

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Christian Ethics, Pt. 4: Submission and Supplication

Scripture: Hebrews 13:7-8, 17-21

Code: 1642

Turn your Bibles to the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews for our study tonight.

We're going to be finishing up our study of this book. It has been a very difficult book, it's not easy to understand, but it's been very instructional I know that I know that I am certainly richer for the days and weeks and months of study that I have done in this book, and I trust and pray that you are too.

We come to our final look at the thirteenth chapter. The title that I have given to the whole chapter is, "Christian Ethics and Example," and really we could throw in there energy. "Christian Ethics, Example, and Energy," for it's all here in the thirteenth chapter.

And we have covered much material in terms of what God expects out of believers in the matter of their behavior and we're going to kind of sum that up tonight, and then talk about the example and the energy.

Now there is a well known Episcopal professor by the name of John Fletcher. He has become well known because he is the principle advocate of a philosophy known as situation ethics. An article in the National Observer said, and I quote, "Doctor Fletcher has spelled out a controversial manifesto of individual freedom and responsibility, based on the ethic of brotherly love, which he says should free every man from rigid archaic rules and codes, like the Ten Commandments. Every man must decide for himself what is right."

It's interesting that a man would come up with a code based on love that would free somebody from the Ten Commandments, when the Ten Commandments are based on love too. The idea of not killing somebody certainly relates to love, the idea of not abusing somebody else physically in adultery relates to love, the idea of not having other gods relates to the love of God, the idea of not coveting your neighbors wife and goods certainly relates to love and to brotherly love. And so for somebody to say that the kind of ethic we want is one that is love but it eliminates all rules is foolish, for love binds itself by the most rigid kind of standards. And when you follow the pattern of situation ethics and situation ethics just says you do whatever you want to do in any given situation, whatever's right for you is right. Well, what happens is that kind of an ethic gives birth to an ethical monster, as every case is to be judged not by reference to some absolute standard but by an arbitrary inner feeling. Whatever feels good to you, you ought to do it. It's just the simplicity of do your own thing. There are no absolutes, there are no objective facts, there is no truth--everything is in a state of flux

and you jump on wherever you happen to want to jump on. That's situation ethics.

And what it leads to is obvious: it leads to a wholesale moral landslide. Since people are so depraved to begin with, you give them the right to do what they want and that's exactly what they are going to do. And when they do what they want they'll degenerate fast. And you'll have crime and you'll have mental illness, and you'll have suicide, and you'll have all of these things, and that's exactly what we have in our world. People have been set adrift on a sea of relativity and there's no harbor of absolutes to tie up to. And we have a society of people doing their own thing and they end up in meaninglessness. If there are no absolutes then in honesty nothing means anything anyway and man can't live like that.

Dostoyevsky, the great Russian writer, wrote in the classic novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* this great statement, he said this, "If there is no God then everything is permitted." And what he meant was if there are no standards and there are no rules, then it doesn't matter what you do. If there is no God, then everything is permitted. There can be no justice, there can be no laws, there can be no anything. And, *The Brothers Karamazov*, I don't know if you've read it, but the story is the story of murder in a small Russian town. The murder of a Russian landowner and the terrible results, when a man who tried to believe that everything was o.k. found out that he couldn't live like that. That he had to face the fact that murder was evil. It was vile, it was wrong, and guilt was heaped in upon him. And the conclusion of Dostoyevsky was you cannot eliminate God. You cannot eliminate ethical standards, you cannot eliminate morality. If you do, then you come up with a terrible fact that if there is no ethic, then there is no God, and if there is no God, then everything is permitted, and if everything is permitted, existence is a disaster. For that eliminates laws and justice and standards of every kind. And so Dostoyevsky's conclusion was there must be a God.

Then you had men come along like Camus and Sarte, who decided one step further than Dostoyevsky that there wasn't a God. But there still was a morality. And then people tried to pin them down and said, "If there is no God who sets the standards--how do you get a morality?" And they just said, don't ask me that. And they both wound up in a philosophy of abject despair. And Sarte relates the whole of his view of life in a book called *Nausea*, and he just winds up as a suicide. Life has no more meaning than that, makes him sick.

But there is a God of morality, there is a God who sets some standards. The God of the Old Testament had some very stringent standards, for life and conduct. And it is the same God in the New Testament who sets standards of behavior to govern the lives of individuals. And as we have looked at the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews we have found that God is a God of order. That God is a God of principle, that God is not a God who says, do your own thing. But God has some very strong and very rigid and very clearly defined standards of behavior.

And we have given you in the past several weeks at least three reasons for God giving the ethics at the end of the book of Hebrews--the standards for the Christian life. He has all the way through been presenting the New Covenant and now within the framework of a New Covenant, knowing Christ, living in the age of grace, there are some standards. He gives them for three reasons.

Reason One: and these are not in any specific order, but reason one that we suggested to you is the fact, that He wanted the Jews to know that it's the same God in the New Testament, the same God of the New Covenant that was the God of the Old Covenant. It's the same God of laws; it's the same God of rules; the same God of ethical standards of morality that you knew in the Old Testament. This is not something new; this grace does not mean you now do what you want. The same God has the same standards, morally.

Secondly: He gives these ethics because they bring joy to the Christian; to be obedient is to be joyous. And to be able to do what God wants you to do results in fruit in your life. It results in productivity and that results in joy.

And the third reason: That God wanted us to live lives that fit his standards was that we might give a clear witness to the world.

And so he closes the book of Hebrews with a list of basic principles to govern the life of a Christian in order that those who read might understand this is the same God with the same standards. In order that those who read might understand that joy is produced by obedience. And in order the readers might understand that witness to the world depends upon the consistency of the pattern of their living.

Now you say, "Well how did God ever cram all of the ethics of the Christian life into one chapter?" Well, He reduced them all to the single common denominator. And here you have very general principles, that kind of blanket wide areas, and we've been looking at them for several weeks.

