

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 14 August 2022. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Remember!

Hebrews 13:7-8

One of the best ways that you can tell how important a subject is to someone is to take note of how often that person mentions that subject. For instance, one year when Seán was still a little guy, Seán reminded us, every single day over a period of several weeks, that his birthday was coming. Additionally, he sang “Happy Birthday” to himself several times per day, and encouraged Timothy to join him in the refrain. (Actually, *all* our kids have done this at one point or another.) When our kids remind us of their birthday every day for weeks on end, we feel it safe to assume that their birthday is important to them!

Well, it’s the same way with the Lord. If you want to know how important something is to the Lord, one way you can do so is to find out how many times He mentions that subject in His Word. For example, consider the word “remember” (as well as other forms of the word, such as “remembrance, memorial, memory, etc.”). I once did a study of the subject, and found that forms of the word “remember” are found **306 times** throughout the Bible. This doesn’t even include the *negative* ways of expressing “remember” (such as, “do not forget”). If the forms of the expression “do not forget” were to be included, the number of commands or warnings in Scripture to “remember” would be well near a thousand!

In light of all these commands in God’s Word to “remember,” it would seem that it is extremely important to the Lord that we “remember” the things that He has told us! The fact is, our memories *need* to be stirred up constantly, because we so easily forget the things of the Lord.

In the portion of **Hebrews 13** that we will read today, the Apostle Paul lists some *people* that God wants Christians to remember. First, there is a special group of people that God wants all Christians to remember. Also, there is a *particular* Person whom we should remember above all else—and that Person is the Lord Jesus Christ. This, really, is the whole point of Paul’s letter to the Hebrews. Paul wrote this letter to fainting, weary Christians, who were suffering under the heavy hand of persecution, in order to remind them of *who Jesus is*. He wrote to remind them (and *us*) of why all our hope rests in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. It is my prayer that every Christian in this room will be stirred to remembrance today, and that you will leave here with a more burning passion to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The title of this message is ***Remember!***

Read Hebrews 13:7.

In this verse, Paul exhorts us, first of all, to...

I. Remember the faith of the under-shepherds (v. 7).

In this verse, Paul is exhorting the people to “***remember***” those that had the rule over them. In other words, they were to remember the pastors of their local churches, whom they had personally known, and to whom they had submitted themselves. He exhorts believers to “***consider the end of their conversation.***” In other words, they were to consider the manner in

which their faithful pastors were continually serving the Lord; and as they thought back on their pastors' lives, they were to consider the "end," or the "outcome," of their pastors' faithful service to God. (The Greek word for "end" has the idea of "outcome.") Paul is exhorting them to "remember" the impact that these men's faithful preaching (and living) of the Word of God had had in their own lives; and with that burning memory, they were to follow their example.

With this in mind, let's talk about who a "pastor" is, and what his job is. A pastor in California once summed up the job of a pastor very well when he addressed young pastors with these words of encouragement and warning:

"Welcome to the most spiritually intense and most wonderfully rewarding calling in life. Welcome to a lonely life filled with close, rewarding, wonderful relationships. Welcome to the 'good fight of faith.' Welcome to the sheepfold. Welcome to the vocation that is very near to the heart of the Great Shepherd. God's people need you.And your ruthless enemy has already determined how he will take you *out* of this life-calling. His sights are set. His traps are laid. But the church of the living God is depending on *you*. The flock of God awaits your firm but loving guidance. God's people await your biblical care and passionate leadership. If you answer the call and depend on God's power, many lives and many families will be changed forever."¹

This is a very biblical description of the pastor. Each pastor has been placed in a very special, God-ordained position; and his life influences many. Now, there certainly is no "respect of persons" with God. God does not have a "caste system" of "more important" and "less important" people in His kingdom. There are no "elites." The New Testament clearly teaches that *every* believer (whether he be a man, woman, or child) is a king *and* priest before God, to offer up acceptable sacrifices of praise and service to God, day and night. Yet, there is a particular group of men (not women, but *men*) whom God has chosen to place in a position of authority and spiritual guidance. They are men whom He intends to be blameless *examples* to His people. That group of men is known by several names. For one, they are known as "pastor."

