

Worshipping God

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: 16 August 2015

Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 0 0] how about i pray for us as we look at god's word together heavenly father we do thank you so much that you continue to speak to us through your word primarily and what you have to say to us in your word is still very much relevant for us today and so heavenly father we pray that you would give us minds to understand and hearts that would seek to live in light of what you tell us this morning we ask it in jesus name amen well it'd be great if you could have a bible open at hebrews 13 there's also an outline in the bulletin that you might find helpful well six-year-old angie and her little brother went to church for worship and when they were there angie told her brother that he had to be quiet when her brother asked her why she said well do you see those men standing back there they are the hushes and if you think that's bad it's as good as it gets this morning is this what it means to worship god this is how we worship god by being quiet another little girl said it involved wearing her best dress and singing loudly even if you don't sound good i can relate to that not wearing the dress part is this how we worship god you see the writer has just finished saying at the end of chapter 12 that we are to worship god acceptably you see there if you look at your bibles at the end of chapter 12 verse 28 just above chapter 13 it says therefore since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken let us be thankful and so worship god acceptably with reverence and awe and so the question is how are we to do this how are we to worship god acceptably with reverence and awe i mean the word worship here is exactly the same word for serve so how do we serve god with reverence and awe what does this kind of acceptable worship look like well chapter 13 tells us it gives us a whole lot of examples and we know the writer is giving us examples of what acceptable worship looks like because the word acceptable actually comes up a couple of more times and the word acceptable is exactly the same word as pleasing so if you look at chapter 13 verse 16 he talks about with such sacrifices god is pleased or literally are acceptable and in his prayer at the conclusion of the chapter he writes in verse 21 may god work in us what is pleasing to him or literally what is acceptable to him through jesus christ and so chapter 13 is all about how we are to serve god acceptably with reverence and awe how we are to worship god in a way that pleases him now there are obviously more ways we can do this than what the writer has listed but he does give us quite a number of examples which i think can be grouped into two main groups now given the sheer number of examples this morning we're going to move reasonably quickly through them and the first group i think is about loving rightly so point one verse one keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters it's pretty straightforward isn't it in fact in the original it's literally just three words keep brotherly love or keep sisterly love even more straightforward worshipping god means we are to keep loving one another as family keep putting other people's needs before our own keep seeking their good which is what love is it's how god has loved us is it not

he sought our good our salvation even at the cost of his only son of course loving like this is not always easy is it when our children are getting what they want they are amazingly nice to each other when they are not getting what they want well let's just say they find it hard to love each other perhaps this is why the author starts with love at this point not only because it's key but because it's one of the first things to go when life is hard and you might remember that for these readers life was hard but acceptable worship means keeping love on loving one another and can i say i've been so encouraged by the way i've seen people do this here at this church in this congregation it's brilliant i've got a numerous examples rattling around in my head at the moment how people visit write cards send letters set prayer reminders to pray for one another and then pray it's brilliant more to the point it's a type of worship that pleases god you see of course it's not just the family way that we know well that we are to love it's also those we don't know well so verse 2 do not forget to show hospitality to strangers for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it he worship means loving strangers by showing hospitality to them in the ancient world it took a long time to travel places which required more frequent stops and so providing a meal for someone who was traveling or even a place to stay was a great way of showing love to strangers for us it might be helping a stranger in need or perhaps inviting some visitors out to lunch with us or to our place for lunch after church whatever it is we had to show love towards not just one another whom we know well but even strangers and even those who are persecuted do you see verse 3 it says continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering here the readers are to remember and stand in solidarity with the persecuted christians and they they used to do this actually if you just turn back one page in your bibles back one page top left hand corner chapter 10 verse 33 just back one page top left hand corner chapter 10 verse 33 we can see it there it says sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution at other times you stood side by side with those who are so treated you suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions the readers used to love persecuted christians with solidarity standing with them but now it seems they are waning and so the writer says well acceptable worship it actually means loving those who are persecuted by standing in solidarity with them sharing with them in their sufferings by praying for them giving to them even mourning with them that's why we have made the persecuted church part of our list of missionaries or links that we pray through week by week it's why we should really run out of those barnabas fun magazines each month because we should want to love those who are persecuted and stand with them and if i'm honest i must confess that

