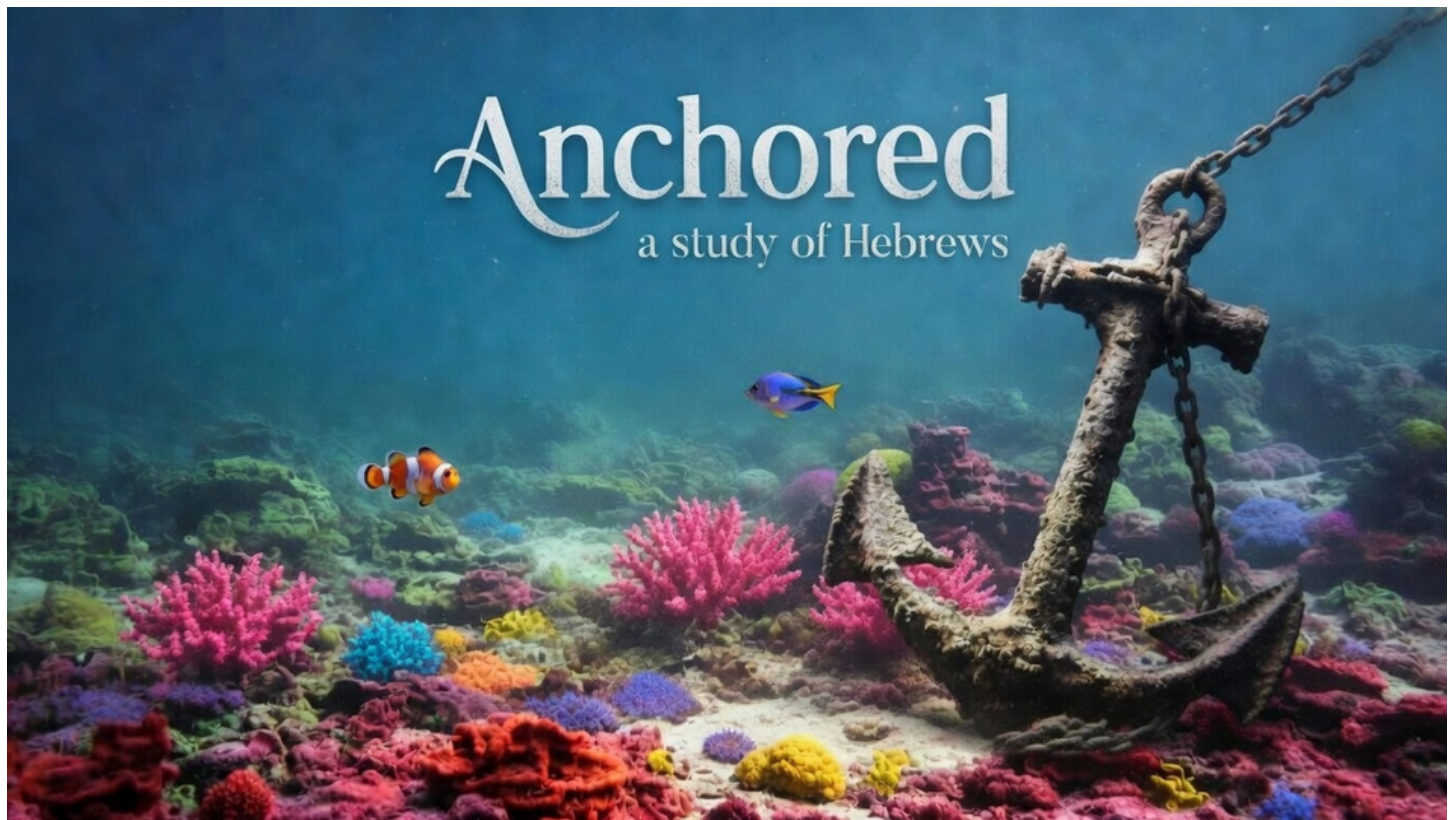




Anchored in a Shepherd

Sunday - July 5, 2026

Hebrews 13:17–25 (ESV)

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

18 Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. **19** I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, **21** equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

22 I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. **23** You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. **24** Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. **25** Grace be with all of you.

Just about every week through our journey of Hebrews, we've mentioned that this book or sermon or letter...it could be any of those...is addressing tired, worn out people.

- As he closes the book, he gives one more thing that you have to have in your life if you're going to keep going and survive in Jesus.
- You have to have shepherds in your life.

