

Acceptable Worship Part 2 - Honor Your Leaders

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[0 : 00] You may be seated, kids. You are excused to your King's Kids class if you would open up your Bible to Hebrews 13.

We are coming in for a landing in the book of Hebrews. Two more sermons. So we are in Hebrews chapter 13 verses 7 through 19 this morning.

And I'm going to read this. It's on page 1197 of your pew Bible. So hear God's Word. 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 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 them.

[1 : 11] 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 own 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 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. But 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 of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience desiring to act honorably in all things.

[2 : 19] I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. May God bless the reading of his word. We are living in an age of skepticism towards leaders.

It's just kind of where we're at right now. Whether political leaders, local, national, whether business leaders, whether educational leaders, even church leaders.

Church leaders have come into some rough times of late. Sexual scandals. Spiritual abuse scandals.

Financial scandals. It seems like every week we got a new scandal. Couple that with the internet. And there's been a rise of skepticism to church leaders.

In some degree, it's understandable. You may find yourself in this sanctuary skeptical of church leaders.

[3 : 25] Maybe even cynical of church leaders. Or maybe even you're done with church leaders. You're done with the church.

I'm so glad that you're here this morning. Church leaders can be pointed to as the reason why people leave the church.

And maybe you've lost faith in church leadership. Or maybe you're relatively new to the church and you're just kind of like, I've never heard anything on church leadership before. I'm glad you're here too.

I'm going to ask you to give me a yes and amen on two questions. And I'm guessing it may be a resounding yes and amen. The foundations of this building may shake.

You ready? I am an imperfect man. I am an imperfect leader.

[4 : 24] Yes and amen. That is true. So let me ask you, church. In light of verse 17, why would you ever obey and submit to your imperfect leaders?

Well, here's the answer. God gives godly leaders for the good of his church.

He calls up those men, those overseers, elders and pastors who are holding fast to Christ themselves so that they can help others hold fast to Christ as well.

So three points this morning. Our past leaders. Second point, our present leaders. And our third point, our timeless and unchanging Christ.

God gives godly leaders for the good of his church. And as they hold fast to Christ, they're going to help others hold fast to Christ.

[5 : 40] And there lies your confidence. Christ. So let's look at point one, our past leaders.

Look at chapter 13, verse 7. Remember your leaders. Now this could be this reference to leadership. These influencers could be a reference to like Paul or Apollos or Timothy.

But most likely, the writer of Hebrews is referring to local church leaders. Men who regularly spoke to you the word of God.

What's being alluded to here is the primary teaching office of the church. It's the office of elder. It's the office of pastor, of overseer. If you just kind of fall, let your eyes fall to verse 17, you see the basic job description.

Those who will keep watch over your souls. The focus here is on past leaders who in order to watch over souls, speak the word of God to them.

[6 : 48] And in their speaking of the word of God, they will have been proclaiming Christ. Because Christ, Hebrews 1, 1 and 2, is the final word of God.

So the connection we have here is a connection between Christian leaders speaking God's word and the care of souls. And we're to remember them.

Now I would be in agreement with a number of Christian scholars who believe this reference to remember your leaders is actually to leaders who have already died.

Past leaders. Past leaders who are faithful to Jesus all the way to the end. And that's why we're called to remember them in verse 7, but we're not called to obey and submit to them.

We're to remember them. And we're shown three ways we're to remember. They remember how they spoke the word of God to you. How they constantly spoke to you God's word.

[7 : 48] Pointing to you to Christ over and over again. When he wanted to hear it and when he didn't want to hear it. They spoke Christ to you. They led with God's word. We're also to consider the outcome of their faith.

Their legacy. What they leave behind. The leaders that the writer of Hebrews has in mind left quite a legacy.

If you would flip back into your Bible to chapter 10, Hebrews 10, verses 32 through 34. We've looked at this passage numerous times because this was a suffering church.

The writer says, Do you know what is required for a church to go through a season of suffering rejoicing, enduring?

