

The Book of

# Hebrews

מֵאֲנִי מִנֵּמ דַּא מִנֵּ ת אֶקְלֵא  
צִמְאֵל לְנִתְאַתְצֵרְחָ דְרִתְסֵנִ סְק  
אֵת פִּקְלֵא תִסְנִ סְרְבֵאל  
רֵךְ תֵּא סְךְ תֵּאקְסֵנִצְ דִּמְמִצְ  
תֵּאֲתַפְלֵשׁ נִתְרִדְנֵהֲרִפֵּר נִרְלֵד  
תֵּאֲגִשׁ רֵלֵד מִלְלֵצ סֵס תֵּלֵשׁ



# Outline of Hebrews

## “Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)
- V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)
- VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)**

# Outline of Hebrews

## **VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)**

- A. Practical Expressions of Love in the Church (13:1-6)
- B. Remember Your Leaders and Suffer with Jesus “Outside the Camp” (13:7-16)
- C. Final Words (13:17-25)
  - A. Obey Your Leaders (13:17)
  - B. Request for Prayer (13:18-19)
  - C. Prayer and Doxology (13:20-21)
  - D. Personal Notes (13:22-25)

# Obey Your Leaders (13:17)

<sup>17</sup> *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.*

<sup>17</sup> *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.*

- Elsewhere in the NT, congregational “*leaders*” are called:
  - “*elders*” (*presbuteros*) – Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim 5:17; Tit 1:5; James 5:14
  - “*overseers*” (*episkopos*) – Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-2; Titus 1:7
  - “*pastors/shepherds*” (*poimen*) – Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 5:2
- These three terms all describe the **same** office in a local church body.
- Teaching and spiritual shepherding are the primary ministries of such elders/ overseers/ shepherds.

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- Having previously pointed out the readers' responsibility to their deceased ***former*** pastors (in verse 7), the author now points out their responsibility to their ***current*** pastors, providing ***strong motivation*** for them to do so.
- The Hebrew Christians were to "***obey***" and "***submit to***" their spiritual "***leaders***".
- They were not to do so out of a mere slavish regard for their authority as church leaders, but out of a ***deep regard*** for Christ's authority as these leaders faithfully communicated his teaching to them.

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- The admonitions to “*obey*” and “*submit*” relate to the leaders as deliverers of proper instruction, a primary responsibility of elders (1 Thes 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17).
- These two commands involve yielding to and respecting the leaders as they give direction concerning proper Christian living and teaching. (cf. 1 Tim 4:16)
- By guiding the church in a proper understanding of biblical teaching, the leaders “*are keeping watch over*” the lives of those committed to their charge.

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- The spiritual growth and eternal salvation of his people are a pastor's **highest priority**.
- And to accomplish those objectives, a pastor must "**watch**" – that is, **stay alert**.
- Such oversight, requires **constant diligence** on their part.
- A truly **faithful** shepherd of the congregation is one who is **determined** to give such attention to their flock.



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- Pastors occupy a place of **trust**: they not only have been **called** by their **people**; they have been **commissioned** by their **Lord**!
- As pastors, they have been entrusted with the care of a portion of that “*church of God, which he bought with his own blood*” (Acts 20:28 NIV); and they know that they must “*give an account.*”

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- They will give such an account at the **end** of their life, when the Lord says to them: “*turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.*” (Luke 16:2)
- This will take place on that day of judgment, when “*each of us will give an account of himself to God.*” (Rom 14:12)
- But that’s not **all**: pastors must “*give an account*” **even during the course** of their ministry.

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- A **faithful shepherd** will **constantly** remember his people in prayer before the Lord as we see exemplified by the Apostle Paul for those whom God had entrusted to **his** care (1 Thes 1:2-3).
  - If the shepherd's work **prosper**s and the souls of his people seem to be growing such that they "*running with endurance the race that is set before [them], looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of [their] faith*" (Heb 12:1-2) then he ought with "**joy**" and thankfulness give an account of this to the Lord.
  - If, on the other hand, the spiritual health of his people seems to be declining such that they "*go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth*" (Heb 10:26) then he ought to pour out his sorrows before the Lord, giving his account "**with groaning**"

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- And when, as members of a local congregation, we come to recognize the **grave responsibility** our pastors have to “*watch over*” our souls and to “*give an account*” for our spiritual well-being, it should **motivate** us to want to “*obey*” and “*submit to them*”.
- They may at times have to confront you with a difficult but necessary truth.
- They may, under some circumstances, even have to utter a sharp rebuke.
- But remember: as a shepherd of the flock of God, he has no choice. He is “*a man under authority*” (cf. Mat 8:9)

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- When faced with such an unpleasant encounter with a pastor, if in doubt, ask yourself: Has my pastor said anything that Christ in his word has not said (either explicitly or in principle)?
  - If he has, then feel free to disregard him.
  - But if ***not***, then don't fault ***him*** – he is merely doing what he is ***responsible*** to do – to his Lord and to you!

