

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever (i) (Quality: Very good)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 May 1995

Preacher: Mercer, Seth (1930-2017)

[0 : 00] in directing your thoughts to Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 13, and reading verses 7 and 8.

Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 13, and reading verses 7 and 8. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever.

Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 13, verses 7 and 8. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever.

forever. I'm sure that most, if not all of you, will know that we meet today, on this occasion, for the pastor's anniversary services.

And it is our desire, and I know that there are those here with me in this, that our desire concerning the services today is that our God may have all the praise and the honor and the glory.

[2 : 27] that it might be a day of true blessing for our souls. When the Lord brings poor, trembling men into the solemn work of the ministry, they are brought into the most solemn place that any poor mortal man can ever hold.

And they can only be sustained in their ministry as the Holy Spirit upholds them and helps them and continues with them until the work which God has given them until the work which God has given them is completed.

But to those that are brought into the solemn position as an under-shepherd, their position is, I was going to say, even more solemn.

But it is exceedingly solemn to hold such a position. And such as God brings them to the over-flock, for however long that is to be, they have this awesome responsibility before their God concerning the souls of those to which they minister.

And desiring that we may rightly consider that today we hold such services. And knowing that the Lord has upheld his servant, the beloved pastor here, through the years, until this present day.

[4 : 45] And it is therefore with this in my heart and seeking to be guided by the Holy Spirit to the right word to venture with, we have read these two verses.

They are joined together by the Holy Spirit. And therefore, first of all, with the help of the Holy Spirit, may we consider a little of the truth contained in verse 7.

And dear friends, how does it begin? remember them which have the rule over you who has spoken unto you the word of God.

Presently, in verse 17 in this same chapter, we have further instruction regarding a flock to whom God has given a pastor.

And there the Lord has been pleased that another word should be used. Instead of the word remember, we have this obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls as they that must give account that they may do it with joy and not with grief for that is unprofitable for you.

[6 : 43] Oh, the solemnity of being a pastor, of being a minister, and in this 17th verse it tells us a little more regarding that responsibility in these words for they watch for your souls as they that must give account that they may do it with joy and not with grief for that is unprofitable for you.

Oh, dear friends, what a responsibility then they have to watch for the souls of those that God may give them, to watch over their never-dying soul.

You see, I would that the Holy Spirit might so descend upon our hearts here today that we may be enabled, first of all, to consider this subject from the aspect of a pastor, but also from the aspect of the congregation.

They watch watch for your souls. You know, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, God there warned his servants about what this meant.

And if they were enabled to warn their hearers to flee from the wrath to come, they would be clear from their blood.

[8 : 39] heart. And if they failed to warn, to sound an alarm in the holy mountain of God, then the blood of the souls of the people would be on them.

Oh, how awful the very thought is. It has been said, and rightly so, that soul blood stains deep.

And I know this, that your pastor has sought, with the Lord's help, to blow the gospel trumpet through the years.

And those of you that worship here, and those of you that worship elsewhere, I'm sure it would be right that you've all heard these notes of warning, and so often contained, and has been expressed in our pulpits, as we may use such a word, in these words.

And you've heard them, and I have heard them, many times, but it's this, how stands the case, my soul, not as we express it in this moment, not someone else's soul, but how stands the case, my soul with thee.

[10 : 16] For heaven, are thy credentials clear? Are they? Are mine? Are yours? Are they clear? you? Ere long, you know, the hand of death will come upon us, and it can come very suddenly. But are we exercised to be prepared?

How stands the case, my soul, with thee? For heaven, are thy credentials clear? And John Kent, in that verse, he makes the credentials very clear, and it's this, is Jesus' blood thine only plea?

Is it? Friends, is it? Is Jesus' blood thine only plea? Has our religion been brought down to such a level?

Is he thy great forerunner there? Oh, to hear his voice saying to us, even today I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there, ye may be also.

[11 : 51] So then, regarding this solemn position, and I, of course, I speak concerning God's servants, every one of them, and in this particular case here today, those whom God is pleased to set over a flock.