Read Ephesians 4:11-16.

Read 1 Peter 5:1-5.

We use the word "pastor" all the time; but what does the word mean? The word "pastor" is translated from the Greek word *poimen*, which literally means "feeder." This word is usually translated as "shepherd," because that is what a shepherd does: he feeds the sheep. The teaching of Scripture, then, is clear: the pastor is an *earthly* "undershepherd," who has been charged with "feeding the flock" of the *Chief* Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren, pastoring the flock of God is not a light thing! When God speaks of the "flock," He is speaking of *His own* local assembly, the church of Jesus Christ. The church is not just a club of some kind, in which people can float in and out as they please. Though the church is located *on* earth, it is *not* of earthly origins. It is of *heavenly* origin. It is a *divine* institution. It is established by God; and its decisions and actions, when Spirit-led, are ratified in Heaven. The Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, is seated in Heaven. The church is *God's* people! The church is under the direct authority of the King of Heaven; and the pastor has the

¹ Paul Chappell, *The Spiritual Leader*.

responsibility before *the King of Heaven* to feed *His* people! What an awesome and fearful responsibility that is!

Does God take His charge to the pastor seriously? He certainly does! The pastor—the “undershepherd”—has the responsibility to make sure that *God’s* people are being fed aright—that they are receiving correct doctrine from God’s Word. Contrary to the popular teaching of our day, there is no “spiritual, invisible, universal church,” or “spiritual, invisible, universal body of Christ,” in which Christians can float around, and in which they are not accountable to any man. Christ’s *ecclesia*, or “assembly,” is, by definition, local and visible, and not universal and invisible. God’s people are not commanded to sit down in front of a television screen to be fed by a man they don’t know; they are commanded to *assemble together* to be fed. And who has the responsibility to feed them? The pastor. In the local church, there is responsibility and accountability, for both the pastor *and* the flock.

By the way, if you want an idea of where the “universal church” mentality leads, listen to this quote from John Ryle, in his book, *The True Church*: “It [the “spiritual, invisible, universal church”] is a Church *which is dependent upon no ministers upon earth*... The life of its members does not hang upon church-membership, and baptism, and the Lord’s Supper—although they highly value these things, *when they are to be had*.”² Do you hear the dismissiveness of the local church in that statement? He’s saying that the “big, universal church” is the *real* church, and that the local church is “nice,” but not absolutely essential. According to Ryle, “*when*” these things that God has commanded (such as church membership, and baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, and pastors) are “to be had,” they’re o.k.; but they’re not essential.

Folks, anything that *Christ* has commanded is not secondary, or “non-essential.” If Christ commanded it, it *is* essential. This includes pastors. God has given pastors “*for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*.” And what is the “body of Christ”? It is the “*church, which is his body*.”

Pastors are feeders of God’s flock. However, “feeding” is only part of the job. The pastor also has the responsibility to be an “overseer.” As we saw in **1 Peter 5:2**, the “feeders” of the flock (the pastors) are to take “*the oversight thereof*.” This is where we get the word “**bishop**.” The word “bishop” (*episkopos*) literally means “overseer.” A bishop isn’t someone who is high up in some kind of hierarchical system. A “bishop” doesn’t control many local churches and parishes, as the Catholic Church and many Protestant churches practice. No, “bishop” is simply another name for the “pastor” of a local, independent, autonomous, Bible-believing church.

The word “bishop” emphasises the pastor’s responsibility not only to *teach* God’s truth to God’s people, but also to be *watchful* of each individual person under his care, and to *protect* God’s people from ravenous wolves (false teachers). The bishop’s job is to make sure that the Word that he is teaching is being understood and *heeded* by each soul under his care. The pastor does his best to make *sure* that each person under his preaching truly understands the Gospel; and he *urges* each one to receive Christ as Saviour, and then be baptised and join the church, and serve the Lord within His body. The pastor also guides the members of the flock

² Kenneth T. Brookes, *Why Cumbereth It the Ground?* (West Redding CT: Danbury Baptist Press, 2014), p. 69.

to spiritual maturity. The Apostle Paul said, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*”; and every pastor urges the flock to do the same.