i'm so often busy with life here that i forget what life is like over there and so this is something i could work more at i think for this is the type of worship that pleases god so is honoring marriage verse 4 marriage should be honored by all and the marriage bed kept pure for god will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral i once heard a child who said christians should have only one husband or wife this is called monogamy monogamy is what they mean of course now it's a silly joke but the problem is the whole institution of marriage has become a bit of a joke in society hasn't it yet some who refuse to get married others who decide to you know it's okay to have affairs while married and others who are trying to take marriage away from us and change its definition but worshiping god means marriage is to be honored by all the word for honor here literally means highly prized and so we are to be faithful to our own spouse or our future spouse and to encourage faithfulness between other spouses you see marriage matters to god because a faithful marriage is a reflection among other things of a faithful relationship to god between god and his church that is that's why god will judge those who are not faithful and although sexual immorality is not more sinful than other sins its consequences are more keenly felt by other sins are they not for it destroys not only the marriage but it has ripple effects which sadly flow on to children and friends and extended family but acceptable worship means honoring marriage with fidelity i need to say at this point that if you have been had have suffered from a bad marriage or whatever the case is that god always provides forgiveness it's always a fresh start with god um i know in our church there are many different circumstances so i just wanted to say that but part of acceptable worship here is that we prize marriage and treat it with fidelity now there are four examples of acceptable worship here uh that we've just quickly gone through we could probably spend a sermon on each of those actually but hopefully you've seen how the the theme of loving rightly unites all these examples okay loving one another as family loving strangers with hospitality loving mistreated christians in solidarity and loving spouses with fidelity worshiping god acceptably means loving all these people rightly but not loving money you see verse five keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because god has said never will i leave you never will i forsake you now in a list that is all about loving this last one about money stands out because it's about not loving you see and it stands out i think because out of all things in the world i think money is the biggest trap for christians it's the thing that we are most prone to worship instead of god of course money is not bad it's the love of money that is bad instead we are to love contentment it says we are to be generous and we are to trust that god will provide for he says never will i leave you never will i forsake you it's a great promise isn't it this is great comfort not only when it comes to money but when it comes to suffering when it comes to life never will i leave you never will i forsake you

and so we can say verse 6 with confidence the lord is my helper i will not be afraid what can mere mortals do to me when i first read this i must confess when it said what can mere mortals do to me i thought well actually quite a bit but the thing is god will provide even then remember chapter 4 earlier on he said that we can approach the throne of grace with confidence to find grace to help us in our time of need that is god will provide even then when we are suffering from mortals and ultimately he will provide heaven for us but the point here though is worship that pleases god loves contentment not money an old bible study leader of mine is a barrister in sydney he's very good at his job he represents hospitals and he was too busy so he wanted to have less clients so he upped his fees hoping that people would look elsewhere but they didn't they just paid him more and so i asked him one day you know he had a pretty ordinary car a toyota not that there's anything wrong with toyotas i have a toyota but i said do what are you upgrade you know audi porsche something like that you can afford it and his reply was it's perfectly fine now if you have an audi or a porsche or i'm not having a go at you i'm not i'm just i'm just saying that here's a person who was content here's a person who's content who who did not love money and that's what it means to worship god we can enjoy things in life yes but we're not to love money we're to be content for that pleases god well worship that is pleasing to god firstly loves rightly and secondly perseveres faithfully i think that's the theme that unites the next group of examples which is point two and this will be a bit quicker and here our examples are grouped together not only by that theme but by the topic of leadership which begins and ends the list kind of like two bookends so verse 7 talks about leaders and verse 17 to 19 talks about leaders and so it groups these examples together but the theme is keeping the faith or persevering faithfully so verse 7 remember your leaders who spoke the word of god to you consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith jesus christ is the same yesterday and today and forever here they are to remember their leaders who spoke the word of the gospel to them in the past which means these leaders are probably no longer with them they are to remember them and they spoke past tense the word of god so it seems like they're no longer with them in fact where it says consider the outcome of their way of life it's literally the end of their life which suggests that these leaders have died but the point is these leaders persevered in the faith to the end and this is what the readers are to imitate indeed jesus kept the faith he is the same yesterday today and forever he does not change so they are to imitate his way of life and to worship god acceptably means to keep the faith i mentioned to the 6pm congregation a couple of months ago a man whose funeral i conducted was one of the first funerals i did his name was bob he used to preach occasionally at an old church of mine but had since retired but on the morning he had a heart attack and died do you know what he was doing he was off in his retirement village walking off to lead a bible study group that morning in his retirement village

see he was a man he was 90 something i think he was he was a man who persevered in the faith and served god to the very end and we had to imitate their faith for this is acceptable worship which means by the way that any other faith is not acceptable worship so verse 9 do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings it is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace not by eating ceremonial foods which is of no benefit to those who do so at this point we need to remember that the readers were Jewish and so they had left Judaism with its special food and ceremonies and altars and priests and animal sacrifices and so on they'd left all that to follow Jesus and now they attempted to go back to all that and so the writer is saying don't don't go back to all that this teaching which is actually strange because such religion does not benefit those who do it does not strengthen them why because Jesus has replaced it all that's what the writer of the Hebrews has been arguing throughout the whole letter