And what a responsibility we have. I think that I could sincerely say that I feel the solemnity of my position at Grove Road Chapel Eastbourne more than ever, more than ever, and oh, the responsibility before God.

Now I'm going to ask you that are here as a question. Do you understand what that means?

Do you understand a little of how your pastor feels as he stands before you? You know, this is equally important in our gatherings together, and surely this, the way it is worded in verse seven, it says, doesn't it, remember them, remember them, and of course that means remember them in prayer.

I wonder how many of us, and thinking of it, whether you have a supply ministry, or whether you're favoured to have a God-given pastor, do you know what it is to pray for them?

[13 : 40] You know, these are searching questions, do you know what it is to pray for them? I've had those dear people through the years, I remember a late Mrs.

Stanton at Eastbourne, and in the very end of her life, the Lord opened her mouth to tell out just a little, and she was 92 years old, but the Lord opened her mouth to bear witness to the Lord's mercy and goodness to her in her long life.

And one day as I visited her, I said this, Mrs. Stanton, you are prayed for? Yes, she said, and I pray for you. I pray you up the pulpit treads, stairs, she meant.

I pray you up the pulpit steps. Friends, I wonder how many of you have prayed this poor man into this pulpit here this afternoon.

The Lord knows how many of you have. But I can tell you this, that the more prayer there is in our closet, the more hope there is that there will be food for our souls.

[15 : 07] The more prayer there is around our family altars, the more hope there is in our gatherings together with our families, as the case is.

Oh, you see, this is so necessary if there's to be, and I believe there has been much prayer put up regarding the services here today.

And oh, may I God hear and answer. This is the word of God and I've had to venture with it. You see, it is.

And friends, I ask another question. You know, over the years in my little preaching, it seems that over and over again I have to ask questions. And I'm going to ask you another one.

Have you come here today, praying, that the Lord would bless you and that his word might reach your heart with power, that there might be a word in season, that there might be a time of blessing?

[16 : 18] And have you joined with Jabez in his cries to his God and we know they were hurt? Oh, how thankful I've been for Jabez's prayer, have you?

And you know how he prayed, why he prayed to the God of Israel and his prayer was this, oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed and that thou wouldest enlarge my coast and that thine hand might be with me and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.

And have you been thankful for what follows? And God granted him that which he requested. So how vital then is the need of prayer in our gatherings together under the sound of the gospel.

Remember them which have the rule over you as your guide. There's another meaning of this, those that God sets upon the walls of Zion.

They are there as guides. And I remember dear Mr. George Rose, some of you may remember him, he used to say this, that a guide was of no use unless or until he had been that way himself.

[17 : 39] And so it is in the ministry. Solemn though the thought is to my own soul, we cannot preach the word of God with authority, with the help of the Holy Spirit only as we are directed into the truth and as the Lord leads his servants in the way that he does, that they may find their hearers.

So then this is God's word, remember them which have the rule over you. Oh, it is recorded in Peter's epistle, the way that this is to be known and experienced.

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Oh, what a prospect that God's servants and his dear people have to receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Remember them which have the rule over you. And there's another word that I would just convey to you in Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians and chapter five, and it's this.

[19 : 37] And we beseech you brethren to know them which labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake and be at peace among yourselves.

Oh, the responsibility then of being an under shepherd. But what does it say regarding them? It says this, who have spoken unto you the word of God.

Now there is no other source of true blessing in any church and congregation than this. And I feel this more and more.

It is only as God blesses his word that is preached and as the Holy Spirit takes the word of God and writes it in the hearts of hearers.

Have you known such times? Have there been the crumbs of mercy, the crumbs from the master's table? Has the word of God found you?

[20 : 52] Has it searched you? Has it tried you? Has it caused deep concern in your heart? Has it sent you home, as it were, upon your knees? From time to time?

And yet have you known what it is to be comforted? And comforted through that that follows in these two verses. But, oh, it's this.

And this is how your dear pastor has sought to continue. And the Lord has upheld him, and enabled him, and helped him thus far in this, who has spoken unto you, the word of God.

Preach the word was the exhortation given to Timothy by his father in the faith of the apostle Paul. It was preach the word. And it isn't left there either.

