



## Jesus Christ – Ever the Same

Series: *Hebrews – An Anchor for the Soul*

Hebrews 13:1-8 (7-8)

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Beloved, I am so eager and so remarkably humbled to get to preach this text this morning. This passage that we are looking at today, and most especially verse 8, is one of the greatest statements of encouragement in all of Scripture. It is profound, powerful, worthy of real contemplation and awe. ***“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*** (Hebrews 13:8, ESV) This is the kind of truth that shores up wavering souls, that dries up the dews of doubt and worry, that dispels the fog of fear, that sets our feet firmly on the Rock, on Jesus Christ, so that we are not moved. Understanding this verse is the key to lifelong endurance and perseverance in the faith, the key to real and vibrant and unshakable trust in the Lord. It is the lynchpin of our lives in Christ. Every other exhortation that we read in this chapter, as good and helpful and Biblical as they are, are only held together, only have weight and worth, if our faith and our hope are firmly placed in the unchanging Christ.

Chapter 13 gives to us a series of exhortations in our quest to finish well, to live this Christian life all the way to the end and to remain faithful to Jesus until we see Him face-to-face. Last week, Pastor Eddie, preached through the first six verses of this chapter describing how we must love one another and in light of that love, how we must show hospitality and care for prisoners and those in need, keep our marriage vows, avoid the love of money, and to pursue a life of contentment in Christ. All of these things are very practical, very necessary, right? And the way that we do this is not by our own strength, our own power, the force of our will, but by faith in the power of God’s promise in verses 5-6, ***“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*** So we can confidently say, ***“The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”*** (Hebrews 13:5-6, ESV) Faith in the promises of God, confidence in the promises of God, is the power to live a faithful Christian life. Do you see that? Today’s text builds upon this truth by telling us how to cultivate that kind of faith, how to grow in faith, how to continue to mature in faith. This is so practical. And the pastor emphasizes the importance of remembrance.

**Remember Your Leaders (7)** Now listen, the writer of Hebrews is going to talk about the proper, present relationship to elders and leaders in the church in a little bit, but his focus in this verse is not on current leaders, but on those that the Hebrew church, that you have known and seen, in the past. Look at verse 7. He writes, **“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7, ESV)** Apparently some of the former preachers and pastors, elders and teachers of this flock had run the race and finished the course and now were with Christ in Heaven. Most commentators agree that the focus in this verse is on men who had lived and died trusting in Christ, perhaps even some that had been martyred for their faith in Christ. The pastor is exhorting them, encouraging the church, to remember the men who had poured out their lives preaching to them the truth of the Word of God, those who had taught them about Christ, who had labored in the burden of the Word of the Lord so that they would be saved and grow up in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, those who laid the groundwork for your spiritual lives and exhausted themselves and sacrificed for your spiritual good who have lived and died trusting Christ. Think about these guys, he says.

Now I want to point something out here that I think is very important, a qualifier, ok? He is exhorting these Hebrews to remember those who “spoke to you the Word of God.” That is not an insignificant statement. They are to remember and consider those who taught the Word of God, not their own opinions, not human philosophy camouflaged in spiritual language, not those who abandoned the clear preaching of the Word of God to appeal to fleshly desires and human wisdom so to win a crowd, who subtly redefined nor who softened the message to avoid offence. Remember not those who merely claimed to speak for God, but those who took the message of Paul to Timothy to heart, **“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” (2 Timothy 4:1–4, ESV)** They are to remember those who faithfully spoke the Word of God. And so are we. But the key and the underlying assumption here is that they not only spoke the Word of God, they lived it.

That assumption is at the heart of what the pastor says next. Remember those who spoke to you the word of God and do two things... First, he says, **consider the outcome of their**

**way of life.** In other words, consider the sum total of their way of life, the result of their conduct, the whole scope of their lives. How did they live? How did they die? How did they endure trials? How did they honor Christ? How did they live in obedience to the Word of God? How did they handle difficulties and fight temptation? How did they handle persecution? How did they stay the course in spite of their own frailty and weakness? Look at the whole course of their lives and consider how they stayed faithful to Christ – not perfection, of course – but when it came down to it, when the choices came, where it would have been easier to compromise or quit, how did they live lives of faithfulness? Look at the whole of their lives – those that have walked the walk and died faithful to Christ and discover how they remained faithful. And the answer of course is only one way – faith in Christ. And that leads to the next exhortation -- **imitate their faith.**

Now, the immediate context of this verse is speaking about pastors and elders, preachers and teachers, those who led in this Hebrew church, but we can extrapolate this to those in our own lives who have faithfully spoken to us the Word of God, those whom we have known who are now with Christ, who have had a significant, spiritual impact in our lives for the sake of Christ and for the good of our souls. Not only those, we have known personally, but those whom we know through Scripture, faithful people throughout the history of the church who have taught us the Word of God. I think of men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, George Whitefield, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, just to name a few. None of them perfect men, but all of them faithful.

