



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 03rd November 2019

by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Hebrews 13:10-17**Subject:** Part 47 – Directions for the Runner

We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. 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.

For the pass while, we have been considering Chapter 13, which was written primarily to encourage recent Jewish converts to persevere even though they may have been tempted to go back; but it is also relevant for us today as it encourages Christians in how we should behave, as well as our conduct in relation to others.

At the beginning of this chapter, it confirmed in verse 1 that we should exercise brotherly love; in verse 2, we are encouraged to show hospitality even to strangers; in verse 3, it tells us to help prisoners and those mistreated; in verse 4 it establishes that we ought to honour our marriages; in verses 5 and 6, we are challenged to practice contentment; in verse 7, it tells us to fondly remember our leaders; in verse 8, powerful reminds us that we should never forget Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever; then in verse 9, we see that in order to continue the race successfully, we are to stay away from various and strange doctrines,

once again we are warned against false teachings and we are to strengthen our hearts with grace. If you have a wrong view about God or about Jesus then you will have a wrong view about Salvation. This is not only detrimental but also eternally dangerous! Hence why there are many warnings in Scripture. Only Jesus enables us to have a right relationship with God, not religion and definitely not any diet or discipline we can follow, will make us holier or purer before God. Ceremonies and traditions, regardless of how nice they are, or fond memories they hold for us, can and do take away the right focus we should have on Jesus and His Grace. Now in verses 10 to 14 the writer looks at the Christian's true bases for communion, in verses 15 to 16 it examines Christian consecration, then some concerns of Christian leadership are addressed in verse 17.

One teaching that has seen many falsehoods, and a stumbling block for the Jewish convert is around the teachings and practices of the sacrificial system. Remember, God laid out the way of sacrificing animals as a sin covering even before the Levitical law of sacrifices, ceremonies and feasts were established. For generations this was how man approached the true and living God, this was how all their fore-fathers made peace with God and how sin was atoned for. It was even an act of worship. This is a system which was engraved into their very culture and identification of being Jewish. Does it have any value for today? Absolutely! There are many people who also claim their cultural as well as their personal identification to be 'Christian' or even Jewish, but they have false teachings around the sacrificial system for today. As believers, it is vital for us to understand the truth about what Jesus teaches on such matters. In verse 10

We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

So, what is the altar that is being considered here, and who are the rightful partakers? Most believe that the only partakers can be ordained priests regardless of religious persuasion. Throughout the centuries there have been all kinds of teachings about this. Some have viewed it as a literal altar and hence have placed one in their church building. Others have viewed it as the Lord's Supper, some have said, no, it's a heavenly altar. Others again, believe that there are three requirements for an altar which are a priest, a sacrifice and a victim, which has given rise to the heresy of a false communion.

Interestingly, both in the tabernacle and the Temple, there were two altars erected but only one was approachable by the people, and the other was solely by the priest. The

brazen altar was the one that could be approached by the people. It was made of bronze were all the animal sacrifices were completed. It was the largest piece of furniture in the tabernacle. The sin offering and the peace offering were done there. This altar and it utilises spoke figuratively of the Lord, His person and work of redemption for the lost. But to reach the next altar you had to be a priest, you had to be cleansed and concremented to go into the holy place, to the altar of “Incense” (Exodus 30:1-10.). This was a very small altar but served its purpose and was richly decorated. Here a very different ministry took place. Both altars had horns on each corner, the brazen ones spoke of the power of sacrifice but on the incense altar, it spoke of the power of prayer. They were shadows and types.

The altar that is been spoken about in verse 10 is not the old covenant altar which was found in the Tabernacle, and later on in the Temple, but it is the new covenant altar which was the cross where Jesus was both the offeror and the offering, priest and sacrifice. 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21 tells us:

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The partakers of these altars are also made visible. It clearly states ‘We’. This is referring to believers under the new covenant as the writer includes themselves in this description. Then it states the next type of person – ‘those who serve the tabernacle’, this is people who serve under the old covenant. It is clearly dividing the two covenants and unmistakably saying that a person cannot serve both. We need to choose which altar we are going to serve - the altar in the Tabernacle or the altar at Calvary, both have consequences.