It's in season, the instant in season, and out of season. And the need for reproof, rebuke, comfort, consolation, and as the Lord may use it.

[22 : 05] So then this has been fulfilled in this house of God thus far. And those of you that do worship here, and the Lord knows how many of you who do, but dear friends, do you value this?

Do you value it? Oh, you will. If you're being led and taught by the Holy Spirit, you'll value it.

And it will mean more to you, because when Jesus is preached, his word is preached. And when his word is preached, so Jesus is preached.

And this and this alone is of the only value that can be known in any place of worship, when Jesus is first and last and all in all.

Oh, may it be so here today. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, and then it's this, whose faith follow.

[23 : 28] It has been rightly said that we only follow a minister, a pastor, as they follow Christ.

how important then that is. It is only as they follow Christ, as they seek to follow him, in and through his word, the sacred doctrines of grace.

It has been rightly said that the doctrines of grace are like the bones of our bodies, the foundation, whose faith follow.

Those of us that are members of churches here today will know that we have what are termed, and rightly so, are articles of faith. And those articles of faith are based on the word of God, and in all that they mean.

and they speak to us regarding God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. And those of you that have looked through your articles of faith, and the Lord knows how many of us have, that have made an open profession.

[24 : 55] And I just leave this thought with you, even in this, that how we need not only to read our articles of faith, but we need the Holy Spirit to enlighten our understanding that we may understand what we read, the sacred doctrines of grace, the very foundation of our faith.

And I feel that in perhaps in two ways this can be preached, whose faith follow. And oh, you know, and this is a searching thought to me, you know, discerning hearers, friends, discerning hearers, spirit taught hearers, they know when a man is preaching the truth and they will know when he's preaching error.

Oh, you will know if you're being taught by the Holy Spirit. You will know when a man is preaching the truth. And I would say this and I tremble in saying it, but you will know when God has sent a poor man to preach.

And why will you know it? At least in some measure, some little measure, because there will be that God given authority in his ministry.

And you will know and you will feel this from time to time. And it's this that those who are being led and taught by the Holy Spirit value.

[26 : 33] And how quickly where there's discernment there will be an awareness that error has crept in. Oh, but those of us who desire to walk in the narrow way that leads to life eternal.

Friends, we don't want to turn away from the word of God, do we? We don't want to turn away from foundation truths, do we? Oh, we do not want to.

We're among those of whom the word of God speaks, seeking the old paths. Where is the good way? And you shall find rest unto your souls.

Ask for the old paths wherein is the good way. And you know that goes right back to the beginning. Right from Genesis to the revelation, there is recorded the old paths that lead to life eternal.

And if we are being taught and led by the Holy Spirit, we shall not want to get away from them. One inch I was going to say, that there will be this exercise within our hearts.

[27 : 48] Oh, again, one is aware of the solemnity of being a minister, of being a pastor. Oh, but what a responsibility.

The Lord knows how your pastor feels, how I feel, and our brethren in the ministry feel about all this. But think of it, whose faith follow.

Whose faith follow. Do you know what it is sometimes for God's servants to preach in such a way that they find you, don't they? They enter into your case.

They enter into the exercises of your souls. And some of you, I believe, would say, yes, there have been times when I've been amazed. And oh, when you've come into the house of God with a burdened heart, really exercised, you've come seeking and hoping to find a portion for your soul.

And when you've really prayed for your pastor, when you've really prayed for the minister, and when the Lord brings the dear man and he enters right into your very soul's experience, and he tells you the very things that are going on within you, and oh, you're amazed, are you?

[29 : 06] You will be, and at times you have been, as I have. I've known a few times when I've really thought that someone has been talking to the preacher about me.

Have you known that? And yet those times are very precious. They're very sacred. And when the Lord enables his servants to find us, to enter into our very case, the burden of our souls, and when he's enabled to preach Jesus to us, whose faith follow.

But you know, and this is very, very searching, again, to my own heart, whose faith, yes, the faith of God's elect, the precious truths of God's word, but you know, I believe it has another meaning, whose faith follow.