An extremely helpful way to outline the book of Hebrews:

- Chapters 1-4: We are on a journey with Jesus the Prophet into the true rest of God.
- Chapters 5-10: We are on a journey with Jesus the true Priest into the true presence of God.
- Chapters 10-13: We are with Jesus the King on a journey to the true city of God.
- This life is a journey to get to God. But you need shepherds and shepherding in your life to show you the way.

The insult.

- It's only at the end that Hebrews pulls out this title for Jesus: The great Shepherd of the sheep.
- The whole chapter (13) is about living in community, and there's a structure to community. Community works best when there's a shepherd.
- Vs 17 says "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority...they keep watch over your souls." The action of a shepherd is to keep watch over sheep.
- Here the leaders of the church shepherds. And Jesus himself is the great shepherd. So, who are the sheep? We are. We are the sheep.
- It's not a compliment.
- Sheep are too helpless to defend themselves from anything, and they have absolutely no sense of direction.
- Sheep will die without a shepherd.
- And we are sheep. It's an insult, and you need to see it as such.
- If you never see it...you'll never find the shepherd.

The identity.

- If we need a shepherd, who should that be?
- Two mistakes:
 - 1) I'll be my own shepherd.
 - 2) I'll let my idols be my shepherd.
- Who should be our shepherds? The answer is not: no shepherd. And the answer is also not a wrong shepherd. Hebrews gives us help here.
- **The shepherds in your life need to be your peers in grace.**
- Back in 3:13, it says, *exhort one another daily...that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
- Put beside that verse 22 of our chapter today, 13. He says, *bear with my word of exhortation.*
- It means that what Hebrews is hoping we'll do for him...let me shepherd you...is what we should be doing for each other.

- You need to shepherd one another. The main qualification you should look for in someone like this is...ready? They are not you. That's it.
- There are things about your life you'll never be able to see unless someone who is not you comes in and tells you about it.
- **Jesus has to be your shepherd.** Your ultimate shepherd.
- This is how you avoid an idol shepherd.
- With Jesus in the right shepherd position, then we can go to 17 and follow that without fear that we're putting our lives into the hands of some madman or group.
- **We need Christian leaders as shepherds.**
- Leaders who we submit to and who watch over our souls.
- The exhortation from Hebrews is to find some, and be a part of the church where they are the leaders.
- Unless you're a part of a church, how can you obey this verse?
- If Jesus is your ultimate shepherd, and your friends are your shepherds who also have Jesus as their ultimate shepherd, then you have created the right climate to also make a group of godly leaders your shepherds also.

The exile.

- Verse 21 is a prayer for all these tired people. *May the great Shepherd of the sheep equip you with everything good...Why? ...so that you may do his will.*
- One of the great things about Christianity is that Jesus changes lives.
- But do you realize that every single religion and every moral community in the world can produce those same kind of changed lives?
- Still...there's all the difference in the world. What is it?
- The idea is not how does Jesus call us to live, but ***why does Jesus call us to live that way.*** That is the great separator.
- It's in verse 20. *May the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep...*
- *...brought again from the dead.* That is the gap between Jesus the shepherd and every other shepherd.
- The word here used to describe the resurrection means to lead someone up to a higher place. It's a word that is tied to the concept of exile in the Bible.
- Exile in scripture is one of the main metaphors for what's wrong with us.
- The most famous exile: The people of Israel exiled from their homeland. Slaves and exiled in Egypt. But, God brought them back home.
- How'd he do that? Through the blood of a lamb.
- The event was called Passover.
- No one could connect the dots until centuries later when Jesus came.
- If you look closely at all the last supper accounts, there's never any indication of meat at the meal.
- The most important part of the meal, and not a word.
- Where is the lamb?
- Then Jesus stood up and made it crystal clear where the lamb was.

Jesus is the Shepherd who becomes a lamb.

- He went to a cross and experienced ultimate exile.
- He went through alienation that your sin and my sin deserves.
- He paid sin's penalty. His blood was washed on the wooden posts. And he died.
- But God brought him back again to life. God led Jesus out of his ultimate exile.
- Jesus is the only shepherd that doesn't just tell you how to live, but who became a sheep.
- He took your place, so that God delight's in you now.
- Do you know the only shepherd who became a lamb?
- Without him, there's only exile.

Father God, help us understand what it means to have Jesus as our great Shepherd. How necessary it is to have shepherds in our lives...the right ones. Let us be insulted if we need it. Let us be encouraged if we need it. And let us be saved...led out of exile by the blood of the cross. In the name of the great shepherd of the sheep, brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, we pray, Amen.