

A Study in Hebrews 13 - Part 1

by William MacDonald

The book of Hebrews emphasizes the superiority of Christianity over Judaism and encourages believers to hold fast to their faith in Christ, even in the face of persecution and difficulty.

Duration: 47:28

Scripture: Acts 16:25, Romans 12:1-2, Hebrews 13:1-8, Hebrews 13:15-16

Topics: "Exhortation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of encountering a preacher in a parking lot and encourages the audience to show support and encouragement to those who boldly proclaim the message of Jesus, even if no one is listening. The sermon then focuses on Hebrews chapter 13, emphasizing the importance of brotherly love and hospitality. The speaker highlights the biblical command to show love and kindness to strangers, as some may unknowingly entertain angels. The sermon also addresses the need to maintain purity in marriage and to be content with what one has, as God promises to never leave or forsake His people. Additionally, the speaker discusses the concept of offering sacrifices to God, including the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of possessions, and the sacrifice of oneself. The sermon concludes with a reminder to be mindful of our words and actions, especially towards our loved ones, and to continue showing brotherly love in times of persecution.

Transcript

13, which is the lesson for today. I know that Rick would like to have been here to finish his series on Hebrews, but too much air conditioning in the car, and you've got a terrible stiff neck. He's not a stiff neck person.

That's a riddle. How can you have a stiff neck and not be stiff neck? Hebrews chapter 13. Let brotherly love continue.

I'm going to read through the entire chapter. Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also. Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have, for he himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

So we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, I will not fear. What can man do to me? Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Do not be carried around with various and strange doctrines, for it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat, for the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate.

Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. 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.

But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Obey those who rule over you and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Pray for us, for we are confident that we have a good conscience in all things desiring to live honorably. But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. 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. Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.

Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints, those from Italy, greet you. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Actually, this letter to the Hebrews deals with the tremendous problem of leaving one religion for another. Specifically, in this case, leaving Judaism for Christianity. And it's a wrenching experience.

But it would be a wrenching experience, for instance, to leave Islam for Christianity, or Buddhism for Christianity, or even for some religions that call themselves Christian. Some of you here in the audience today know something about that. Probably know something about a mother's tears, the father's anger, to think of leaving the church in which you were brought in.

For what crime? To come to Christ. And so in the background of this epistle, you can hear those Jews, and they're saying, how can you do this? We have such a beautiful priesthood, and we have such a wonderful ritual, and we have such a, the ordinances, and the tabernacle, and the furniture of the tabernacle, and you're leaving that for what? For an upper room, with a table, bread and wine on the table. Is that what you're doing? And of course, all kinds of pressures were brought upon those early Christians to renounce Christ and to return to Judaism.

So I think the book is very applicable today, because as the gospel goes out, people respond to it, and it means leaving, as I might say, their mother's church. I think of a lady back in Chicago, and she was brought up in a Polish home, and she trusted Christ as her Savior. And when she went and told her mother, her mother flung herself down on the kitchen floor and screamed.

That was really quite a demonstration. You can never leave my church. And she said, I've already left it.

And she really paid the price for that, to come to Christ. Of course, the argument of the letter is, what you have in Christ far exceeds anything that worldly religions can offer. And we'll see that, I think, as we go along.

It's good to study the verses in connection with that background. For instance, in verse one, it says, let brotherly love continue. Well, you know, you might say, well, what's that got to do with it? Well, the backdrop of this whole epistle is persecution, trouble.

These people were being persecuted. They were losing their jobs. They were disinherited.

They were thrown out of their homes. And they were just a huddled group of people whose only crime was Christ. What happens when you're huddled together like that and you're being persecuted in Christ? The problem is that oftentimes you take it out in the tough spots of life, in the trials of life, you take it out on the person who's nearest to you and the person you love the most.

Isn't that true? I forget who the poetess was who wrote it. One great truth in life I've found while journeying to the West, the only folks we really wound are those we love the best. We flatter those we scarcely know.

We please the fleeting guest and deal full many a thoughtless blow to those we love the best. And this happens in times of persecution and it happens in times like the present. It happens in many homes, you know, that unguarded word.

