

Sunday April 21<sup>st</sup> 2013  
The Letter to the Hebrews  
Part Eighty One

1). Heb 13:15 *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. 17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

a). We had looked last week at companion scriptures to v15 from Ephesians Chapter 5 and Colossians Chapter 3 and we had seen in these verses that offering what Hebrews 13:15 calls 'the sacrifice of praise' is a result of the process of being filled with the Spirit - Eph 5:18 *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

b). And this process of being filled with the Spirit through the Word of God, as we know, brings about the metamorphosis, the inward change, as we are transformed into the image of Him who created us.

c). And we have previously seen in our study of Hebrews how the metamorphosis will bring about an increase in brotherly love amongst us – as we grow towards spiritual maturity so we will have a genuinely deeper affection for one another which will find its ultimate expression in 'agape' love.

d). The working of the metamorphosis will also produce a similar result with our marriages – the more the Word changes us the more we, by faith, align ourselves with the roles and responsibilities of the husband and wife.

e). Therefore - Heb 13:9b *For it is good that the heart be established by grace,*

As our hearts are established by grace – the same process as being filled with the Spirit, so the harvest from the fruit of our lips must also increase, as we choose, by faith, to continually offer the sacrifice of praise.

f). Giving the sacrifice of praise then is an integral part of having faith to the saving of the soul – it is a good work that will remain at the Judgment Seat of Christ when our works will be tested by fire.

g). This then is no small thing.

h). And along with this, according to the scripture, we must not forget to do good and to share as these are sacrifices with which God is well pleased also.

2). Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.....18 ¶ Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

a). We had also seen last week how in both Ephesians and Colossians being filled with the Spirit, letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, brings about the offering of the sacrifice of praise which is then immediately followed by verses to do with submission – ‘Wives submit to your own husbands’.

b). And this is a pattern which is repeated in the Book of Hebrews – We have the verse concerning our hearts being established by grace, which is then followed by the admonition to continually offer the sacrifice of praise, which is then followed by the command to submission - *17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive,*

c). And it is really no surprise that we should see submission in this context – Everything starts with and is dependent upon the Word of God *Ro 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

d). Submission, whether it be wives to husbands, employees to employers or a flock to their shepherds is all dependent upon having faith to the saving of the soul – believing that which God has said and then choosing to act accordingly.

e). No doubt we will remember with respect to wives and husbands that submission is really an issue between the wife and God that has its manifestation in the wife’s relationship with her husband – it is not a wife/husband issue per se. And of course if the wife chooses not to be submissive, thereby placing herself in sin, this still remains an issue between her and God which, if unresolved in the present, will find its final resolution at the Judgment Seat – In such a situation though the husband can neither demand or enforce submission, but will rather continue in his God given role and responsibility in faithful obedience to that which the Lord requires of him.

f). And this example of the wife and husband would transfer over to the relationship between the flock and their shepherds.

g). Now we can say with all certainty that the issue of submission really hinges on our ability to grasp the reality of what lies beyond Christ's Judgment Seat – it is then a good indicator of what we really believe.

h). And of course a grasp of this reality is absolutely contingent upon our proper engagement with the Word - 1Co 2:9 *But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

i). This is why the scripture tells us - 2Ti 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

j). There must be diligence on our part to rightly divide the word of truth in the present, so that we may be approved and not ashamed at the Judgment Seat of Christ yet future.

k). And we have already seen the warnings for choosing not to do this – Heb 2:1 ¶ *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,*

l). Once we turn our backs upon the consistency and continuity required to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard then that reality of the Kingdom that once shined with the brilliance of the glory of God and filled our vision will become a mere shadow and a vapor set to vanish away and our vision will be filled instead with the flashing neon delusions of this present age.

m). And if you should find that your feet have already begun to move on the downward slope of the Mountain to the plain below, turn around – it will be an uphill struggle to regain the mountain top, but remember – 2Co 12:9 *And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."*