They need leadership to do that. What a legacy. The leaders being spoken about here in verse 7 are the men that led this church early on through a really hard season of suffering.

[9 : 20] Remember the outcome of their way of life. They endured to the end. They held fast to Christ all the way to the end. Remember that. Consider that.

What did that require? They were faithful. We're also told to imitate their faith. A faith that endured to the end.

We've been called to imitate quite a number of people here in the book of Hebrews. Chapter 11 is the whole kind of passage of the heroes of the faith. Over 20 people named. These saints of the Old Testament who by faith endured all the way to the end because they were looking forward to a better country, a heavenly homeland, a city whose architect and builder was God himself.

We are to imitate that kind of faith. 12, 1, and 3, the ultimate example of endurance, Jesus himself, who suffered the cross in order to accomplish our salvation and give us an example of endurance all in one shot.

And here in 13.7, we have one more group whose faith we are to imitate Christian leaders who have died, who were faithful, who didn't stray from Christ, who were willing to suffer for Christ, who were constantly offering up the new covenant sacrifice of praise to God through Christ.

[10 : 51] God gives godly leaders for the good of his church. He gives godly leaders who hold fast to Christ in order to help the church hold fast to Christ.

Do you have past leaders who you can look to, who you can remember and consider the outcome of their faith and you can imitate, do you have them? Thank God for them.

Thank God for those models of faithfulness. Perfect? No. Faithful? Yes. Maybe when you look back and think about men who've given leadership to churches you've been part of, that ended with scandal.

Consider the outcome of their faith. But don't imitate it. Or maybe you're saying like, hey, I'm pretty new to this whole Christianity thing. It's not like I've got examples.

I'm new. Read Christian biographies. There are some great missionary biographies that point to men and women, but the three I'm going to give you are excellent stories of men who are faithful.

[12:08] Adoniram Judson to the Golden Shore. Hudson Taylor, Spiritual Secret. John Patton, the missionary to the New Hebrides. These, you read these stories and they're stories of men who have endured so much.

It's, it's really quite encouraging. But I would say one, one other thing. I'm going to make a transition from point one, our past leaders, to point two.

you have present leaders that you can look to who are imperfect, yes and amen, but faithful.

God gives godly leaders for the good of His church. Let's move to, point two, our present leaders.

We move from leaders who have died, verse seven, to leaders who are alive, in verse 17.

And look at the job description. We're told to obey your leaders and submit to them. Here's the job description. For they are keeping watch over your souls.

[13:12] In the original language of the New Testament in Greek, Koine Greek, that word keep watch over, keep watch, it literally means to go without sleep. Like a night watchman who works the third shift he's on guard, making sure the property he isn't taken advantage of.

Like a shepherd, keeping watch over his sheep by day and by night, making sure no wolves come in. This idea of keeping watch over carries this sense of vigilance.

A leader, an overseer, a pastor or an elder prayerfully keeps his eye on those God has entrusted to his care.

To protect from wolves and false teaching, to provide healthy doctrine and intervene when sheep are hurting. Christian overseers, watch over that part of you that matters most, your soul.

That part of you that is eternal, that part of you, your inner being, that worships God. It all starts there. We're to watch over your souls.

[14:46] First and foremost, a Christian leader, elders, pastors, overseers, are entrusted with a sacred responsibility by God himself to see to the well-being of the Christians entrusted to their care in their church.

It is weighty. In Acts chapter 20, if you want to turn there with me, it's on page 1105 of your pew Bible.

In Acts chapter 20, the apostle Paul, in verse 17, sends for the elders of the Ephesian church. And he says, hey, meet me in my latest. It's a poor city.

He was on his way back to Jerusalem. And it's there, in my latest, that he meets them. And in verse 25, we read this. And this is Paul speaking, and now behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.

So in other words, he's like, this is the last time, guys, I am going to see your face as long as I live. So immediately, you know, this is serious, a serious moment.