Why did I say that to my wife? Why did I say that to my husband? Well, because kind of the water's hot and you want to take it out on somebody and who else is there but the person who's right next to you. So I think that in view of the persecution these Christians were going through, it's very good expectation that brotherly love continue. Watch out for the unguarded word.

Don't treat the ones you love the best worse than you treat the fleeting stranger. Then it says, do not forget to entertain strangers for by so doing some have entertained, unwittingly entertained angels. Once again, view it against the backdrop of the epistle.

And I think the strangers here primarily were probably people, Christians who were fleeing for their lives. And if you take them in, you're threatened too. You really expose yourself to danger if you take these people in.

It kind of helps thinking about some Kari Ten Boom and her family in the Second World War taking in Jews. It's not exactly the same, but it's similar. They exposed themselves to the wrath of the Nazis by taking in Jews.

But here it'd be a matter more of taking in Christians who were being persecuted and hunted and chased and pursued. And they come to your door and what are you going to do? Of course, the verse has a wider application than that, doesn't it? It's really an exhortation to hospitality in general. Remember, do not forget to entertain strangers.

By so doing, some have entertained angels unawares. And of course, you know who the writer was thinking of when he wrote that. Who was it? Who was he thinking of? Of course, Abraham.

The day three men came to him. Actually, they were angels in human form, weren't they? And one of them was the angel of the Lord. One of them was the Lord Jesus Christ in a pre-incarnate appearance.

It was kind of exciting, wasn't it? They just looked like men. But one of them was the savior of the world. And in typical Middle Eastern fashion, Abraham went out, killed the animal, barbecued it, served his guest.

In so doing, he served two angels and the Son of God. He said, boy, I wish that would happen to me. It happens to you all the time.

Any time you show hospitality to another Christian, it's just the same as if you showed it to the Lord Jesus. I told you before that wild story of the woman who bought property in the Mount of Olives years ago so she could serve a cup of tea to Jesus when he came back. He's coming back to the Mount of Olives.

So she wanted to be there on the spot so she could serve him a cup of tea. Dear woman, but you can serve him a cup of tea any day by doing it. Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my presence, you have done it unto me.

We forget that, don't we, in our Christian lives. Life can become very routine and very humdrum and very mundane, and we forget that any kindness we show to one of Christ's people, we show it to him. It's reckoned as unto him.

And in the rewards that are given out at the judgment seat of Christ, it will all come out. Fantastic, isn't it? Then verse 3, remember the prisoners as if chained with them and those who are mistreated since you yourselves are in the body also. Now once again, I like to read these verses primarily against the background of the epistle.

Persecution, suffering, and these prisoners are in prison because of their confession of Jesus Christ. Now it's wider than that, I know it's wider than that, but just for the interpretation. I think these were Jewish Christians who were staunch in their loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ and they preferred to go to prison rather than to renounce him.

Now to remember those in prison once again exposed the other believers to danger, too. Because persecutors are very impartial. They're out to get any, in a case like this, who name the name of Christ.

So it means taking your stand with people who are suffering for the namesake of the Lord Jesus. I sometimes think of this, do we have an opportunity to do this? Sometimes we do. You know, sometimes you go into a city and you see a sandwich man and a sandwich board here.

And maybe he looks just a little bit offbeat, you know. And on this side it says Jesus is coming and on the other side it says are you ready, you know. And the world passes by and sneers.

It's kind of a nice thing to go up to him and say thanks a lot, that's what I believe. I was down at San Leandro in the shopping district the other day and there was a black man there and he was preaching, there was nobody particularly listening. He went to a, in the middle of the parking lot and he was quoting verse after verse.

What should I do, should I just pass him by and not say anything? I didn't, I went up to him and just gave him a word of encouragement, you know. Easy to kind of look down your theological nose at him. Preaching with nobody listening.

