

Sunday April 28<sup>th</sup> 2013  
The Letter to the Hebrews  
Part Eighty Two

1). Heb 13:17 *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. 18 ¶ Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. 19 But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.*

a) The Book of Hebrews, as we know, is written around 5 parts of a progressive warning, a warning that begins in Chapter 2 with the caution against drifting away - Heb 2:1 ¶ *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

And concludes with the despising of the birthright in - Heb 12:16 *lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.*

b). And it is of course within the overall context of this progressive warning, the possibility of drifting away leading to the despising our birthright that we find the final admonition of Hebrews 13:17 given – ‘obey those who rule over you and be submissive’.

c). It would then be quite logical to see that obeying ‘those who rule over you’ and being submissive to them must make it impossible to begin to drift away and impossible to ultimately reject the birthright that would otherwise follow.

d). And this would be borne out by the historical setting for this letter where there were those within this historical ‘church’ who had already been carried about by various and strange doctrines. To submit themselves to the correct teaching from their leaders and to follow their example would then have delivered them from false doctrines which in turn would result in them receiving the salvation of their souls at the Judgment Seat.

e). Within our own setting the same would hold true – as the whole counsel of God is spoken to you and you have those given to you as examples to imitate, so submission to the teaching and obedience to those who speak

the whole counsel of God to you in word and deed must result in the salvation of your souls.

f). We can see how this would be true through that which we see in – Jas 1:21 *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

g). To state the very obvious though, this truth is unassailable, but only if it is adhered to – if it isn't then the veracity of the truth does not override our own foolishness – we either live this out by faith or we will perish in unbelief – as always the choice is ours.

2). Col 1:24 *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*

a). That which God has given to those who rule over you and speak the word of God to you, just as we see here with regards to Paul, has been given to them 'for you' – for the purpose of presenting you complete at the Judgment Seat that you would be found worthy.

b). And the ministry that those who lead you have been given in order to bring you to this point of conclusion is by the grace of God, 'according to His working', alone. Outside of the grace of God everyone who leads or speaks the word of God to you is the same as everyone else, facing the same battles and the same struggles.

c). Consequently, those who lead are not immune to the possibility of drifting away or being deceived. This is why the scriptures tell those who lead must take heed to themselves first and then to take heed to the flock of God.

d). It is imperative then that those who will warn, teach and preach 'in all wisdom' remain consistently in the word, engaging with it correctly, according to the scriptures; ever watchful for the schemes of the enemy – 2Co 2:10 *Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of*

*Christ, 11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

e). And we might find great encouragement from the words of the Lord through Jeremiah concerning the 'shepherds' of Israel, which we might readily bring into our own experience - Jer 3:15 *"And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

f). So then, to be a shepherd, to oversee the flock of God which He purchased with His own blood, is not a career and nor is it a position for self-exaltation, but the privilege of service on behalf of the One who died for us.

g). Because of all these things then, those of us whom God has appointed to this office and those He may appoint yet future will see the enormous importance of doing this task well and we will have a powerful incentive to maintain a good conscience before the Lord - 1Pe 5:4 *and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*

h). The consequence for not doing this task well we saw last week in verses from Ezekiel Chapter 3 – and we can also see this same fearful consequence from another perspective in - Zec 11:17 *"Woe to the worthless shepherd, Who leaves the flock! A sword shall be against his arm And against his right eye; His arm shall completely wither, And his right eye shall be totally blinded."*

3). Jas 4:10 *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

a). Obeying those who rule over you and being submissive would be a part of humbling ourselves in the sight of the Lord – remembering that a few verses earlier in James we are told - Jas 4:6 *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*

b). If we refuse to give the submission and obedience commanded in Hebrews 13:17 then that would place us amongst the proud and God will resist us, literally he will oppose us, but in our submission He gives us grace.

c). And according to James 4:10, humbling ourselves in the sight of the Lord is a present action that will have a future consequence – in that Day, at His Judgment Seat, 'He will lift you up' – He will exalt us to a position of rulership.

d). Humbling ourselves with respect to God's appointed leadership, in whatever sphere we encounter it, is to submit ourselves to the word of God – this then is faith – this then is the pathway to glory and we must not try to rationalize ourselves out of it.