We began to study the ethics in verses one to nineteen. Let me just remind you what we covered. We said there were three categories of behavior patterns, or three categories of ethics that a Christian needed to follow. First category: in relation to others, in relation to others. The first three verses. Now we have a responsibility toward others in two areas, sustained love and sympathy. And when you have those two operating in your life that covers a whole gamut of things.

The second area of responsibility for our ethics is in relation to ourselves. We have an obligation to ourselves in the matter of sexual purity, in the matter of satisfaction, and the matter of steadfastness. We need to keep ourselves pure sexually, we need to be content with what-ever we have, and we need to be steadfast in the faith not following around false doctrine. This we owe ourselves.

The last category of ethics is in relation to God. In our relationship to God and as Christians we saw that God wants from us separation, and we saw that, last week in verses ten to fourteen. How that God says, I want you to be apart from the world unto myself. I want you to cut off from the system and come out separate unto me. Verse thirteen and four-teen summing it up, "Let us go therefore, unto him outside the camp, bearing his reproach, for here we have no continuing city but we seek one to come." The idea that the Christian should live within the framework of the system doing what the world does, playing the world's part is really foreign to Christianity, God wants us separated unto Himself.

The second thing we saw God wants in relation to Himself is sacrifice. The Jew thought perhaps in the New Covenant sacrifice would be over. Well physical sacrifice was, but there were still some sacrifices to be made. Verse fifteen, the sacrifice of praise from our lips, verse sixteen, the sacrifice of a holy pure life and sharing with other people. And with such sacrifices God is well pleased. We see then that separation and sacrifice were the two first ethics in relation to God.

Now lets go to the third one tonight and then the fourth, and then wrap it up.

The third standard of Christian behavior toward God is submission. Not only separation unto Him, not only sacrifice made to Him, but submission to Him. And I want you to notice how this submission is ordered, verse seventeen, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves," and we'll stop there. Now here is a responsibility toward God. You say it sounds to me like a responsibility towards some rulers. Yes it is, but the wonderful thing that is evident in this text and evident in other texts in the New Testament is this, that God, now watch it, that God mediates much of His rule in this world through men. God has done that for a long time. Throughout the Old Testament God mediated His rule at times through kings, through prophets, through judges. And in this age God mediates His rule through Spirit-controlled men. Someday God will mediate His rule in the living Christ who sits on the throne of David and rules in the world and the kingdom, right? And He'll mediate His own kingdom. But at this time God is literally ruling His people through certain Spirit-led men.

Now we know that if we study the New Testament we find that God has set leadership in the church. And there were in the assembly of the Hebrews here certain men given the rule of that congregation. The apostle Paul defines these men as elders, bishops or if you choose the word presbuteros, which is translated "presbyter," it's all the same thing, teaching pastors. These men were ordered of the Spirit of God to have the rule of the church. They do not rule for themselves, they rule in the stead of Christ. They are called undersheperds, and that's really what I am. That's what your pastors are, that's what any pastors are in any given church. So when in seventeen it says obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves, the submission here is not really to men but it is to God, as He rules, mediating His rule through Spirit-controlled men. So there were in that assembly, as in all early local churches gifted men, chosen by the Lord, granted to the church to rule.

In Ephesians, chapter four, the Bible says that Christ won trophies at the cross, and that He came back into heaven with all of the spoils and he brought gifts. Then it says in verse eleven of chapter four that He gave those gifts unto the church. And the gifts that He gave unto the church were apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors. The trophies of the victory at the cross, God gave back to the church some of those trophies, as gifts for the instruction and the ruling in the body.

In the book of Acts, the instruction is given to ordain elders in every city. In the book of Titus, the same instruction is repeated. So that in every local congregation there were men who ruled that congregation.

Now there are some church governments today where the congregation rules the leaders. That's foreign to the New Testament. There needs to be a well-oiled working relationship going both ways. But the rule of the church was always given to the gifted men placed by the Spirit of God in control. Now notice it says, "Obey them that have the rule over you." There's no qualification to that. It doesn't say obey them if you like them, it just says obey them. The Spirit of God has placed them there to rule. This is part of God's chain of command within the framework of the church. The term, "them that rule over you," is one word in the Greek, just one word, hegeomai, it simply means "chief" or "leader." Obey leaders, obey chiefs, and submit yourselves. It is rendered "governor" in Acts, chapter seven. It is rendered "chief" in Luke 22:26. And so God has given to the church certain men through whom He mediates His rule. It is the right of those men to declare the direction of the church, to preside, to teach the Word, to reprove, to rebuke, to exhort, and to do it with all long suffering, and to do it in meekness.

In First Peter, and I want to show you some things that need to be mentioned here, least you think we lord it over you. In First Peter, chapter five, verse two, Peter giving instruction to the elders. Verse one we might as well begin, "The elders who are among you I exhort, whom am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." That means he saw Christ die and he saw the marvelous transfiguration of Christ. This is what he says to the elders. "Feed the flock of God," the word is literally "pastor," and pastor means to feed them and the food is the Word. "Feed the flock of God which is among you," watch, "taking the oversight," the word is bishop. That's the job of the elder is to take the oversight to rule the church. Now watch, "not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind," not just out of money.

You'll notice that there are several perils to the pastorate, several perils, to being an elder. Peril number one is the peril of covetousness, the peril of covetousness. Some people want to rule because they covet authority, they covet professional position, they covet bigger churches, more money, more power and they wind up being petty tyrants, who lord it and dominate over the church, and this is very common. He answers that in verse three, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage," but being what? "examples to the flock." So you lead not as a dictator, but as a pattern.

Paul said to Timothy, "Be thou an example to the believer in everything," word and deed. Be a pattern that others can follow. And so there's always the peril of covetousness that a man covets money or that he covets power and he becomes sort of a mini-dictator.

And then in the pastorate there is a second peril and that's the peril of conceit. And this is something I think many of us have to deal with in our own lives, is the problem of pride. And he deals with the peril of conceit in verse five. "In like manner, you younger submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with," what? "humility; for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore, unto the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." In the pastorate there is the peril of the desire to be exalted, the peril of conceit.