I was listening. God was listening. Marriage is honorable among all and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Good verse for 1992 in the United States, huh? Big squabble about Vice President Quayle and some TV program exalting fatherless homes where a woman just wants to have a baby, she doesn't want a husband. I never can read this verse without thinking of Bishop Latimer years and years ago during the reign of immoral King Henry VIII. Bishop Latimer presented him with a beautifully bound Bible and on the wrapping of the Bible he wrote those words, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Now I admire the bishop. I tell you, it took courage to give that to King Henry VIII who slew his wives as readily as he drank a glass of water. And sometimes I think the church today has lost its capacity for anger and righteousness in these things.

Well, this is the word of God and men may have their lifestyles in our day and live together with women without marriage and all the rest, but God's word stands, fornicators and adulterers God will judge. And then it says, let your conduct be without covetousness and be content with such things as you have. And when I read that I chuckle.

You see, the Jews had been saying, we have the tabernacle, we have the priesthood, we have the offerings, we have the glorious ceremonials, you know, and they were rehearsing all the things that they had in Judaism. And the writer to this letter is saying, look, when you come to Christ you have a better covenant. You're no longer under the covenant of law, you're under the covenant of grace.

We have a better mediator. Moses was a mediator, but we have a better mediator than he. We have one who died to make sure the covenant.

We have a better hope. Generally speaking, the hope of Israel in the Old Testament was the millennium life here on earth. They had a heavenly hope too, but that wasn't the emphasis.

And we have a better hope, guaranteed by Christ who has gone inside the veil. We have better promises, some of them right here in this chapter. We have a better homeland, Israel, Jerusalem.

We have a better city, the heavenly Jerusalem. And we have a better priesthood, our Lord Jesus Christ, a great high priest. They had high priests in the Old Testament, but they never had a great high priest.

And we have better possessions. These are some of the better things that the writer to this letter emphasizes. Incidentally, the word better is one of the key words of the book to the Hebrews.

We have eternal redemption. Under Judaism, the sin question was never dealt with satisfactorily. They had annual atonement.

We have eternal redemption. The great day in the calendar of the Jews was the day of atonement, and it was an annual remembrance of sin that never put them away. They never had a clear conscience concerning sin.

Say, were they saved? Well, they were saved as they put their faith in the Lord. They weren't saved by the ceremonial system. If they believed whatever revelation God gave them, they were saved, yes.

But there was an annual remembrance of sin. Thank God we have something better than that. We have eternal redemption, eternal salvation, eternal covenant, and eternal inheritance.

So I think of that when it says be content with such things as you have. I should say so. We should be content with them.

For he himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. I was thinking driving here this morning, it's impossible. It's impossible to realize the comfort that that verse of Scripture has been to people down through the centuries.

Marvelous when you stop to think of it. A preacher was once talking to a lady and explaining to her that there are really five negatives in this verse. In other words, I will never, never, never, never, never leave you nor forsake you.

In the original language of the New Testament, that's what that amounted to. And she said, well, you Greeks may need five, but one's good enough for me. And I like that.

It's just good enough the way it is in English, isn't it? I will never leave you nor forsake you. A lot of these verses of comfort in the Bible don't mean much to you until you're going through affliction. It's wonderful the light that difficulties can bring on the Word of God, isn't it? That's true of a verse like this.

Now, I'm sure that you've experienced that where you've had some difficulty, some disappointment, the death of a dream, something in your life, and all of a sudden a verse of Scripture comes and you have a meaning that you never knew before. Well, that's true of these verses and of the one that follows. I will never leave you nor forsake you, so we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper.

I will not fear. What can men do to me? Some of you might think, well, men can kill you. Well, that's true.

They can. They can kill you. Not outside the will of God, Paul.

And when he does, actually, the best thing that can happen to you in a way, isn't it? To be with the Lord. To be with the Lord, absent from the body and at home with the Lord. This verse teaches us that in the Lord we have perfect security, perfect protection, and perfect peace.

And I suppose that many martyrs went to their death with these verses on their lips. The Lord is my helper. I will not fear.

Of course, that's supernatural, I admit it. And you don't get it until you need it. You don't get dying grace until it comes time to die.

When it does, you get it. And that's true of all the circumstances and difficulties of life. My grace is sufficient for you.

My strength is made perfect in weakness. Then there's an exhortation to remember those who ruled. I believe that verse 7 refers to past rulers, the past leaders in the Christian church.

