

**Lesson 56**  
**Personal Responsibilities in Christ**  
**Hebrews 13:18-25**

With this fifty-sixth message, we come to the end of this exposition of the Book of Hebrews. I trust that the time we have spent in this epistle has been as valuable to you as it has been for me. The Holy Spirit has used this book to change my own life and make me more appreciative of Christ, my Savior and Lord.

In the first message on Hebrews, we assumed that this book would show us the superiority of Christianity to Judaism and also point out that the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant (Mosaic Law). However, our ultimate goal for the study of Hebrews was to love and respect the person of Jesus Christ more. All our efforts in the Book of Hebrews have been fruitless unless we have come to see in a more distinct way the beauty, exaltation and holiness of Jesus Christ. After all, Christianity is Christ; it is knowing, loving, and obeying Jesus Christ, and that is life eternal. *“And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent”* (John 17:3).

In the first message on Hebrews, I quoted a section from William R. Newell’s commentary on Hebrews. Has this book done this to us?

The great object of Hebrews, then, is to set before these believers’ eyes, Christ, the Son of God; the Son of Man; the Great High Priest in Heaven; and to cause them constantly to occupy their thought and worship with God, into Whose presence Christ by His blood has brought them.

The thirteenth chapter of Hebrews deals with the practical aspects of Christianity. We have seen the Christian’s social responsibilities and his ecclesiastical responsibilities, but now we look at some personal responsibilities.

RESPONSIBILITY TO PRAY - Hebrews 13:18-19

*“Pray for us ...”* -- The author of the Book of Hebrews requested that the Hebrew-Christians pray for him and his fellow-laborers. We see the author’s humility, for he does not consider himself on such a high spiritual plane as not to need the prayers of other Christians. The author knew the power of prayer and had great needs even though he was apparently a recognized Christian leader. The author was a man who believed in prayer. He was a brilliant theologian but he was a simple man of faith and knew that prayer was essential to his spiritual growth. This request of the author is very similar to the request of the Apostle Paul of the Ephesian Christians.

*“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given; to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel”* (Eph. 6:18-19).

Every Christian needs enlightenment and empowerment. Life is too big for us to handle alone, too complicated and too structured. Life is often cruel and deceitful and it is so easy to get bewildered and confused by it. Prayer offered to God can somehow move God to cut through the illusions of life and bring us understanding and perspective. Never underestimate the power of prayer!

George Mueller said, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of God's willingness."

Martin Luther said, "None can believe how powerful prayer is, and what it is able to effect, but those who have learned by experience."

**"... for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things."** -- The author was persuaded that he and his companions had a right to ask for prayer, for they knew they were doing God's will and were desirous of pleasing Christ in their ministries. They were not "gold-brickers" or "leeches" or "sluff-offs" but dedicated to furthering Christ and His kingdom.

When a Christian asks you to pray for him, do it right then or soon after, or you might forget to pray at all.

**"And I urge you all the more to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner."** -- Apparently the author felt that in some wonderful and mysterious way their prayers could move God to set the circumstances that he might see them sooner than was humanly expected.

Let's face it, there is a mystery between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, but while we know that prayer does not change God's secret plan, it does bring the plan of God into our experience, and without prayer we will not see God work much for us.

RESPONSIBILITY TO DO GOD'S WILL - Hebrews 13:20-21

**"Now the God of peace ..."** -- The author just requested the Hebrew-Christians to pray for him and now he prays for them. This section is sometimes used as a benediction at the end of a worship service, but it is actually a prayer. The author began by praying that the "God of peace" would do something for these Hebrew-Christians. Why is God addressed as the "God of peace"? Because the Hebrew-Christians were in great turmoil over the fact that they were undergoing tremendous social persecution from the unsaved Jewish world. The pressure was so great that some were thinking about leaving Christianity to go back into Judaism. They needed stability, peace and comfort, and only the God of peace could give it to them. Their hope for peace was not in running from their unpleasant circumstances but in trusting the living God through Christ. **"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful"** (John 14:27)

The nearest modern equivalent to "the peace of God" is "sound mental health." We all want mental stability in the midst of crisis, and in Christ we are in touch with the God of mental

health, who gives us His peace in the midst of our conflicts.

