

“God’s Caregivers”

Fixing Our Eyes Upon Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 13:1-17

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Jeff: All right. Why don’t we pray? Don, why don’t you lead us?

Transcriber’s Note: Don plays “Fairest Lord Jesus.”

Jeff: I love “When the Saints Go Marching In.” That’s beautiful! (*Laughter*)

Let’s pray. Our heavenly Father, we thank You so much for the day You’ve given, for the time that You’ve set aside in our lives to spend in Your word, to simply reflect upon it and enjoy its beauty, its structure. Father, we know that its more than that. We know that Your Holy Spirit who inspired it continues to illuminate this Word, taking it up and bringing it to bear upon the lives of those who belong to You. But more than that we also know that the Holy Spirit takes this Word up and brings conviction to the world that there might be life out of death. Father, we come before You this morning thanking You for these things, especially that we could be here, that we could be under Your word and that we could be shaped by it. Father, as we study it, we do pray that’s what would happen, that You would shape us and form us after the image of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Father, as we come we are also mindful that there are those who are dealing with struggles in life. And we think about the Deffenbaugh’s and Diane’s mom. And we pray that You will bless as they minister to her in these last days of life. We certainly pray for Kevin Kohn and ask that You would not only minister to Him but his wife as well, especially with these asthmatic attacks. We pray, Father, for our brother as he recovers from a heart issue.

Father, we’re thankful that we can have this way of communicating with you and bringing our requests. And we do that this morning with full confidence that You hear us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Father, now bless us in Your word, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. So today we’re actually going to take off on our work from the last time because we didn’t get through all of it. So what I’ve decided to do was to bring some of what we didn’t get through into the introduction and try to Segway it a bit into today’s verses, which are 7-17. So I’ll read 1-6, but we’ll actually go on reading the next section and we’ll see where we end up at the end of our time together. So Hebrews 13:1-17. Always remember that I’m reading to you not just any word, but I’m reading to you the word of God, the infallible, inerrant and authoritative Word.

“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 the 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

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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 have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood was 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.

“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.”

And that’s where we’ll end today. Actually, we probably won’t get there today. And I forgot to say,

Sig: The word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: What am I supposed to say?

Brave Man: Go ahead.

Jeff: I’m supposed to start teaching. Never mind. *(Laughter)* Okay, so today we’re going to look at this basic outline. I’m going to look at an introduction. And the introduction is going to cover what we didn’t look at the last time. And then the structure of our text and what we’re going to look at their is the structure of verses 7-17. And then we’re going to be talking about *eating healthy*, being led to health. You probably thought you were coming to a Bible study, but this will help you of course.

Anyway, a couple of introductory points before I get started. I want you to remember that in 1-6 love was the theme. And that was fairly important for us to remember. The verses start with love. And though the verses for that section go to verse 6, there is a repetition of the word *love* in verse 5. And so there’s something of a bookending to this particular section that talks about love. It points out love and helps us to see that this is the main theme of this section.

Now the last time we talked about this a little bit. But I want to press a little further into it. There are a few things out of the text that we didn’t get to the last time.

I want to do that by having you think about C.S. Lewis’s understanding of love. He wrote a book called *The Four Loves*. If you haven’t read it, it’s a great book, but it’s not an easy read. It’s not something like *The Five Love Languages* that your wife might have

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you read so that you would know her love language. And I’m not disparaging that. You ought to know your wife’s love language and she ought to know yours.

Anyway, this is not like that. This is a little bit more of a thinker. And what he does is that he takes the four different Greek words for love and he just walks through them.

One of the things that he talks about is that he talks about the love of *eros*, the love of marriage. And what he says is this. He says that when you have two people who are in love with one another, he said that they face one another. And he said that they have a habit of talking about the love that they have for one another.

When he gets to the love of friendship, *Philadelphia*, that love, he says that this is not of that kind. He said that friends don’t look longingly into each other’s eyes and talk about the love they have for each other. He said that friends stand side by side looking in the same direction because they’re going somewhere together. But he said that usually and mostly, if not always, friends have something that binds them together. So he says that brotherly love is about something.

So he says that it could be about dominoes. It could be about white mice. It could be about any number of things. But when you have this brotherly love and you’re with someone arm in arm, you’re walking with them.

