

Jesus Christ - The Author and Finisher of Our Faith

in the Book of Hebrews

(Part 3 - Chapters 11-13)

Meeting 9

Three chapters, three days, and three meetings a day – just the right length! Lord Jesus, we thank You – You are truly wonderful – the same yesterday, today and forever. Over the course of decades and the last few years, I have seen so many brothers and sisters who have changed: yesterday they are one way, today they are another way, and tomorrow they disappear. That is why we people are not very trustworthy. If we are not going on and moving on with Jesus Christ, none of us are trustworthy because we keep on changing. Hopefully, we are changing for the better to be more like Him; but unfortunately, we change in the opposite way. That is not very good. There is only one Person who is the same yesterday, today, forever, and is always trustworthy. He is perfect, and even as a Man He was perfected; He is our great, heavenly High Priest today, so consistent, always helping us and interceding for us, able to save us to the uttermost, serving us with His wonderful, powerful, indestructible, indissoluble life. His love for us has never changed. How many times have I changed over the years; I even change during the day – up and down. With us, today someone may be a wonderful brother but in two hours or a month he may not be! But our Lord Jesus is not like that. That is why in Zion we look unto Him and not to man. That does not mean that we don't care for one another or respect one another, but nobody is like Him. We saw in the previous meeting that we need to remember those who lead us, but we also need to remember that Jesus Christ is the only One who never changes.

Learn not to look at any man. If he is following the Lord, imitating Christ, then Amen; if he is not, we still follow only Christ. That does not mean that we don't follow those who are following Christ but those who are

following Christ may change. They may follow Him for five years, but in the sixth year, they change! After all these years, I realize why the verse, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”* (Heb. 13:8), is inserted in its context. It is about you and me. I should not be looking at you, and you should not be looking at me. We should both be looking at this wonderful Jesus who never changes. He does not need to change because He is perfect; He is God. From the beginning to the end, He is wonderful, righteous, holy, glorious, and powerful. His love never changed. How is it with your love or my love? We are moody and always change. Sometimes we are loving, then all of a sudden, we are not. We are both not yet perfected. But if you are following the Lord, speaking His word, are faithful, and your life shows it, then I will gladly imitate your faith. But if you change it will be a different story because I am following the Christ in you; I am not following you. Paul said, *“Imitate me,”* which is immediately followed by the phrase, *“just as I also imitate Christ”* (1 Cor. 11:1). If he is no longer an imitator of Christ, would you still follow and imitate him? Definitely not! We need to learn this lesson. If I imitate you, it is because I see Christ in you and want to learn to be like that. But if you are no longer expressing Christ, that I cannot imitate. This is what verse 8 means, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”* Nobody else is like Him.

Not to Be Carried About with Various and Strange Doctrines

Hebrews 13:9a says: *“Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines...”* because if a man changes, strange things come out of his mouth! That happens so often and causes Christians, believers, God’s people to be carried about in many different directions – you don’t know where you will land. *“For it is good that the heart be established by grace”* (v. 9b), to be solidly rooted and grounded in Christ, to walk in Him, and not with any practice of religion as in Judaism at that time, *“...not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them”* (v. 9c). The ordinances, the religious practices of Judaism had no profit. Would you prefer to eat a shoulder of lamb or Christ? Today, we are eating the real spiritual food; we are eating Christ. Doctrine is not edible. We need the truth in the word of God, not the teaching of man replacing the word of God. The Lord told the Pharisees and scribes that they were *“making the word of God of no effect*

through your tradition which you have handed down” (Mark 7:13a); their commandments of man were nullifying the word of God. That is a no-no. Our heart needs to be established in the truth, the word of God; then it will not be easy for someone to try to carry you away. You should always say, “Wait! Let me go home and check it out in the word of God!” You be a Berean – learn from them!

Eating of Jesus Christ as the Reality of the Offerings

Paul then takes us in a wonderful direction: *“We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat”* (Heb. 13:10). “We” refers to the believers, who are following the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a different altar, meaning to say the sacrifice we are eating is different from “those” who are serving in the old ways of Judaism, who offer sacrifices on the physical altar. Paul was an expert in Judaism; he was studious, wise, and the top student of the top professor. He knew every situation and ordinance; He was the top Pharisee! None of the other apostles knew the Scriptures more than this brother. The Lord had 12 disciples of whom some were fishermen, but He only needed one Paul – that was good enough! No one except Paul could have used this example.