**“... who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep ...”** -- The peace of God belongs to the true Christian because he is united to the living Christ who was resurrected from the dead. Christ is our life and in Him we can find the power to live the Christian life. **“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”** (Phil. 4:13). Christ is called the “great Shepherd of the sheep.” As Christians we know that we not only share Christ’s life but that we are His sheep and He is our Shepherd. As the good Shepherd, Christ died for us and we have experienced His love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, redemption, righteousness, holiness, and glory. We have God’s peace when we contemplate Christ’s work for us. However, Christ is also the “great Shepherd” because He takes care of all true believers in Christ, who are His sheep. **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand”** (John 10:27-28). Christ continues to love us, take care of us, and guide us because we are His sheep and He is our Shepherd.

Sheep are the most helpless creatures. Sheep have no wisdom and no weapons. They are forever running off and getting lost and if anything attacks them they are utterly helpless to defend themselves. This is why sheep need a shepherd, and this is why we need Christ, the great Shepherd. He is our source, our provider, our strength, and He watches over us in tender, loving care. This brings us peace and sound mental health because we know that Christ cares for and loves us.

A converted Russian Jew told the story about the shepherd and the sheep in the poor parts of Russia where he once lived in a village away in the interior. In that town everyone raised a little lamb, nurturing it to be a good-sized sheep to kill in the winter for food. Nearly everyone in the town had a sheep, and there was one man in the town who was the shepherd of the flock of sheep. Every morning the shepherd came down the street and gave a certain call and the people opened up their gates and let the sheep out and they would follow the shepherd. The sheep knew his call; they knew he was going to lead them to green pastures. When the day was done, the shepherd brought back the sheep into the street and the sheep were called by their owners. The converted Jew went on to make his point and said, “You cannot realize the shame of a man who calls himself a shepherd that would come back in the evening minus one sheep. He would have to leave town if he allowed one sheep to be stolen or lost. He would lose his reputation and standing in the town as the shepherd.” Christ, you see, is the great Shepherd because he loses none of His sheep.

**“... through the blood of the eternal covenant ...”** -- The “blood of the eternal covenant” refers to the blood of Jesus Christ who shed His blood that the people of God of all ages might have the forgiveness of sins. The New Covenant is an eternal covenant that Christ has made with God and with His people that all who apply the death of Christ to themselves shall be saved for all eternity. The blood of Christ is the basis for our “so great salvation.” We are saved “by, with and through” the blood of Christ.

**“To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood ...”** (Rev. 1:5b).

***“... the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”*** (Acts 20:28b).

***“... through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption”*** (Heb. 9:12).

When men, who call themselves Christians, speak of those who believe in the blood of Christ as teaching a “slaughter-house religion,” they declare themselves rejecters of true Christianity.

In verse 20, we have mentioned both the death and the resurrection of Christ. The cross means the forgiveness of sins and a break from the old life of self-reliance. The resurrection means union with the life of Christ and power to live the Christian life.

***“... even Jesus our Lord ...”*** -- The secret to Christianity is Christ. Christ is our only source of power, and this power now resides in the Christian by the indwelling Christ.

The greatest power in the world is not found in the hydrogen bomb but in the power of Christ Himself.

The United States of America now has great nuclear submarines by which the oceans of the world can be navigated without ever coming to the surface. The secret of their power lies in a nuclear reactor hidden away in the depths of the submarine. That strange, remarkable force does not need any refueling, but is constantly giving off energy, so the submarine never needs to go into port for refueling. So it is in the Christian life. We have the indwelling Christ who lives in us and we need no man-made or outside source of power. We only need to call upon the power of the One who dwells within us, even Jesus Christ.

***“... equip you in every good thing to do His will ...”*** -- The author’s prayer is that God would equip them to do God’s will. God not only saves us through Christ but also equips us to do His will. God equips, but Christians must do God’s will by faith and obedience. God prepares, but man must work at doing God’s will as revealed in the Bible.

How has God equipped you? What are you doing with the spiritual gifts God has given you? Are you submitted to do God’s will and use your gifts? God’s will can be boiled down to three basic concepts: 1) living a holy life; 2) reaching the lost; and 3) building the saints. These are three tasks that God has given all Christians to do to some degree, and by faith we can do them.