e). We must submit ourselves to God's appointed leadership then, not because you have heard me say it, but because you have seen it for yourselves in the scriptures – 'faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God' - as with everything we are taught, we must take it back to the scriptures as it is through the scriptures alone that the Holy Spirit is our teacher and through the scriptures alone that the metamorphosis will take place and through the scriptures that our soul will be saved.

f). And as we saw last week obedience and submission to leadership is within the parameter of those leaders 'watching out for your souls', which is exactly according to God's heart. God's passion is that we should be joint heirs with His Son, receiving the salvation of our souls and this is the driving passion of those who would shepherd you also.

g). This issue of being obedient and submissive within the 'church' setting is something we just need to settle as being God's will for us as we grow with respect to salvation.

4). Our verses in Hebrews Chapter 13 then continue - *18 ¶ Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. 19 But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.*

a). The writer of our letter then goes on to say that he is confident of having a good conscience, and this would be a good conscience before the Lord - *Ac 24:16 "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*

b). And given the fact that our writer is looking to be 'restored to you the sooner' we may conclude that he is well known to this group of Christians and probably one of their own who for some unknown reason has been separated from them.

c). His assertion then of being confident of having a good conscience and 'in all things desiring to live honorably' are attributes that would be known by this body of believers about him through their personal experience of witnessing his example. This would be the very thing we had seen last week with regards to Paul in – *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.*

d). Even though he has confidence in having a good conscience and the desire to live honorably and they in the 'church' would know this to be true of him, our verse begins with the request, 'Pray for us'.

e). And this request for prayer is easy to understand – we have already realized today that apart from the grace of God everyone who leads, everyone who speaks the word of God to you, experiences the same struggles and temptations as any other Christian, and so the request for prayer here would be within the overall context of the spiritual warfare.

f). The recipients of this letter were to pray for his safety and protection from deception and distraction; that he would continue in the paths of righteousness, rightly dividing the word of truth, fulfilling his ministry so that he should not be disqualified from receiving the salvation of his soul.

g). Prayers of this nature are not uncommon in the NT scriptures – the Holy Spirit through Paul, in the scriptures which are to follow, show the importance of asking for this kind of prayer -1Th 5:25 *Brethren, pray for us.*

*2Th 3:1 ¶ Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,*

*Ro 15:30 ¶ Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,*

*Col 4:2 ¶ Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

h). We would realize then that those who rule over you, who watch out for your souls are to be the focus of your consistent, constant, fervent prayer.

i). This is not something to be taken lightly or casually, but with all seriousness because if the shepherds are overthrown then the flock will be scattered with the direst of consequences. The onslaught of the world, the flesh and the devil will likely be most intense against those who are to lead.

j). Earnest, fervent prayer for the shepherds is also in the flock's best interest as maintaining God's appointed leadership so that the word of God may continue unhindered and be opened to our understanding is of paramount importance to the saving of our souls.

k). To fail to do this out of negligence or complacency would be like shooting ourselves in the foot – not only is it possible that those who lead

could be overcome but the salvation of our own souls would be in jeopardy because of it.

l). So then in the midst of praying for each person here individually, which is hopefully part of our daily discipline, please give your earnest attention to those who have the responsibility to lead you.

m). To invest this time and effort will not only draw us closer together, but will also make submission much more desirable.

5). Prayer of course, with regards to the salvation of the soul, is not a one way street here - Heb 13:20 *Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

a). After the request for prayer for himself our writer then prays for those to whom he has written, those with whom he has been running the race of the faith, to whom he ministers.

b). And his prayer has its focus on the salvation of their souls.

c). Now the reference in v20 to 'the God of peace' speaks not only to peace with God - Ro 5:1 ¶ *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*  
- a peace that has come through Christ's sacrifice at Calvary, but also to the peace of God that is made possible through the resurrection of Christ from the dead - Col 3:14 *But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*

Php 4:6 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

d). We can see in the Colossians scripture that the peace of God ruling in our hearts is directly connected with 'putting on love, which is the bond of perfection' - this is 'agape' love, the kind of love that is only possible through the process to spiritual maturity and must come about through 'continuing in brotherly love' just as we are admonished to do at the beginning of Hebrews Chapter 13 - Heb 13:1 ¶ *Let brotherly love continue.*

e). Then in Philippians we see the peace of God guarding our hearts and minds as a result of being 'anxious for nothing' as 'in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving' we let our 'requests be made known to God'. And we could readily apply what we see in this verse to our attitude to, and prayers for, those God has placed in leadership.