Here we see clearly the contrast between the two altars. The moment Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the Temple was torn in two, and the Temple, the altar, the sacrifices, and the rituals ceased to be a part of God’s plan and we saw this in Hebrews 8 verse 13 – When it says:

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

The old covenant sacrificial system after the cross became a part of the world system, a part of man’s religion, man’s way, man’s work. The bases for communion for the Jews was at the

altar in Jerusalem but for us as believers, the bases of communion, is at the foot of the cross.

John Phillips wrote about this, he said -

***“The great brazen altar, in the Temple court, still beckoned to the Hebrews. But no matter how attractive the symbol seemed, with its appointed priests performing a divine service originally divinely ordained and hallowed by custom of centuries, the Christian had no part in that altar. It was obsolete. To go on offering the blood of bulls and goats to God, after the shedding of Christ’s blood was an insult, not an inspiration. Believers have a better altar, a better sacrifice. That’s the point that’s being made.*”**

Sometimes Christians can have a crisis of faith and think about going back into a religious system they came out from, but how could they forget the emptiness, the loneliness, the guilt, shame, the cycle of it all. Think back to Hebrews 10 verses 11 to 14, how the priests offer up continually the same sacrifice but to no effect, just more darkness. This is why Hebrews in particular asks how can you go back, when there is so much light, true forgiveness, true reconciliation with God, true purpose, cleaning for the soul and for the life, fellowship, and hope!

Today, the world may say that there are many ways to God, but Scriptures say no, God is perfect. He has made only one perfect way, no other way required. The Old Covenant was a covering but it wasn’t a solution, the only remedy is Jesus. This leads us on to verses 11 and 12

For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate

Ordinarily the Jewish priests under the Old Covenant were allowed to eat what remained of the sacrifices. *But there was one that they were never allowed to eat, can anyone remember?* It was the sacrifice of sin made on the Day of Atonement. No-one was allowed to eat that sin offering. The bodies of the animals used for this sacrifice were taken outside the camp and burned. Leviticus chapter 4.

In this view, an analogy is given. On the day of atonement, the sacrifice could not be eaten but the carcasses of the animals were burnt outside the camp. This was a type for the future in which Jesus was taken outside the walls of Jerusalem [John 19:17]. It is like the writer is

underlining and pointing out the picture of the old covenant and drawing it beside the new covenant, and asking them to see the similarities and the differences, look at the obvious. Just as much, as the priest of old could not have a part in the sins of the people, so the believer should be outside the camp of the world, no longer a part of its system, its standards, and practices. This is what Jesus did, pictured supremely in the crucifixion, setting us apart by His own blood, outside the city gates which is laid out very clearly in verse 12. With this in mind, verse 13 clearly instructs us in what we should do -

Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

Jesus died outside Jerusalem. Shamefully brought out and nailed to the cross. It was about reproach and shame. Jesus calls you to follow Him, the path of suffering and shame. It's hard. Salvation is free, but to embrace it, there is a cost. (1 John 3:13 and 1 Peter 4:12).

Charles Spurgeon in one of his famous sermons about this verse wrote -

"A sorry life your Master had, you see. All the filth in earth's kennels was thrown at him by sacrilegious hands. No epithet was thought coarse enough; no terms hard enough; He was the song of the drunkard and they that sat in the gate spoke against Him. This was the reproach of Christ, and we are not to marvel if we bear as much. "Well", says one, "I will not be a Christian if I am to bear that". Skulk back, then, thou coward, to thine own damnation; but oh! men that love God, and who seek after the eternal reward. I pray you do not shrink from this cross. You must bear it."