[17 : 27] Jesus is the one true sacrifice Jesus is the high priest Jesus is the one who gave himself at the altar of the cross so verse 10 he says we actually have an altar for which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat the high priest carries the blood of animals into the most holy place as a sin offering but the bodies are burnt outside the camp well so also Jesus suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood here the writer refers to the day of atonement back in Leviticus there the priest would sacrifice an animal for sin and then take the body outside the camp to be burned and so the writer uses this Old Testament practice to show that you know what Jesus has replaced all that you see Jesus went outside the camp or the city he carried the cross you remember outside the city gate of Jerusalem to the hill called Golgotha and there his body was crucified as a sacrifice for sin and so now it's his blood that pays for our sin it's his blood that counts us holy in God's sight which is why by the way we call that there a table not an altar for our altar is the cross where Jesus was crucified and sacrificed once for all whose blood pays for our sin so we're to keep faith in Jesus and no other kind of teaching in fact those who follow any other kind of religion or simply follow the world cannot eat at our altar says verse 10 they cannot find forgiveness at the cross and so the writer is saying don't go back to that old way no no keep sticking with Jesus persevere faithfully with Christ leave your old ways behind and go to him verse 13 let us therefore go to him outside the camp bearing the disgrace he bore for here we do not have an enduring city but we are looking for the city that is to come we're to leave our old way of life behind and go to

Jesus even be willing to suffer for Jesus you know bear disgrace for his namesake for this world will be shaken remember it will not endure but the one to come will and so we had to look for that city to come heaven and since the readers are so keen on religious sacrifices and so on the writer says well these are the sacrifices that are acceptable to God verse 15 through Jesus therefore let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise fruit of lips that openly profess his name and do not forget to do good and to share with others for with such sacrifices God is pleased Jesus has made the ultimate sacrifice for us he died to pay for our sin and in response now the only sacrifices we make are ones that respond to that lips that confess his name openly did you notice not just here in church but openly and hands that do good and share with others for this is what pleases God this is the worship that is acceptable to him but so also is verse 17 have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account do this so that their work will be a joy not a burden for that would be of no benefit to you this verse about submitting to leaders

I was going to say it's my favorite verse in the Bible but it's not it's actually I find it uncomfortable reading it actually but do notice the reason behind it is because we keep watch over you you submit to leaders because by doing so helps you persevere in the faith for example we teach you from the Bible and say keep believing in Jesus and submitting helps you to keep believing in Jesus that's how it works of course there are bad leaders who seem to watch over themselves more than their people who don't teach faithfully from the Bible and while all leaders will have to give an account if you know people in churches like this then perhaps they should change but here the idea is to submit to leaders so that it will benefit you so that you might be helped to persevere you see this chapter is these last group full of examples that help us to persevere faithfully and this whole chapter is full of examples of how we are to worship

God acceptably with reverence and awe how we are to serve God in a way that pleases him and we are to do this not to earn our way into heaven but because God is already giving us heaven do you remember chapter 12 verse 28 therefore since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe do you remember Eric the eel from last week he'd already run his race remember he'd already received his prize at one level and all he had to do was finish it the point is we are already receiving the kingdom Christ has already secured a place for it we just need to finish the race and the way we are to do it is to worship God acceptably in these ways on the slide is a quote from an eight-year-old called Danny Dutton third grade he wrote this you should always go to church on Sunday because it makes God happy and if there's anybody you want to make happy it's

God he sent Jesus for us besides the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway still got time but he's got it though doesn't he if there's anyone you want to please it's God he's the one who gave his son for us he's the one who is giving us a kingdom that cannot be shaken and so he's the one we are to worship acceptably what's more God will help us do it and so that's how the writer ends the letter reminding them of what God has done for us through Jesus and that God will help them worship him and so let me end as the writer does verse 20 now may the

[24 : 26] God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing acceptable to him through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever and all God's people said Amen Amen