

A Greater Leader

Jesus is Greater #25 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 16, 2025 - Hebrews 13:7-17

INTRO: Good morning church! We're continuing our series entitled, "JESUS IS GREATER: An Exposition of Hebrews." Our theme verse is:

Hebrews 1:4 (NLT) This shows that the Son is far **greater than** the angels, just as the name God gave him is **greater than** their names.

Today, we're continuing in chapter 13 in a sermon called A GREATER LEADER.

Need: When it comes to leadership, people today are both skeptical and searching. Many have seen leaders fail, whether in politics, business, or even the church. The result is a growing distrust of authority. Yet, God designed His church to be led, not by celebrities or dictators, but by faithful shepherds under the authority of the greater, unchanging Leader, Jesus Christ.

Trans: The Hebrew background believers were tempted to turn back to old covenant forms of religion and to disregard their Christian leaders. Today, believers still face the temptation to resist spiritual authority or follow popular voices instead of faithful shepherds. We need to remember that Christ Himself has appointed leaders for the good of His flock.

BODY: In the book of Hebrews 13:7-17, the author exhorted Jewish background Christians, who were tempted to be led away from the gospel of grace, to faithfully follow the spiritual leaders that Jesus, the greater, unchanging leader had set over them. We can faithfully follow the spiritual leaders Christ has placed over us. How can we faithfully follow the spiritual leaders Christ has placed over us? The text gives four ways we can faithfully follow the spiritual leaders Christ has placed over us.

Read text: Hebrews 13:7-17 (ESV)

⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹² So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³ Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. 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.

WE CAN FAITHFULLY FOLLOW THE SPIRITUAL LEADERS CHRIST HAS SET OVER US...

1. By remembering the example of our former leaders.

EXP: (7) Notice the first word: "Remember." These were likely past leaders—perhaps martyred or deceased—who faithfully proclaimed the gospel. Their example serves as a living testimony of enduring faith.

"Remember" (7) (μνημονεύω, *mnēmoneuō*) (PAM) - to be mindful of, to remember, to call to mind

"Spoke" (7) (λαλέω, *laleō*) (Aorist) - to speak the truth; the word of God. Past tense.

"Consider" (7) (ἀναθεωρέω, *anatheōreō*) (PAP) - look at attentively, consider well, to observe accurately

"Way of life" (7) (ἀναστροφή, *anastrophē*) - manner of life, conduct, behavior, deportment

"Imitate their faith" (7) (μιμέομαι, *mimeomai*) (PMM) - Middle voice from *mimos* (mimic); to imitate.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV) Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

ARG: Hebrews 11 was a "remembering" of past faith leaders, such as Abel:

Hebrews 11:4 (ESV) By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

Paul reminded Timothy of his spiritual leaders:

2 Timothy 1:5 (ESV) I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

ILL: My testimony is a Timothy testimony, except my spiritual leaders were named Ettie and Wilda.

APP: Who are the spiritual leaders whose faith you should remember? Don't idolize them, but imitate their faith in Christ. Honor their memory by continuing to live by the truth they taught.

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2. By refusing to follow false teachers.

EXP: (8-12) Look at v.9, “Do not be led away.” But v.8 stands as the anchor: “Jesus Christ is the same ...” Because He never changes, we must not be “led away.” False teachers tend to draw people to embrace cultural license or drive them fearfully towards legalism, but the gospel of grace never changes.

“Do not be led away” (9) (περιφέρω, *peripherō*) (PPM) - to be carried or led away; in opinion

“Diverse and strange teachings” (9) - Teachings outside the norm of Christian doctrine.

“Be strengthened” (9) (βεβαιόω, *bebaioō*) - to make firm, establish, confirm, make sure

“Grace” (9) (χάρις, *charis*) - unmerited favor. Here, the gospel of grace is in view.

“Foods” (9) (ὠφελέω, *ōphelēō*) - “It seems that the Jewish Christians... were focusing so much on Old Testament dietary laws that they forgot the greater and weightier things—salvation through grace by faith in Christ.” (R. Albert Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*)

“Altar” (10) (θυσιαστήριον, *thusiastērion*) - The place of sacrifice. Here, the cross of Christ.

“Those who serve the tent” (10) (σκηνή, *skēnē*) - tent, tabernacle; the OT priests who serve there.

Hebrews 8:5 (NIV) They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.

“Sacrifice for sin” (11) (ἁμαρτία, *hamartia*) - the sin offering is not to be eaten, but burned up (Lev. 6:30).

“Outside the camp” (11) — The sin offering itself was to be carried outside the camp and burned up.

Leviticus 16:27 (ESV) And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned up with fire.

“Jesus also suffered outside” (12) (πάσχω, *paschō*) - suffered, passion of the Christ. On Golgotha.

“Sanctify the people” (12) (ἁγιάζω, *hagiazō*) - to separate, consecrate, make holy to God.

ARG: There is no other gospel, but the gospel of grace!

