WHY PRAY FOR YOUR PASTOR? (Hebrews 13:18)

INTRODUCTION*:** Take your Bibles and turn once again to Hebrews 13. In way of review, last week we looked at verse 17 where we have the ***command for you to ***be continually obeying and submitting*** to me as your pastor—if I am your pastor! But it's not ***blind obedience***, is it? There are ***limits to your obligation*** to obey me.

What are those limits?

1) It is confined to things in the ***spiritual arena***—things that have to do with your ***relationship to the Lord!*** You are under no obligation to obey me in the area of selling four wheelers…or buying a car…or whether or not you should own a dog!

2) But it also has to do with ***church-related*** things, right? If it involves ***our building***—or what happens ***inside*** this building—I should ***lead***—and you should ***follow***—unless I'm asking you to do things that are ***unbiblical!*** And if I'm asking you to do ***unbiblical things***—or leading us in an unbiblical ***direction***—you ***shouldn't*** obey me!

Instead, you should ***confront*** me and—if necessary—***replace*** me, right?

But what about things that are "neutral"—like having a ***recycling container*** next to the garbage can? You should submit—even if you think it's dumb and even if the recyclables all end up being mixed in with garbage somewhere along the line!

Lastly, we looked at the ***motivation***—***why*** should you obey and submit to me as your pastor?

1) Because I watch for your souls! What does that mean? Here is the end of a quote I gave you last week: "Pastors are to be 'sleepless sentinels' standing guard over **the most precious treasure Christ** has on earth, **the souls of His people**." So you should obey what I teach you from the Word of God because I am doing what I can to ***prepare you for eternity!***

2) Because we must all give an account! It specifically states here in verse 17 that ***the pastor*** is to give an account, but ***all believers*** will give an account of how they lived their lives after they became a believer.

3) Because it is profitable for you! The profit—the benefit—is not in you ***obeying me***, per se. The blessing comes when you listen to God's Word as God's Word—and ***obey what God says*** in and through His Word!

And that brings us to <u>verse 18</u>. For the sake of context, please follow along as I read verses 17-21. As you already know from your outline, the title of the sermon is simply "Why Pray for Your Pastor?"

So ***why*** pray for your Pastor? The Bible gives us several reasons ***why*** you should pray for me; we are going to look at ***three***. The first one—and one I'm going to cover rather quickly—is… ***1. Because God commands it!***

--Just like the verbs "obey" and "submit" in verse 17, the verb "pray" is in the ***imperative*** mood—meaning it is a ***command***, not a suggestion—and in the ***present*** tense—meaning something you are to be <u>continually</u> doing!

--And let's not forget that regardless of who the ***human*** author of this book is—scholars ***don't know*** and ***don't agree***—we know that the ***real author*** of Scripture is ***God the Holy Spirit***—not a "needy" pastor!

--And—as is often the case with God's commands—this is ***not the only place*** in the Bible where we have this command! Here are two others:

--I Thessalonians 5:25 "Brethren, pray for us."

--II Thessalonians 3:1 "Finally, brethren, pray for us…"

Reason #1 to pray for your Pastor? Because God ***commands it!*** And since God commands it, that is really the only reason we need!

Reason #2? ***2. Because Pastors need it!***

Why do Pastors need prayer? 'All they do is sit in an office reading the Bible—and maybe some other books—and pray…and write a few sermons…and maybe visit people once in a while.' Hopefully you don't think that way, but I'm sure that is the ***perception*** that some people have about pastors.

What I'm going to do now is give you ***three reasons*** pastors need prayer. Please know that I'm not doing this in hopes of you ***feeling sorry for me!*** I'm doing it to hopefully convince you to ***start praying*** for me if you don't—or ***praying more*** for me if you already do!