Now I want to tell you something, especially you young men, because the young men have a tendency,--and I’m speaking from experience,--young men have a tendency to unite with other young men over the strangest things. I’ll never forget. It was a lesson I learned. And this is free; I’m not going to charge you for this, okay? (*Laughter*) But I’ll never forget the best man at my wedding. I thought he was the best buddy I ever had. We were weight lifting partners. And we did all kinds of stuff together at the time. But we were weight lifting partners. That was the essence of our friendship. And he was the best man at my wedding.

Anyway, he moves away, I move away, and we don’t talk. And then he moves back and he wants to start lifting again. And at the time I wasn’t lifting. I was in school. I was pastoring a church. I said, “I don’t have time to lift.” I never heard from him. And it came to me. We had dominoes in common. And dominoes wasn’t enough! You know what I mean?

Now there are those kinds of friendships. And it was good while it lasted. But all of a sudden I realized that genuine friendship is gathered about something more than dominoes and white rice. White rice! (*Laughter*)

And when I thought about that I thought to myself, you know, Christians who have this brotherly fraternal love, they have something more than dominoes in common, right? And the Scriptures tell us that. Brotherly love has us facing in the same direction, moving along the same path. But what we have in common is Christ and all that gathers around Christ.

And let me just show you what we have in common. We have something to share. We have a love for something. Not just Christ, but what Christ loves. So Hebrews 3:13 talked about how we are to encourage one another. And Hebrews 10:25 talked about how we are to stir one another up.

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Transcriber’s Note: Hebrews 3:13, NKJV. “*But exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*”

Hebrews 10:24-25. “*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*”

Jeff: And Hebrews 12 talked about how we were to pursue peace with one another. And so there are things that we gather around as we stand alongside of each other that we have in common that we pursue. And those things are throughout the book of Hebrews. And so when you think about the book of Hebrews and the way that it talks about this *philadelphos*, it talks about this brotherly love in such a way that it actually gives us something to hang our hats on. We understand the flesh on the bones of what it means to be brothers and have an affection for one another.

I think that’s important. I think that’s important because I think that most of the time,—well, I’m going to move into autobiography. Any questions about that, or thoughts before I move on? No? All right! I explained it really well then! Okay, good! (*Laughter*)

All right. So the question then becomes, *how do I respond?* Well, he gives us examples. And I’m not going to spend the time we might have with these. But he says that we are to remember the prisoners. We’re to honor marriage. And we’re to cherish freedom from greed. Those are ways in which we should respond.

There are motivations for us to respond in this way. Why? Well because he says that “*some have entertained angels unawares.*”

Now that’s a wonderful thing. And I think it takes us back to the very opening of the book of Hebrews, where it says that angels are “*ministering spirits sent to minister to those who inherit salvation.*” So it’s not surprising that those ministering spirits show up in our lives at different places. And so what a wonderful thing that is. But I don’t know if I can say more than that about that, so I’m just going to press on.

I’m also going to say that *brotherly love can be hindered*. How can it be hindered? Well, when I forget to suffer with those who suffer, when I defile marriage, and when I’m greedy instead of loving the God who gives my sustenance. So I can hinder brotherly love in those ways. So I think that love is really central in these first six verses. We have to take it into account. Now I’m going to move on to the structure. But does anybody have any thoughts or comments before we move out of that section from last time? Does anybody want to talk about love? You guys were like Cupids the last time. You wanted to talk about love. There we go! All right! (*Laughter*)

Brave Man: What were the four Greek words? I only heard two of them.

Jeff: Yes. So what were they? There’s *eros*, there’s *Philadelphia*. *Phileo* would be the word. And then there was *storge*. *Storge* was affection.

Brave Man: So you’re talking about the gaining of one of those, not the meaning of it.

Jeff: I’m talking about—(*Laughter*) You know what? We’re post-moderns. (*Laughter*) You invest your own meaning in it. (*Laughter*) Okay, that’s right.

Don: When the author of Hebrews says that “*some have entertained angels unawares,*” is that referring to Abraham in the book of Genesis, 18 or whatever?