Paul had talked about foods which did not profit those who were practicing Judaism and offering animal sacrifices. The wonderful thing about the priesthood is not just about bringing an offering to God, but about eating the food! Don’t think that God just wants to eat food by Himself! He wants to give it to all the priesthood to enjoy. In short, the food, the animal meat, that those who serve the tabernacle eat has no spiritual profit; it does not change their lives. Even the blood of the animal sacrifices cannot remove sin (Heb. 10:4, 11)! God has no pleasure in animal offerings (Heb 10:5-6). And the blood of animals cannot perfect those who are offering the animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:1). Only the blood of Jesus Christ through the eternal Spirit can cleanse our conscience (Heb. 9:14). So, all their animal sacrifices and whatever they were eating did not profit them; unless they would turn and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the reality of all the sacrifices. By the one unique sacrifice, He has perfected all those who come to Him (Heb. 10:14); their sins are forgiven. Isn’t that wonderful? Or would you prefer

to be bringing animals to the Lord’s Day meeting? No, those animals are just a shadow of things to come. Now we can offer up wonderful spiritual sacrifices, the reality, through Jesus Christ. And Christ only needed to be sacrificed to God once for all because He is the perfect sacrifice, the reality of all the sacrifices; He is not a shadow. God was absolutely happy with Him!

Because Christ is the unique, perfect sacrifice, the reality of all the sacrifices, in Hebrews 6:6, Paul said it is impossible every time you sin to bring Christ down again to be crucified for you. No! He died once for all; so you do not need to kill Him every day. It is not Him who needs to be crucified again, it is you who needs to be crucified. Paul says, “*I die daily*” (1 Cor. 15:31b). That means you must experience the crucifixion of Christ. Christ needs to die only once, but you need to experience this death of Christ all the time. It is the same with the precious blood of the Lamb – He only needed to shed His precious blood for you once for all through the eternal Spirit. His blood is effective any time and all the time! Isn’t that a wonderful mystery? His blood is fresh because it is timeless – I don’t know if you have a sense of how wonderful that is. If your hands are dirty, you wash them with soap and clean, fresh, running water. The blood of Jesus Christ is exactly the same – it is so fresh! Paul told the Galatians that Christ was portrayed right before their eyes as if He was just crucified (Gal. 3:1) because it is so real! Remember, Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14); so, there is no limitation to the eating of Christ as the reality of all the offerings!

Paul said, “*We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle [in Judaism] have no right to eat*” (Heb. 13:10). Which offering do the Jews have no right to eat of? It is the sin offering. On the Day of Atonement, the priest brought an ox as a sin offering for his own sins. He would then bring some of the blood of the ox and sprinkle it on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. Then the bull had to be carried outside the camp; and the flesh, the outer parts and the inner parts, including the skin had to be burned there outside the camp. It was not to be eaten! So they had no right to eat of that sin offering.

But what about with our Lord Jesus Christ? He is the reality of all the offerings! We can eat of this wonderful Christ always – not as in the old

covenant. The Lord said, *“For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed”* (John 6:55). The people did not understand what He said, nor did they even give Him time to explain it, but they left and ran away. And the Lord said, *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing”* (John 6:63a). The Spirit is the reality. May we all learn to experience the living Christ. If you learn to experience Christ as this wonderful sin, trespass and peace offering, you will have much to eat. Don’t just say, “Oh, I have peace, praise the Lord.” It is not just about a feeling of peace, but you must also eat the shoulder and the breast – eat the best parts! Do you eat those parts? Learn to eat them because we are eating the real food. If you think you need the love of Christ, then eat the wave breast of the peace offering; if you think you lack strength, then eat the heave shoulder of the peace offering. Remember which parts to eat. It is necessary for us, the priests, to learn to eat the best part. So in two verses (Heb. 13:10-11), Paul told us how to eat Christ. He did not need to describe and repeat all the details because they were already written in Leviticus. To fully understand it, go to Leviticus to see the shadows and types. Christ came to fulfill the reality of all the offerings – the burnt, meal, peace, sin and trespass offerings.