And thirdly, there is the peril of compromise. So easy to compromise. Verse eight, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith." There's always the problem of the peril of compromise, giving into Satan, watering down your convictions because it's expedient. And so it is not an easy thing, to take the oversight, to rule, but that is the calling of God.

There's a special honor, the Scripture says, for those who rule well. In First Timothy 5:17 Paul said this, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." And then in the next verse it even goes so far as to say, make sure you pay the preacher enough so that he can live.

In First Thessalonians, chapter five and verse twelve, it says this, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." He says you ought to be aware of them you ought to have a deep knowledge of your leaders. I think it's a wonderful thing when people in a church will make themselves available to be known by those that are in leadership. Apparently even in those times some of the people never got to know the leaders, and to get a full acquaintance, and a full involvement, as much as was possible in their lives.

And so we find then, that it is very obvious as he says there in First Thessalonians "there are some who are over you," in First Timothy, "some rule," and Peter says, "some take the oversight." It's all saying the same thing. In the framework of the church, there are some given to the church, by the Spirit of God to rule in the church. And we believe here at Grace Church and it's been your belief since the very beginning, that God would raise up men who would lead the church. And I always think it's kind of a tragedy that when you have the pastors and the elders being led around by the congregation--that's not the way God intended it to function. Now that doesn't mean, as I said, that you become a little dictator, not at all. You're responsive and sensitive to the needs of people. But remember this: the Bible indicates clearly that we are the undershepherds of Christ. First Peter 5:4, which we were just looking at says that, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." We're undershepherds, serving the chief Shepherd. And so as

elders we have a tremendous responsibility, not only to feed the flock, not only to warn the flock of impending danger, not only to nurture the flock when they're injured and wounded, but to be sure that we take the oversight in terms of disciplining the flock, in terms of maintaining leadership in the flock, and giving direction.

In fact in First Timothy 3:1, it talks about a bishop, the word episkopos, simply means to look over, or to watch over. And that's the responsibility of the pastor. In fact the term bishop, episkopos, from which you get Episcopalian. The term itself is a title used by the Athenians for the officers that were sent to manage the affairs of a subjected state. In other words, the Athenian government when it wanted to rule over a subjected state would send a man called an overseer. And that's exactly the term the Spirit of God uses for those who would rule in the church. It's a serious responsibility, believe me, and we have to give an account to God as we shall see, for how we rule.

But now I want you to notice one other thing, and it says in 17, it says obey them and submit yourselves. I think the term obey has very, very definite connection to teaching. I think the word submit has very definite connection to authority. And so there is to be obedience to their teaching, and submission to their authority. And this is not our duty to these men; it's our duty to whom? God, because they rule in the stead of Christ, don't they? And I'll tell you something, you know I think about that sometimes, that Christ has placed me, and all the other elders and pastors in this church to rule over you in His place. What a, what an unbelievable responsibility. And I think every man of God ought to realize that responsibility. It's a very sobering responsibility.

In John 13:20, let me use a verse that applies, and maybe brings the principle into focus. Jesus said this, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," truly, truly, listen, "He that receiveth whomsoever I send," listen, listen, "He receiveth me." And He took it a step farther: "Whoever receives me receives my Father." And so you see, when a man is placed in the rule of the church, your submission and your obedience in receiving him, is the equivalent of receiving Christ, is the equivalent of receiving Him that sent me, said Jesus. And so being subjected and obedient to leaders is really your obligation to God. And you know when you don't have that you have chaos in the church. When you don't have Spirit-filled leaders who rule well, or you don't have people who submit and obey the Word that they teach, you have disunity. And that the Spirit is well aware of and that's why the injunction is here. One of the salient qualities that a Christian must have, and here look at this, four things are narrowed down as our obligations to God. Just four. Separation, sacrifice, and the third one is submission to the leaders of the church.

Now, I'm not riding a hobby horse, I'm only teaching you what the Word of God says. As Dr. Bob Jones used to say, "If you don't like it, call up heaven, I didn't write it." This is the Word of God.

In verse 17, let me take it a step further. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves," why? "for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Stop there. And

therein comes the sobering responsibility that we have. They watch, like wakeful shepherds. That's our priority.

Beloved, the priority that I have in my life as a minister in this church, the priority of all those who minister here as pastors and elders, is the priority of watching for your souls. They watch for your souls. It's very easy for many pastors to just watch for your bodies. To make sure that you're here, that's not even the issue. The issue is to watch for your souls, to make sure that your spiritual life is what it ought to be, and that's the priority. As those who watch for your souls, submit.

Verse 15 of Second Corinthians 12 says, and these are the words of Paul, and I love this, he says, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you." Isn't that good? He was expendable, for the care of the souls of the Corinthians. And I love the statement, just a little statement that's so obscured because we really don't study it very often but, Third John, verse 4, I just love this, listen to what John says, he had such a great heart, he says, "I have no greater joy." Now wait a minute, that's a pretty powerful statement, you have no greater joy than what? "Than to hear that my children walk in truth." Now that's a pastor's heart, right? I have no greater joy, than to hear that my children spiritually walk in truth. I'll tell you something, that's a joy. The sweetest joy that comes into the life of a pastor who's committed to the things of God is when he sees somebody walking in truth and bearing fruit. Believe me, that's sweet. And the tragedy of all tragedies in the life of the man of God is when he sees those in whom he invests his life who do not bear fruit, who do not walk in the truth, who stray away. That grieves worse than anything else.

We're like nurses you know, with critical care patients. We care for your souls. I always think of Paul in Acts 20. He was getting ready to leave Ephesus, and in chapter 20, you don't need to look it up. Let me just read you a few verses, I'd rather give it to you just as the Spirit of God stated it. He says this, and so graphically, verse 24, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." But he says in 27, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the whole counsel of God." I told you everything that I possibly could. Over in 31, he says, "Night and day with tears I warned you." He cared for their souls. And when he left, they all fell all over the place and started crying and crying, and the Bible says later in the chapter they cried because of the words which he spoke unto them. He had real care for their souls.