3). So, to go back to our verses from Hebrews - *17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.*

a). Within the historical setting for this letter we would see the command to obey and be submissive within the context of those who were already being carried about by various and strange doctrines – for them to choose to obey those who ruled over them would bring correction to their incorrect doctrines and safeguard them for the future. This we could see after the fashion presented in - Eph 4:11 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,*

b). And we could of course readily find application here for ourselves.

c). Let's continue then by looking at these verses within our own particular setting in these last days - the command to obey and be submissive is just that, a command, that must be responded to by faith – with the original language for this suggesting actions that are to happen constantly – 'constantly obey, 'constantly be submissive' - And such a verse as this could be used by the unscrupulous as a means to dominate and control, but fortunately the second half of this verse sets the parameter in which obedience and submission to 'those who rule over you' are to be given – 'for they watch out for your souls' – And this responsibility of watching out for your souls, for those who 'rule over you', is further qualified by the fact that they must 'give account' – At the Judgment Seat then 'those who rule over you' will be held to account for the way they have watched out for your souls.

d). No doubt we can imagine the consequence for those who have abused this scripture for their own ends.

e). So then, is this scripture telling you that you must do everything that those in leadership tell you to do? Thankfully for our part and thankfully for your part the answer is 'No'.

f). Well then, if we don't have to be obedient and submissive to everything that those in leadership tell us to do how then are we to understand it?

g). The answer to the question, needless to say, is to be found in the scriptures – and we have already seen the answer probably without realizing it in past weeks.

h). Heb 13:7 *Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*

1Co 11:1 ¶ *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*

i). That which you are to obey then and be submissive to is that which is taught to you through the scriptures and that which is demonstrated to you through the faithful obedience of those who lead as you observe their lives lived out before you. And of course, by extension, whatever those who rule over you may need to tell you and whatever correction they might need to give to you in order to bring you in line with the scriptures, that you must obey and be submissive to also; in short then anything and everything that from a scriptural standpoint has to do with bringing you to completion so that you may receive the salvation of your soul.

j). So whatever you hear and whatever you see within this context you must constantly submit to and you must constantly be obedient to because the whole purpose is to direct you, to lead you, to the salvation of your soul at Christ's Judgment Seat.

4). Our Hebrews verse then goes on to say - *Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

a). Now this part of the verse has both a present and a future application.

b). In the present you are to make sure that the responsibility that those who rule over you have to watch out for your souls is a responsibility they can discharge with joy and not with grief.

c). The word translated 'grief' here is a word that literally means 'to groan' – the idea is of a groan that would accompany the resuming of a thankless task, anticipating a lack of appreciation and even opposition.

d). The responsibility of watching out for your souls is not to be a task of banging our heads against a wall, but rather a task that you all are to make easier by readily being obedient and submissive to the scriptures so that we may continue in this task with joy.

e). If our task then becomes like banging our heads against a wall because of your disobedience and lack of submission to the Word then you are not profiting from that which God has given us for you – you will be like the servant who buried his talent in the ground.

f). And in that future Day of course a lack of profitability in what is now our present will result in no profit at the Judgment Seat, with only one consequence - Mt 25:30 *'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

g). It is good for us to note that the joy or grief experienced by those who rule over you is exclusively in response to the way you respond to their ministry in the present and does not have to do with those who lead being held to account by the Lord in the future – although it would be true to say that the successful discharge of our responsibility would be met with joy on our part and of course the contrary would also be true.