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Jeff: That’s often where commentators take you. But I do think that probably he has more in mind, that opening section in Hebrews where it says that angels are “*ministering spirits sent to those who will inherit salvation.*” And here’s what I think. I said that I couldn’t say much about it because here’s the point of it. Even if I did, I did it unawares. *(Laughter)* The whole point of that is how do you know, right? So I think that the people that talk about how they’ve entertained angels misread the text, because it says that they did it unawares. The one who was aware of it was the angel and God Himself.

Rob: My thoughts are, (and there are people of course who are better educated in this stuff),--

Jeff: Go ahead.

Rob: I would think that you don’t know that at the time but that you become aware of it later by finding something out that should not have been known by this person. This is a breakthrough that rocked me.

Jeff: Yes. I think there are those providentially unexplainable things. I mean, when I was first converted I read the book *Angels* by Billy Graham. It’s a scary book, you know? You read the story about how the natives are going to kill the missionary and the missionary didn’t die. And years later there was somebody who was converted out of the tribe. And he asked him that night, or at some point in his life, “Why didn’t you guys kill me?”

And he said, “There were all these soldiers gathered around your tent. We couldn’t get to you, or we would have.” And you’re saying, “Oh, that’s really neat!”

Now you know, I don’t doubt that at all. But that’s not part of my common everyday experience. *(Laughter)* I mean, it’s a wonderful story. And I don’t doubt that in Elijah-like fashion that those kinds of things happen where, remember, the prophet prays. “*Let his eyes be opened.*” And then he sees the heavenly host on the hillside around him.

I have a tendency not to think like that, though. I have a tendency to think that he who is on God’s side wins. He who is with God who is not One, but Three, outnumbers any number, you know? That’s kind of how I think. I don’t typically think that there are heavenly hosts surrounding us. There are. I just don’t tend to think that way. I shouldn’t have said that, right? *(Laughter)*

Sig: Now we know what to pray for. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Yeah, that’s right. *(Laughter)* So when you believe in the providence of God and the sovereignty of God and those kinds of things, your mind has a tendency to think that God is sovereign. God providentially superintends. You don’t think about the means by which He does it. You usually have a tendency to think that the sovereign God providentially superintends. At least that’s my own experience. Anyway, how about anybody else? No? All right.

Okay, well let’s move on. And now we’re going to really focus on 7-17. And I start thinking about these verses in the previous verses. So these verses come out of our previous six. He says, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.” And then he quotes from Psalm 118, “*The LORD is my helper.*”

So he says that if you are in the Lord, then the Lord will never desert you. He will never leave you. The Lord is your helper.

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Now that’s encouraging for us to read as we read the Scriptures. But we need to remember that this is not the healthiest congregation in the world. There were a lot of problems here. People were dull of hearing. They were prone to drift. They struggled with unbelieving hearts. In fact, they sound like any congregation, a typical congregation really. And so what we have is God telling this very typical congregation which struggles with very typical problems, “I’m not going to leave you. I’m not going to desert you. You’re secure in Me.”

Now one of the ways in which He provides that sense of security to His church is leaders in the church. And that’s where I think that 7-17 enters in. The interesting thing,-- and I’m going to come back to this, but I want to mention it now,--is this. Notice that verse 7 talks about past leaders. And I want you to notice that 17 talks about present leaders.

Now that ought to give you an indication that hey, there’s something that we ought to take note of in this particular section. Just like 1-6 was roped up by the word *love* so here we have a section roped off by the word *elders* or *leaders* in the church. Okay? So past leaders and present leaders.

Now that’s what we need to talk about. But I don’t want to blurt out the end. I want to help you walk to it and see it. So let’s think about what’s in between here, because when you think about what’s in between, it doesn’t really make sense. I mean, if you look at verse 8 and it talks about this ontological statement regarding the Son. He’s “*the same yesterday and today and forever.*” This is who He is. He doesn’t change. Jesus is just as immutable or unchanging as the Father.

And verse 9. Don’t be carried away by false teaching. 10-14 is really about the atonement stuff. And 15-16 is an admonition to do good, or a basic admonition to do good.

So in between 7, about past leaders, and 17, about present leaders, you basically have these statements. What’s going on? Remember what I told you the last time? You get to the end of the letter and you wonder. Is he running out of papyrus? Is the guy delivering the letter saying, “Hey Paul, I’m going to leave now!”? You know what I mean? So Paul is scribbling out the end. And so he’s trying to fit everything in that he didn’t fit in. (*Laughter*) And I would say to you that’s not what’s happening here. And I tried to say that to you the last time.