It's a serious thing to be a critical care nurse in the church. It's a serious thing to be a wakeful shepherd of a flock that has sheep that are forever going astray. And we have to labor as those, and I say this even with a sense of reluctance in my own heart to, to even admit that this is true, that I must give an account to God for the way that I minister to the care of the souls that He entrusts to me. And as I've said before that's why I'm not real anxious to have more people. I'm not too sure I'm doing the right job with the ones I've got.

In James, chapter 3, verse 1, it says this, and this again, as I've reminded you in the past is a fearful thought for many teachers. "My brother, be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we all stumble." And when a man of the God who stands before the people stumbles, he usually doesn't fall alone, there's usually a whole slew of people coming up behind him that fall all over him, and it's a greater condemnation.

First Timothy 4:16, Paul says, "Take heed unto yourself," Timothy, you're going to be a leader you're going to watch yourself, "and under the doctrine; continue in them; for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." People are following; it's important how we walk. And someday we're going to give an account to the great Physician, the chief Shepherd, of how we ruled and how we led. And so he says, be submissive and be obedient, that's your obligation toward God. Because God has set men in your midsts to rule over you and they must give account, as those who watch for your souls.

But you know there's besides accounting to God, there's a couple of other reasons that you ought to submit, watch verse 17, in the middle, "that they may do it with joy, and not with grief." That's the first reason. You ought to submit because of the joy that it brings the leaders, because of the joy that it brings the elders, and the pastors. If you're really selfless, and my joy and the joy of the others that labor here in your midst, if our joy means anything to you, then your spiritual growth, in your own mind, should be one way to bring us joy. And you know, I think, and I've said this many times and I think it to be true, I think sometimes the saddest group of people, the most grieved group of men, are very often ministers, pastors. And I think sometimes the reason is because of the fact, that they are dealing with a stubborn and rebellious people, who because they will not submit, rob them of the joy of their ministry.

The idea of the word grief here is groaning, over a thankless task. And there are many men whose ministry is a very thankless thing. And he says you ought to submit, just for the joy of the one who labors with you.

You know, the apostle Paul knew about that joy, apparently especially the Philippians were a submissive bunch. He didn't express a whole lot of joy over the Corinthians. In fact they were a pain in the neck as well as the heart.

But in Philippians 1:4, he says, "Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." He said to the Philippians, you make me happy. And the reason was, because they were submissive. You read the letter to the Philippians and you don't get any rebellion at all, there isn't any there. There's not really any false doctrine there, there's not really any resistance there, just a couple of cantankerous women causing problems. But that was about it. Euodia and Syntyche, chapter four, and he told Sysucus to get them together and shape it up, you know.

But basically he's just simply expressing joy over a submissive people. And he does it chapter 2, verse 16 again, he says, "Holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that not I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." He says I want you to keep doing what you're doing and do it a little better, so my joy remains. In chapter 3, verse 18 he says, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." And here he admits, that sometimes, even in his ministry, there are people who walk in such a fashion, that makes him cry, that makes him weep, that gives grief instead of joy. "Brethren," in 17 he says, "be followers together of me, and mark them who walk even as you have us for an example." For many don't walk that way, they're enemies, and they grieve me. Paul found joy in those who were obedient. And those who wouldn't walk the way he tried to teach them to walk, he was grieved.

You know the other letter in the New Testament that perhaps expresses the purist kind of church is the First letter of the Thessalonians. And again, here was a church that was so beautiful and so responsive and so submissive, and here's what he says to them in 2:19, "What is our hope, and joy, what is our crown of rejoicing? Are not even you." Again he says you Thessalonians make me so happy. You make me so happy. Why? Because they responded to his ministry. Verse 20, I love this short verse, "For you are our glory and joy."

Then in chapter 3, verse 9, "For what thanks can we render to God again for you," I mean we've just we've thanked ourselves out of thanks. And he says, "for all the joy with which we joy for your sakes before our God." We're just overjoyed with joy, because of you. Now there is a classic illustration of a group of submissive, obedient people who followed the principles they were taught and brought joy to his heart.

You know, there was a dear old prophet in the Old Testament. I don't, I don't know, there are a couple of prophets I love, but I think the one that I just feel the, the most empathy with is Jeremiah. And I guess I feel that, because when his ministry began, God told him nobody would ever listen to him or believe anything he said. And he said, it'll be that way through your whole ministry and Jeremiah said, I'll do it any- way, and that's faithfulness. And Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet because he cried a lot. And he knew a little bit about what it was to be able to give out orders and to teach things, and have people do nothing but rebel, and be stiff-necked and have no joy. And he spent his whole life in anguish and grief because of a stubborn and rebellious people over which he was given the rule, spiritually.

In 13:17 of Jeremiah, he says, "But if you will not hear it," he says, I'm trying to tell you some things, but if you will not hear it, "my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep bitterly, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." Jeremiah said, you grieve me, and he cried all the time. Backing up into chapter 9, verse 1, he says in such glorious poetic language, but so expressive of his grief, he says, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine

eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" That's how grieved he was that he just...there weren't enough tears to express the pain. In chapter 10, verse 19, he says, "Woe is me for my hurt! My wound is grievous, but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it. My tabernacle is spoiled, [my body] all my cords are broken; my children are gone forth from me, and they're not; there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and set up my curtains. For the shepherds are become stupid, and have not sought the Lord; therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered." Now there's the sad heart of a man of God whose people were rebellious. Believe me, beloved, your spirituality affects your leaders, and don't ever forget that. We are called of God to watch for your souls, and when there is no growth, there is no joy, but grief.

You know, even Jesus, sat over the city of Jerusalem one day and what did he do? He cried, and He said, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest those that are sent to you. How often I would have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her brood but you would not, and He wept. He wept because they were rebellious. And I'll tell you something, God only knows how many dear undershepherds, how many dear faithful men of God, through the years, have been grieved deeply have lost all the joy of their ministry, because some proud, stubborn, rebellious and unsubmitive people had stolen their joy, and would not submit.