First, you need to pray for me because… A. The responsibilities of pastors are humanly impossible!
What are my responsibilities as a pastor? In a nutshell, it is this: ***Be a Christ-like watcher over your souls!***

Here again is the quote I gave you last week about what it means to ***watch.*** It literally means "to be sleepless…to stay alert, to remain vigilant and fully aware of threatening peril" (BADG; quoted in Preceptaustin.com)—like a shepherd watches over his sheep. But what exactly ***does that entail?***

1) I need to know God's Word well enough ***to spot*** "wolves dressed in sheep's clothing"—and ***teach you*** how to do the same! There's a pretty good chance that ***I won't invite any false teachers*** here to fill the pulpit—***but you*** may unknowingly ***invite them into your home*** via Facebook…or YouTube…or even ***a book*** that you read!

And let's not forget that someday some of you will have the responsibility of ***calling the next under-shepherd*** of ***this flock!*** So you need to know the difference between ***false teaching*** and ***sound doctrine.***

2) I also need to know you as the sheep! Some of you may remember me sharing with you that while in the military, I turned down a promotion to Master Sergeant, pay grade E-8. ***Why*** did I turn it down? Because it involved ***overseeing a team*** of around 8 National Guard Recruiters. Why did I ***not want to do*** that?

Because in order for me to do that job effectively, I would have to learn what made each of them "tick" so I could properly ***motivate them*** if they were struggling. And I didn't want to try to get "into the head," so to speak, of 8 other people! Fast forward to now, and my responsibility is to do that in ***the spiritual arena*** for 30 plus people! What was I thinking to say "***no***" to 8—but "***yes***" to 30!

Steven Cole put it like this: "These tasks require the discernment to **know where people are at spiritually** and when they are heading toward spiritual danger." ("The Responsibilities of Church Leaders," (Hebrews 13:7, 17-19, 22-25)). I'm afraid I ***don't do a very good job*** of doing that sometimes.

And if these things aren't difficult enough…,

3) I need to strive to be the kind of shepherd that Jesus was! What ***kind*** of shepherd was Jesus?
--He was always ***about*** His Father's business—beginning at the age of 12 (Luke 2:49).
--He was ***brave*** enough to overturn tables (Mt 21:12)—and confront the pride of the Pharisees (Mt 23).
--He was ***compassionate*** to those who needed compassion. Mt 9:36 "But when He saw the multitudes, He was **moved with compassion** on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."
--He ***did always*** the things that pleased His Father (John 8:29). Imagine ***the impossibility***—for me—to have every action…and attitude…and conversation…and decision…and sermon…be pleasing in the sight of God!
--And Jesus ***was self-sacrificing*** to the point of ***giving up His very life*** for the sheep! Although God rarely asks a pastor to do that, it is interesting what Paul wrote in **II Corinthians 12:15** "And I will very **gladly spend** and **be spent for you**…"

I fail in all these areas—and more—and that is why ***you need to pray for me!*** Not only are the responsibility of pastors humanly impossible… B. The obstacles are immense

What are ***the obstacles*** that I face while carrying out my responsibilities as a pastor? Here are ***four***—but not in any particular order.

1) Satan. Does Satan try to hinder me from doing what God wants me to do? He certainly does! Although we don't have the details, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in **I Thessalonians 2:18** "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but **Satan hindered** us."
--Paul also told the Ephesians, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the **rulers of the darkness of this world**, against spiritual wickedness in high places." **(Ephesians 6:12).** ***What weapons*** did Paul instruct them to use in their fight against Satan?

They were to put on the **whole armor of God** (Ephesians 6:13-17), "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit…" (Ephesians 6:18).
--And Peter reminds us in I Peter 5:8 that Satan is as "a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour."
--So even though we don't know much about ***the unseen battle*** that is happening behind the scenes, there is an ***unseen battle happening*** behind the scenes!

Another obstacle that hinders me in carrying out my responsibilities is…

2) The world. What do I mean by the ***world?*** When the Bible warns us not to "love the world" (I John 2:15), it is not referring to the globe…or the ground…or the skies or the trees.

--"World" comes from the Greek word "kosmos"—which has several meanings. In I John 2:15, it refers to the "organized system of fallen humanity that operates in opposition to God." ***It promotes that*** which lead people away from God—like selfish-pleasure, power, and pride; and ***disdains that*** which God delights in—things like kindness, sacrifice, service to others, and humility.

