

38—Hebrews 13:9-16—Seek the City that is to Come

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I. Introduction

- A. What pleases God? That's a question that has been answered many different ways.
 - 1. Some will say there is no God to please. They have no one to give thanks to but themselves.
 - 2. Others ask, "Can I earn God's favor?"
 - 3. Can I purchase eternal happiness?
 - 4. If I do a little more good than bad does that get me across the finish line?
 - 5. What if I only eat kosher food?
 - 6. How about if I serve in soup kitchens and install water wells in third world countries?
 - 7. What if I just go to church hoping that will make me a Christian as though sitting in a garage makes me a car? (S. Cavness)

II. Main Point

- A. I believe the main point is very simple—God's favor cannot be earned but we are made right with God through faith in the blood of Christ.

III. Outline

- A. Do not be led away by strange teachings
- B. Let us go to Jesus Outside the Camp
- C. Let us offer up a sacrifice of Praise

IV. Exposition

- A. As we move to the end of this letter to the Hebrews, the author gives some important last minute bullet points. They are to help us see Jesus as better and to help us endure to the end by faith. There are many distractions that can lead us off the path of following Christ and we need to be aware of them and stick to listening to Jesus. So, let's hear the command to not be led away by strange teachings.
 - 1. We discussed last week that we need to be strengthened to endure by grace. There are many simple means by which our hearts are strengthened. When we take in the words of the Bible we are filling ourselves with the very breathed out words of the Holy Spirit. We want think God's thoughts after him.
 - a) One reason we need to do that is because there are many false ideas out there and even more troubling are the counterfeit ones that have an appearance of truth mixed with error.
 - b) One of the obstacles to being strengthened to endure is trying to be strengthened the wrong way. One of those ways is an attempt through what a person eats.
 - c) We need to revisit something we've already heard back in chapter 9 which says, ⁸ By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹ (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰ but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.
 - (1) Food cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper which means it cannot benefit us with God because it cannot bring us to God.
 - (a) We have discussed at length that animal sacrifice was insufficient but however taught that a payment for sin was necessary.
 - (b) God cannot be a just God if he forgives sinners without just payment. However, they were pointing to the sacrifice that was coming that did sufficiently pay the debt we all owe which is death.
 - (c) As it says there at the end of verse 9—they did not benefit from the animal sacrifices because they knew every day of their lives that it did not bring them to God.
 - i) For their protection, they had to remain separated because their conscience had not been made perfect.
 - ii) If that were the means to God, this world could have never ended favorably for anyone. In fact, it seems the world would have had to simply go on as is and no one

would have ever returned to what was intended in creation—fellowship with God himself.

- (2) However, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the sufficient and just payment necessary for salvation.
 - (a) It does make our conscience perfect.
 - (b) It does bring us to God.
 - (c) We are a new creation in Christ.
 - i) And through repentance and faith in Jesus, we are made perfect—forgiven and counted righteous by faith alone.
 - ii) But we must continue in that faith to the end.
- d) There have been many issues in the church related to food and sacrifices.
 - (1) One of the main problems was the fact that most every religions had animal sacrifices and the question arises as to whether one can eat meat sacrificed to idols.
 - (2) I cannot in this short space unpack all of this.
 - (a) But Paul explains this in detail in 1 Corinthians 8 and in Romans 14.
 - (b) One of the premises needed to deal with this issue was the fact that idols are not actually real. But not every believer had this knowledge. Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 8:7-8 ⁷ not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸ Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.
 - (c) He also says this in Romans 14:1-3 ¹ As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.
 - (d) On down it says...Romans 14:14-15 ¹⁴ I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.
 - i) Two things to glean from this:
 - (1) Food will not commend us to God.
 - (2) Love your brothers and sisters whose conscience might be burdened by this.
 - (e) So, how do we apply this for us?
 - i) I mean, you and I shop at our local grocery stores and there are no labels that indicate any such thing for us these days.
 - (1) So, we are not battling over food sacrificed to idols.
 - (2) However, some people say we should not eat meat because of animal harm and we should be a vegan or vegetarian instead.
 - (3) Neither of those will commend you to God.
 - (4) Eating meat and eating vegetables are taught and encouraged in the Bible.
 - (5) But respect the person who wants to do that insofar as they do not think they are earning God's favor by their eating practices.
 - (6) And furthermore, have your views about what to eat but please do not impose them on the rest of us.
 - (7) I imagine that I eat very different from you but I do not expect you to do what I do.
 - e) There are others things in our culture that may demand a similar response but let's circle back to the command to not be led away by strange teachings.
 - (1) If you have come up with or heard something new than has not been affirmed and believed by the church for over 2000 years, then you are being led away by diverse and strange teachings.
 - (2) Look, we do not have to figure this out. We believe in the historic doctrines of the church.