Imitate the faith of the faithful that have come before you. That is the idea. Notice something. It's not, "imitate their methods, imitate their personality, imitate their dress, imitate their vocabulary, imitate their experiences, mimic their mannerisms," it's imitate their faith. John Piper offers this insight that I think is very helpful. He says, "If you try to imitate (these things) you become a religious fake, a spiritual counterfeit. This is a frightening reality when you see it – people who have learned the forms of godliness and know nothing of the power that comes from genuine faith. Instead he says: look at the whole course of their conduct and how they finished their course, and get the same motor that made them what they were: their faith. And what was the substance of that faith? Where was their faith rooted? The next verse tells us:

**Trust in Jesus Christ – Forever the Same (8)** Verse 8 says, "**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**" (Hebrews 13:8, ESV) Do you see the point? This is not just a

statement of the immutability of Jesus Christ, not just a statement about one of the attributes of Jesus, it is vital truth that must be the very foundation of our lives, must be at the very root of our faith, must be the very substance of our souls. These faithful leaders, the ones who didn't quit, didn't go astray, spoke the Word and lived the Word, they trusted wholeheartedly, unreservedly in Jesus Christ. That is where they placed all their hope. That is where they found their strength. And just as they trusted in Jesus in the past; we must trust in Jesus right now, and tomorrow, and the day after that, and every day after that one. Why, because **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever**. Jesus remains forever the same. He was perfectly sufficient, more than enough for them, and he will be for you too.

Look beloved, here is the point. The faithful Christians of old were not that different from us. They lived in a sea of change. Nothing ever stays the same. We live in a world of change. Kingdoms and empires rise and fall. Forests grow and are gone in an instant. Rich men become poor; strong men grow weak; the smooth, fresh face of youth yields to wrinkles and age. Minds, once sharp and insightful become clouded. Time, distance, changes of address, changes in vocation, changes in life cause relationships to wax and wane. Circumstances change. Personalities change. Desires change. There is nothing about this earthly condition that is certain and fixed and immovable and sure. Nothing.

And it is true of us individually and spiritually. We are one day strong and the next we are weak. One day we are resolved and the next we are wavering. One moment we are determined by the power of God's grace to be holy and constant and the next we are sinning, led astray by our own lusts. One moment we are utterly Christlike in our demeanor, and the next we act like children of Adam. One moment we are firm and uncompromising in our devotion to Jesus and His church and the next we are unstable and wavering. One day we are sacrificial and the next we are self-indulgent. One moment seeking humility, the next we are acting in utter pride.

For one season the gospel is in favor and the next it is ever more opposed. Churches change. Pastors and worshippers come and they go; they live and they die. Our lives are filled with constant change. We know this to be true, right? We long for a sure and lasting foundation, for a hope in which there is no variation or even the shadow of change (cf. James 1:17). It will not, cannot be found in this earth. Those who search for it here will search in vain! The sure hope for which we long, the sure foundation on which our lives, our very souls can find

rest and strength – that one sure foundation is always and ever Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, today and forever. Jesus never changes, He is the same God, the same Savior, the same Sanctifier, the same Priest, the same Brother, the same Giver of grace, the same Lord and King. Everything else in your life – everything – is changeable but He remains ever the same. What He has always been, He is today and He will be forever. You can always depend upon Him.

That’s the point that the writer of Hebrews wants to press home to our hearts and minds today. That is the heart of this message. Jesus Christ is eternally reliable, eternally sufficient, eternally satisfying, because He alone is eternally unchangeable. Oh beloved, think about what this means.

Before the first star light up the sky, before the sky was created, before the first angel was formed, before the mountains, the plains, the rivers were fashioned, before anything else was, He is. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”** (John 1:1–3, ESV) From the very beginning and forever, He is the beloved Son in whom the Father is well-pleased. From everlasting and forever, He is very God. From the very beginning, he was chosen by God the Father to be the Savior of sinners. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the World, and the one to whom all nations will come, **“so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** (Philippians 2:10–11, ESV)

He is forever the same in His great love to His people. He has loved you, church, with an everlasting and eternal love – a love with no beginning and with no end. He set His love on you in eternity past, chose and predestined you to be His own, in Divine foreknowledge placed His gracious love upon you and loved you with all His heart. For this reason He left His Father and like the writer of Hebrews has told us, became like us, yet without sin, so that He might redeem us. His unchanging for His church, for you and for me, is the reason He took upon Himself the debt of our sins, the defilement of our rebellion, and bore our sins in His body on the tree that He might bring us to God. **“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** (2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV) Never has he, never will He change in His love for His people. **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness,**

**or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35–39, ESV)** The love of Christ for us is forever the same.

Jesus is forever the same in His purpose toward us. He resolved in eternity to set His love on us and give Himself up for us on the cross so that **“that he might sanctify (us), having cleansed (us) by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present (us) to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that (we) might be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:26–27, ESV)** And why? So that we could be with Him, where He is, at the right hand of the Father in Heaven, and see the glory that is His, that the Father has given Him because He has loved Christ before the foundation of the world. That purpose has not changed, nor will it ever change, because Jesus is forever the same. Jesus is faithful and He is determined to fulfill this purpose in us, in all of His people, beloved, and He will not fail. He will never be content until every soul He has purchased with His blood shall be glorified and by His grace and by His power. He will not lose one, not one, whom the Father has given Him.

