we can continually offer up a sacrifice of praise that is well-pleasing to God.

[47 : 04] Well-pleasing to him because we are sharing in the glory of his Son, our great Savior. We're bearing the cross with him. But that's how also we'll share the crown with him when he comes.

so he says to us, keep praying. Keep praying that we will have always in our churches that kind of mature Christian ministry that will lead us always in worship that really is pleasing to God.

For that, as someone's put it, is the happy occupation of such as go forth unto him bearing his reproach. these shall not fear the consuming fire, but shall rejoice in the Father's love.

Amen. Let's pray together. Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you, the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Therefore, let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.

[48 : 26] For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Gracious God, our Father, may that city and the crown of righteousness be before us this day, this week, and every day, all the rest of our lives, grant, Lord, that we should be kept and guarded by true leadership of the true gospel, kept away from straying into strange and diverse teachings, and kept true to the path that has been trodden for us by the Lord Jesus himself and all who have truly followed him.

guard us and keep us on that path we pray until that great day of glory and joy when our Savior is revealed and we shall be with him and we shall be like him.

Hear us and help us, for in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.