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- Remember, he has been charged with “*keeping watch over your souls*”. His **primary objective** is your salvation and spiritual growth.
- And just as it would be cruel for a physician to avoid recommending a painful course of treatment, if it was necessary in order to cure a fatal disease – so it would be unloving for a pastor to withhold a painful correction if needed in order to address a serious concern in the congregation.

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- The Apostle Paul tells us (2 Cor 2:15-16) that a faithful minister is:
  - To those who are **perishing** “*a fragrance from **death to death***”
  - To those who are **saved** “*a fragrance from **life to life***.”
- But as long as a minister is **faithful** in his service, he is “*the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being **saved and** among those who are **perishing***”
- In other words, as long as a minister is **faithful**, the Lord will be pleased with him – **regardless of the outcome** of his efforts.
- And in **either** case a minister will be **rewarded** for his faithfulness.

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- But so far as a pastor's **people** are concerned, for him to "*give an account*":
  - "*with joy*" is **beneficial** to them
  - "*with groaning*" is "*of no advantage*" to them
- Every Christian pastor who is worthy of the name can say with the Apostle John, "*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*" (3 John 1:4)
- Or as the Apostle Paul said about the Thessalonian believers under **his** care: "*For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.*" (1Thes 2:19-20)



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- It gives great satisfaction to **any** loving pastor to see that his labors among his people are not “*in vain*” (cf. Phil 2:16):
  - To see members attending church **regularly** and listening **attentively** to the teaching
  - To see individual members **growing** in their walk with God.
  - To see members faithfully **serving one another**
  - To see members growing **confident** in their grasp of the gospel and **sharing** it with unbelievers who they then invite to church
- In **these** circumstances it is “*with joy*” that he gives his account to God and it **motivates** him to continue serving the congregation with growing eagerness and enthusiasm.

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- On the other hand:
  - If the members of a the church do **not** obey their pastors in the Lord and submit to their teaching
  - If their souls are obviously **not** prospering under their pastors' ministry, it is with a **sad** heart and "*groaning*" that those pastors will give their account to the Lord.
- Such a state of affairs are of "*no advantage*" to the members:
  - The heart of the pastor is **discouraged**.
  - The **Lord** is **displeased** with the congregation and the tokens of his favor are withdrawn.
  - Spiritual barrenness prevails; and it seems as if the clouds were commanded to not rain on the unfruitful vineyard.

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- With such a **stark contrast** in the two possible outcomes, there is an obvious motivation provided here for a congregation to “*obey [their] leaders and submit to them*” – to bring them “*joy*” and not give them cause for “*groaning*”.
- And there is here a strong reminder to the “*leaders*” of the **sobering** responsibility they have to “*watch over [the] souls*” of their people – knowing that they must “*give an account*”.

# Class Discussion Time



# \*Class Discussion Time

- I asserted in the lesson that, in the New Testament, the terms pastor (or shepherd), elder, and overseer all describe the same office in a local church body.
- Do you agree with this? Explain why or why not.
- I also implied throughout the lesson that in the NT it is expected that there will be a **plurality** of pastors/elders/overseers in a local church (e.g. Acts 14:23).
- As you are no doubt aware, many otherwise conservative evangelical churches do not operate in this way.
- Are those churches operating in an unbiblical manner? Explain why or why not.

# \*Class Discussion Time

- At Crystal Valley, we take very seriously the idea of church **membership**: to **visit** the church (even on an **extended basis**) is one thing, but to become a **member** is quite another.
- People sometimes question our emphasis on the idea of church membership, claiming that the Bible never says anything about having to become a member of a local church.
- Though the specific words “church membership” are never used in the verse we examined today, do you see that many of the **key ideas** that are involved in what we call “church membership” are actually taught in the passage that we covered today? Specifically:
  - Members are to obey and submit to the pastors
  - The pastors must give an account to God for the spiritual well being of the members

# \*Class Discussion Time

- Our text commands members of a local church to “*obey*” and “*submit to*” church “*leaders*”, which I believe refers to the church pastors/elders/overseers.
- I have implied in my material that the obedience owed to a pastor extends only so far as they are commanding their members to obey the word of God – and even used a quote from John Brown (himself a nineteenth century Scottish pastor) in saying that if the pastor goes *beyond* the Word of Christ in what he commands, then “disregard him”.
- Some churches (and their pastors) would have a stronger view of a pastor’s authority.
- What do *you* think?