



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Scripture Reading
Week of
April 10th -16th



Monday

- ❖ Joshua 9, 10
- ❖ Psalm 71
- ❖ John 3

Tuesday

- ❖ Joshua 11, 12
- ❖ Psalm 72
- ❖ John 4

Wednesday

- ❖ Joshua 12, 14
- ❖ Psalm 73
- ❖ John 5

Thursday

- ❖ Joshua 15, 16
- ❖ Psalm 74
- ❖ John 6

Friday

- ❖ Joshua 17, 18
- ❖ Psalm 75
- ❖ John 7

Saturday

- ❖ Joshua 19, 20

Sunday

- ❖ Joshua 21, 22

Uphold the Supremacy of Christ Over All Things: *Honor Marriage*

By Pastor Powers

In leading the congregation that I serve through the book of Hebrews, we have come to see the book's theme as: *the supremacy of Christ over all things*. Christ is supreme over angels, Moses, Aaron, and the Levitical priesthood with all that system offers; He is supreme over the entire first covenant with all of the promises it offered. Jesus is supreme over all things because the covenant he administers is far surpassing in all its promises.

The book of Hebrews has its power-packed doctrinal sections that make up the first twelve chapters. That is what makes chapter thirteen so enigmatic and seemingly anti-climactic. Why is it in the book at all? How can the author go from discussing the massive doctrines of atonement, sacrifice, forgiveness, sanctification, and perseverance to finish off the sermon by simply saying, "Let brotherly love continue; be hospitable; remember the prisoners; honor marriage; avoid

fornication; be content; respect your leaders?" These sound so cliché, so trite. How are they supposed to fit in the context of perseverance?

The author of Hebrews, in my opinion, is addressing one kind of audience - a suffering one. Suffering can come from one of two directions: pleasure or pain. The preacher of Hebrews (and I treat it more as a sermon and not a letter) is preaching to those who, on the one hand, are contemplating **caving-in beneath the pressures that threaten** as well as to those who are contemplating **selling-out to pleasures that beckon**. The message that both parties need is the same - it is the gospel of Christ's supremacy over all things. To those suffering as Jews in a post-Jewish context, they needed to see the supremacy of Christ over the older covenantal system. He is the answer to all questions. He is the finish of all lines. He is the completion of all starts. He is the referent of all

pointers. He is the substance behind all shadows. He is the antitype to all types. He is the end of the run, the final destination. There remains nothing left to come. He is it. He is supreme. He, then, is worth suffering and even dying for. "Don't cave-in! Persevere in faithfulness!" And since this Jesus is supreme, there is nothing this world has to offer that is more valuable. "Don't sell-out! Persevere in faithfulness!"

The preacher has another dynamic going on throughout the sermon: he is addressing a suffering congregation. That is, he is addressing them in their corporate identity. The author makes it clear throughout the sermon that each one's perseverance is a corporate responsibility. He has such powerful sections as 3:12, "See to it, brothers (plural and corporate), lest there be in any of you (plural) an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God."

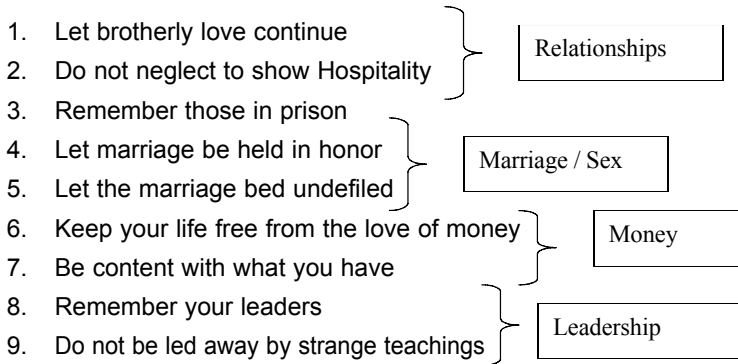
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Or what about the famous section in 10:24-25? "And let us consider one another with a view to stirring up each one to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage each other..." (my translation). Perseverance is a corporate responsibility. The corporate gathering of God's people is to be mutual and meaningful, as opposed to occasional and casual.

Now I believe that if we have kept these two themes in view throughout the book, we will have a firm understanding as to the immense practicality of chapter thirteen's list of exhortations. There are nine exhortations that make up four categories:



Therefore, I think there are two reasons these nine commands and four categories for living appear precisely here at the end of twelve chapters of Christ's supremacy: First, they stand-out as real expressions of heartfelt worship. We are meant to ask some hard and searching questions of our hearts:

- How can I manifest the supremacy of Christ over my relationships?
- How am I to worship the supremacy of Christ in marriage and sexuality?
- How do I demonstrate the supremacy of Christ over money?
- What will my commitment to Christ look like in my treatment of leadership?