- (a) There are a lot of great things out there on YouTube and other platforms that promote sound doctrine but there's also a lot of really bad stuff too.
 - (b) I've benefited from this very much not only growing as believer in sound doctrine but also how to BBQ.
 - (3) I caution you because I'm seeing really sound people get off track badly and when they do, they leave a trail of tears and destruction in their wake.
 - (4) I've listened to stories of people who explored and it changed their lives drastically.
 - (a) You must be discerning. Please feel free to ask me about a podcast or someone in particular or whatever. I'm here to help you with that. Do not go at it alone.
- 2. Finally, concerning not being led away by diverse and strange teachings, verse 10 and 11 give us the reason for being on guard and the hope we have in Christ.
 - a) It says there in v. 10 that we have (possess by faith) an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.
 - (1) The old covenant has ended. The new covenant has been established.
 - (2) The way to God is not through the offering of animal sacrifices.
 - (3) The way to God is through the perfect and complete sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's Son.
 - (a) The altar is the cross and faith alone gains you access to its benefits of forgiveness and righteousness and many more too.
 - b) Verse 11 describes the day of atonement where sacrifices were made and brought into the holy of holies once a year.
 - (1) If there was any sacrifice that would have any potential for commending someone to God by eating it, this would have been it.
 - (a) However, as Leviticus 16 affirms along with verse 11 here, the sacrifice was burned up outside the camp. They could not eat it.
 - (b) In fact, they could not even return to the camp until they were clean again and they were unclean for going outside the camp.
 - (c) Outside the camp was the place leper were kept among others who were perpetually unclean.
 - c) The Hebrews would have known this! It's really a compelling argument for them not to return to the old covenant ways.
- B. That gets us to our next point. We've just heard that food cannot get anyone to God. The old covenant could not accomplish this because the sacrifice was insufficient and had no lasting affect on the worshipper. However, something very significant changes access to God and a very different trajectory for God's people—Let us go to Jesus outside the camp.
 - 1. So, there in v. 12 it compares the sacrifice spoken of in v. 11 to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.
 - a) It says there in v. 12—So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.
 - b) This is the hope of the gospel! Christ's death on the cross satisfied the justice of God so that he can remain just and also forgive sinners.
 - c) We all understand this. If someone kidnapped and murdered my daughter and it was proven beyond a reasonable doubt to be true but the judge or jury set this person free, we would rightly be outraged because of injustice.
 - d) The same is true for us. We are guilty of sins against God but he would be unjust to set us free without sufficient payment for our sins.
 - e) This is the reason why the Son of God came to die on the cross for his people.
 - f) Only God could reconcile us to himself. Only God could make that sufficient payment.
 - g) In other words, he met all of his own demands in Jesus for us that he might sanctify us by his blood.
 - 2. Jesus describes himself in John 6 as the Bread of Life to help us make that connection with eating the sacrifice.
 - a) In John 6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