Who are they? Well, they spoke to you the word of God. It says, whose faith followed, considering the outcome of their conduct. What's the outcome of their conduct? Well, the outcome of their conduct is that these men were believers.

They were men of faith. They taught the word of God. And in spite of all the difficulties of life, and in this case, in spite of all the pressures to return to Judaism, they went on faithfully for the Lord.

Consider the outcome of their faith. That's really something, isn't it? It's one thing to profess faith in the Lord and be very brilliant for a while and then just peter out. But that wasn't the outcome of their lives.

Their lives, they just went on enduring unto the end in spite of all the difficulties. And I think that's probably the thought in this verse. They weren't tempted to apostatize.

They weren't tempted to leave all the glories of Christ and go back to the types and shadows of the Old Testament period. Those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Some people link the next verse with it.

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Some people put those two verses together in this sense. Consider the outcome of their conduct.

Jesus Christ, the immutable Jesus Christ, was the gist of their message. The object of their faith and their life in a word. And we're to remember them and follow their example.

Now, another key word in the epistle, the Jews would say, we have, we have, we have. And the writers of the Hebrews continue saying, we have, and here it is again, we have. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

Well, when you read altar here, don't try to think of a material altar like this pulpit or something like that. It doesn't mean that at all. Actually, the altar is Christ.

Christ is everything in the book of Hebrews. Christ is the high priest. Christ is the offering.

He is the sacrifice. And everything in the tabernacle spoke of Christ as well. He serves in a heavenly sanctuary.

So when it says we have an altar, I think immediately of the Lord Jesus from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. In other words, if they're still clinging to the types and shadows of Judaism, they've never really entered into the privileges of Christianity. And then there's a lovely section here, verses 11, 12, and 13.

Now, the camp here is not only the tabernacle tent itself, but the enclosure around the tabernacle tent. And the corpses, the carcasses of those animals were taken outside that whole area and burned. And the writer sees a spiritual application here.

Therefore, Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered outside the gate. Calvary was located outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem. I don't know the exact place, but if you go to Jerusalem today and go out through the Damascus Gate and go along the street and go up a little alley, you can come to what is known as Gordon's Calvary and the garden tomb, and it's outside the city.

Now, the application. Therefore, Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered outside the gate. Let us go forth to him outside the camp.

Now, the camp primarily here means Judaism. In the day in which this was written, the writer is calling the Jewish believers, or those even who profess to be believers, to leave Judaism for Christ. That's really what he's saying here.

Let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. Today, what is the camp? Well, the camp today is Christendom for us. Christendom.

Now, let me just pause to say there's a difference between Christendom and Christianity. Christianity is the real thing. Christendom is all of the falseness.

It's, for instance, churches that teach salvation by works or by ordinances or by ritual or by character. It's that whole decadent system. A church without loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A church that doesn't honor the word of God as the only source of truth. It's Christendom with its humanly ordained priesthood and with all the material aids to worship, all of the incense and all of the rituals. In short, it's the church today where Christ is outside.

And the writer says, go forth to him. But notice that expression, bearing his reproach. There's a reproach connected with being a real believer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a reproach connected. And that stumbles some people. But it shouldn't.

We should expect it. And I think maybe in talking to people about the gospel, we should warn them ahead of time. You're going to be a Christian.

Watch out. There's going to be a reproach connected. You're always going to be a speckled bird in the religious community.

And I feel that increasingly now as the days grow darker, Christian bashing has become the popular sport in the media. And they don't miss an opportunity to take a crack at Christians. And they call our teaching Puritanism.

And of course they say it with a sneer. Now, anything to do with holiness or righteous living is just labeled as Puritanism. Now, there's a certain reproach.

I'll never forget sitting in an English composition class in college. I went to the guy next to me and he said, what are you, a Christer? I had never heard that word before, Christer. He said, yes, I am.

Here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. In other words, the trials and testings of this life are only for a short time. And then eternal glory.

It will be worth it all when we see Christ. Now, we have no continuing city here, and I'm so glad we don't. The urban blight that you see in the world today.