END SIDE ONE.

SIDE TWO.

Listen in First Thessalonians 5:12, Paul says to the Thessalonians, and I read it before but I want to read 13, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you." And the word "know" so often in the New Testament means to love them, "and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you," listen, "and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake." To love your leaders. The best way to love your leaders, to show your love, is to obey.

I always think of the little, little boy, and the question was posed to the little boy. If you really wanted to show your mommy and daddy you really loved them, what would you do? And he thought for a minute, and then he said, I think I'd do what they tell me. And he was right. And if you really want to show your leaders that you love them, says Paul, do what they tell you. And he says, be at peace among yourselves. Unity, love, the ministry of gifts. And he says, you go around and you warn those unruly ones and you encourage the fainthearted, and you support the weak, and you be patient toward all men, and you see that none render evil for evil, and you rejoice evermore and you pray without ceasing. You know what he's saying? You want to make your leader happy, you want to show him you love him? Do all the things you know you're supposed to do spiritually. And he goes right down five and lists them. And what he's saying is don't tell me you love me, prove it. Don't tell me you appreciate the ministry, prove it. Prove it by showing me that you can do the things that God has called you to do. Live at peace with your brother. Be forgiving, minister, pray, give thanks, follow the

will of God. All the way down the final chapter, he gives those things.

So submit for the joy of the leader. You say, all right MacArthur, you've said enough, you've padded your case.

Let me go to you now. There's a second reason you ought to be submissive, not only joy for me, but joy for you. Joy for you, look at 17 again, "Obey and submit," why? "that they may do it with joy, not with grief," now watch, "for that is unprofitable" what? "for you." If you don't obey and you don't submit, guess who loses? You do. Cause you're not following the pattern of God. If you don't have a willing and loving obedient spirit, then you lose. Why? Because you're out of sync with what God is doing. You're out of sync with what is being taught. And you know, there are some people, and I know that's probably true here. There are some people that resent me so much they couldn't learn anything if they tried. And so in the long run I'm not the loser, they are because that steals their own joy. Because where there's no fruit, there's no joy.

Just after Jesus got through talking about all of the wonderful fruit that a Christian could have in his life, He said, these things I'm telling you that My joy might be in you and your joy might be, what? Full. Fruit brings joy. And so to submit, puts you in a position to be profited by the ministry. If you react and rebel, you can't profit.

For the members of the body to be in constant rebellion, is thus to be a source of deep grief to their pastors and elders. But it's also to despise their own blessings. It not only prevents you receiving instruction, into your heart, which results in spiritual barrenness but it sacks all your zeal as well. And so everybody loses when you rebel. And you'll find too, that the people who gripe most about their leaders are those most subject to bitterness and spiritual infirmity. Always.

Well, so spirit-filled submission brings joy around to everybody. You say, well what if I disagree? Well, I don't think the Bible says if you have an idea that maybe something's a little out of sync, you shouldn't maybe share it in love, I think that's good. You say, but yes, but I know a pastor who did so and so. The Bible says, if an elder has done something wrong, rebuke him, but rebuke him in the front of two or three other elders, right? That's First Timothy 5:19 and 20. So we're not impervious, we're not in some kind of ivory tower sitting up there shooting little theological arrows down at everybody, sort of drowning in the moat. No, if there is something to be said to us that needs to be said, it ought to be said. I think the Scripture allows that. It even encourages it. Rebuke an elder, yes, but not with some serious thought, and before two or three verifying witnesses. And then if he be deemed to deserve the rebuke, rebuke him before all that the whole congregation may fear the consequences of sin.

So what is our obligation toward God? Separation, sacrifice and submission to those that God has set to rule.

Fourth, and lastly, our obligation to God is supplication. The first word of verse 18 is what? Just that first word, what is it? "Pray." This is an obligation to God, to pray. Prayer makes things possible. Prayer moves the hand of God. Prayer ties into the power source. And here it's so beautifully connected to the previous point. Because he says, pray for whom? For us. And he's the writer. And I believe that he is one of the elders in the church to whom he wrote here. I believe whoever this writer is, he was one of the leaders of this church. He says, "Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner." The indication was that that was home for him and he'd gone away and he wanted to come back. And it's an epistolary us here, in other words, it's us, it's a plural us, but it refers to only one. Pray for me, pray for me. You know instead of rebelling against your leaders what should you do? Pray for them. Instead of criticizing, pray. Believe me, the servant of Christ stands in tremendous need for prayer. We are men, we are weak, we are sinful, we are foolish, we are ignorant, we are erring and we desperately need the prayers of the saints. And we desperately need a double portion of the Holy Spirit, believe me.

I think very often it's the men of God around the world in the places of leadership, who bear the brunt of Satan's attack. Don't you think that? Because Satan knows that if they go, a lot of people are going to go with them. And we're often tempted to compromise, or often tempted to water down our convictions cause we're afraid to face the issue, or we're tempted to be slack in terms of preparation, because it's a little easier to do that and the people might not know the difference anyway. Tempted to all kinds of sin, and we need your prayers. Pray for us. And so the writer encourages them to pray.

You know, I love what the apostle Paul did at the end of the book of Ephesians, he did the same thing, in verse 18, he says, pray for all saints, and then in 19, he says this, "And pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador." He says pray for me. Pray for me that I might be bold. That's something very practical that you can pray for.

And I really do think this. I think if a lot of churches spent their time praying for the pastors, rather than rebelling, it might be a little bit different situation. Cause I believe God answers prayer. Do you believe that?

Now there are two reasons that he uses to support it, he says pray for me, now here's two good reasons. Reason one, I deserve it. You say wait--that sounds like egoism. It isn't, I deserve it. What do you mean you deserve it? Look at verse 18, "For we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." Boy, I like that, you know what he says? Pray for me because I think as best I know, I believe that I am God's man, in God's place, with a pure heart. I deserve your prayers.

