

Pentwater Bible Church

Hebrews Message 45

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Hebrews

Message Forty-Five

RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS

November 18, 2018

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OUR OBLIGATIONS AS BELIEVERS

Hebrews 13:7–17

⁷Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, (yea) and for ever. ⁹Be not carried away by divers and strange teachings: for it is good that the heart be established by grace; not by meats, wherein they that occupied themselves were not profited. ¹⁰We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle. ¹¹For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned without the camp. ¹²Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate. ¹³Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. ¹⁴For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come. ¹⁵Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name. ¹⁶But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. ¹⁷Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you (ASV, 1901).

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR TEACHERS

Hebrews 13:7–8

⁷Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith (ASV, 1901).

The apostle says to Remember your leaders. That is, all who had accurately spoken or preached the Word of God to them, whether apostles, evangelists, or pastors. “Think of their work in preaching the Word of God, and follow or imitate them in their faith.” We are to follow someone else’s example. However, only if they are speaking the truth about Jesus to us. We are to imitate their faith. We are not to follow mere men as our model and example in all things is Christ supreme. We should follow the clear genuine example of Christian teaching only where we see those values displayed in Christian leaders. Even the apostle says that he himself is an example to believers (1 Corinthians 4:16; Philippians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:6), but adds a limiting factor, that they should only follow him in as much as he followed Christ: “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Grammatically, his is a present active participle used as an imperative. In other words, DO IT with emphasis. These leaders who we should follow, like

those in the list of the faithful in chapter 11, remained faithful during life and until death. They never gave up on preaching and accurately teaching the whole council of God. Additionally, the apostle tells the first century Hebrews to also imitate the faith of their more recent teachers. The earlier rulers are people, who had been their spiritual rulers, but who have now died; they have finished their course and they have kept the faith with patient endurance. There are three characteristics of good teachers: they accurately proclaim biblical truth; they are men of faith; and they live a spiritual lifestyle worthy of imitation. Now, these living saints need to continue to imitate those earlier rulers. The same holds true for us today nearly two thousand years after this epistle was written.

One unbiblical tactic is where the preacher tells the congregation what they expect to hear. By continually appealing to their ego, boosting their pride, and self-esteem, as well as simply reassuring them that they are correct in what they believe; they lull the listener into believing their version of the “correct” ideology to accept. This results in a “GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT INSTEAD OF WHAT THEY NEED” mantra. Another tactic is to appeal to people’s laziness and intellectual complacency. They do not wish to be challenged and want to live according to what is important to them. Some who call themselves “Christian” prefer intellectual laziness, and even hide from learning anything about the Bible. As long as they know nothing about the Scripture they are happy with the skewed view the heretical church teaches them because it seems correct even though they are swayed away from the truth. This is apostasy.

The idea with the newest most recent wave of apostasy is to soft-sell the Bible and salvation. It is not attempting to save anybody from the fires of Hell but from an aimless and meaningless life here on earth. Our experiences and quality of life here are more important than the total service to God and the blessed assurance that He will soon come to lift us out of this sinful decaying world. Salvation is given lip service and evangelism with real confrontation is thought to be too divisive. This apostasy does not want to upset anybody. There is never any mention of Hell and the outcome of an unsaved life. They may say that they believe strongly but, their actions differ sharply from what they say.

Usually their Bible teaching is characterized by an over emphasis on application. This of course is the middle of the road approach. They avoid doctrine as too divisive. Paul warned us that the end times would be characterized as a departure from sound doctrine and a departure from the truth.

II Timothy 4:3-4

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (KJV).

This is hardly *Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith.* Biblical accuracy, and whether they live a spiritual lifestyle worthy of imitation are the keys for discernment as to whether to follow a teacher or not.

JESUS IS THE CENTER OF OUR FAITH

Hebrews 13:8–9

⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, (yea) and for ever. ⁹Be not carried away by divers and strange teachings: for it is good that the heart be established by grace; not by meats, wherein they that occupied themselves were not profited (ASV, 1901).

Paul points out that Jesus must be the essence of our faith. He says that *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever*. Frequently this verse is explained inaccurately by taking it out of context. It is important to remember that “a text apart from its context is a pretext.” A pretext is just trying to prove a personal point of view instead of what the author intended. Frequently, those who practice this technique try to teach that, since Jesus did a certain thing in the Gospels, He must always do the same exact thing. That is simply not true because He did not always do everything in the same way. The context in this verse and chapter simply teach that Jesus can give the believers victory in their trials. He gave victories before, is giving victories now, and He will give victories in the future.