So, the offering and the eating go together. That is why if you just listen to a sermon on Sunday morning – even though you may think it is wonderful, when you go home you are still empty. But that will not be the case if everyone in the meeting prepares an offering for the Father that is their best experience of Christ, a more excellent sacrifice, like that of Abel at the very beginning of the history of faith (Heb. 11:4). Then the Father will not keep everything to Himself, but will say, “I’ll eat just a little bit, but the rest is for all of you.” If you have such a wonderful meeting where everyone brings a spiritual sacrifice to the Father, you will be surprised – it will be very encouraging, and you will go home very satisfied. That is the best food, the best part! So, I really praise the Lord for teaching us the practice of the priesthood. We have an altar, where we all have the right to eat! When somebody brings the best of his or her offerings to the Father, I really have the feeling “It tastes good! Thank You, Father, for sharing with us this wonderful spiritual food.” When He is satisfied, then we will also be satisfied.

This is important to see because Zion is the city of our feasts, the festal gatherings (not the “general assembly” as the old translation says in Heb. 12:23). Who brings the food – the angels? No, all of us bring the wonderful spiritual food, sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And we all have the right to eat! This is a marvelous way! What a wonderful feast in Zion! Every time we gather at the Lord’s table, on the one hand we enjoy what Christ has accomplished; on the other hand, we bring the wonderful offerings of the best of the experience of Christ in our daily living – the spiritual reality of Christ as all these offerings. Then we will all have much to eat.

“For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp” (Heb. 13:11). If you are a priest serving inside the gate, according to the old covenant, you have no right to eat that sacrifice.

“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate” (Heb. 13:12). Jesus is the real sacrifice who suffered outside the gate. Now in the new covenant, don’t remain inside the camp! If you want to eat, go outside the camp to eat!

“Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13:13). When Christ went outside the camp to bear our sins, He identified with us; and we now identify ourselves with Him. We have been crucified with Christ, bearing His reproach. This is where Paul got the truth, *“I have been crucified with Christ”* (Gal. 2:20a). It is like Moses who preferred to bear the reproach of Christ with God’s people (Heb. 11:26). If you are in a camp of religious tradition, don’t stay there but come out – whether it is voluntarily like Moses, or involuntarily by being kicked out; both are better than staying. Do not remain inside the camp! Many who have remained inside the camp were disappointed and left because they did not experience anything. But praise the Lord! We go forth outside the camp, bearing His reproach. He bore our sins, and we bear His reproach. We are not ashamed of His suffering. Are you ashamed of Christ? He was not ashamed of you. He gave His life for us and died for our sins. Praise the Lord!

“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come” (Heb. 13:14). Wherever you are, do not get stuck; for we have no continuing city. We must keep on going; we follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Abraham never went back to the place where he came from, nor did he get stuck in Canaan. He dwelt in tents, so he was ready to move anytime at a moment’s notice. If he had built a house there, he would not be able to pick up his house and move. He was seeking the city to come. Though we are living on this earth, we must live like Abraham since this is not yet the end station – we have no continuing city. Looking back, I really praise the Lord that He raised up the situation for me to be kicked out of a religious camp. If it were not for the Lord’s mercy, I would be stuck there. I don’t want to get stuck inside a camp but want to keep on going with the Lord outside the camp. Like Abraham, we seek the city that is to come. So long as the Lord has not returned, we do not want to get stuck in any tradition. Even if things are good now – we must keep on growing! If it becomes a camp, then it is time to move on. And the time to move on is always to bear His reproach. Here we have no continuing city.

Though we have no continuing city, there is one thing that must be continuous! Hebrews 13:15 says, *“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”* How will you praise God if you are not experiencing Christ as all the offerings every day and in every situation? Will you keep praising Him just for what He did 2,000 years ago? If so, then you are stuck 2,000 years ago. Some say that you must weep at the Lord’s Table; but if you do that, you are stuck 2,000 years ago because for you Jesus Christ is still hanging on the cross. That does not mean we despise the cross; we appreciate it, but He is no longer hanging there! Hebrews tells us that is the beginning of the work of Christ. Why get stuck there? It is elementary. Today He is on the throne! Let us keep on going! So, there is one thing we should do continually, and that is to bring these wonderful rich offerings. Every time we bring such an offering, it will be fresh and living. The “praise” mentioned in the above verse is not just praise that Christ suffered and died for you 2,000 years ago. Do you think God is happy and satisfied with that? He will say, “Ok, and what else?”