Jesus is forever the same in His ministry to us – forever the same! The Christ that we see in the gospels – cleansing the leper, giving sight to the blind, casting out demons, raising the dead, stilling the storms with a word, announcing salvation to a man like Zacchaeus – the chief of tax collectors – and arresting his heart and soul and transforming him, casting Paul to the ground on the road to Damascus and crushing His pride and putting in him a new heart and sending him forth to preach the faith he once tried to destroy, who tenderly but firmly sought out Peter after his denial and brought him to repentance and renewed him in his faith, the One who cleanses the soul of guilt and breaks the bondage of sin and brings captured souls into the freedom of forgiveness – this Jesus is our own Lord, mighty to save. All the love and gentleness, all the compassion and long-suffering, all the uncompromising holiness and justice, all the firmness and perfect judgment, all the tenderness, all the hatred of sin, and all the sin and wrath bearing grace – it is in Him forever the same because Jesus is always the same.

The truth that He spoke, the power of His blood that He shed for the forgiveness of our sins to cleanse the repentant sinner, His reign and His rule is forever the same because He is forever the same. His gospel message is forever the same. Jesus Christ still saves sinners from the guilt, the power, the defilement and the punishment of sin by grace alone and through faith in Him and His sacrifice alone and not by any human works or merit. Still there is **“salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** (Acts 4:12, ESV) He still makes all things new; He still transforms hearts of stone into hearts of flesh and writes His Word on them. Just as He was to Moses, Jesus is still more to be desired than the fleeting pleasures of sin; His blessing more to be desired than the false promises of the world – power, pleasure, popularity, wealth, reputation, comfort and ease. He is still the One upon whom we can cast all of our cares because He cares for us. His call to the cross is still the same -- **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”** (Luke 9:23, ESV) So is His offer of blessing -- **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”** (Matthew 11:28–30, ESV) So too, is His promise to all who come to Him, **“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”** (John 6:37, ESV) And why? Because Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

There is so much more I could say. Beloved we could be here all day and even that would not be enough and that’s not hyperbole. Jesus Christ, oh that our souls would truly believe this, is forever the same in His power to preserve us, His people, to the end. Jesus does not begin a work of grace and leave it uncompleted. That is not who He is. Jesus said, **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”** (John 10:27–30, ESV) It will never be said that any have truly trusted in Jesus Christ and been defeated and brought to shame, because the “founder and perfecter of our faith” never changes.

The writer of Hebrews, the pastor of this flock, is calling you and me to put our whole trust in nothing less than the tried and true cornerstone, the Rock of the Ages, the sure and unchanging and forever faithful, the One who said **“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”** (Hebrews 13:5, ESV) In this world that is adrift in a sea of change, the one who builds his life, his happiness, his desires, his hope, who rests His faith on Jesus Christ who does not ever

change will not be shaken and will not be moved, and will instead know the sure joy and peace and comfort of God. It is by faith and hope and trust in the unchanging Christ, standing on His word, believing His promises, relying completely on His matchless grace that we can stand, that we can rejoice, that we can be faithful, that we can hold forth the eternal gospel to a world – to our families and friends, to our co-workers, to our neighbors with confidence in the saving, transforming grace of God in Christ, even when times are hard, and when others depart and fall away.

Beloved, just as those who faithfully ran the race and finished the course, we know, we follow, we are being shepherded by the same Jesus Christ, who was and is and is to come, who lives and reigns now, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. We do not trust a philosophy, not an ideal or a program, not a tradition, but the Savior of sinners, the Son of God, the King of glory, who does not change. It is Him whom we preach, whom we serve, whom we love, whom we worship, to whom we pray, the one whom we adore. There is no-one better, no-one more faithful, no-one who loves us like He does, no-one more deserving of our devotion.

I encourage you beloved, to settle in your heart now with certainty, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Everything changes; he does not change. Set your heart upon Him. Put your treasure where you can never lose it. Put all your hope in His unchanging glory. Put all your trust – for salvation, for sanctification, for acceptance with God, for perseverance in grace, in His unchangingly powerful sacrifice for your full redemption. Put all of your pursuit of joy in Him. Put all of your hopes in Him. Spend all of your life for Him. He is bigger than any problem you are facing, better than anything that sin can promise, greater than whatever the world may take from you, more certain than whatever change may come. He can bear it all for He is forever the same, forever Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and forever. Rest your soul upon Him.

And for those of you who do not know Christ today, who are being tossed about, who know real guilt, who know that things are not right between you and God, you who know your sins are many and they are not forgiven, who know that you need forgiveness, who need a new life. I want you to know this morning, there is hope for you. There is a Savior for you. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.



I want you to know what I have found: He breaks the power of cancelled sin; He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make foulest clean, His blood availed for me. His blood, His atoning death, His sacrifice to pay the penalty that your sins deserve, can do the same for you that He has done for me. All you must do is come – come confessing your guilt, confessing your sin, and asking Him to forgive you and to save you. Surrender your life to Him today.

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