--And we are bombarded—daily—with messages from the world that are in ***direct opposition to God*** and His Word! Here are just a few of the ***countless philosophical sayings*** that the world promotes and lives by:

--"It's okay to cheat—as long as you don't get caught!"

--"You have your truth; I have mine."

--"Just follow your heart."

Here's ***two more***—both ***from songs*** that have been around for a long time: "If it feels good, do it" and "If you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with!"

--So these messages—and hundreds more—are obstacles that hinder you from wanting to listen to me as I remind you to "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world…"

Obstacle #3? **3) Your sin nature.** Is ***your sin*** nature an obstacle to me being a Christ-like watcher over your souls? It is, isn't it? ***How?***

--What stops you from reading your Bible…and praying…and coming to church? Sometimes it's health issues, but more often than not it's ***our sin nature.***

--What stops you from ***loving*** God…and ***obeying*** God…and actively seeking ways to ***serve*** God? Again, sometimes it's health-related, but oftentimes ***we don't do*** what we know ***we should*** because we have a nature within us that fights us. "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:19).

But the obstacles that hinder me from being a Christ-like watcher over your souls are not just Satan…and the world…and ***your*** sin nature. I am an obstacle ***to myself***—and that's why ***I need prayer!***

4) My personality and sin nature.

I realize that my personality and sin-nature are ***two*** different things, but both hinder me from being a ***Christ-modeling***—and God-pleasing—pastor.

--Personality-wise, I'm rather ***passive***—meaning I don't like to ***confront*** people—or "rock the boat." Is being ***non-confrontational*** a bad thing? ***Probably not***, but at times it can be. ***Why?*** Because part of my "job description"—as stated in II Timothy 4:2—requires that I "reprove, rebuke, and exhort…"

--To "***reprove***" means to tell someone their fault. Can I tell someone their fault without confronting them? Not hardly, right?

--To "***rebuke***" means to admonish, to censure severely, and to strongly warn. Again, can I do that in a passive, non-confrontational way? Maybe—but I'm not sure how!

--To "***exhort***" in this context means to "urge" to do something. As you well know, I tend to ***teach*** more than I ***preach***. Because of that, is it possible that you only look at sermons as an "***information gathering***" time because I fail to tell you ***what you ought to do*** in response to what you've heard and learned?

--***Another*** personality trait I have is that I'm not ***very emotional***. Why is that a ***bad thing?*** Because people can get the impression that I'm not very caring or compassionate. But it also may be an indicator of a ***cold heart!***

--We see the heart of ***David*** in Psalm 119:136 "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

--We see the heart of ***Jeremiah*** in Jeremiah 13:17 "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."

--We see the heart of ***Paul*** in Acts 20:31 "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

I realize it would be a bit awkward—for you—if I stood up here and cried through the whole sermon, but should not the reality that some of you may be on your way to hell move me to tears at times?

--Here's another ***personality trait*** that goes right along with the one that I just gave you; one that—outside of my sin nature—I probably struggle with the most. What is it? I'm ***extremely duty-driven***—but to a fault!

Ever hear the saying, "If you want something done, ask a busy person to do it?" That's kind of how I operate. And in one sense, it's a ***good thing*** because I love to get things done—except my 3 seasons porch and the metal baseboards here at church!

But on the other hand, it's ***a bad thing*** because I can begin to look at ministry as ***a list of tasks*** that need to be accomplished, ***instead of people*** that need to be cared for…and encouraged…and listened to!

--Being "duty-driven" can ***lead to a mindset*** that says, "There, I called that person—cross it off the list!" --And "Yay; I'm done preaching for the day—now I can relax!"

--And—sadly—I'm being transparent—I sometimes don't listen to people the way I should because my mind is ***already on to the next thing*** I have to do!

--And—believe it or not—this duty-drivenness even affects me ***when I go fishing!*** Don and Art often get in conversations with people ***about the Lord*** while fishing down at the dam. ***Why?*** Because they see those meetings as ***divine appointments*** from the Lord! And I do too—but only ***sometimes!*** Sometimes I ***don't want to talk*** to people because I'm on a "fishin' mission!"