One of the reasons why that’s not happening here from my perspective is that 50% of what he says is already in the letter. He’s not hustling to get something in the letter that he didn’t get in the letter already. 50% of it is there.

I think he’s making a final point. I think he’s making a final, crucial, important point. The question is, what is that final, crucial, important point?

I want you to notice, at least from my perspective, that it’s in the middle. It’s in the middle. Now what does the middle say, or essentially the conceptual middle? The middle says (remember, it doesn’t say this; I’m going to get to this), that there is no temple, remember? There is just this house church.

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Now I want you to keep that in mind, because what I’m going to say next hinges on this. There is no temple. There is this house church. And verse 10 says, *“We have an altar.”*

Oh, wait a minute! Wait a minute! We are not in the temple. We’re in this house church. We don’t have all the accoutrements of Judaism. And then the Preacher says, *“We have an altar.”*

Now he doesn’t just say, *“We have an altar.”* He says, “The food on this altar that we have, well, the priests that function in the temple aren’t worthy to eat this food that we have on this altar.”

Now what is he saying? Well, I think that he’s saying something very, very pointed, something very specific. What he’s making a comparison with is with the food that is on the altar in the temple. And what is the food on that altar? It is the sacrifice. And what is the sacrifice upon the altar in the Christian church, which is now a Communion table?

All right. I think he’s making a comparison between Christ and animal sacrifices. Now notice this: shadows and types. This is the comparison: the shadows of the Old, Old Testament animal sacrifices, the fulfillment of the New in Christ.

Now what I want you to grab is this. Keeping that in mind, think about what it says in verse 8. It says that *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”* In other words, it did not matter how He was prefigured in the Old under the shadows and the types. Those shadows and types which were changing and which would eventually pass away pointed to the One who is forever the same.

And that’s the connection that I think that the writer of the Hebrews wants us to understand. The shadows and the types point to the One who is the same yesterday, today and forever. They had their function. And that function has come to an end with the appearance of Jesus Christ. With the appearance of Jesus Christ the climax of the covenant has arrived. And so one of the things that I think that we’re supposed to derive from this is that Christ is the center of what it is that we’re doing.

And therefore verse 9. *“Do not be led away.”* In other words, don’t be led away. Don’t go back to the strange teachings of the shadows and the types from which you were delivered in Christ.

So there’s a very clear message that really resonates with what we’ve been through already. And all that we’ve been through already is that Christ has come. He’s the great High Priest. He’s the great sacrifice. He’s the One who fulfilled the covenants. Therefore don’t go back to Judaism.

And that’s essentially what we have here. We have an altar. We have better food on the altar. And guess what? The shadows and the types that pointed toward Christ, that Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever, has come. And you’re with Him. So don’t go back to Him.

It’s sort of like what we found in Hebrews chapter 11. You remember that in Hebrews chapter 11 we’re told that Moses looked forward to Christ and counted Christ better than the passing pleasures of Egypt. And what the writer was trying to say to them was look! You want to go back to Moses, and the shadows and the types that were found with Moses in the Mosaic administration of the covenant. Moses didn’t want to stay with

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Moses! Moses wanted to go with Christ! So why do you want to go back to Moses when Moses wanted to go where you want out? You see, that’s the idea. So I’m going to pause there and ask if you have any questions before we move on to some other things.

But for right now here’s what I want you to catch. For right now I want you to catch that in verse 7 we have past leaders, in verse 17 present leaders. And the conceptual center of that text is about Jesus, and Him being the fulfillment of the Old. And therefore don’t go back to the Old. That’s the idea. Okay. Any thoughts or comments before we move on? Is that understandable? Yes?

Matt: I have a question and a statement that might be controversial. Do we currently do that same thing, go back from where we are as Christians to somewhere else?

Jeff: When I look at Hebrews 11, I look at Hebrews 11 as talking about events that happened in redemptive history that are unrepeatable. I don’t think that the events in Hebrews 11 are the only unrepeatable redemptive historical acts. I think there are other redemptive historical acts, like Jesus at Gethsemane, for instance. That’s an unrepeatable act. People will talk about having a Gethsemane experience. I don’t think that we have Gethsemane experiences, not like Jesus had, right? So I think these are redemptive historical acts that were to accomplish salvation.