Los Angeles in flames. I'm glad that's not my city. I'm glad San Francisco's not my city either.

Although it has a mystique about it that draws people from all over the world, I still call it Sin City. We seek one to come. Abraham looks for the city which has foundations.

Only one city has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 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.

Now, in the Old Testament, the priesthood was limited to one tribe, the tribe of Levi, and to one family of that tribe, the tribe of Aaron. It was a distinct setting apart of a certain people for the priesthood. In the New Testament, all believers are priests.

You read that in 1 Peter 2, and maybe we could just turn to 1 Peter 2 and see it, although I know you're familiar with it, but I like to see it in the Word. Verse 4, 1 Peter 2, verse 4. Coming to him as to a living stone rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also as living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. Why? To offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Verse 9, but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. So, Peter tells us that all believers are a priesthood, are a holy priesthood, and a royal priesthood. Our function as holy priests is to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God.

In the Old Testament, they offered up dead animals to God, or the parts of dead animals to God. They were dead sacrifices. But we as priests of God today offer up different kinds of sacrifices, and we have two of them in this passage.

First of all, the sacrifice of praise to God. That's kind of nice, isn't it, to think that when we, either in our private lives or come together here at the Lord's table and praise the Lord, it goes up to God as a spiritual sacrifice. You think, oh, it's just in the gym of the Redwood Christian School in San Leon.

No, no, no. It goes right through the universe to the throne of God, the spiritual sacrifice. The sacrifice of praise.

And then it says in the next verse, do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices, such sacrifices, and that has to do with our possessions, doesn't it? There are two of our sacrifices, the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of our possessions, and then in Romans 12, 1 and 2, the sacrifice of our persons, all beginning with C. Very handy, easy to remember. That you present your bodies a living sacrifice, your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And I think there's another one in Romans chapter 15, if you want to turn back to that.

Romans chapter 15, verse 16. Well, I should go back to verse 15. Paul says, nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some point as reminding you because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

And the word he uses here is a priestly word, his offering to God. And what he's saying here is that he goes out and he preaches the gospel to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles get saved, and he offers them up as an offering to God. So, you have the sacrifice of praise, sacrifice of your possessions, sacrifice of your persons, but the next one doesn't begin with P. The sacrifice of your service.

These are the sacrifices of the New Testament priesthood. Now, you have the holy priesthood here in verse 15 of chapter 13. Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 15 says, Therefore by him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God, the holy priesthood, and then the royal priesthood in verse 16.

Paul and Silas in prison in Philippi, at midnight they sang praises to God, and then that was worship, and then they led the Philippian jailer to Christ. You have the both exercises of priesthood there in the prison in Philippi. But I should say this in passing.

People say, well, if everybody is a priest, men and women, why can't women speak? Why can't they preach? Why can't they be elders if everybody's a priest? Well, the answer to that is that the same Lord

who established the holy priesthood and the royal priesthood put restraints upon the public use of it, put restraints upon the public use of that priesthood, and they're found in the Word of God. I call them controls, put controls on the public exercise of the priesthood. Verse 17.

Obey those who have the rule over you. And this probably refers to the elders in the local assembly. Be submissive.

They watch over your souls as those who must give an account. The solemn thing to be an elder in a local assembly, responsible for the spiritual care of the flock. And so it says, let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Once again, it's all going to come out in the coming day, isn't it? We live in a kind of an age that has the spirit of rebellion against constituted authority. What is that bumper sticker? It says something like defy authority. That's not exactly the word, but I always tremble when I see that bumper sticker on a car.

I wonder where that person's going to end up. Defy authority. Well, certainly those of us in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ should take very seriously a verse like verse 17 where we're to obey those who rule over us, be submissive to them, and look forward to that day when we'll stand before the Lord and give an account for it all.

The writer is bringing the letter to a close. He says, pray for us. We're confident that we have a good conscience in all things desiring to live honorably.

Why does he mention that? Well, he's not a fraud. You know, there are a lot of frauds in Christian service, aren't there? Think of the scandals that have come out within the last few years here in the United States. Some of the terrible things that have been happening in Christendom, all bringing dishonor on the name of the Lord.