[15:56] The apostle Paul is about to charge these elders with something weighty. In verse 26, therefore I testify to you to this day that I am innocent of the blood of all.

He has a clear conscience. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of scripture. He spoke to them the word of God, Christ.

And then in verse 28, he says, pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock. So to elders, he's saying, pay careful attention to yourselves and all the flock. Flock, shepherd.

He's calling them to a shepherding task. And not only are they going to pay attention to the flock, to themselves. Our elder team, we have Les Martin, Steve Bickle, John Tippin, myself, and Zach Melgren is going to be put in, Lord willing, as an elder this January.

We care for each other. We look out for one another. This isn't a good old boys club. We pay attention to ourselves and to the church, his flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

[17:11] The Holy Spirit has made you overseers. And so this chapter 20, we have elders pastoring as overseers.

It's all one group of words describing one office. It's a weighty call to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood.

The blood-bought flock of God. And Christian leaders were under shepherds of the chief shepherd, 1 Peter 5.

And so this responsibility given to us by God carries an authority but it's a derived authority. It's not our own. It's God-given. We exercise it with God's word.

It's a word authority. And we call people to obey God from his word. God has given his under shepherds the right to intervene in Christians' lives out of care for his flock.

[18:18] In verse 17, in the middle of it, there is a phrase that any church leader finds very sobering.

As those who will have to give an account, according to 2 Corinthians 5, all of us will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account.

But Christian leaders uniquely will need to stand before Jesus and give account for all of their teaching, all of their leading, how they led, cared for the flock of God.

It is a weighty thought. How we shepherd matters to Jesus. and it's sobering and motivating.

We want to do it well. Do you know why leaders lead? We lead for the name of Jesus. We lead God's people unto Jesus for the glory of God that you would hold fast to Christ.

[19:34] And you know what it begins with? It begins with us not straying from Christ. It begins with us being willing to suffer for Christ. It begins with us offering worship to God through Christ.

It's called integrity. It's a clear conscience. And this is why God insists on certain qualifications being met by the men who serve as elders and overseers and pastors.

I want you to see something. If you turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 3, this is on page 1178 of your Pew Bible.

These are the qualifications for an elder, a pastor, an overseer. I'm just going to read it through.

This saying is trustworthy.

If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. It is a good thing. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

[21:02] He must manage his own household well with all dignity keeping his children submissive. If someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

He must not be a recent convert where he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

we are entering into the fall and we've moved our nomination process for elders and deacons into the fall now and I just want to get this in front of you because this matters in terms of who leads our church.

Man of character, perfect, no, trustworthy, yes. Do you know why these qualifications are in place? because the Lord Jesus loves his church.

He's not just going to hand his church over to anybody. But men who are proven characters, perfect, no, faithful, yes.

[22:09] So let me ask you, knowing this about a New Testament leader, a pastor, how do you respond to them?

What's your response to an elder, an overseer? Well, in verse 17, we're shown, we're told, obey your leaders and submit to them for they're keeping watch over your souls.

That word obey means to do what they say insofar as it's God's word. We lead with God's word. Our authority is derived.

We're going to call you to things from God's word for the glory of Christ. What's interesting is that word obey, there's a couple different words in the original language for obey. This one carries a nuance of trust.

To trust your leaders. To be confident in them. That they're not going to mislead you or take advantage of you. They're not in it for themselves.

[23:18] They're in it for Christ and for your welfare. You are to obey to your leaders and remember, we, our leadership team, our elders, we're looking to care for each other and just as we are giving oversight to the church, the church submits to the oversight of its elders.

do you see the correspondence? Oversight is responded to through submission. You're essentially allowing your elders, your overseers to watch over your soul.

It is not a forced submission. This is voluntary. This is something where you're opening yourself and say, okay, love me to Jesus.

Help me to hold fast to Christ all the way through. And we know from last week in 1228, therefore let us be grateful receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

This is a way we worship God and how we respond to our leaders. this isn't blind obedience or submission.