Galatians 1:6-8 (ESV) ⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

ILL: The North Star. Throughout history, explorers used it because it was constant. If a captain started following a random, flickering light on the horizon instead, he would surely be lost. Jesus Christ is our North Star.

APP: Are you being led by the unchanging truth of Christ, or are you chasing cultural trends, emotional highs, or strange doctrines? The way to refuse false teaching is to root yourself in Christ and actively choose to identify with him and with His gospel of grace!

3. By responding to the sacrifice of our greatest leader.

EXP: (13-16) The writer calls believers to “go to Him outside the camp” (13). This means identifying with Jesus, even when it means rejection by the world. Because Christ was sacrificed outside the religious system of Judaism, we must leave behind any earthly system for salvation and identify solely with him.

“Let us go” (13) (ἐξέρχομαι, *exerchomai*) (PMS) - to go out of an assembly, i.e. forsake it.

“Reproach” (13) (ὀνειδισμός, *oneidismos*) (PAP) - a reproach; to be an object of scorn, as Christ was.

“No lasting city” (14) - this world and its Jerusalem will not last.

“We seek the city that is to come” (14) - We seek a better city as the OT saints did in Hebrews 11:

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Hebrews 11:16 (ESV) But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

"Let us continually offer" (15) (ἀναφέρω, *anapherō*) (PAS) - to put upon the altar continually

"Sacrifice of praise" (15) (αἶνεσις, *ainesis*) - a praising (the act), especially a thank offering; praise. In the LXX, the phrase *θυσία αἰνέσεως* is used to translate the Hebrew for the "thank offering" in Lev. 7:12-15.

"The fruit of lips that acknowledge his name" (15) (χεῖλος, *cheilos*) - the lips, of the speaking mouth.

"Do not neglect" (16) (ἐπιλανθάνομαι, *epilanthanomai*) (PMM) - to forget; neglecting, no longer caring for

"Share what you have" (16) (κοινωνία, *koinōnia*) - fellowship, the share which one has in anything.

"Pleasing to God" (16) (εὐαρεστέω, *euarestēō*) - to be well pleased with a thing; to gratify entirely.

ARG: Since Jesus offered Himself for us, our appropriate response is to offer ours to Him!

Romans 12:1 (ESV) I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

APP: What does your altar look like? Are you willing to identify with Christ publicly? To bear His reproach joyfully? Follow His example by offering the sacrifice of praise and serving others for His glory.

4. By respecting the authority of our current leaders.

EXP: (17) This passage concludes with the most direct instruction regarding current human leadership: "Obey your leaders and submit to them." Godly leaders are entrusted with the care of the flock.

"Obey your leaders" (17) (πείθω, *peithō*) (PMM) - to listen to, obey, yield to, comply with; to trust.

"Submit" (17) (ὑπέικω, *hupēikō*) (PAM) - to surrender, to yield to authority and admonition, to submit.

"Keeping watch over your souls" (17) (ἀγρυπνέω, *agrupneō*) - Lit., to not sleep; keep awake, watch; to be circumspect, attentive, ready. Your leaders are the watchmen in the night, when all else sleep.

"Give an account" (17) (ἀποδίδωμι, *apodidōmi*) - to discharge what is due; to render account. To God.

"Let them do this with joy" (17) (χαρά, *chara*) - joy, gladness; the joy received from you.

"Not with groaning" (17) (στενάζω, *stenazō*) - to sigh, murmur, pray inaudibly; with grief, groan, sigh.

"No advantage to you" (17) (ἀλυσιτελής, *alusitelēs*) - gainless, pernicious; unprofitable.

ARG: It is Christ who gave spiritual leaders to equip and build up the Church to follow Him.

Ephesians 4:11-12 (NIV) ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

Christ's under-shepherds are to serve in His stead until the Chief Shepherd returns.

1 Peter 5:1-4 (NIV) ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it 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 will never fade away.

ILL: We live in the most skeptical and authority-resistant age in human history. Think about how many people today approach a traffic stop, a school teacher's decision, or even obeying the flight attendant. The immediate, almost instinctive, response is often defiance, cynicism, or the recording of an interaction hoping to "catch" the authority figure doing something wrong.

However, the Bible asks us to think about submission not in terms of how worthy the human leader is, but in terms of how worthy the Greater Leader is that appointed him over you.

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APP: Pray for your pastors and spiritual leaders. Support them with love and cooperation. Follow them as they follow Christ, making their service a joy, not a burden. Do you respect the burden they carry, knowing they will give an account for your soul? A Greater Leader established this structure for your protection and growth.

CONCLUSION: In every generation, God appoints leaders to shepherd His people. Yet our ultimate allegiance is to Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever—our greater, unchanging Leader.

Will you...

- (1) Remember the example of the spiritual leaders who taught you God's Word?
- (2) Refuse to follow false teachers by keeping your focus on the gospel of grace?
- (3) Respond to Christ's sacrifice with praise and good works?
- (4) Respect the authority of those who now watch over your souls?

When we do, we honor both the Chief Shepherd and the under-shepherds He has given us, living as a flock that brings joy to our leaders and glory to our Lord!

Let's pray.