Furthermore, Jesus is unchangeable in His nature. He has always been divine with all the eternal aspects of His divinity. Until the Incarnation (for all eternity past) He existed only *in the form of God* (Philippians 2:5–11). God is a Spirit and Jesus existed only *in the form of God* for all eternity past. With the incarnation He additionally took on the form of a man while still being God. In other words, He added human nature in becoming a man. His person changed from being only God to being the God-Man. At that point, He became a mortal man, a natural man, subject to hunger and thirst, subject to fatigue and weakness, and subject to physical death of the body He entered. After His Resurrection, His person changed again. He is no longer the mortal God-Man. Jesus is the immortal God-Man. He is no longer subject to hunger, thirst, death, and so on. Because of these attributes only He has always *not* been the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is the same only in the essence of being God who can give us victory over our trials as the intercessor at the right hand of God (Hebrews 4:14–16; 7:25, and He does provide salvation.

In the first century there arose several heresies when this epistle was written. Most of these people were driven by the conviction that only God can save humankind. So, they were willing to promote the deity of Christ, while denying His humanity, or in the case of the modalists, at the expense of the Trinity of persons.

Another group of heretics were the Judaizers. When uncircumcised Gentiles began following Christ and claiming the promises to Israel, these life-long Jews wondered how the Old Testament laws applied to non-Jewish followers of Jesus. The answer was that Christ had fulfilled the Old Testament and fulfilled the old covenant. As Paul summarized in Ephesians 2:15 God was “abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace...” It was union with Christ and not works of law which qualified a person for the promises of God. The Judaizers did not accept this answer and gave Paul issues in all of his missionary travels. They taught that one must become a Jew first before becoming a Christian and be circumcised into the Mosaic law.

Another early heresy was Gnosticism. Though Gnosticism had various forms one of the most destructive—and one that is still present today—is Docetism. Docetism was an early Christological heresy which taught that Christ only appeared to be human. The foundation of Gnostic philosophy was that all physical matter was evil and all things spiritual were good. Therefore, it was unthinkable that God would actually take upon human flesh. This belief also led to either severe asceticism (punishing the flesh) or licentiousness (since the physical had no connection with the eternal).

Apollinarianism is another heresy. They taught that Jesus is not equally human and divine but one person with one nature. In Jesus' human flesh resided a divine mind and will (he didn't have a human mind or spirit), and his divinity controlled or sanctified his humanity.

One other is Modalism, also known as Sabellian. They taught that God's names (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) change with his roles or "modes of being" (like a chameleon). When God is the Son, he is not the Father. There is no permanent distinction between the three "persons" of the Trinity, otherwise you have three gods.

Today we have the Prosperity Gospel. The ancient form of this modern heresy didn't really have a name, but it appears in 1 Corinthians 4:8-13. In this text Paul speaks tongue in cheek about those in Corinth who have "already become kings". The Corinthians believed that they were living in the blessings that are reserved for the future. To steal a popular phrase the Corinthians believed that they were to begin "living their best life now." They believed true things but applied them at the wrong time. They wished to acquire on earth what should be sought in heaven.

Since the first century there have been many, many more but these are examples of what the apostle was warning the first century Hebrews about.

COMPARING THE OLD WITH THE NEW

Hebrews 13:10–12

¹⁰We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle. ¹¹For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned without the camp. ¹²Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate.

As sort of a recap the text returns to previous arguments about the New Covenant being vastly superior to the Old Covenant. The discussion centers on the annual Day of Atonement ceremony and the Lord Jesus' once and for all sacrifice. Some new information regarding the Day of Atonement is added here to what was presented in chapter nine. The new detail is that *those beasts whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned without the camp*. Normally, during the other sacrifices, the priests could eat the meat of those sacrifices that were offered on a daily basis. However, this was not permitted for the remains of the animals that were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement. Similarly, Jesus suffered and died outside the city gates (Matthew 21:39; 27:31, 33; John 19:20). The Hebrew audience to this epistle must completely forfeit the Old Covenant and their practices. Jesus has made the final sacrifice to

make His people holy by shedding His own blood. People cannot partake of both and expect to please God or receive any additional blessing. If they go back to the service in the Temple they are required to bring blood sacrifices. This alone shows they have not trusted in Jesus as the final sacrifice.