Now when I look at Hebrews 11, I look at Hebrews 11 and I find that Abraham leaves Ur of the Chaldees, leaves his idolatry, and goes and follows God.

Now it’s at that point that I find application because I say to myself, “I’m not being asked to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go into the Promised Land and lay hold of the land of promise and become a nation, and so on. But what I am called to do throughout Scripture is to leave my idols behind.” And so I can find an application even in those unrepeatable redemptive historical moments and say that this is what I can sort of derive from this by way of application. I am to leave my idolatry. And so that’s kind of how I think about those particular stories, and that’s how I tend to apply those particular things. Does that make sense?

Matt: Yes.

Jeff: Okay.

Matt: So I see how this applies to us. Here’s the question from my observation.

Jeff: Yes, please.

Matt: What is the altar? Is it a building? Is it the place where we go on Sunday mornings? Or are we it?

Jeff: That’s great.

Matt: You know, classic conservative Reformed people talk of the sanctuary. The Catholic church talks of the sanctuary as the house of God.

Jeff: The way I look at it is that the church is invisible and the church is visible. So as long as I belong to the body of Christ by believing in Jesus Christ, I belong to this universal invisible church that gathers all over the world. But, like he says in his letters “*To the church in Ephesus,*” or “*To the church in Philippi.*” There are localized manifestations of that invisible body to which people belong. So, for instance, I belong to the local body in Gibsonia, right?

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So the idea then is that I’m not to forsake that temple, that particular physical manifestation of the body of Christ. Now that’s not saying that I may move, and so on and so forth. But if I’m living there and that’s my church of which I’m a member, I go there and I don’t forsake the assembling together of the body and that sort of thing. And I think those admonitions that are in Hebrews are aimed at the local manifestations of the invisible church.

Matt: So that building is sacred.

Jeff: No, no. The building is the people. The living stones that gather in that building are the people, the church.

Sig: Do you mind? *(Laughter)* You can let us talk; we all have turns! *(Laughter)* When he refers to the tent, and so we have an altar from which those who serve the tent—

Jeff: Yes, the tabernacle.

Sig: But I thought the tabernacle was the moving part.

Jeff: It is. But remember how he deals with it. He deals with the tabernacle under the Mosaic administration because he’s really dealing with people who want to go back to Moses. So he has the temple in mind because the temple is standing and exists.

Sig: Right.

Jeff: But it really was the tabernacle which was mobile. But he’s dealing with the tabernacle because he’s dealing with people who want to go back to Moses. That’s why he’s got the tabernacle in mind.

Sig: Thank you.

Brave Man: Hey, Jeff?

Jeff: Yes?

Brave Man: We have someone who is going to disagree about the sanctuary, but here we go.

Jeff: Okay. I don’t get it, but go ahead. *(Laughter)*

Rob: One thing I was thinking that we do as an application for today is that we really rely on God for salvation. But then for sanctification I think that sometimes, at least I know myself that we try to rely on “Oh God, what am I going to do? It’s up to me,” that kind of thing. It’s kind of like the Israelites. Getting back to the Old Testament, they had to go through all these works. That’s the way it had to be done, I know. We need to be focusing on God. God does the work. The conjunction would be His Son to me.

Jeff: Yes.

Tom: Jeff, I want to say too that we need to always remember that the sacrifices in the temple and all that were temporary. But the problem with the Pharisees was that they thought it was permanent. The one thing that we see in our heritage, what I’m saying is that it’s not permanent. The permanent is Jesus Christ. And that’s our focus.

Jeff: That’s right. Okay, all right; good stuff. Let’s move on. Let’s actually talk about *what a life that focuses on Christ is to look like.*

Now in my *paideia* group we just read through Martin Luther’s Catechism. And it was really great because you get the sense of what kind of a pastor Martin Luther was. We were just talking about it last night. Martin Luther is this pastor who is basically not looking down at the end of his nose saying, “Did you obey every jot and tittle?”