He says this, we trust, now that's not arrogant, the best I know, he says, I really trust that I have a good conscience, and that I really in all things, want to live sincerely. That I'm honest in my ministry; that I really believe that what I'm doing, God is in. Pray for me, I believe I'm God's man, called of this ministry. That's like saying I deserve it. What do you mean a good conscience, friend? What do you mean you have a good conscience? Well, we could talk a lot about conscience, let's not say too much, other than the fact, that the conscience is the faculty of the mind that enables us to perceive right and wrong. It's a built in system. We can tell what's right; we can tell what's wrong by the response of our conscience. It's the inner principle that decides whether something is right or wrong. It kind of, ah, it's God's vice regent, governing us on earth. And conscience is a court that's always in session, believe me. There is never a recess, in the court of conscience. Nobody can evade it, nobody can silence the prosecution. It's really the nearest thing in this world to standing at the bar of God.

Conscience is that thing that determines whether something is right or something is wrong.

Now let me say this, to begin with, an unsaved man has a defiled conscience, right? Titus chapter 1, verse 15. The unsaved man has a defiled conscience. But you know what happens when you get saved? When you get saved, you get a conscience, Hebrews 9:14 that is, remember this word? Purged. When you are saved, at that moment your conscience is cleaned. And then it becomes rather incisive. You know Christian people are much more sensitive to evil, aren't they? Why? Because they don't have a defiled conscience, they've got a purged one. And with a purged conscience, the Spirit of God reveals to you right and wrong.

Now when he says I have a good conscience, he means that as his conscience speaks to him it is saying, friend, you are doing what is good. You see? I have a good conscience. In other words, my conscience is not damning me. He's saying, pray for me I deserve it, as best I read my conscience, I am sincere. I believe my life is right before God, and I want to serve Him with my whole heart. I'm in the place He's called me, I'm the man to do the job, I deserve your prayers. That's a significant thing, isn't it?

You want to know something? I'll be real honest with you. When a guy says, pray for me, or pray for my ministry, I want to know that he deserves my prayers. Have you ever thought like that? I think like that. A guy came to me one time, I'll never forget it. He says, "I want you to pray for me." When anybody asks me that, I'll say, well, what do you do or pray about what? He says, "Well I have a terrific ministry." And I said, "Well, what's your ministry?" He says, "Well I have a answer service ministry." And I never heard of an answering service ministry and so I said, you tell me about it. He said, "Well I bought a machine and all the electronic equipment," it cost him over \$10,000, "by the time I was done I invested \$20,000 into it." And he says, "we've been operating six months." And people call into this thing, and you leave a message, a typical answering deal, and then you follow up and so forth. And he says, "We're praising God, that in six months, we've seen two people, come to

Christ. We think they're really saved." And I said, ah, almost \$20,000 in six months and two people are saved? I said, my friend, let me tell you something, you could sell your machines, go door to door, and in a week, under the control of the Spirit of God, you'd probably see more than that come to Christ. I really can't conscientiously feel that that kind of a ministry is maximizing either your money or your talent.

You know there are a lot of gospel blimps around. You ever see that film, The Gospel Blimp? Where the guy wants to witness to his neighbor, so he hires a blimp to drop gospel bombs in his backyard? I mean there's plenty of that going on.

And so when a man says, pray for me, I want to know whether he deserves my prayers, right? And that's not being judgmental, that's only being sane. Prayer time needs to be used expeditiously. I don't want to waste it on something that God is saying, Oh, John, don't pray about that. I'm not even in that, you know. If I'm goin' pray, I want to be praying for what God's doing.

And so he says, there may have been some question in their minds you see. We don't know the background, but there may have been some questions in their minds as to why he left to begin with. And he says, pray for me, I'm God's man, and as best I know my heart, it's pure, my conscience is clear. I believe I'm doing what God wants me to do.

Oh, you know something people? It's wonderful to have a good conscience like that, isn't it? It's wonderful to have a conscience that's not forever accusing. And you know and yet, I think all the time, because we're human and because we're sinful our conscience always has some work to do, right? You know people will say to me after a sermon, sometimes, ah, that convicted me. You know what you're saying in effect? That your conscience managed to dig up, some area where you're not cuttin' it, right? It just flashed it up on the screen of your mind, and said, ah, you're not doing that. Or you are, and you shouldn't be. That conscience just is there to do that. And here's a man who actually says, I've examined my heart, before God. I believe I have a pure conscience, nothing accusing me.

You know, Paul said in Acts 24:16, "And in this, I exercise myself." He says you know what I do? I work on this, I exercise myself, I work at this one. You work at what, Paul? "To have always a conscience void of offense toward God." See, I work, if I find my conscience convicting me in a certain area of weakness, I get in there and I shore that area up. If the Spirit of God's bugging me about not praying, I'm goin' take care of that, if the Spirit of God says I'm not faithful in my teaching of the Word of God, in my study, in sharing Christ, I don't know, whatever it is, I get into that area and I shore it up. That's what he says. I exercise myself toward this. To always have a good conscience, toward God, and then he says, toward men.

And there's an opposite to that. First Timothy 1:19. He says, "Holding faith and a good conscience," watch, "which some, having put away." You see some people try to shove, some Christians, try to

shove conscience aside and just go on being disobedient, and just kind of pushing conscience away. You know what they did? They put away the faith and they made shipwreck. You know something? Conscience is the rudder that guides the ship. Throw away the rudder, and you'll wreck the ship. That's exactly what happened to Hymenaeus and Alexander. And Paul says, I delivered them to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. That's disciplining two Christians because they pushed their, their conscience aside. They threw away the rudder and they made a shipwreck out of their lives.

Conscience is very important, and you'd better respond to conscience, because pushing conscience away can make a shipwreck of your Christian life. And so he says, pray for me, I deserve it.

Secondly he says, pray for me, I need it. I need it. Verse 19, "I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner." I want to get there. You say, you mean that guy actually believed that prayer works? Does he believe that if he was going 30 miles an hour, and they started praying, he'd go 90 miles an hour to get there? He believed that. It doesn't sound too much like fatalism to me. Not at all. He knew God heard and answered prayer. There's no blind fatalism.