5). As we finish up this section of scripture from Hebrews I would like to spend what remains of this morning sharing with you again the scriptural mandate for those who rule over you so that we might have a more informed understanding of what their watching out for your souls means. And the place we would go to begin is Paul's words to the Elders of the Church in Ephesus at Miletus, recorded in – Ac 20:28 *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*

a). We will see at the beginning of v28 a dual responsibility to 'take heed' – the Elder is to take heed to himself and to take heed to the flock – in other words those who rule have a responsibility to be scripturally correct themselves and to make sure the flock is scripturally correct also.

b). Those who rule have not taken this position to themselves, but as we see from our verse, 'the Holy Spirit has made you overseers' – and they have been made overseers for one purpose – 'to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood'.

c). Here then is the most extraordinary thing – Christ purchased us all with His own blood; the blood of God Himself paid for us and we belong to Him – then He has appointed from within our midst those who are to shepherd His church on His behalf to provide protection and nurture; to lead them by the still waters and take them to the green pastures, to lead them in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

d). And within the context of our verses from Acts the action of shepherding has most particularly to do with 'watching' so as not to allow false doctrine and those who would draw away disciples to themselves from gaining a foothold amongst those engaged in the race of the faith. And there is a very serious side to this for those who shepherd and not just with regards to false doctrine - Eze 3:17 *"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: 18 "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 19 "Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. 20 "Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. 21 "Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul."*

And it is within the framework of what is presented in this OT scripture that Paul says this to the Elders of Ephesus - Ac 20:26 *"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*

e). All of this then is at the heart of the ministry of Elders.

f). The Holy Spirit said the same thing through Peter after this fashion – 1Pe 5:1 ¶ *The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*

g). To 'Shepherd the flock of God which is among you' is probably the greatest privilege that could be given to anyone this side of the Judgment Seat, even when it might be done with grief rather than joy.

h). We see from the scripture that this is a responsibility that is undertaken willingly and eagerly and has to do with service. It is not done as

'lords over' but by being an example – which would take us back to Hebrews 13:7 and 1 Corinthians 11:1.

i). And what a glorious incentive for doing this task well - *you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*

j). Wonderful though this is let's add a little balance to it –  
Jas 3:1 ¶ *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

6). Joh 10:15 *"As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.*

a). The verse here is clearly talking about Christ's sacrificial death on behalf of 'the sheep', but as those who lead, like Paul, imitate Christ, we will see that laying down our own life for the sake of those whom Christ has purchased with His own blood is an essential element of the shepherds' role.

b). There will often be much in our own lives that will have to be set aside, to lay down, so that you may be properly fed and properly led and properly protected.

c). The overriding concern then for those who rule over you is doing what has to be done irrespective of the cost to them personally in order that you have the opportunity to be found worthy at Christ's Judgment Seat - leaving nothing that can be done undone.

d). So important was this to Paul that he would have been willing to be accursed from Christ in exchange for Israel's redemption - Ro 9:1 ¶ *I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,*

e). The Lord of course does not make any such bargain, but I think we can see in this Paul's overwhelming desire for his countrymen according to the flesh to be redeemed.

f). And this same passion for those to whom he ministered can be seen in - 1Th 2:19 *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy.*

g). And speaking personally these verses have become the very essence of what motivates me and I think they would be the heart cry of all who lead and teach – the whole point of it all is all of you clothed in glory in the

presence of the Lord at His coming. There is no nobler or greater endeavor than this.

h). And it is inescapable that the outcome for those who rule over you at the Judgment Seat is inextricably linked to your own appearance there.

7). And so I hope that within the context of the scriptures we have just looked at you will have a better understanding of what it means for those who rule over you to watch out for your souls and for you to have a grasp of the importance of obeying those who rule over you and being submissive and perhaps we can understand why shepherding the flock of God can be done with joy or grief.

a). And finally, for my fellow Elders and for those who also teach the word of God to you, let us remember soberly that we will give an account for what we have done in watching out for the souls of those in our care, remembering also that what is at stake here is not just our own souls but also the souls of those entrusted to us – and in the midst of this which is seemingly overwhelming let’s remember that God does not appoint us to a task without giving us the grace to accomplish the task – *1Co 3:10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it.*

*2Co 1:12 ¶ For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.*

8). If the Lord is willing we might conclude our study of the Book of Hebrews next time.