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The kind of pastor he is is that he’s walking down the street one night. He finds one of his congregants having had one too many beers. And he picks him up and he says, “no, no, no, brother! We need to get you to bed, and tomorrow you need to look to Christ in a way you haven’t looked at Him yet!” You know, that sort of thing. He lays him in bed and he goes to his house the next morning. He slaps him on the face and says, “You’re going to eat eggs this morning, I’m telling you.

” And he gets him out of bed and he says, “Now how is it that we can look to Christ today?” And there’s a sense in which he’s always pointing his people to Christ. It’s almost as if he’s trying to pull them out of the Slough of Despond and get them looking to Jesus, because he knows that no effort of theirs other than looking to Christ is really going to do them any good.

And yet a life that looks to Christ will be a changed life. The manifestation of change will be there. That’s what this is about. Feasting on Christ will produce a healthier life.

Now he actually walks us through this. I want you to see that. A healthy believer has a heart strengthened by grace. That’s in verse 9: a heart strengthened by grace.

Now I want you to understand this. Remember, 50% of this is already in the letter. Remember that one of the things he is doing, one of the things that he wants us to focus on is that he has talked about the heart already. He has said in 3:10 that an unbelieving heart is a bad thing.

Transcriber’s Note: Hebrews 3:10, NKJV. *“Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.’”*

Jeff: In 8:10 and 10:16, we have a renewed heart in Jesus.

Transcriber’s Note: Hebrews 8:10, NKJV. *“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*

Hebrews 10:16. *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.”*

Jeff: In 9:18-22 and 10:22 we have a heart sprinkled clean.

Transcriber’s Note: Hebrews 9:18-22, NKJV. *“Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.’ Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”*

Hebrews 10:18. *“Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.”*

Jeff: And you know, this is really the question for men. How is it that my heart can be sprinkled and that I can have a clean conscience? You know what? You only have a clean conscience when you’re strengthened in your heart by grace. And what I mean by that is this. What I think the author means by that is this. The more you go over the gospel

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throughout your entire life, and the more the teaching of the gospel sets in, the greater your sense of having been cleansed by the work of Jesus Christ will be there.

I mean, it’s not magic. What it is, it’s preaching the gospel to yourself over and over again. And it’s coming to grips with the idea that in Christ Jesus I am forgiven my sins> Why? Because He offered perfect obedience, the obedience I could not offer. And He was the atonement, the punishment on my behalf, for my sins. It is because of those things that I stand forgiven before a holy God, and nothing else!—nothing that I do, nothing that I accomplish, nothing good that anyone says of me. In fact, when people say good of me I usually think to myself, *if they only knew*, that sort of thing, right? I think to myself continually and always that Jesus Christ alone is the reason why I can say I stand before God on the final day, let alone today. And so that’s the idea.

So if we’re going to have our consciences cleansed, we need to have our hearts strengthened by the gospel of grace. It’s that simple.

And then he goes on and he talks about *a healthy believer*. A healthy believer who understands this has this heart condition. Verse 15: he speaks from the heart. Remember what Jesus said. “Out of the mouth comes the overflow of the heart.” If my heart is strengthened by grace, I’m going to speak out of that heart.

And I’ll add to those to give thanks. The interesting thing is this. If you look at the words *give thanks*, that word is the Greek word *homologeo*, which means *I will confess*. I will confess something about God. In other words, I will agree with God. That’s what confession means. *Homologeo* means *to say the same thing*. I will say the same thing that God says. I will say the same thing about myself that God says about me, that I’m a dirty rotten sinner saved by grace. That’s true. He is a holy God. That’s true; I’ll say that, too. Jesus Christ is the only Savior in this world. That’s true; I’ll say that, too.

So do you see the point? Redeemed lips, lips that are strengthened by the gospel, are going to say the same things that God says.

Matt: You’re a filthy, dirty rotten sinner.

Jeff: A filthy, dirty rotten sinner. That’s right. And that’s the idea of confession. Notice that it comes from the text. 3:1: *the High Priest of our confession*.” 4:14: *hold fast to our confession*.” 10:23: *hold to the confession without wavering*.” That’s there, it’s there, it’s there. And this is what he’s doing. He’s taking us back. This is a heart condition. This is what the lips speak out of the heart condition. And then he says that a healthy believer will do good. He’ll do good.

Brave Man: You bet.