The practical point is that as Christians we must be willing to go out from the system, to bear the reproach and the shame that both the sin offering and Christ Himself bore, and to be rejected by men. The world is against us, like it was against Jesus. Remember the attitude Moses had toward the world as we saw in Hebrews 11 verse 26. He considered

"the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"

Paul had a great deal to say about separation.

"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

Christians should have nothing in common with the world system and should be separate from it (2 Timothy 2:4). This journey is not easy, fraught with traps and false teachings. It's a journey of suffering and shame. But be encouraged we are not alone! Many have gone this

way and successfully completed the course. The author has pointed to successful stories already, for example chapter 11, even verse 7 of this chapter and *how can we do it?*

V8 - Jesus who sustained them, will sustain you and for-evermore. If you want to successfully run the race, we need to concentrate on Jesus just like Hebrews 12 verses 1&2 said. As you run, you are reminded that others have ran this race and finished successfully, but as you run you are dependent on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith. You can't save yourself but it's Jesus who saves and keeps you (Jude v1 and v24).

Separation from the system does not mean separation from unbelievers in the sense of never having contact with them. If this were so, we could never witness to them or be hospitable to them. Nor does it mean we try to escape the world by becoming monastics. As far as separation is concerned, the world is an attitude, an orientation, not a place. As long as we are in the flesh, we take some of the world with us wherever we go. Paradoxically, a holier-than-thou attitude is the essence of worldliness, because it is centred in pride. It is worldly attitudes and habits from which we are to separate ourselves. And we can participate in many worldly things just as easily with Christians as with non-Christians. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus describes our proper relationship to the world.

"I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (John 17:15-18).

True separation is costly.

"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"
(2 Timothy 3:12).

The reason why more Christians are not persecuted is simply because so few are truly godly, truly living outside the camp of the world. We may not consider ourselves as being "worldly" in that we don't do certain things. But is our love for the Lord greater than our love for the world? Do we agree with the Lord on all points of His teaching or have we or are we compromised on some things?

Jesus told Peter – When you were younger you went wherever you wanted to go but at the end of your life someone will take your hand and lead you where you don't want to go. This

has application to us. Peter was going to end his race well and not fall again, even though there was a clear cost. Are we concerned about ending our race well? I am, because I want to glorify God. Jesus told Peter that Satan came up and asked to have Peter, like Job (Luke 22:31-32). What this shows us is that we are kept by the power of God through the intercession of Christ. That's why we hold on because Hebrews 7:25 –

Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

If your heart is burdened – then let it be strengthened by grace. Verse 9 says don't look at the foods you eat to gain God's favour but we see in verse 10, the Old Covenant is no longer required because we are under the new covenant. Under the new covenant we can go to His altar and feast on the gospel, feast on the word of God because Jesus died to cleanse us which is why our hearts can be strengthened by grace. Therefore, we go with Jesus, we leave the camp. We leave the world which we used to identify with. We no longer participate in rejecting God. Our altar is Jesus, He sanctifies us with His blood, we feast on the Word of God - 1 Corinthians 9v13&14.

So, what is it saying to us today? We turn our back on any religion philosophy, thought, idea or even relationship that asks us to reject Jesus, His love, His sacrifice or asks us to be open to falsehoods, or contra to Scripture. We turn our back on lifestyles that are not according to Scripture. We turn our back on Christianity without Christ or where Christ is not central. What happens if the Church asks Jesus to leave? Well, we leave with Jesus. We run, but not aimlessly.

While the cost may be high, so too is our reward which we see in verse 14 -

For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

This is not the first time this has been brought to our attention. But first, look at the context. The Jewish people looked to Jerusalem as the sacred city, which had the sacred temple and the sacred altar. It was the very centre of Jewish life, as it is still today. We, as believers, under the new covenant have a city, but not like any other. We have no city here on earth, we don't long for any city that's here like the Jews with Jerusalem, or the Muslims with Mecca or the Hindus or Buddhists have with various cities and temples. No, we long for a city that

doesn't belong to this earth, it is a heavenly one, where Jesus rules, the sacrificed lamb is worshipped, honoured and glorified. We look to that city.