Read Hebrews 13:17.

Though the word “bishop” is not actually used in this verse, the bishop’s *responsibility* is described here. The bishop is one who “watches for people’s souls.” However, there is yet one more aspect of the pastor’s job. Not only is he to *feed* the Word, in his role as “pastor”; not only is he to be a “watcher” over the souls of others, in his role as “bishop”; but he is also to be a personal *example*. He himself is to *live* everything he preaches. He is to endeavour to live as spotless a life as possible. This responsibility is expressed by yet another title: **elder**. An “elder” is someone who is respected and emulated by reason of age and wisdom. Likewise, a pastor is an “elder” by reason of spiritual age and wisdom. A pastor doesn’t have to be *biologically* old; but he does need to be “old” in *spiritual* wisdom and maturity. He must have a firm knowledge of God’s Word, and a “tried and true” walk of faith.

We saw this word “elder,” as well as the *responsibility* of an elder, in **1 Peter 5, verses 1 and 3**. Let’s look now at one other Scripture that mentions the responsibility of an “elder.”

Read Acts 20:17-21, 28-38.

In **verse 28**, the roles of **pastor** (“feeder”), **bishop** (“overseer”), and **elder** (one who is to be an example to others) are all spoken of interchangeably. Notice also that Paul *personally carried out* all these pastoral responsibilities when He was pastor in Ephesus. Paul *poured out his life* to these people. He allowed himself to be spent for them. In return, the people loved him dearly, and followed his example. The people would never forget the burning testimony of this great servant named Paul!

Why am I going to such great lengths to define what a “pastor” is? Because it is important that you understand that a “pastor” isn’t just someone who fills an office. A true “pastor” is one who exemplifies the character of Jesus Christ to the flock. A pastor pours out his life in humble *service* to God’s people, and does everything in his power to make sure that not one soul “slips through the cracks.” A pastor also remains faithful to God to the end, regardless of whether he must suffer persecution, or even death, for the name of Jesus. **This is the reason that Paul exhorts the believers to “remember” their pastors.** He is not exhorting them to *worship* their pastors, or to treat them as little “divinities”: rather, he is exhorting them to remember their faithful *example of humble service*, and to live their lives the same way.

The Scripture is full of examples of people who lived by faith. Paul spent all of **Hebrews chapter 11** listing heroes of faith, whose faith we should imitate. However, a person whom you have *personally known*—someone who has poured his life into *your* life—often reaches your heart even more personally than a hero of the Bible (other than the Lord Jesus, of course). Those of us who know the Lord can probably all testify of a man of God—a pastor—who has deeply touched our lives, and who has given us a godly example to follow.

The question I would pose to you, then, is this: Are you following that pastor’s example? Are you considering the “end”—the outcome—of his life of faithful service (the impact that he has on other people)? “Remembering” doesn’t mean merely sitting around and *talking* about

“how wonderful Pastor So-and-So is.” Paul is exhorting us to remember our pastors’ faith with the intent of *copying* that kind of faith in our own lives!

Remember, faith isn’t just the embracing of intellectual truths; it is the putting of that faith to action! **Your life should be no less fervent and devoted to Jesus Christ than your pastor’s life is.** Does God have high expectations for the pastor? Of course He does. Why, then, should you strive to live to *lower* expectations? You may not be called to be a pastor; but you should be striving to impact others’ lives through your own faithful service to God, with no less fervency and zeal than your pastor does (or *did*, if he have already passed on to glory)! For example, does God expect that a bishop should bring up his children in such a way that they are in submission to him, with all gravity? He certainly does. This is one of the requirements of a bishop in **1 Timothy 3**. Why, then, should *you* strive for anything less in your home? Your children, even at the youngest ages, should be able to see that this Person called Jesus Christ is more important to you than *anyone or anything else* in the entire world! Your children should be able to see that serving God with all your heart is what brings true joy. They should be able to see that the time you spend in prayer, and in God’s Word, is the most precious time to you—even more so than your time with your family. They should be able to see that their coming to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ is infinitely more important to you than providing them with material things. *Everyone around you* should be able to see that imparting the Word of God to your children, and endeavouring to lead them to the Saviour, is something that is constantly on your heart and mind.