***“... working in us that which is pleasing in His sight ...”*** -- God not only equips each believer but He also empowers each one to get the job done. ***“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure”*** (Phil. 2:12-13). We can work because God is at work in us. God equips and supplies the power, and when the Christian is depending upon Christ’s power to work in Him, this is pleasing to God. God gives the ability and supplies the power but we Christians must use that power by faith. God is working through us, not apart from our human wills, but right along with them.

**“... through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”** -- Here is the secret to Christian living - it is through Christ. The words “through Jesus Christ” are the most dynamic, the most revolutionary, the most life-changing words ever to be uttered by man.

When we are living life through Christ, then we are living life as God intended man to live. Christ is fulfilling; Christ is adequate; Christ is strength; and Christ is satisfying!

RESPONSIBILITY TO ACCEPT EXHORTATION - Hebrews 13:22

**“But I urge you brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.”**

-- Many parts of the Book of Hebrews are exhortations to keep professing Christians from falling into apostasy and to get true Christians to push on into Christian maturity. At times the author gives blistering and scathing exhortations for them to examine the reality of their Christian commitment, but he always ends up by comforting true believers in the truth that once a person is saved he can never be lost.

**“For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it”** (Heb. 2:1).

**“... how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”** (Heb. 2:3a)

**“Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it”** (Heb. 4:1).

**“Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity ...”** (Heb. 6: 1a).

**“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES”** (Heb. 10:26-27).

**“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God ...”** (Heb. 12:15).

These warnings were given to shake mere professing Christians out of lethargy and get them to make commitment to Christ and also to make true Christians want to push on for Christ.

The message of the Book of Hebrews is that Christians are to persevere for Christ with patient endurance. Christians are to never give up, never quit, never give in. Christians are to push on for Christ, proving with their lives that they are true believers.

When Winston Churchill was a young man, he was a student at Harrow, a preparatory school in Britain. He was in the bottom third of his class, not a strong leader, always in trouble and seemingly not destined for anything great. He finished his schooling and went into the military in Africa and India and came back to Britain and entered politics. On two different occasions, he was named the Prime Minister of the British Empire. One day towards the end of his career, he

was invited back to speak at Harrow to address the student body. The headmaster of the school told the students that one of the greatest orators and leaders of modern days was going to address them so they should listen carefully and take many notes. When the day came, Winston Churchill was introduced by the headmaster with a glowing introduction. Churchill, a 5 ft. 5 in., 235 lb. dynamo got up to make his address and said, "Young gentlemen, never give up, never give up, never give up, never, never, never, never!" He sat down and the people were stunned, but he got his point across - never give up.

Remember, Christian, when you are tempted to give up Christianity: Never give up! It is always too soon to quit. Faith in God will enable you to hang in there five minutes longer. Never give up. Never!

CLOSING REMARKS - Hebrews 13:23-25

***"Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you. Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you."*** -- This epistle closes with some personal greetings which are self-explanatory. We do not have to comment on them because they explain themselves.

***"Grace be with you all."*** -- The author ends His epistle with a reminder of God's grace. Grace is a key word in Christianity for it tells us that our salvation is all of God. We did not deserve salvation; we did not work for it; we did not earn it. It was given to us by God because He chose us and sent His Son to die for us. It is God's grace that saved us, grace that keeps us, grace that sanctifies us, grace that satisfies us and grace that will one day glorify us. When we understand grace, we can say as did the Apostle Paul, ***"... by the grace of God I am what I am!"*** (1 Cor. 15:10)

CONCLUSION

What do you know about God's grace? Have you been touched by God's grace? Do you understand what it means to be saved by God's grace? To be saved by God's grace means that God gives you salvation as a free gift through the death and resurrection of Christ. God gives it to you apart from any human works or human merit. He gives you salvation in Christ because He fixes His elective love on you.

Salvation is a gift and if it is a gift all you can do is receive it through faith. By faith, you receive what God gives you. Have you received God's gift of salvation in Christ? You cannot work for salvation; you cannot weep for salvation; you cannot buy salvation. To be saved, you can only receive Christ and His death for your sins, and when you do, you will understand that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ.