

Christian Leadership

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[0 : 00] Hebrews chapter 13. Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember 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.

Keep your life free from 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.

[1 : 23] Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and 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.

We have an altar, from which those who serve the tent 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.

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

For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him, then, let us continually offer 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 over your souls, as those who have to give an account.

[3 : 06] Let them do this with joy, and not with groaning, for that would be no advantage to you. 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. Now, may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good, that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, shall see you if he comes soon.

Greet all your leaders and all the saints, those who come from Italy, send you greetings. Grace be with you all.

Amen. Well, let's pray. Lord God Almighty, we ask you to draw near to us this evening.

- [4 : 50] What we know not, will you teach us? What we have not, will you give us? And what we are not, will you make us this very day?
- For Christ's sake. Amen. Amen. Well, I'm not going to spend time saying how glad I am to be with this great Christian family again.
- Nor to say how wonderful it is to be in this great restored building. Nor to say what a privilege it is, Paul, to be here on a special day for you.
- Christian leadership is the title of what I'm going to try to cover. And Hebrews chapter 13 is the source of what we are going to learn.
- So let's get straight to work on that. Please open your service sheets. And if you can read the small print, do. And if you can hear me, please listen.
- [5 : 54] We're going to look at, there are three verses on Christian leadership here in Hebrews. Chapters 13 of Hebrews, verse 7, verse 17, and verse 24.
- But we won't bother about verse 24 because we've already greeted one another. Verse 7 then. Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.
- Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. And then verse 17. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over 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 no advantage to you. Look then carefully at verse 7.
- Here is the leader, the Christian leader, as a speaker and a preacher of the word of God. Look then at verse 17.
- [7 : 06] Here is the leader as a shepherd and a pastor keeping watch over the flock of God. This then, the speaker, the shepherd, the pastor and the preacher and the pastor is the basic pattern of work, Paul, to which you are now formally dedicating your life.
- They are to be your number one priorities. Effectiveness in your ministry will depend inevitably on keeping this top of your agenda.
- Now, what I want tonight is to tell you, Paul, three hopes I have for you based on this New Testament pattern. And here is my number one hope that faced with this life work which we are calling you to tonight, you will be more than a little terrified.
- Let me explain what I mean. Who is the speaker in this great New Testament letter? Well, we've all already heard that.
- I think I will just repeat it. But we all heard that from Dr. Philip at the beginning. But it's a magnificent beginning and if you have your Bible near you, you may like to follow.
- [8 : 30] In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets but in these last days, in these last days, he spoke to us by a son. So the great speaker, according to this, is our Lord Jesus Christ.
- And if we turn over to the end of Hebrews' main teaching to chapter 12, we read this in verse 25. See that you do not refuse him who speaks.
- So according to this letter to the Hebrews, this sermon of Hebrews, the great speaker, the one who speaks the word of God, he who is the word himself, he who is the word on whom our faith wholly depends, as we learned last Sunday night if you were here, is our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Second question, who is the shepherd in this great New Testament letter? We'll turn down to the benediction.
- Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep. Verse 20 leaves us therefore in no doubt, he is the shepherd as he is the speaker.

[9 : 54] So my friends, what we're learning from this is that the supreme speaker and the supreme shepherd, the supreme pastor and the supreme preacher is the Lord Jesus Christ who has returned to the throne of God in heaven.

So the question obviously arises, who in practical terms is to take his place on earth? And the astonishing answer is frail, very ordinary people like ourselves.

Yes, and I would have you note, look at verse 17 again, frail, ordinary people like ourselves, the line, the second line, those who will have to give an account.

Well, if that does not make you tremble, Paul, it certainly does me. You know, Paul, I've been to a very many conferences like last week, and just occasionally, rarely, I'm glad to say, I meet a young man on his way to ordain ministry, who clearly thinks that he is the one the churches has been waiting for, who is frankly very pleased with himself.

You ask, did I get a glimpse of just such a man last week? Well, I hope very much that I didn't. The churches can do without that thought.

[11 : 30] Let me then remind you what your great namesake said about the responsibilities of speaking and shepherding. He asked this great question, who is equal to such a task?