Second, these categories stand-out as the areas in life where believers need to most help from the body. These are the areas we are most inclined to be blinded, deceived, hardened, and drifting. We are meant to ask some hard questions of each other:

- Do you ever feel pressures that threaten in areas of leadership, submission, marriage and other relationships?

- Do you ever feel pleasures that beckon in sex or money?

So to this end, I want to treat them each topically. The command of Hebrews shouts forth: "Uphold the supremacy of Christ over all things!"

"How?"

"Honor marriage and sexuality!"

What does it look like to honor something? Webster's Dictionary defines honor as showing respect or esteem. While that may be true, the Greek word behind the English of *honor*, is the notion of holding something in high esteem due to its worth or value - "to regard it as precious." Nothing possesses value in a vacuum. There must be some ground, some reason, for esteeming something as valuable. Usually, that which makes a thing valuable is the story that goes with it. Furthermore, what is valuable to one person might not be valuable to another - visit a garage sale! But certain things are so precious they are valued by all. (Life is arguably the most precious possession of earth.)

Two principles have emerged here: (1) Universal - Some things are so precious, they are honored by all; (2) Rationale - All precious things are valued for a reason. The idea behind these two principles is simple to see: the deeper the rationale for a thing's worth, the more universal will be its esteem. The best story will attract the largest audience - visit an *Antique's Road Show*!

When the Bible says the kinds of things that Hebrews 13:4 says: "Let marriage be held in honor among all," the first legitimate response should be, "Why? What makes marriage so precious that it should be universally esteemed?"

Here is where I want to bring caution. Christians usually like to reason using law: "The reason marriage is to be held in honor is because God said so. There are commands in Scripture that make it clear: marriage is for sex and sex is for marriage. . Keep sex in marriage and you will be obeying God and honoring marriage." That may be true, but reasoning with law will never convince our teenagers to stay pure. In fact, it may have the opposite effect (study Romans 7 and the "wet-paint" syndrome of humanity).

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But more to the point, it is impossible to reason with law. That is to say, throwing up command after command in the face of a lusting teenager is not reasoning for the value of marriage. The commands of Scripture ("law" in any form) do not exist as a rationale for anything being precious; they exist to protect what is precious.

Imagine, for example, that you took your children to see the Crown Jewels of England. Once you arrived at the tower and made your way down into the lower levels and onto the moving sidewalk with all the other people, you saw the jewels behind the glass. There they were, perfectly lit so as to enhance their beauty. But all around you were signs of their value: armed guards, bullet-proof glass, light sensors, smoke detectors, surveillance cameras, and the like. Your child asks of you, "Daddy, why are these jewels so precious?" You respond with all the authority you can muster, "Because they are heavily guarded, Son!" Your son scratches his head for a minute wondering why that answer didn't satisfy his curiosity and tries asking it again, but differently, "Daddy, but why do they have to guard them?" Your response is equally profound, "Because they're worth a lot of money, Son!"

The conversation has all the ingredients of a bad Abbot and Costello routine, doesn't it?

"Son, I want you to stay pure until marriage!"

"Why, Dad?"

"Because God has commanded you to keep sex in marriage as pure and precious?"

"But what makes sex precious, Dad?"

"Can't you see all the commands in the Bible? They exist to keep marriage honorable?"

"But why is marriage to be honored?"

"Because God said so."

The signs that exist - the guards, the glass, the gates -

only point to the reality that a thing is precious; but they don't tell the story. Similarly, the commands of Scripture are only signs that exist - the guards, the glass, the gates - because marriage is valuable. They do not tell the story. Do not try to reason with your teens by using law. They will only rebel. Tell them the story!

Here is how I envision the story being told to Brice...someday!

"Dad, why is marriage to be honored?"

"Well, son, there is something very important that you need to know. You and I were created by God as sexual beings. All the feelings you have when you see a pretty girl, all the questions you wonder about - 'What will she feel like if I touch her' or 'why do I want to touch her?' - are drives (powerful urges and feelings) put in us by God.

Now, Son, you need to know two things: (1) you need to know why those urges exist - why God made us sexual creatures; and (2) you need to know how to respond and carry out those sexual urges in a way that honors God's design! Are you ready? (Of course not, you're only 46!)"

We will take up this conversation in two weeks, following Easter, and then we will take up the remaining two topics: Money and contentment and Leadership and submission.

Corporate Arsenal Passages

God is Faithful to All His Promises

Promise 3: Promise to be with you

Joshua 1:9

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."



Matthew 28:20b

And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.