At the end of the book of Romans in chapter 15, verse 30, Paul says, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service, which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted by the saints; that I may come unto you." See, pray for me, that I'll get out of this mess and get over to you. Paul believed in prayer. That's the same Paul that wrote Romans, chapter 9, and believed in the sovereignty of God. And yet he believed that prayer made things possible, that otherwise couldn't be possible. So supplication is our responsibility toward God.

Beloved, I've given you, in three weeks the basic ethics of the Christian life, and I want you to know something. You are not now, unaccountable. All these things need to be operative in your life.

But wait, there are two other things in the passage, which I want to briefly point out. And then we'll close.

I've given you ethics, a whole list of them. And I've given you the ethics, simple, aren't they? Yet profound. Now let me take you a step further. You know, it's one thing to give me a list of something, it's another thing, to give me an example. I remember when I was a little boy I wanted to be a professional baseball player. I wanted to be that so bad. First thing my dad ever gave--he started it all--he gave me a catcher's mitt when I was one. But anyway, now I wanted to be a baseball player, and I just wanted it so bad. And I bought baseball books, and I read little boys' baseball books: how to pick up a grounder, how to catch a fly, how to hold your bat, all the little deal. But you know something? I could have read little boys' baseball books all my life, and never been able to play

baseball. I needed to go watch somebody do it. And that was the next step.

I remember my dad taking me down, and the old long ago, to Gilmore Field to watch the Hollywood Stars. And I'd sit in the bleachers and I watched certain guys. And then I'd go watch the old Angels at Wrigley Field. And I used to watch, and I had the guys that I used to watch to see how they did it. And I began to pattern my life after other people.

I can tell, without a question, if I never knew Lenny Seidel, if I watched him play softball, I could tell where he was raised: Near Boston because he stands exactly like Ted Williams. When he was a kid there's no question about it, He patterned himself after Ted Williams.

This is how we learn, not only by listing out all the do's and don'ts and how tos, but by seeing somebody else, right?

The Spirit of God gives us some examples. Are you ready for this?

Go to verse 7. I want you to see that God doesn't just expect you to take the book and learn how to do it. He wants to show you somebody else who did it, and you can pattern your life. Verse 7, I love this, "Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God," now watch, "whose faith," do what? "follow, considering the end of their manner of life." You know what he says? Hey, you remember those wonderful people? Those men of God, who first came to you? Who first dispensed unto you the gospel, who first taught you the Word of God? Remember them? Follow their faith. Pattern your life after their lives. Look at the results. Consider how their life ended, and you pattern your life the same way. That's our example.

You say, to whom does he refer? He refers to their leaders, their chiefs, their elders, their teaching pastors, their evangelists, their prophets. Those who you remember, back in chapter 2 verse 3 and 4, came and declared the truth unto them and were accompanied by signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit. He says remember, and I think the word remember indicates that he's talking about their past leaders as opposed to the present ones, although, I think both could well be in view. Look at those that God has set over you, and look how they live, and what the results of it are. Consider the end of it.

Now the term end is used sometimes in the Bible to speak of death, but other times it's used just to speak of results. ekbasis, it can speak either way. So he's saying, look at the lives of those who, who lived before, the originators of the ministry there. Look how they lived and how they died. And then look at the living examples, and see the results of the kind of life they live. See their faith and follow it. Follow it.

I'll tell you something, everybody patterns his life after somebody. You might as well choose the right somebody, right?

And so he says, you look at your past leaders, you mark em, you follow em.

There's a little note in here that's so good. You want to know the characteristic of a really good leader in the church? Remember them who have the rule over you, that's number one, they ruled, number two, who have spoken unto you, what? the Word of God.

That is forever and ever people, and you're goin', I know you're goin' get tired of hearing it before the Lord comes. But it's forever and ever the obligation of the ministry--speaking the Word of God.

Well, he says remember it. Now this is not idolatrous veneration. This is just spiritual memory. Follow them. You know what the Greek word follow is? Mimetai, from which we get mimic. Be mimics, be mimics of the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the teachers, that God places over you.

You say, oh, I don't know about that MacArthur, you follow men, and oh, I used to hear people say that all the time, don't follow men. Well, I don't buy that. You know there were two men that I never met, but that when I was a young Christian, in seminary, two men had a profound effect on my life. Three men, one of them was E. M. Bounds, who wrote a little book called, Power Through Prayer, that I used to read and reread. And that book just shattered me, every time I read it. That man became a pattern for me--a pattern that I have never lived up to. But that is there, still. Another man was John Payton, who was a missionary. I read and reread his biography, and his commitment became a pattern for me. The other man, believe it or not was Thomas O'Kempus, who wrote Imitation of Christ, very mystical and very kind of far out, almost esthetic, and yet in that, the devotion of the man became a pattern for me, as a backdrop for the tracing of my own life. And all my life, I have to honestly say, that I am a product of laying myself against many different human patterns. And so are you, aren't you?

Listen to Second Thessalonians 3:7: "For ye yourselves know how you ought to follow us." You hear that? Paul says you know you ought to be following us, watch, "for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you." He says, we lived rightly among you and you ought to follow our patterns.

Even in Hebrews 6:12, right in the book we're studying, that same truth is brought out. "Don't be slothful," he says, "but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." The Bible repeats that you ought to follow other men, who are your examples in faith.

In First Timothy chapter 4, verse 12, Paul said to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." You be a pattern that others can trace their life on. In Titus, he says the same thing. Titus 2:7 he says, you young men,

in all things showing yourself a pattern of good works. You're to be a pattern. Again tracing other people's lives against you. The apostle Paul repeatedly said, be followers of me. But the key was this, he said, "Be followers of me," what? "even as I am of Christ."

And that takes us to verse 8. Look at it. And here beloved, is the ultimate pattern for the Christian to follow. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever."

You know you can trace your life over men, and that's good. But, ah, it's not best. Because men will fail and men will change, right? And men will disappoint. But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Men come and go, Jesus abides.