In short, each of us should remember our pastors by following their godly example, and by endeavouring to impact others’ lives for Jesus Christ. We should also remember our pastor by *praying* for him. The *Son of God Himself* craved the prayers of His disciples in Gethsemane! How much more does your pastor (who is a sinner, just like you) need your prayers for spiritual protection, guidance, and wisdom, from *His* Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ? Your pastor is a *prime target* of the enemy, because of the influence that he has over many people. Your pastor has great joy in serving the Lord; but he also has more spirit-crushing responsibilities, more pressures, and heartaches, and devastating disappointments, and temptations, and more feelings of loneliness, than most people can possibly comprehend. Pray for him; and pray for his wife, who also carries much of his heavy burden. Pray for his children, too. A pastor’s children are *also* prime targets of the enemy. They *very much* feel the pressures, heartaches, disappointments, and sorrows that their dad and mom feel (even though their parents try to shield them from it). Pray that the enemy will not succeed in *hardening their hearts* against God, or against the Gospel ministry, because of the negative things that they may perceive about the ministry, or because of the expectations that they might feel are being put upon them.

We all have heard of the famous Baptist pastor, Charles Spurgeon; and we all have heard of the many thousands of people who were saved through his preaching. Yet, to what did Spurgeon himself attribute his success? An American pastor once asked Spurgeon this question. He said, “I have long wished to see you, Mr. Spurgeon, and to put one or two simple questions to you....In our country, there are many opinions as to the secret of your great influence. Would you be good enough to give me your own point of view?” Spurgeon’s answer was, “My people pray for me.”³ Spurgeon wasn’t just saying that, folks.

³ J.C. Carlile, *Charles Spurgeon, the Great Orator* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour and Co., Inc., 1995), p. 20.

He had a rotation of members who prayed for him *while he was preaching* every Sunday. Brethren, are *you* praying for your pastor—not just on Sunday, but throughout the week? I need your prayers. (My wife and family need your prayers, too.) Remember your pastor!

II. Remember the faithfulness of the Good Shepherd (v. 8).

(**Read Hebrews 13:8.**) As we have seen, the purpose of “remembering” our pastors is that we might follow their example of faith in Jesus Christ. Yet, what would be the point of exercising faith in Jesus Christ **if Christ isn’t exactly who He claimed to be?** There would be no point whatsoever! If Jesus Christ were not the eternal, unchanging, immutable Son of God—the One in whom we can place all our trust for time and eternity—then we would be practicing a vain, dead, empty, pointless religion! That is why Paul, immediately *after* admonishing us to remember our pastors, and to follow their example of faith, reminds us of *who* the *Object* of our faith is. He said, “***Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.***”

In what way is Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever? Does this mean that all Christ’s ways of *dealing* with mankind are always exactly the same in every dispensation of history? No, it doesn’t. God has chosen to deal with men in different ways throughout history. For example, God instituted the nation of Israel in the Old Testament; but He has now instituted the church in the New Testament. God instituted the symbolic sacrifices of animals, and many other ceremonies, in the Old Testament; today, the amount of ritual in the church is very small, and much less complex. Yet, **salvation has always been (and always will be) by the unmerited grace of God;** and this grace has always been available to mankind because of the **Sacrifice of Christ on the cross.** Salvation has always been obtained by placing one’s complete faith in “***the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.***” The way of salvation has never changed, because it is rooted in the unchanging Person and character of Christ! Anything that is rooted in Christ’s Person and character will never change.

Now, this is a weighty truth; so, let’s look closely at it. First, let’s examine the *Person* of Jesus Christ. Who is He? He is the eternal Son of God—the second Person of the Triune God. He is God Almighty. As Man, He had a beginning, when He was conceived in Mary’s womb; but as God, He had *no* beginning. Let’s go back to **Hebrews 1**, and look at an Old Testament Scripture that the Apostle Paul quoted there.