John Piper once preached –

“Life is hard, God is Good, Glory is coming, Therefore, stand firm in His grace.

Remember that although life is hard, God is good no matter what, don't forget Jesus is coming. Be prepared!

In the light of this let's see verses 15 and 16 -

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.

The Westminster Catechism asks and answers a very important question, “*What is the chief end of man?*” The answer surprises even most believers. Here is the answer with proof text from Scripture.

a) Man's chief end is to glorify God [Psalm 86:9; Isaiah 60:21; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31; Revelation 4:11]

b) and to enjoy him for ever. [Psalm 16:5-11; 144:15; Isaiah 12:2; Luke 2:10; Philippians 4:4; Revelation 21:3-4]

The chief end of man to worship God, is for here on earth, but it also continues on in the eternal city, forever more. Note, we can only do this if we have a personal relationship with the Lord. Jesus is the basis of our fellowship. It is from this relationship that flows these two verses, even to us today.

Sacrifice was extremely important to the Jew. It was God's provision for cleansing of sin under the Old Covenant. Many Christian Jews no doubt wondered if God required any kind of sacrifice under the New Covenant. They knew Christ offered the one and only sacrifice for sin. But they were used to many kinds of sacrifice, *and perhaps they thought that God still demanded some offering, some sacrifice, even of Christians?* And Yes they were right, He does, and we are told this here in these verses. He demands the sacrifice of our praise and of

our good works in His name. He demands sacrifice not in the form of a ritual or ceremony, but in word and in deed—in our praise of Him and in our service to others.

In Word.

God no longer wants sacrifices of grain or animals. He wants the sacrifice of praises to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. Remember under the new covenant we are all priests (Revelation 1 verse 6) hence why we are invited to do this (Psalm 54:6).

The psalmists knew a great deal about this sort of sacrifice. If their writings could be characterized by any single word it would be praise.

"I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High" (Psalm 7:17).

"Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him" (Psalm 43:5).

"I will give thanks to Thee, O LORD, among the peoples; and I will sing praises to Thee among the nations" (Psalm 108:3).

All of the last five psalms begin with 'Praise the LORD' which in Hebrew is 'Hallelujah'. The sacrifice God desires is the cry of our lips in praise to Him. The Christian's sacrifice of praise is to be offered continually. It is not to be a fair-weather offering, but an offering in every circumstance. *"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).*

Do you find it hard to lift your hands and praise God, more importantly, do you find it a struggle to lift your heart to praise Him? We have, as you know, no reason why we should not, Amen!

In Deed.

John warns us that

"the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20).

In other words, if our praises of God in word is not accompanied by doing good and sharing, it is not acceptable to Him. Worship involves action that honours God. Isaiah gave a similar warning to Israel. When the people asked God,

"Why have we fasted and Thou dost not see?" the Lord replied, "Is this not the fast which I chose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and

to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:3, 6-7).

Praise of God in word and deed are inseparable. Lip service must be accompanied by life service.

"This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27).

The only acceptable sacrifice we can offer to God with our hands is to do good to one another, to share, to minister in whatever ways we can to the needs of others in His name.

"Little children," John says, "let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18).

Oliver Greene wrote -

"You will note that there are three sacrifices that please God, and should not fail to offer these sacrifices continually. First, confessing His name; Second, living a holy life, doing good; third, giving to those who are in need, sharing our blessings with those less fortunate than we. He is a hypocrite who praises God with the lips but not by a holy life, a life of faith, sharing blessings with others. Such a person may put on a convincing outward show, but God looks upon the heart."

