

HEBREWS – LEVITICUS

Hebrews 13:15-25

December 31, 2023

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¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. ¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. ¹⁹ I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

²² I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³ You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. ²⁴ Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. ²⁵ Grace be with all of you. ¹

It is appropriate that as we gather this morning our focal passage of scripture in this journey through the book of Hebrews are the final words of the Spirit-led author. Chapter 13 has been called an epilogue by many. It is akin to a post-credits scene in a movie. It is important, but such a wonderful closing word. Grace be with all of you.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:15–25). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

A good closing word of the year for the church who is First Baptist Orange Park today.

Beginning in verse 15 we are reminded once more to lean heavily, fully onto Jesus Christ and through the Spirit offer sacrifices of praise to God as we gather together.

We are to continue to intentionally do good works as the outflow of our faith.

We are to have a biblical understanding of leadership which relies more heavily on understanding following and submission – much more than we would like to admit.

Then, the benediction and closing words.

It is a winding down, collective of challenge and encouragement.

So, for today, as we walk through these final words, just a simple reminder to us all.

- 1. WORSHIP WELL**
- 2. FOLLOW WELL**
- 3. LIVE WELL**

WORSHIP WELL

When I use the word “well” in these points, it is not so much a term of comparative analysis. In other words, this is not saying “worship better than the other person” or ensure your church is better at ministry than the one down the street. No, what I see as the emphasis here in doing these things well is to do them right. To realize that to live as children of God, members of his church, part of his eternal family means that Christ is not an add-on feature. Christianity done well is holy living lived rightly. Worship done well is well...worship.

Hebrews 13:15

¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.²

Coventry Patmore was a nineteenth century English poet and critic. As he stated, in reference to the work of worship, we are to be “Mary in the house of God...A Martha in our own.”³ Read Luke 10 for the reference.

Worship must be the primacy of our living. It is that which service to the Lord flows. For worship is the outpouring of praise to the one, the only one who is honorable to receive it. We all are made to worship and thus, we do. The question is always – What or whom do we worship?

In our church culture, we have seen redefinitions of worship and some view it only as the musical portion of the service. The praise of God, the fruit of the lips...as the Hebrew writer exclaims is an acknowledgment of Christ, of the name, of who he is. And...as stated numerous times in the book, it is very often expressed in music.

But just because there is a tune and the typical four chords provided as guides...worship is not automatic.

Over the years we have turned “worship” into an adjective to describe something else.

We have worship leaders, worship pastors, worship services, worship music, and so on.

But, here’s the challenge. What if we have all these adjectives floating around the church telling us what should be worship...but we do not worship?

As a pastor, shepherd, overseer, I am to guide us, instruct us, to worship.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

³ Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 458.

As our associate pastor, Shelvin Lamb knows, he has a primary role of shepherding you, the church, into worship through song.

Here's a newsflash for many. The pastor who is primarily in charge of leading us in worship through song has a calling, is set apart by God and his church, and he has a role given by God for the church. His ministry is NOT the choir. It is NOT the orchestra.

This is a heavy reality. In our case, Shelvin Lamb is our pastor who is to teach you – the church (not the choir, not a praise team, but you and me) the theology of worship. He is to teach you the way to sing praises. He is to lead us to sing together as a choir of all...not a choir on risers only, to offer that which we have been commanded to give – a sacrifice of praise to God.

Yes, you can praise God while singing a solo alone in your car, in your home, while walking, or wherever. But, for the church gathered...this is our mandate.

I remember growing up in a church culture with orders of worship, choir specials, special music, performances by the good soloists, and more. We still do that at times, but the realization that our calling as the church is to collectively, as the assembled family of God who is called First Baptist, offer sacrifices of praise together is revolutionary, if not super-traditional. The old is new. Ancient is modern. And praising our Lord is not up for debate. We are called and commanded to “continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God.” I'm thankful we are understanding this and am so excited to see how the church arises in the coming year in this area.

And, let's not miss that worship is not passive declaratives, but active. Singing praises from the heart leads to actions of worship.