Your first group of examples, men. The supreme example, who? Jesus Christ who never varies, who never changes. And you notice it uses His earthly name, Jesus. It uses His earthly title, Messiah, Christ. Why? Because it's presenting an earthly pattern. He says to them, watch, follow the men who were your leaders, but oh, if you really want to pattern your life, pattern it after the human Jesus.

Let me ask you something? You want to see sustained love? The first ethic we talked about. You want to see sustained love? Who are you going to see it in better than anybody else? John 13, "Jesus having loved them," loved them what? "unto the end." Sustained love.

You want to see sympathy? Who you goin' see it in? Who you goin' see sympathy in? You hear it in John chapter 12, as He goes to the grave of Lazarus, and He begins to do what? To weep. You want to see sexual purity? You'll see it in Jesus like you'll never see it anywhere else. As He denounces the vile sin of sexual immorality in John 8, and then cleanses the immoral woman.

You want to see satisfaction, contentment? You'll hear it, when Jesus says, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." You'll hear it when He says, "The foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." That's satisfaction.

You want to hear steadfastness? Listen to Him in Matthew 4, as Satan confronts Him three times, and three times He says no. I'll trust God's Word, I reject yours. Steadfast.

You want to see separation from the world? Listen to His prayer in John 17:16, He said, "Father, they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

You want to see sacrifice? Listen to the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:2 when he says, "And walk in love as Christ also loved us, (listen) and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God as a sweet smelling savor." Never a greater sacrifice than His.

You want to see submission? Listen to Jesus in the garden as He prays, "Not my will," what? "Thine be done."

You want to see supplication? Watch Him in the garden as He prays for Himself, for His disciples, and for all the Christians who would ever be born, in the world.

My friends, the perfect example, the unchanging yesterday, today and forever, example is Jesus Christ. The ethics, great. The example, look at Jesus and mimic Him. And you also will find Him reproduced in the lives of men, after whom you can pattern your lives.

Lastly, you need more even, than ethics and an example. You say, well what more would you need? Well, I'll tell you something friend. If all you had is the ethics and the example, you might run out there and grunt and groan in your flesh and try to produce all this stuff, and you know what you'd have? Wood, hay and stubble, believe me. You can't do it in the flesh. You know what you need? You need the energy, oh, I like this. Watch verse 20, and we're goin' wrap up. "Now the God of peace." I love that title, don't you? "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," now watch, "make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. So let it be."

You want to hear something exciting? He gives you the ethics, He gives you the example and then He gives you the energy. You say what's the energy? It's the power of God. Look what it says, "Now the God of peace." Now jump to verse 21, "Make you perfect, working in you, that which is well pleasing in His sight."

You want to know something? Your Christian growth has nothing to do with your own power. It's God working in you, right? Boy, what an exciting thing. And you can have all these little rules. You can say I'm going to do them. I'm going to love, love-love-love. I'm going to be sympathetic, sympathy-sympathy. And I'm going right down the line, in the flesh, wipe out! You'll never do it!

So you look at Jesus Christ, and you say all right God. The power is yours, it isn't mine, do it in my life. And notice, verse 20 just explodes with the power of God: "The God of peace that raised again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." You know what that is? That's the greatest display of divine power in the history of the universe, isn't it? What God accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ. So he's simply saying, the powerful God, He's the one who can make you perfect. You can't function on your own energy. You can't just whip out your flesh and decide that you're goin' to be spiritual. It doesn't work like that.

I like Second Corinthians 3:5. It says this, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Isn't that good? You can't do anything. Notice it says He wants to make you perfect. That means complete and mature, lacking nothing, in every good work,

total. God doesn't do half jobs, believe me. He wants to make you totally mature, perfect. It says He wants you even to do His will, in everything, in everything, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight. Oh, I'm so excited to know that God puts down the orders, and then God's the only one that can do them in me, as I yield to Him. And the question of the Christian life is the question of yieldingness.

Listen to Second Corinthians 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." How you going to have all sufficiency, how you going to abound to every good work? When God is able to make it happen in you, and that's only a question of your yielding to His power, as long as you try to do it in your own strength you're fighting the power that can do it. Just let God do it, will you? And then when He does it, don't you like the end of verse 21, who gets the glory? When He does it, who gets the glory? Jesus Christ. And that's the way it ought to be. He deserves it, doesn't He? You remember this verse? I'm sure you do. "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to do" of what? "His good pleasure." It's God. There's your energy beloved.

The New Covenant's a wonderful thing, isn't it? But it's not just free grace and do what you want, there's some ethics. Beyond the ethics there's a living, vital example. Beyond the example there's energy, and it's the power of God in your life.

And he closes the formal part of his letter by saying, do it God, do it! And He will if you yield to Him.

Then he closes with personal notes. "I beseech you brethren, bear with the word of exhortation." He says I know it's been hard and heavy, but hang in there, "for I have written a letter unto you in few words." You say few words? Does he know how long we've been in this? You want to hear something startling? You can read the whole book in less than an hour. It's been brief, powerful, heavy--he says bear with it. He figures they're going to read it again. Then he says know ye that our brother Timothy is out of prison and ah, if he'll come along, we'll be seeing you pretty soon. "Greet all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. The Italian's greet you." He must have been hanging around a group of Italian Christians from Rome at this time. Then he closes this way, "Grace with you all. So let it be."

Father, we thank you that we've been able to study this marvelous book and we've taken the time tonight to bring it to a conclusion. Thank you for what we've learned about your standards. Thank you for what the Spirit of God has taught us. And our Father we realize that though we have the ethics and the example, the energy is God in us, so may we yield. Help us to carry out these things that we have learned tonight, that we might have joy, that those who labor as teachers and ministers might have joy, and that the watching world might have joy when they see our testimony and come to our Christ.

Thank you, Father, for helping me through this book. I pray that you'll indelibly imprint in our minds all that was divine, and that you'll cause us to forget, that which was human. We pray Lord tonight, that no one would even leave this place without making a commitment to Jesus Christ and that no Christian would leave here if their conscience is still accusing them in any area. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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