God looks on the heart, but we look on the outward appearance. We don't really have the ability to look into each other's hearts, but we do have the ability to watch each other's lives. *How is God pleased?* We offer our praise and our good deeds through Jesus. People do many good things but it's not a sacrifice unless we do it in Jesus' name. Does it provide a help, Yes! But this isn't just helping each other, but doing so in a way to glorify God.

This then brings us to the last verse that we are looking at this morning – verse 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.

It may surprise you, even though it shouldn't, but Christianity isn't democracy, nor is it anarchy, but it is a Theocracy. God rules, through Christ, through the leaders. Let's look at verse 17 in three sections for the sake of clarity.

Section 1 -

In John Gills exposition of the Bible he renders the interpretation of verse 17 as follows.

“Obey them who have the rule over you not the ecclesiastical rulers among the Jews, for these (converted Jews) were no longer obliged, they been no longer under such tutors and governs nor civil magistrates, though it was their duty to obey them as we see in Romans 13 verse 4 –

For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

But they are exhorted to obey by constantly tending upon the word preached to them, and taking note, receiving it by faith and love as it is in harmony with the Scriptures for a contra behaviour is pernicious to souls, and highly resented by God: and being present at and joining with them in the ordinances of Christ, as administered by them and by regarding their admonitions, councils and advice”.

Section 2 -

This verse goes onto expound the structures of which the Scriptures points in regard to the authority which has been placed here. In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 Paul laid out a template for rule within the church. This is the authority that if it is Biblical and in harmony with Scripture than we should obey it not because it lets us off the hook but places us in harmony with the Lord. Note the emphasis is been placed not on the leader making you to submit but it is an act that you do, the AV has it “submit yourselves” to their spiritual authority.

John MacArthur said -

“The pastors/elders of the church exercise the very authority of Christ when they preach, teach, and apply the Scriptures.”

The commentators are united in their understanding as to the power and authority that church leaders represent. Be submissive – *why?* Because we are human being and we resist authority and we rebel against authority. This resistance and rebellion didn’t just happen in the 60’s. Humbling ourselves before authority is not easy because we have an inward rebellious streak. We always want things our way and we want others to see that and agree. Our fallen nature is very rebellious and not pleasing either to God or the church when it acts up and wants its way.

But the authority in the church should be three things :

1) Mindful of the fact that they have to give an account to God for the spiritual welfare of the souls under them. *Did they do the best they possibly could in feeding the flock with the Word*

of God not some way-out things, or some amusement.? Were they consistent, diligent in guarding against heresy and such like?

2) Living right themselves before God so as not to stumble the flock.

3) They are shepherding the flock, not policing or fleecing them spiritually or otherwise. They must make themselves aware that with this authority comes the responsibility and accountability to God. The leader isn't the Lord or in any way equal to Him, nor is he a prince but he is a Shephard, a servant, providing spiritual food, protecting, guarding, running after those who stray, or going back, growing cold, encourage the flock, visit the sick, encourage those who have gifts.

Section 3 -

It's amazing how in a single sentence, verse 17 describes not only the responsibility of a pastor but also the reaction of the flock. He's going to be met with either joy or grief. We want to serve with Joy because it's profitable, grief has no gain. No grief, all joy. They are told for their part to let the leaders teach and preach and share with them the Word of God without "sighing" and "groaning". Those words by themselves point to a wrong attitude towards what is been done for them, or with the idea that they could do better.

There's a welcome word here. If it's possible to make life easier for your leader, than do so, don't give him grief. Pastors answer to God. They serve God and the church, and in the end, they must give an account of their faithfulness. But let's also be careful and balanced too, Leaders can abuse leadership just like ordinary people abuse their office professionally, even personally. But those that do, will have to answer to God.

Throughout this chapter, so far, we have been shown the practical side of the Christian life in the race. While there are challenges, dangers, ups and down, but all the time we are encouraged to look unto Jesus and not forget that while are costs, there are many benefits.

Amen.