COMMITMENT AND SERVICE

Hebrews 13:13–16

¹³Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. ¹⁴For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come. ¹⁵Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name. ¹⁶But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased (ASV, 1901).

In these verses there are two requirements Jesus demands. They are commitment and service. In discussing commitment, the example of going outside the city, out of the camp is expanded from verse 12. This means to abandon the city. Jesus is outside the Camp of Judaism and they should *go forth unto Him*. This is given as an *immediate* need. Paul uses the present tense as if to say, “*Let us keep on going outside to Him.*” The readers are to go “outside the camp.” Now, they are to go outside the Camp of Judaism *bearing his reproach* and, later, they will need to go outside the City of Jerusalem to flee from the Roman troops in the rebellion of 66–70 AD.

The main point the apostle makes here is that a moral and religious purpose is served by going from this camp. These Hebrews valued nothing so highly as their moral and religious life and their citizenship in Israel. From a Jewish point of view the Jewish Christian must leave the family structure in which he learned the precepts and commandments, the ceremonies and traditions, the prejudice and pride of being Jewish. He is asked to go to Jesus upon whom the Jewish people invoked God’s curse by hanging him on a cross (Deuteronomy 21:23). They are told to go to one who bears the curse of God is to share “the disgrace he bore.” By choosing for Christ, the Jew rejects Judaism and thus faces expulsion, alienation, and certain persecution. Paul reminds the readers of the suffering, public insult, and persecution they have endured since they became Christians (Hebrews 10:33). All are exhorted to go to Jesus who was cursed by God, because through Jesus we have access to God. We identify with him, for through Him we are made holy. He bore disgrace to set us free from the guilt of sin and to remove the curse from us. That means that the world of sin vents its hatred against us for going to Jesus (John 17:14). Christians are not taken out of the context of a sinful world but are placed in it to be witnesses for Christ.

“For here we do not have an enduring city.” The words echo an earlier statement of the author when he discussed those people who lived by faith but who did not see the promises fulfilled in their lifetime. “And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth” (Hebrews 11:13). They longed for a better country, a heavenly country, much the same as Abraham looked forward to a heavenly city (Hebrews 11:10; and see 12:22). Repeating his former remarks, the author says, “We are looking for the city that is to come.” Wherever God in his providence has placed us, we are to be Christ’s ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). We represent Christ by boldly speaking the

Word of truth. Yet we know the brevity of life and the fleeting nature of this world. Therefore, we look and long for our eternal home: “a city that is to come.”

The second requirement Jesus demands from the readers is service. It is found in verses 15–16. Jesus is our High Priest, but we are fellow-priests. The job of a priest is to sacrifice. Today, believers do not sacrifice blood, but we give sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. The means is through Jesus the Messiah: *Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice*. The word *offer* here means “to offer up a sacrifice.” In this verse, the author clearly puts the believer in a priestly role under the High Priest Jesus. Believers are to *continually* offer up the sacrifice of praise to God; we are to worship God for who He is and for what He does.

The background is the Old Testament thanksgiving offering, which was given for favor graciously bestowed. They have received grace from God and now He should be thanked. The way of thanking Him is with *the fruit of [our] lips which make confession to his name*. This is to be done orally and the confession is that Jesus is the Messiah.

The second thing believers sacrifice is noted in verse 16. We are to sacrifice in deed: do not forget *to do good*. The words, *to do good*, mean performing any kindly service. Performing any kindly service will fulfill the requirements of verse one (for example love of the brethren); the words, *and to communicate* (or share), specify giving alms to the needy. Giving alms to the needy will fulfill the requirements of verse 2 (showing love to strangers). These are sacrifices and *with such sacrifices God is well pleased*.

Obedience to Leaders

Hebrews 13:17

¹⁷Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you (ASV, 1901).

There are five reasons to obey their present leaders: (1) The leaders are responsible to watch over the moral and doctrinal health of the congregation; (2) The leaders will someday have to give an account of their stewardship of leadership at the Judgment Seat of the Messiah; (3) The leaders would like to exercise their ministry with joy, and not with grief; (4) A lack of submission is *unprofitable* for the rebels because they, too, will be judged at the Judgment Seat of the Messiah. (5) the teachers will be judged themselves more harshly than the rest at the Bema Seat judgment.

Next message: PERSONAL OBLIGATIONS

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