When you get home, by the way, Paul, you might underline that in your Bible, 2 Corinthians 2.16. Who is equal to such a task? When I did Latin, none of it has remained in my head at all, but when I did Latin, as you may have done too, there were questions that demanded the answer no.

And when Paul says who is equal to such a task as New Testament ministry, the answer, of course, is no. And again, the apostle writes this, not that we are competent in ourselves, he, God, has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant.

So we're not made competent by education, we're not made competent by practice, we're not made competent in any other way than hanging on helplessly to God, who alone can do it.

The gentleman behind me, can you see them? They look very learned, don't they? And no doubt they were very famous in their day, and no doubt they were very gifted.

[12 : 55] Were they equal to the task, do you think? No. How often in Bible history, God calls great men, well, they're not great men to start and men to serve him, and almost invariably, these men decline on the ground that they can't do it.

Let me read to the call of Jeremiah. The word of the Lord came to me saying, before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.

Before you were born, I set you apart. I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. That's a magnificent calling, isn't it? Alas, sovereign Lord, I said, I don't know how to speak, I'm too young.

But the Lord said to me, do not say, I am too young. You must go to everyone I send you and say whatever I command you. Don't be afraid of them, for I am with you, and I will rescue you.

Well, there's a sentence for you, Paul. It's something I've needed many times. I am with you, and I will rescue you. So, perhaps you don't need to be terrified after all.

[14 : 15] So, let's change my first hope that you will be a humble man of God, dependent on your heavenly father and your savior.

My second hope is that you'll be a grateful man of God. I want you to consider verse 7 once more. I'm sure, Paul, that you've got a very great deal to be thankful for.

I imagine you're thankful for your parents, your home, your education, your health and your strength, your dear wife, and much more.

But here is a debt that no Christian can repay, those who first spoke the word of God to us. I'm slightly misled my page.

You will do that yourself and embarrass yourself. So let's have a moment of quiet. I suggest that all of us are quiet for a moment and try to remember, well, it isn't difficult, the people who first spoke the word of God to you.

[15 : 36] I was on the train this morning coming back from Edinburgh, trying or thinking of those who first spoke the word of God to me, and I feel it's a debt I can never repay.

There was Eric and John and Ian, who was my first Crusader class leader. so let's make a moment of silence and remember those who first spoke the word of God to you.

Now you'll see from, I hope that was a pleasurable thought as you went back over the years. Now you'll see from verse 7 that you owe to them a great deal more than just speaking the word of God.

You owe to them a way of life, something that you can imitate for Christianity as taught as well as taught. And you owe to them, of course, above all, a gospel message centered on our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I think that's what verse 8 is about. It's a marvelous sentence, isn't it? And many people know it by heart and revel in it. I tell you what I don't think it means.

[16 : 57] I don't think it means that as your leaders come and go, live and die, and another generation comes, that Jesus Christ is always there.

Namely, that he was there when these leaders were working and he's there with the present generation and will always be there. I don't think it means that.

I think verse 8 is really a summary of the whole of the letter of the Hebrews and I think it's a summary of the message of the gospel. Because the theme of the letter of the Hebrews is the priesthood of Christ, it takes up chapter 3 to chapter 10, that is, two-thirds of the letter is taken up with Christ the priest.

And the priest of the Old Testament did two things. He offered a sacrifice on the day of atonement for the sins of the people and then taking the blood, he went through the curtain of the Holy of the Holies, he stood for a moment in the presence of God, having opened up that presence, and then came back to the people to reassure them that their sins were forgiven for yet another year.

God was so how is that fulfilled in Christ? Why, obviously, he is the great high priest, he offers his sacrifice, he goes into the presence of God, now not as a symbol, but as a reality, he is able to go because of his own sacrifice, and we may follow him into the presence of God because he is our one and only savior.

[18 : 47] Without that, a minister's life is a very pitiful one. I went this morning to the new restored church of St.

George in Edinburgh where the people of Charlotte Chapel were having their first service. It was a really, very magnificent occasion. the knobs were all there, the province of Edinburgh, and many important people in the front two rows.

I wondered what they thought of it. It was a great crowd of Christians. At least they know now that the church is alive. They had a very straight and splendid message on Christ's sacrifice, opening the way to God.