After the Lord resurrected, He spent forty days speaking with His disciples. Did He remind them not to forget the cross? No! The disciples would never forget the cross. He spoke with them for forty days about the kingdom. And when He was taken up and the disciples were still looking, the angels said, “Why are you still looking up? He will come back, get ready.” It seems like a joke, but it is very serious! He ascended! In Revelation 5, when John thought that there was no one worthy to take the scroll, he must have shed more than just a few tears and really wept. The angel did not sympathize with his tears but told him, “Do not weep! Behold, the Lord is no longer on the cross. He ascended! And now I will show you what happened when He ascended. He ascended as the only One worthy to take that book with seven seals to rule over the whole situation on this earth today.” He is the Ruler over the kings of the earth. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And He will make all of His enemies His footstool. In Hebrews Chapter 1, after the writer mentioned that He accomplished the propitiation for our sins (in one phrase only), He immediately says that He ascended and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Then Hebrews describes the great High Priest as the wonderful, unique, once-for-all sacrifice for us; and He is the Forerunner who entered into the heavenly tabernacle not made with hands. He is not only the ruler over the kings of the earth, but for us He is the great heavenly High Priest, King of righteousness, and King of peace, walking among the seven golden lampstands. Today, He does not just want us to appreciate His crucifixion; He wants to see us go on to perfection! But unfortunately, His people would not and still do not listen to Him. We all need to see the complete picture.

So, let us continually – not once a month or once a year, but continually – offer the sacrifice of praise to God. The Lord gave us seven days a week to prepare the sacrifices, so that when we come to the feast, we have something wonderful to offer to God, to have a feast together, where everyone has something to eat. Do you see the picture, dear saints? Do you see the importance of the priesthood? Today, we don’t bring an animal sacrifice, but we bring Christ. But how are you going to profess this Christ – just by just sitting in the meetings and looking at each other and nodding our heads to one another, thinking about the

Lord? If that is all you do, how will you bring forth the spiritual calf, the spiritual sheep, the perfect lamb, and the meal offering without leaven?

The praises of God are based upon our experience of Him. Hosea 14:2 says that the praise, the fruit of our lips, is the spiritual “bullock” or “calf” of our lips. This means that your sacrifices must be expressed through your mouth. Out of the abundance of your heart, what you have enjoyed and truly experienced of Christ must come out of your mouth! Otherwise, if you keep it inside, nobody knows it; God Himself is anticipating and waiting for it. And if you bring it out, it is a real praise to God! We must continually offer the sacrifices of praise to our God, that is, the fruit of our lips (not the fruit of our hearts or of our ears). It must come out of our lips! The enemy wants to shut us up. The fruit, the bullock, is the wonderful offering that comes out of our lips. By this we give thanks to His name.

“But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:16). The writer mentions this because it is necessary! There are so many saints who need help; remember them. If you truly experience Christ as all of these wonderful offerings, you will definitely have a compassionate heart to do good to the saints. The more we experience this Christ in bringing these offerings to God, the more we will realize that it is not just for God and not just for the saints but for many people who need help – not just those who are with us. In Galatians 6:10, Paul says, *“...let us do good to all, especially [foremost] for those who are in the household of faith.”* That means although we should especially do good to those who are in the household of faith, it is not just to them but to all. The Lord came to this earth not just for those who love Him but for everyone. Such a wonderful heart of our Lord Jesus Christ!

The Benediction for the Saints

“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. And I appeal to you,

brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words” (Heb. 13:20-22). This is a short book. If it is too long for you, you don’t have the faith and need to grow in faith. But if you have the faith, you will keep on reading it because there is so much in such a short book of 13 chapters. You cannot exhaust it! Paul wrote a few words, but they encompass the whole Scripture!

“Grace be with you all. Amen” (Heb. 13:25).

May the Lord by His Holy Spirit and through this word remind us every day. Remember to get into this word. Bear with the word of exhortation. Which is to say, take it seriously to heart. It is not a command but an exhortation with love, that we will all get into the word. He is not forcing you. The Lord will never force us. But it is up to you. The more our love for Him increases, the more we will have an appetite to pursue this wonderful Christ. Amen!

Note: The above content has not been reviewed by the speaker.