The sacrifice of praise is ultimately sacrifice of time and even resources.

Hebrews 13:16

¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. ⁴

FOLLOW WELL

In a culture where everyone declares themselves to be leaders, we need some godly followers.

If everyone is leading, but no one is following...is that leadership? Or, just self-declared righteousness?

Let me preface this next part with a reality check and a warning. This portion is a trigger for those who have been influenced and harmed by poor, if not evil, spiritual leaders. So, listen closely here.

There are myriad examples of poor spiritual leaders who have ascended to a place of power, even if only within a small church of a few families. In such a position, declaring the “don’t speak ill of the man of God” philosophy and heavy-handed, my-way-or-else teaching, many have been thrown under the proverbial bus and the list of hurt image-bearers is long.

Sadly, some have experienced abuse – emotional, mental, spiritual, and tragically even physically and sexually.

Our church has not been immune to this reality as even within the last few months I have talked with, met with, prayed with numerous people who just now, thirty years after the fact, are coming to grips with the heinous things done to them by ministers who had positions of power and leadership.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

This is just one reason I continue to press for more and more security, safety precautions, background checks, and whatever else we can to ensure First Baptist is the safest place we can be for all.

Sadly, our history says that has not always been the case.

And it is not just here. It's epidemic and I know this.

So, when we read this next portion of God's inerrant, immutable Word, we have to take it to heart, have ears to hear, and pray for the discernment to be able to know who the righteous leaders are the Spirit is speaking of.

Hebrews 13:17-18

¹⁷ 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. ⁵

When the author says to “obey your leaders and submit to them” he is writing about the current leaders in the first century church. However, the instruction is timeless regarding the local church. That being said, we must realize that the presumption here is that the command to obey and submit to leaders refers to those leaders who teach and live in accord with the theology articulated throughout the letter. Therefore, this calling to submit to leaders is NOT universal. If the leaders deviate from the gospel, it is invalid. To put it another way, submitting to leaders in Hebrews is an indication that the readers are not repudiating the message preached to them.⁶

Red flags exist, so pay attention to them. But, be careful not to justify personal, sinful, disobedience and lack of spiritual submission to the one

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁶ Schriener, Thomas R. *Hebrews: Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 424.

God has placed over you, based on personality dislikes or anger over things that are not gospel-focused or biblically-centered.

Pastors are human, so they will tick you off. As can be attested by some here today. So, for that, I am truly sorry.

The qualifications for pastor are clear in scripture.

God did not call me or any other pastor to be a social media influencer, pop-culture icon, motivational speaker, or life coach.

But pastors...elders...overseers...have been called to shepherd, protect, teach, and will (this is the most frightening thing and every prospective pastor and planter better get this) must give an account for the sheep under his care to the Great Shepherd.

James 3:1

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.²⁷

Why is this? Simple. If we claim to have an informed knowledge of God's Word for God's people, and further claim that we are charged to deliver it, we are more responsible to deliver it clearly and obey it.⁸ Sunday School teachers need to understand this, too.

Leadership begins with followship. For pastors and for all believers. Everyone has a leader over them. Every godly leader is submitting to the one who must give account. No one stands alone at the top, for if they do...they will fall.

So, follow well.

LIVE WELL

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jas 3:1–2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁸ Hughes, 464.

Simple right?

If you worship well, serve well, follow well, submit well, obey well...well, you will be living well.

For the first century church living in fear, the writer reflects on their identity in Christ, their heritage of faith, and gives them the closing words of encouragement to finish the race, to live well and finish well.

I love how the book ends, for it really doesn't end.

Look again.

Hebrews 13:20-21

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. ⁹

That's the end, right? It even says "Amen." It is such a great benediction. It is a blessing upon the church.

But then...the post-credit scene comes.

Hebrews 13:22-25

²² I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³ You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. ²⁴ Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. ²⁵ Grace be with all of you. ¹⁰

Grace be with all of you.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:20–21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:22–25). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Press on. Live well.