"Wow, Pastor, we didn't know you had so many ***negative personality*** traits!" To which I reply, "And I haven't even gotten into how much of an obstacle my ***sin nature*** is!"
--By nature, ***I'm selfish***—just like you! Sometimes ***I don't want to*** serve others—I just want to be ***left alone*** so I can ***do what I want to do!*** Not bad or wrong things—but things that please me and make me happy!
--Also—by nature—I ***depend too much*** on me and not enough on the Lord! Instead of being quick to recognize my limitations and weaknesses—and go to the Lord for help—I just "dig in" and work harder!
--I could go on, but I believe you get the point—I need you to pray for me!

Why pray for me? ***First***, because God commands it! ***Second***, because I need it! Why do I need it? Because the responsibilities are humanly impossible—and the obstacles are immense!

But there's ***a third*** reason and it is this: ***3. Because God can provide what I need***

A few weeks ago—during the Sunday School hour—we were looking at Numbers 11 where we saw Moses' being very "un-Moses" like! What do I mean by that? Moses was focused on ***the impossibility of his task***—leading God's people—and the ***immensity of his problems***—trying to provide food for roughly 2 million people! And Moses' focus on Moses got his eyes off the power and promises and past provisions of God!

And—in this instance—I need to ***not follow*** in Moses' footsteps!
So we're going to "shift gears" and focus on God's ability—and desire—to provide me what I need to do the "work of the ministry" in answer to prayer. We're going to look briefly at ***three*** passages.

A. My sufficiency is of God (II Cor 3:5)

--Please turn to II Corinthians 3, beginning with verse 4.
--Now vs 5. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;" I am not "sufficient"—meaning ***adequate or competent***—to do the work of the ministry because no one is! In the end of II Cor 2:16, Paul asks the rhetorical question: "And who is sufficient for these things?"

So even though ***I am not adequate***…or competent…or sufficient to handle these responsibilities, God is adequate; God is sufficient!
--Vs 6 "Who **also hath made us** able ministers…" Who made Paul an "able minister"? ***God did!***
--And "able" comes from the same Greek word that "sufficient" comes from in vs 5!

The point? I am ***insufficient***—I am inadequate—to perform the responsibilities that I have been given, but God ***can*** make me ***adequate***—and ***will*** make me ***adequate***—in answer to your prayers and mine!

B. God provides grace (Heb 4:16; James 4:6)

--Hebrews 4:16 "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find **grace to help** in time of need." "Grace to help" is more than just forgiveness and help in time of testing—it is spiritual help from God to do what He calls us to do!

--James 4:6 "But **He giveth more grace**. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, **but giveth grace** unto the humble."

--I believe II Corinthians 9:8 teaches the same truth, even though the context is about giving.

The point again is this: God is able to change me and mold me and make me more like Christ—and will do that in answer to prayer!

C. God's strength is made perfect in my weakness (II Cor 12:9)

--You're in II Corinthians 3; turn now to II Corinthians 12. Here we have the account of Paul's "thorn in the flesh." Notice what it says in vs 8.

--God's response to Paul's request? He said "No" without saying "no!" Verse 9: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." In essence, God is saying, 'It is more beneficial to you to be weak—and dependent on Me—than you being strong and independent."

--And God wants me to be dependent on Him in the same way!

Why pray for me? Because God commands it…and because I need it…and because God is able to make me better equipped—and more Christ-like—in answer to our prayers. And let's not forget—the more Christ-like I am as a Pastor, the better it will be for all of us!

So what would God have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First, start praying for me if you don't—and pray more for me if you already are!

2. Second, be as patient with me as a fellow sinner—just like you want me to be patient with you!

3. Third, remember this: "I watch for your souls!" So even though I am a fellow sinner, don't dismiss what I tell you if I'm telling you the Word of God!

4. Lastly, don't ever let my lack of emotion—or compassion—make you doubt the truth of God's Word! Heaven is real—but so is Hell—and Jesus talked more about Hell than He did about heaven!

And you won't get to heaven if you say "No" to God's way for you to get there—the crucified but risen Son of God—and Lamb of God!

--Do you have Jesus? Is He yours?

--Remember Acts 4:12.

--Rest assured, you will not be the one exception!