[24 : 38] In so far as your overseers call you to hold fast, to trust Christ, follow them, obey them. But if your overseers are requiring something of you that obviously grieves God, it is your responsibility to not obey, to not submit.

it's a worship of God. But man, that's not what any of us want. There's that little phrase, let them do this with joy and not with groaning.

By the way, let me just let them, your overseers, your leaders, do this, keep watch over your souls with joy and not with groaning. maybe you're thinking, well, here it comes.

Let me just help you understand what is being said here. Don't think of this as your leaders taking something personally. No, here's the joy.

This is the context of the book. The joy of leaders of a church is when they are watching their church hold fast to Christ all the way to the end.

[25 : 59] That's where the joy is. 1 Thessalonians 3.8, Paul says to this Thessalonian church, he says, and now we live when you are standing steadfast in the Lord.

Joy. 1 John 3.4, maybe you're familiar with it. John says it this way, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

It is a huge joy when your overseers, pastors, and elders hear of bold steps of obedience, of owning sin, of seeking Christ, of worshiping him.

That is huge joy. And the back side, the flip side of that is also true. The groaning. The groaning is when you are trying again and again to help a brother, sister, and the Lord to follow the Lord, but they arch.

They resist. They get defensive. They make it very difficult. And often times you can watch them walk away from the Lord.

[27 : 10] This task of leadership is full of heartache, but it's full of joy as well. it's no advantage to you if you are arching under the leadership of your church, because what that means is you're arching under Jesus.

It's no advantage to you. The best thing that your leaders can do for you is for themselves to hold fast to Christ.

to not straight, to draw near, to be willing to suffer, to offer sacrifice of praise through Christ.

That's the best thing that we can do. Your present leaders, God gives godly leaders for the good of his church. Last point, our timeless and unchanging Christ.

when you have a church whose leaders are holding fast to Christ and the church is holding fast to Christ, do you know what that means?

[28 : 20] Jesus Christ is the controlling center of that church. He's the sun and everything is orbiting him. It's a beautiful thing. What I love about this passage is that it's book-ended with leaders past leaders who have died verse 7 and then present leaders who are living verse 17 and what you have in between in 8 through 16 is the timeless and unchanging Christ.

The one who connects past leaders and present leaders and future leaders. It's all about him.

Verse 8 is one of my favorite verses in the Bible.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever. I'm going to have you say that with me. You ready? Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever.

He's the one that never changes. Christ is the last and final word of God. Hebrews 1. Christ is the creator and upholder of the universe. Hebrews 1.

Christ after making purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of God in glory. He's on the throne. He's a giver of grace right now. Christ is greater than the angels.

[29 : 41] Christ is greater than Moses. Christ is greater than the little biblical priesthood because he's from the line of Melchizedek. Christ through his once for all sacrifice shedding his blood he inaugurated the new covenant which is better than the old.

He's made it obsolete in passing away. Christ is built on better promises. There's no changing in the eternally existent second person of the Trinity from everlasting to everlasting.

He is God. Totally God. Totally man. He is our great salvation. Timeless and unchanging. He's at the center of it all.

salvation is found in no one else and we must not neglect this great salvation. That's why Christian leaders must hold fast to Christ because he's at the center of it all and when we're holding fast to Christ we can help others hold fast to Christ.

So he's at the center of it all. So in light of who Jesus is he's at the center of it all. Let me just point you to a few ways we keep Christ central together.

[30 : 57] How we hold fast to Christ. The first is in verses 9 and 10. Godly leaders keep their church from being led astray from Christ.

Verse 9 Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings by false teachings and false teachers leaders stand in the gap. We say no you don't want to go that way.

You don't want to follow that. You don't want to digest that bad stuff. In this context it had to do with the teaching under the old covenant on food and former altars and sacrifices of animals and the writer of Hebrews is saying no no that's all gone.

it has no benefit for your heart only God's grace does. And so your leaders what we're aiming to do is this we're aiming to lead you to Christ through his word again and again.