- b) The image is that if you will eat of this Bread you will have eternal life.
 - c) The question is, how do I eat this Bread of Life and gain its benefits?
 - (1) John 6:47-51 ⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.
 - (2) The answer is—believe! Faith in Christ is feasting on the Bread of Life.
 - (3) Faith is believing in and the receiving of all that Jesus is for us.
3. Upon hearing this good news, the preacher here in v. 13 concludes that we ought to come out to Jesus and bear the reproach of Christ.
- a) Before we talk about what it looks like to bear the reproach of Christ, let's see where they are coming from.
 - (1) What does it mean for those inside the camp to come outside the camp?
 - (2) I think it first means those who depended on the old covenant ways of being right with God through animal sacrifice need to see those ways are over and there's a far superior way, indeed, the only way to God is through the sacrifice of Christ.
 - (a) In other words, those who are inside the camp need to come outside the camp to Jesus to be clean...to be forgiven...to be made perfect so that they may have fellowship with God forever!
 - (3) For for the rest of us...come out of our self-righteousness...come out of our pride...come out of our uncleanness...come out of our camps, our tribes, our families, our traditions, our ways and come to Jesus.
 - b) This is really amazing and really good news that Jesus suffered outside the camp.
 - (1) He went to the uncleanness of the world in order to make it clean.
 - (2) He went out among the lepers and outcasts...indeed...he went out to the outsiders to save them.
 - (3) He went out to the nations who worshipped other gods.
 - (4) He went out to his enemies and those who didn't love him and he sought them and bought them with his redeeming blood.
 - (5) He went out and accomplished what no one else could do.
4. With that said and with the understanding that we do not deserve such an amazing love, hear the command to go out to him and bear his reproach.
- a) Go to him and believe he is everything you need for salvation and eternal life.
 - b) But what does it mean to bear his reproach?
 - (1) To come to Jesus and believe is to identify with him in every respect.
 - (2) You believe he is the Son of God and the promised Messiah.
 - (3) You believe that only through his blood can one be made right with God.
 - (4) You believe that if you repent and believe in Christ, you are forgiven of your sins and counted righteous—justified—by faith alone.
 - (5) So, you come and identify in all of that but also you identify in his shame, his disgrace, and his humiliation.
 - c) We have already heard about Moses doing this in—Hebrews 11:24-25 ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to bear reproach with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.
 - (1) We live with being mistreated by the world rather than enjoying its temporary pleasures.
 - (a) To be sure, the world offers some amazing pleasures but they are temporary and they never deliver on their promises. You can never be satisfied by them.
 - d) The reason we do that is because we are seeking the city that is to come.
 - (1) Nashville is no lasting city. None of this will last.
 - (2) But we live in humility now because exaltation is coming.
 - (3) The one who sanctified us by his blood will also glorify us on that great day.
 - (4) We will receive a resurrected body that is immortal and sinless.

(5) And we will be swept up into the glorious presence of God and we will behold his face.

(6) You must decide if you believe that Jesus is worth the wait and the reproach.

5. One last point to make concerning this—if Jesus suffered outside the camp to sanctify the unclean and sinners of the world then we ought to go and share this good news with those outside the camp too.
 - a) We come to the gathering to be equipped to scatter.
 - b) We come to praise the one we go to proclaim.
- C. Now finally, if all of that is true and I believe it is, the only appropriate response is there in verses 15 and 16—Let us offer up a sacrifice of praise.
 1. A sacrifice is an offering and a gift.
 - a) In the old covenant, the sacrifice was a payment for sin or guilt.
 - b) It was your substitute. That lamb lost its life in your place.
 - c) The consequence of sin is death and the sacrifice reminded the people every time that they deserved death but God was going to make a way of salvation.
 - d) It was costly.
 2. So, how does that relate to praise to God?
 - a) It seems like praise is not enough and you're right. Praise cannot earn God's favor, nor eating or not eating certain foods.
 - b) You offer a sacrifice of praise because the perfect sacrifice in Christ is sufficient and it is yours through faith.
 - c) Every time you sing you should realize that you deserved eternal death for your sins but Jesus died in your place.
 - d) Jesus' life was costly. His worth is more than we can understand. He was God's perfect Lamb who was given for his enemies.
 3. This is why we all sing when we gather.
 - a) When you offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, you are publicly confessing that you deserved death for your sins.
 - b) You are publicly declaring that Jesus was the perfect and final sacrifice.
 - c) You are publicly acknowledging that your sin cost God the Father his one and only Son.
 - d) But you are also saying that you trust him and that you are God's own possession.
 4. But there's more. We offer up a sacrifice of praise when we do good and share in the name of Jesus.
 - a) Romans 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.
 - b) Micah 6:7-8 ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" ⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
 - c) James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.
 - d) As it ends—for such sacrifices are pleasing to God!
 - (1) And the only way praise is sufficient and doing good is sufficient and sharing is sufficient is if you offer it by faith in Christ.
 5. What pleases God? Faith in Christ!
 - a) A faith that is alive not dead.
 - b) A faith that bears the reproach of Christ outside the camp.
 - c) A faith that offers up a sacrifice of praise to God.
 - d) A faith that seeks to do good and share in the name of Jesus!
 6. Do you have that kind of faith?
 7. Are you seeking to please God apart from faith? It will never work.