And again, I tremble to say this, but dear friends, it is one thing to preach the word of God, to preach it in a very searching, solemn, and yet Holy Spirit enabled way, but it's another thing to walk it out in our life.

I just think of dear Mr. George Rose again for a moment, because I've heard those who loved him, and those that valued him as their pastor, and of course it goes back many years now, but you know, there were those of his flock and they could say this, that his very life, his walk, his conduct, his conversation, it did bear out what he'd been preaching to them.

[31 : 01] You see, that means our example, or as the Bible puts it, our example, be thou an example to the flock. Oh, how searching this is.

Oh, and yet, oh, how wonderful when the Lord enables a poor trembling pastor so to live that his flock can say this of him, as is said in the word of God, in the acts of the apostles, of those, and it says this, they took knowledge of them, why?

Because they'd been with Jesus, and had learned of him. You see, how often when we may meet with one another in our homes and in our lives, our conversation can be about anything and everything but better things.

But when we do meet together, are we exercise about it? Are we concerned about our conversation and our conduct? You know, the Bible speaks of it like this, and it says, then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them, that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name, and the promise is this, and they shall be mine in that day, when I make up my jewels.

Oh, the solemnity of our very life, and you know, if and as the Lord enables his servants and pastors so to preach, if it really reaches the hearts of hearers, it will have an effect on them, and you will say this, be this religion mine, oh, you will, you'll want to walk, and you see this question of being an example to the flock over which God has placed us, considering the end of their conversation, the end of their conversation.

[33 : 19] Now, I'm sure that many of you will know this, that the word conversation, in the word of God, it's so often, it does take in our literal conversation, and that's very important, but friends, it takes in our whole life, it takes in our whole life, considering the end of their conversation, and what is it?

It is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever, considering the end of their conversation.

Now, that searches me, that searches me, does it search you? help? Do you know what it is to be ashamed of your conversation?

To be ashamed of your life, your example? Do we know what it is to feel ashamed? You will join, and we shall join with godly Ezra.

When he said this, I am ashamed. I blush to lift up my face to thee, my God. ashamed. And yet, there's a hymn, isn't there, I believe, somewhere, and it says this, to rejoice and be ashamed.

[34 : 48] To rejoice in Christ, and yet to be utterly ashamed of ourselves in every aspect of our life.

Do you know what it is to be ashamed? Do you know what it is to mourn before God? To call our words and our actions or, do we know what it is?

You come to the end of a day, do you know what it is to have to think about what you've said and how you've lived? Yes, as we've lived in our homes with our dear ones, our children, fathers and mothers that are here, grandparents, do we know what it is to be ashamed of ourselves?

We shall know. If we are being instructed by the Holy Spirit and it will bring us to nothing and it will bring us to the feet of Jesus and what a mercy when it is so.

I must come to a close this afternoon. Remember them which have the rule over you. Oh, remember them. Remember them.

[36 : 04] You know how good it is in and where there is a flock, where the dear people remember their pastor, remember him from day to day in their prayers, remember him in his life and all that that means to him, and remember him in a practical way.

Oh, how good this is, where it is now, and where pastor and flock are joined together in Christ.

Oh, there will be many things that come against it, many trials, many temptations. I'm no stranger to this, to being brought again and again as it were to nothing.

And oh, how many times I've said, Lord, I do not know how to handle this. I do not know how to handle it. And yet, to be enabled, as I believe God said to his servant Moses, the cause that is too hard for thee, bring it unto me, bring it unto me, but oh, for grace to do so.

You see, it's one thing, if we know that, bring it unto me, but friends, it's another thing to be enabled to do it. And to be enabled, as it were, to lay it at his dear feet, and to plead his mercy, to plead for his help.

[37 : 49] Now, I'm aware that we've just touched a few things this afternoon, and I hope the Lord will help me with his will this evening. But it's, I've had to come with verse seven, because it's linked by the Holy Spirit to verse eight.

It's joined together. We have pastors' anniversary services here today, and it's this, remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, their whole life.

oh, how far, far short I come. Do you? Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

amen. Amen. Amen.