Not get in the way of people leading you away from Christ. Christ we want you to hold fast to him all the way to the end.

[32 : 17] So we're going to tell you don't go down the way of legalism don't go down the way of licentiousness worldliness has no benefit long term benefit for your soul only God's grace from the throne does.

Godly leaders keep their church from being led away from Christ into false teaching. Godly leaders the second thing help their church suffer for Christ.

In 11 and 12 we read 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. It's being talked about as the day of atonement when the high priest would slaughter an animal on an altar outside the tabernacle and he would bring the blood into the holy of holies sprinkle it on the mercy seat and then the body of that animal sacrifice would be brought outside the gate.

It wouldn't be eaten by the priest it would be brought outside the gate because it was seen as unclean and burned. Outside the gate outside the camp means something that is defiled.

And if you look at verse 12 so Jesus also suffered outside the gate the once and for all sacrifice for our sins for salvation he was seen as being outside the camp.

[33 : 45] It's a picture of suffering it's a picture of being kind of like made an outsider outside the gate of Jerusalem on Calvary.

Christ's death the death of the Messiah on the cross is scandalous. To the Jews it was it was just utter weakness to Greeks it was just foolishness but for those who are being saved it's the power of God.

God the leaders help their church go outside the gate to where Jesus is to bear his reproach to suffer with him and you know the one of the ways we do it look at verse 14 for here we have no lasting city but we seek the city that is to come.

Our job is to keep reminding you again and again hey life isn't here it's not here we're passing through we're aliens and strangers we're on our way we're Zion bound godly leaders help their churches go outside the gate finally godly leaders help their churches offer new covenant sacrifices to God through Christ we read here in verse 15 through him Christ and let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God not food not animals no Christ is our once for all sacrifice do you know what we offer up praise lips that acknowledge God's name Zach

Melgren keep giving us great songs that we would be able to offer up to our God Sunday after Sunday just sacrifices of praise with our lips together to give him the glory that's a new covenant sacrifice brothers and sisters that's the result of Christ's sacrifice but there's another sacrifice here do not neglect to do good and to share what you have for such sacrifices are pleasing there is a horizontal way of offering praise to God of acceptable worship and that is not neglecting to do good and to share what you have and given that this is a passage about leaders there's probably some dimension of this is don't neglect to do good to your leaders to share what you have with them these are ways that we are keeping the timeless and unchanging

[36 : 45] Christ center to our life together as a church by not being led astray from him but rather we draw near by be willing to suffer for him outside the gate by offering sacrifices to God through Christ we together hold fast to him God gives godly leaders for the good of his church let me wrap up by saying this we are to remember our past leaders who held fast to Christ I've got some we obey and submit to our present leaders who are holding fast to Christ so that they can help us hold fast to Christ and we keep the timeless and unchanging Christ central together not being led astray being willing to suffer giving him praise we live at a time when there is growing skepticism over leaders even church leaders but church that doesn't need to be true of us of Christ the King church God God gives godly leaders for the good of his church would you repeat after me Christ is my risen and reigning priest and king the anchor of my soul the same yesterday today and forever that's kind of like in those moments when you're marrying a couple and you're walking through the vows and they kind of jump in let's try that again the same yesterday today and forever to whom we hold fast together hey why would you obey and submit to the leaders of Christ the King church here's why God gives godly leaders for the good of his church not perfect but trustworthy in order to hold fast to Christ to the end let's pray God in heaven we thank you so much I thank you for Steve and for Les and for John I thank you for Zach and God as I thanked you this morning thank you for this calling this sacred responsibility of giving leadership to your people your blood bought people God thank you that we are in this together Zion bound God would you grow us would you keep us from straying from Christ would you make us willing to suffer for Christ outside the gate and God would you cause there to be in us growing joy as we offer sacrifices of praise to you Sunday after Sunday in Jesus name we pray amen amen Thank you.