Jeff: Yes. So a healthy believer is going to do good. One of the things I want to point out is in verse 16: do good and share. The words *to share* is *koinonia*. And the idea of *koinonia* is investment.

Remember, I said this to you before. Peter and Paul are going into the fishing business. And both have 50% of the capital to get into the business, right? That’s *koinonia*. We have a tendency to think of *koinonia* as fire hall fellowship. Hey, we got coffee! How ya doin’?, that sort of thing. That’s not *koinonia*. *Koinonia* is when you invest in the gospel together, just like Peter and John investing in the fishing business

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together. You invest yourself, your time, your talent, your energy, your money, those kinds of things. You’re investing, and that’s *koinonia*.

And if you have the heart condition that we talked about, one that is strengthened by the gospel of grace, you know that your lips are speaking out of your heart and your hands are doing according to your lips. Then you’re going to be enjoying this kind of *koinonia*.

I have a couple minutes. Does anybody want to share?

Transcriber’s Note: Matt comes up to the microphone. *(Laughter)*

Matt: You all have an invitation to have *koinonia* with me this summer. I invest in inner city kids and I need businessmen to come beside me so we can have *koinonia*.

(Applause)

Sig: Who are you, Matt?

Matt: I’m a filthy, dirty rotten sinner. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: There you go.

Matt: I’m like other little sinners who like to get involved at Pine Valley Bible Camp.

Jeff: Amen. I was a little worried that you didn’t add “saved by grace” on the end there. *(Laughter)* Anybody else? Yes, Mike?

Mike: When we’re telling ourselves that we’re dirty rotten sinners, it’s also good to tell the rest of the story. The reason we can give is what it talks about in verse 15. It’s because God has declared us holy and blameless in His Son. And the righteousness of Christ has been given to us, which we don’t deserve.

Jeff: That’s right.

Mike: And that’s the rest of the story. If we get stuck on “we’re dirty rotten sinners,” then we’re going to kind of live that way. But if we tell ourselves the full truth, the rest of the story, it gives us the ability to walk in victory in Christ, realizing that it’s not in ourselves but in Christ.

Jeff: Amen. Very good. And let me just say this, tagging on to Mike’s comment about that. So we still haven’t dealt with past leaders and present leaders. But we have dealt with the conceptual center. The conceptual center is that Jesus Christ is the better food on the altar. And we’ve dealt with what a life looks like that has eaten from that food on that altar.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And so now the question that we have to ask is this. Well, what about the past leaders and the present leaders? And that’s this. The value of a leader is grounded in what he has to say about the One who never changes.

And don’t you love this? There’s a lesson here. Verse 7: past leaders. Verse 7: present leaders. It doesn’t matter, as long as both past and present leaders point you toward the Jesus who is “*the same yesterday, today and forever.*”

And I love this because this is a way of taking away from personalities and putting focus and emphasis on Jesus Christ.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And I think that’s a valuable lesson today. In fact, you know, it’s never too late to start telling your congregation that it’s not about me. It’s about Jesus. And so if it ever

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becomes about me, that’s when it’s gone in the wrong direction, right? And so I start telling my congregation that after a few years of being there, right?, because I never want them to think that it’s about me. It is not, because I was a past leader in some churches. I’m a present leader in one now. But I’ll be a past leader there, too. And if I want that congregation to stay intact, then it had better not be about me. It better be about the One who doesn’t change, the One who is “*the same yesterday, today and forever.*”

And so think about how this section pulls everything together. Past leaders, present leaders. The altar that is in the church, the food upon which we feast, is Christ. This is what a life looks like that is eaten from that food. And this life is guided by leaders who constantly point us to Jesus Christ who doesn’t change. Yes?

Brian: Let me go back to what you were saying about Martin Luther, how he said, “Hey, what are you going to do looking at Christ today?” Are you tying this point about leaders to that statement? I would say that it’s as simple as living out the life. If I’m sailing and a massive wave knocks me off direction, I’ll be looking at the shore to where I’m headed. Or if I’m flying, I’m looking in a certain direction no matter how bad the turbulence kicks me out. Because of looking in the right direction I always know how to turn back. So is the application really that if I’m always looking at Christ, no matter how bad I fall, no matter what’s coming at me, if I keep my eyes pointed to Jesus, I always know which direction to turn, how to turn back and go the right way?