f). In both scriptures then we see that we are dealing with God's response to our faith in action and this would be implicit in our verses from Hebrews Chapter 13 as well.

g). In Hebrews Chapter 13, to add additional emphasis to God as the God of peace, we also see the power of God who, 'brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead' – the power of God then demonstrated through the resurrection of Christ – and in conjunction with this we must remember what Christ's resurrection, through the power of God, means for us - Ro 8:11 *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

1Pe 1:3 ¶ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

h). Just as the power of God could raise the Lord Jesus from the dead thereby opening the door to His Millennial Kingdom in fulfillment of His plans and purposes for the ages, so we can have the certainty of that same power working in us so that we can walk through that door into the glory that awaits us there - Re 3:8 *"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.*

i). And with the salvation of the soul in view, the One that God raised from the dead is described as 'that great Shepherd of the sheep' – the shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep so that by His resurrection He could bring them into His Kingdom which is to come – the One who will feed, nurture, protect and train those who hear His voice - Joh 10:2 *"But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them*

*out. 4 "And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.*

*Heb 12:7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?*

j). And all this has been accomplished and ratified - *through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*

k). In the original language this is written in a form apparently called 'the locative of sphere' – which simply means that what God has done, as detailed in our verse from Hebrews Chapter 13, and what our writer prays He will do in the lives of those he writes to, will all be accomplished by that which has been set in place by the death and resurrection of God's Son. The contrast is drawn here once again between the first covenant made with Israel which was fulfilled in Christ and therefore had become obsolete and ready to vanish away and the new covenant, a covenant that is 'everlasting', which came into being following the Lord's sacrifice and resurrection, which still awaits Israel's acceptance yet future - Heb 7:22 *by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.*

l). And although Israel's acceptance of this covenant remains yet future the covenant itself is fully established and unchangeable and it is within the sphere of this better, unchangeable covenant, of which Jesus has become a surety, that God's present actions exist and our writer prays.

m). The point of this is to add more emphasis still to the power of God and His faithfulness within the lives of those who will have faith to the saving of the soul.

n). And so it is within this context that our writer prays that God will - *21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

o). And this God will accomplish 'through Jesus Christ' who is the word made flesh - 2Ti 3:16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Ro 12:1 ¶ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed*

*by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Eph 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

p). 'Every good work' through which we are to be brought to completion by His workmanship is to be 'well pleasing in His sight' – and we know that without faith it is impossible to please God.

q). All of this then brings us full circle to where the Book of Hebrews began - Heb 1:1 ¶ *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things,*

6). Our verses then continue - Heb 13:22 *And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.*

a). Following the prayer for his readers our writer now offers what amounts to an apology.

b). He appeals to them as 'brethren' and asks that they will not be impatient with him as he has only written them 'few words'. They should not be upset with him then because he didn't write them a longer letter.

7). Heb 13:23 *Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly. 24 Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you. 25 Grace be with you all. Amen.*

a). We would assume that the Timothy here is the same Timothy who was Paul's spiritual son, but there is nothing here that would make that certain.

b). What we can know is that Timothy has been imprisoned and has now been set free – the reason for his imprisonment is likely because of the persecution we had seen earlier in the Book. Where he was imprisoned and for how long there is no way of knowing.

c). Timothy is not with the writer at the time of writing, but 'if he comes shortly' they will both see the recipients of this letter together.

d). The greeting is given to 'all those who rule over you and all the saints'.

e). Greetings are also given by 'those from Italy', but this in no way tells us where the letter was written – literally this phrase says 'those of Italy',

which has two possible meanings – either those who are in Italy or the Italians who were with the writer when he wrote the letter.

f). In the end there is no way of knowing where this letter was written from and nor is that of any importance.

g). The final verse finds fitting words for us all as we depart each other's company – 'Grace be with you all. Amen'

h). And so our study of the Book of Hebrews draws to a close, but not to an end.

i). And one final word on all that we have seen in these last 2 years –  
1Co 15:1 ¶ *Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.*

7). If the Lord is willing we will return next week for that which He has for us then.