Maybe it was completely new to them, I don't know. I guess that one or two of those important people who came, a special guest, thought of the ministry as being rather marginal.

When I was young, the minister was still respected, but now it's a marginal occupation, and people can't understand why a strong and able person like Paul becomes a minister. But this morning it must have been very clear to them that the minister had a real message, something that meant a great deal to those who were there and had changed their lives.

[20 : 12] And for that we can be very grateful that we're not wasting our time. Grateful not only for the things that this world has given you, but grateful for that glorious gospel that has brought you the forgiveness of sins, and more than that, has given you a faith to live by, and given you a gospel to preach.

So, my first hope, a humble man of God, my second hope, a grateful man of God, and now my third, a watchful man of God, verse 17.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls. Well, that must mean, I think, first of all, if we're not to be humbugs, that if I'm to keep watch over the souls of other people, I must keep watch over myself.

And yesterday, I determined, Paul, that I would read to you a short passage from 1 Timothy chapter 4 that says this far better than I can say it. Here is Paul talking to Timothy, who is a young and able minister of the new covenant.

1 Timothy 4 11. Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you're young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.

[21 : 56] Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Be diligent in these matters, give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Now listen to this. watch your life and doctrine closely.

Persevere in them because if you do, you will both save yourself and your hearers. Now, Paul, my time is nearly up.

But we were studying Hebrews in my group last week, and between us we identified three areas where watchfulness is very, very necessary for all of us, and not least for the Christian leader.

First, shame. It's very easy when we're Christians to be ashamed in the face of the world.

[23 : 16] The world hasn't got very much time for Christianity at the moment. It's embarrassing, isn't it, to stand for Christ. Many of you have experienced that, and if you haven't, I doubt if you're a Christian. But it's also possible to be ashamed of the church, because the church in this country, as south of the border, is moving in a different direction.

It's leaving scripture behind. It's leaving behind the gospel of grace. it's leaving behind the standards that our leaders gave us when we were young.

And it can be rather embarrassing to stand for those things as a minority in the formal church of God. Jesus was very, very blunt about this.

If you're ashamed of me in this world, I shall be ashamed of you in the life of the world to come. By the grace of God, Paul, don't be ashamed.

Don't be ashamed of Jesus. Don't be ashamed of his gospel. Don't be ashamed of his ethics. Don't be ashamed of his standards. Don't be ashamed of his claims.

[24 : 33] Don't be ashamed of his demands. Second, sin. We found this in the letter to the Hebrews. We found that Christians struggle all their lives, that the struggle is never over, that there are temptations from without, and there are testings within.

You even get that, don't you, in this chapter, if you glance at it, right at the beginning. Verse four, let marriage be held in honor among you.

Keep your life free from the love of money. I've been in the ministry many, many, many years, and I've seen ministries destroyed, either through failure to follow Christ in terms of marriage, or of money.

The struggle goes on, Paul. The Lord often has to discipline us as he disciplines other people, people. But it's another area where you will need to be particularly watchful if you're to shepherd the sheep.

Thirdly, suffering. Again, we found this very strongly in Hebrews, particularly chapter 10, whether we haven't time to look at that now. And it does seem, doesn't it, that a little bit of persecution is likely to come our way in the years to come.

[26 : 09] People will lose their jobs because they belong to Christ. There will be many trials and testings, I think, for young Christians in the days to come that we've not known before.

And yet, when you think of Iran, how few our persecutions are compared with theirs. I'll just give you those three areas, Paul, that arose out of our study of Hebrews last week and that Hebrews is talking about all the time.

Don't be ashamed. Continue the struggle with sin and evil and be prepared for suffering and persecution. Don't shrink back. So, a humble man of God, a grateful man of God, and a watchful man of God, those are my three hopes for you, Paul.

They come straight out of Holy Scripture and this great chapter. And by the grace of God, I believe they will be a pattern for you in this life as you follow our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I'm going to suggest that we all now use this benediction both for Paul and for ourselves. Together, now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good, that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

[27 : 54] Amen. Amen. to too who will theater here can be Wi ■■■■