Jeff: Yes. I think that’s a good way to say it. And if I can read you something that’s just absolutely stellar from *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, there are two sections in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* that are just great stuff.

This is under the section *Of the Perseverance of the Saints.* “*Nevertheless, they*”, (that is, the elect), “*they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God’s displeasure and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.*” That sounds to me like what you just said.

And yet that doesn’t have to be full apostasy, a full walking away from Jesus. That can be the description of a Christian who stumbles, who just needs to get up and put his eyes back on Jesus and start moving in the right direction. And the first step in that direction is repentance, right?

But here’s how I’d segway into what we’re doing here in this section. And that is that obeying and submitting to leaders is crucial in this regard. Now here’s what I’d say to you. The interesting thing is that it doesn’t just mean to obey and submit. In Greek the word *obey* is *to be persuaded to obey*. In other words, you can look at that from the perspective of the pastor and from the perspective of the person.

There’s a twofold way in which this is crucial. The pastor who stands up and says, “I am your authority; I’m your pastor! You need to obey me! Now why aren’t you obeying me?” Now that’s as bad as a parent saying, “I am your father and you will obey me!”, right?

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I mean, you can do that, and I have. Don’t say a word! (*Laughter*) You can do that, and you’re right. You would be right in doing that. But isn’t it better to sit down and persuade them of the wisdom of obedience? Right?

Tom: Yes, that’s true. When you mentioned Martin Luther, in his book by Eric Metaxas, when the church was breaking away, they said, “We have both body and blood. We have wine and bread for our Communion.” Some of the pastors that were breaking away said, “It’s hard to break tradition. We only give bread.” And so they got a lot of criticism.

Luther said, “Let them go; they’ll come around. We’ll keep preaching the Word. So if they only want to do bread today, in future years they’ll come around to do both body and blood.” So he wasn’t trying to establish that they were going to do it this way. “Here’s the truth; now you work on it.”

Jeff: And here’s the point. It wasn’t just the Reformers. All the way back, the Patristics have always said that the pastor does not have a magisterial authority. Pastors have a ministerial authority, which is an authority of persuasion which comes right out of this text.

In other words, it is wrong for the pastor to stand up and say, “You must obey me.” The pastor must persuade people to do what they ought to want to do, right? He ought to persuade them. This is the wisdom of this text. And it actually isn’t that “you ought to obey me.” It’s that you ought to obey the Jesus who is “*the same yesterday, today and forever.*” That’s really what we’re after. But the point is that the pastor is to persuade people to do that.

But, on the other hand, the congregation is incumbent to be persuaded, right? So it’s incumbent on the pastor to persuade. But it’s also incumbent upon the congregation to be persuaded to obey and submit, not to the pastor per se, but to the Jesus whom the pastor is preaching, His word. Be persuaded to obey Jesus and submit to Him.

So it’s not as cut and dry as all that, you know? This is why there’s an art to the pastorate, because you’re constantly persuading people to follow Jesus? And you know what? You know that they’re just like this church. Their hearts are inclined a bit not to follow Him. And because they’ve been renewed, they have this stronger inclination to follow Him. But that weaker inclination of the old man is always sort of tugging them back. And you have to persuade them to follow their stronger inclination. And that’s the idea. And so anyway, we’ll end there. Any last thoughts or questions before we pray?

Sig: I just wanted to tell you that Dale Thurston’s call was to reinforce what Don Maurer told us, that the Bishop is feeling stronger and healthier and coming around.

Jeff: Okay. Oh, that’s great.

Sig: That’s why he called twice.

Jeff: That’s good. All right, let’s pray. Father, thank You for this day, for reminding us that love ought to reign in our fellowship. Thank You for reminding us that Jesus Christ is “*the same yesterday, today and forever*”, and that even though He was pictured in the shadows and types of the Old, He now has come and He remains. And Father, thank You that He reigns and rules over our lives. Thank You, Father, for giving a manifestation of Your love in the leadership of Your church. And Lord, we pray that You would make that

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a blessing to each of us. Lord, we ask these things, all of them, in Christ’s precious name, as we also think about the Bishop. We certainly pray that You will mend him and make him better. We certainly pray that he’ll be out soon. And we certainly ask that he’ll be with us again soon. We ask these things in Christ’s name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)