Read Hebrews 1:8-12.

In **verses 10-12**, Paul is quoting from **Psalm 102:25-27**. In this Psalm, King David is praying to the LORD; and in his prayer, he says, “***Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.***” Now, again, I would remind you that in these verses, David is addressing *the LORD*. Yet, in **Hebrews 1**, when Paul quotes this psalm, he applies these words to *Jesus*. Paul is ascribing to Jesus everything that David ascribed to God—the power of Creation; eternity; and immutability! Paul is telling us that Jesus is God, and that because He is God, He never changes!

Now, this brings us to the *character* of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is God, His character cannot ever change. His perfect, righteous character is part of who He is. His character could

never be anything less than perfectly righteous, and balanced in every way. No aspect of God's character suffers at the expense of another. I could spend all afternoon speaking about the perfect character qualities of Jesus Christ: but there are two of His qualities that I would like to focus on--**justice and mercy**. How can a just God, who cannot "drop the charges" against sin, show mercy to the sinner? How can the God who said that "*the wages of sin is death*" not give the sinner what he deserves (which is an eternity in hell)? Here's how.

Titus 3:4-6

Read 1 Peter 3:18.

Christ's perfect righteousness is imputed to the sinner's account, as though it were his own, *because* Jesus paid the debt of our sin. God's just punishment upon sin (which *should have* been laid on us) was laid instead on Jesus; and on this basis, God is able to extend His mercy to all who will receive His Son by faith. Because of Christ's sacrifice in our place, God is able to "justify" the sinner—declare him to be righteous (even though he is, in fact, a sinner)!

No other way of salvation could have satisfied both the *justice* of God, and the *mercy* of God, than the one that God has provided through the death of His Son on the cross. The way of salvation that God has provided is rooted in His *character* of perfect justice *and* mercy; and it will not change. All who will simply place their faith in that sacrifice are declared "righteous," and are saved from death and hell. *Times* may change. *People* may scorn the theology of the Bible, and declare it outmoded. People's *ideas* about Christ may change, and be perverted. (For example, more and more people today are coming to think of Christ not as the God-Man, Jesus of Nazareth, but rather as some kind of "universal consciousness.") Yet, no matter what alternate ways of salvation people may come up with, Jesus never changes. He is still the only Way to the Father; and He has promised to save all who will come to Him.

That brings us to the *promises* of Christ. Because Christ is God, His character is unchanging; therefore, His *promises* are unchanging. The God who cannot lie has made this promise.

Read Hebrews 7:24-25.

To those who have placed their faith in Christ, these are words of great comfort. Christian, when doubts sometimes enter you mind as to whether you are still saved, *remember* this truth. Your Saviour has not changed. He has promised to give an *eternal* salvation. This promise cannot change, because it is rooted in Christ's eternal, unchanging character. He is ever faithful. He is ever true. He is the Good Shepherd, who has promised, "***My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.***" If you are saved, you are *in Him*. Your *feelings* will fluctuate; but your feelings cannot change Christ's promise of salvation, which is rooted in *Who He is*. Remember this; and with this knowledge, run the race with patience, just as countless saints have done before you! Keep "looking unto Jesus."

Conclusion: If you know Christ as your Saviour, today's Scripture is a call to "remember." We are called to remember the godly faith of God's ministers, and to imitate their faith. We are also called to remember the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. No matter how radically the world around you may change, or how dire your circumstances may be, *Jesus* will never change. He has saved you for time and eternity. So do not lose heart. Serve Him with all your might!

Perhaps you do not know for sure that you are saved. If so, this message is for you, as well. You have heard that salvation is obtained by placing your faith in Jesus alone. You cannot be saved partly by trusting in Christ, and partly in good works. God will not accept it. In **Romans 3**, Paul said, ***“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”*** If you have never truly placed your faith in Christ alone, you need to be saved. Trust in Him today!