And it's as if the writer is saying, I really do covet an interest in your prayers. And as far as I know, my life is out in the open, and I don't know any reason why you shouldn't pray for me, why I don't deserve your prayers. We ought to pray for one another.

Sometimes we look at other people and say, well, they don't need my prayers. You know, we reserve our prayers for those who are stepping close to the precipice, as we think of it, or going through hard times. But we all need prayer.

And certainly the writer here recognized it, and the Apostle Paul, in all of his epistles, recognized it too. But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. This would be one of their prayer requests.

The writer might come to them. An awful lot of this sounds like the Apostle Paul, doesn't it? It's easy to see why people would think that Paul wrote this letter, but the fact of the matter is we don't know, and we shouldn't say if we can't be positive about it. Then the writer closes with one of the great benedictions of the Bible.

There are several great benedictions in the Bible, and this is one of the greatest. 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.

The God of peace. That means the God who's the source of peace. When we come to know the Lord God through the Lord Jesus Christ, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and the peace of God reigns or monitors in our heart.

It's a lovely expression, the God of peace, who brought up the Lord Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is really, the longer I live, the more I think it's just one of the keyest doctrines of the Christian faith. It's emphasized in the New Testament more than Calvary, you know, because Christ's death on Calvary would have been worthless apart from the resurrection.

If he hadn't risen from the dead, his death would have been no different from any other death. But God set his seal upon the work of Christ by raising him from the dead, and the apostles and writers of the New Testament are always quick to bring in the resurrection. We serve a risen Savior, that great shepherd of the sheep.

You know that the Lord Jesus has spoken of the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. The great shepherd, you have the great shepherd risen from the dead, and the chief shepherd, 1 Peter 5, who will reward his servants, particularly the elders in that passage, when he comes again.

You have the good shepherd in Psalm 22, don't you? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Christ on the cross, the good shepherd giving his life for the sheep. You have the great shepherd in Psalm 23, and you have the chief shepherd in Psalm 24 coming again. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant, that is the blood that ratified the everlasting covenant, the blood that sealed the everlasting covenant, What is the prayer? Make you complete in every good work to do his will.

You have the divine and the human. Only God can make us complete. But we still have to do his will, don't we? And we're not put here as mechanical beings.

God empowers us, but we certainly have to cooperate. Working in you what is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ. And that should be the goal of our lives, always to do the thing that pleases his heart.

The great question, the great question in all areas of Christian life is, what is it like in his sight? Does it please him? And then he closes with a description of glory to Christ, who is worthy of it forever and ever. And I be appealed to you, brethren, bear the word of exhortation. What's the word of exhortation? All through here he's been pleading, look, don't go back to Judaism.

If you renounce Christ to go back to Judaism, your fate is sealed. There's no more offering for sin. It's impossible for such a one to be renewed unto repentance.

The great sin of apostasy. I think that's the exhortation of this book. Tremendous warning against apostatizing from the Christian faith.

Bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. Well, it doesn't look like few words to us, but I suppose relatively speaking it is. Know that our brother Timothy has been set free.

Well, it's sometimes easy for us to forget Timothy was in prison too. He was a squeamish stomach. Yet he had to endure imprisonment for the namesake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

With whom I shall see you, if he come shortly. Another reason why people would think that Paul wrote this letter. You know, you can't blame them.

It doesn't say so. Greet all those who rule over you and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

Paul was a gentleman, wasn't he? He was really a gentleman. He knew rules of Christian courtesy. And he never neglected them.

It's good for us to be courteous. And when I think of verse 24, I think of the last time I was in Italy in an assembly in Rome. And one of the dear brothers got up at the end and he said, When you go back to the United States, he said, Remember to convey to the assemblies there this message.

Those from Italy greet you. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Once again, the letter ends on a grace note. And what is that? Well, it means everything for nothing to people who deserve nothing but judgment. This will be our theme throughout the endless ages of eternity, won't it? Oh, the grace that brought me to the fold.

We're going to have a closing chorus, I think, and then close in prayer.

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