

Jesus: Our Life

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[0 : 00] Well, please do take your seat and if you could grab a Bible somewhere near you or turn it on and scroll down to Hebrews chapter 13, that would be wonderful. We've come to the terminus of our journey through the book of Hebrews.

Let's just take a little time to think about where we've been, what we've seen and what we've come through. It's a letter written to struggling Jewish believers who attempted to give up on Jesus and turn back to Old Testament Judaism, their previous way of life.

So the writer has written a brief exhortation, he calls it, to tell them to keep on going. The first 10 chapters are rich theology.

Some of the richest theology superimposing the reality now available in Jesus over and against the shadows that were seen in the Old Testament.

The opening verse declares the very theme of the whole book, that Jesus is God's full and final word. He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

[1 : 16] Then we get four sections. Four sections where he's showing how superior Jesus is now to everything they had in the past.

He says in chapters 1 and 2 that Jesus is superior to angels and superior to the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. The argument then moves on and in chapters 3 and 4 he says that Jesus is superior to Moses and superior to the promise of rest that they had in the promised land. Chapters 5 and 3. Chapters 5 and 7 are the third big theological section where he's saying that Jesus is superior to all priests. And it's even superior to this mysterious figure of Melchizedek, this king priest from the book of Genesis.

And then the last big theological section is that Jesus is superior to sacrifices and the Old Testament covenants. He is just better in every way.

He is infinitely superior. He's made everything that was old now obsolete. Jesus is infinitely superior and therefore the writer to the Hebrews encourages them, don't give up.

[2 : 39] Don't give up on Jesus. He also clearly warns them that if they give up on Jesus, they give up on their only hope of escaping God's coming judgment.

Again and again he's saying, if we stop, how will we escape? If they didn't get away from it with what they had, how much less will we get away with it?

With all that we now have in Jesus. Then the previous two sections to chapter 13. Chapter 11 encourages us to keep looking upwards and keep looking forwards like those heroes of old.

The many, many that are mentioned in chapter 11. And then chapter 12 functions as a final shot in the arm to encourage us and Mr. Hebrews' readers.

He tells them to keep going. You're really God's children. Keep on running. It's all worth it now and will eternally be worth it.

[3 : 45] And we saw last week that he's talking about the difference between two mountains. Between Mount Sinai of old and Mount Zion which we're now welcome to because of Jesus.

That we are now eternally inheriting the unshakable kingdom of Jesus Christ. See as well, if you just flick back to chapter 12 now you must have found 13.

That everything he's been talking about in the book so far comes and is summarized on chapter 11. In chapter 12 verses 18 to 30. So the book's been about angels and a heavenly city and rest and a firstborn and perfection and a mediator and a sprinkled blood of sacrifice.

And all that, all that is seen on Mount Zion. The reality that's now ours in Christ. And one day we'll inhabit fully when the end comes.

When God speaks and shakes everything that is created. So that everything that cannot be shaken will remain. So let me read for us.

[5 : 00] We'll start in chapter 12 verse 28. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Let us be thankful and worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.

For our God is a consuming fire. Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers.

For by so doing, some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison.

And those who were ill treated as if you yourselves were suffering. Marriage should be honored by all. And the marriage bed kept pure. For God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have. Because God has said, Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.

[6 : 03] What can mortals do to me? Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods which is of no benefit to those who do so.

We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. The high priest carries the blood of animals into the most holy place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp.

And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp bearing the disgrace he bore.

For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

[7 : 12] And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account.

Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.

I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon. Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will.

And may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Brothers and sisters, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for in fact, I have written to you quite briefly.

I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you. Greet all your leaders and all the Lord's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings.

[8 : 24] Grace be with you all. Let's pray. Father God, having seen throughout this book that you are a God who speaks, Lord, we'd invite you to speak to us now.

Send your spirit to make this word alive, sharper than any double-edged sword. And may it do surgery on us, we pray, for the glory of your son.

Amen. This is Tiger's Nest Monastery in Bhutan, one of the most revered places in Asian Buddhism.

It was made famous a couple of weeks ago because these two characters went to visit it, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, on their recent Asian adventure. To get there, you need to trek two and a half hours up a steep path.

You then have to ascend 756 steps before you finally arrive at this monastery precariously perched on the edge of a cleft.

[9 : 29] Once, at the monastery, you can light a butter lamp, paying homage to your favourite Bodhisattva. You can receive saffron water in exchange for a donation to attain and garner blessing.

You can sit in a cave and meditate on the icon of Padmasan Bhava, or bring an offering to lay before one of the 125,000 statues that litters the monastery.

It all looks very reverent, it all looks very worshipful, but isn't it? Or take the Muslim who prays three or five times a day.

He goes to mosque every Friday, he observes all the food loss. He eventually saves enough money to go on pilgrimage, to go on Hajj, to Mecca. Is this devout worship?

Is this going to attain earnest blessing and favour from Allah? Or what about the Hindu? Earnest in his yogic practice, offered to a multitude of gods, particularly the one he is a particular devotee to.

[10:43] He pays significant alms to various gurus and monks. And he even attends, every ten years, the Kumbha Mela Festival, ritually bathing in the Ganges for all 30 of the festival days.

Is this pleasing to the gods? Is this worshipping God acceptably? Is any of this real worship?

Well, if Hebrews 13 is correct, if Hebrews 13 is true and right, then all that effort, the climbing the mountains, the dipping in the streams, the going to Mecca is of no worth at all.

Hebrews 13 is all about worshipping God rightly. It's all about worshipping God pleasingly.

And so go back to chapter 12, verse 28 with me. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship, the same word as serve, and so serve God acceptably, the same word as pleasingly.

[12:03] So worship God pleasingly with reverence and awe. Just go to chapter 13 and verse 15.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that openly profess His name, and do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Chapter 13, verse 20. Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will.

And may He work in us what is pleasing to Him. Through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. So what Hebrews 13 is about, it's not a random checklist that He's just plunked and bolted onto the end of His letter.

It is in fact a very practical idea of what worshipping God pleasingly looks like. Notice as well how it starts in chapter 12, verse 28.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, do you see the order of it? That God is giving us a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

[13:29] It is grace first. God has graciously acted in His Son to welcome us in His unshakable kingdom. And as a result, as a consequence, as a response, let us be thankful.

And so worship, serve God acceptably. All the other religions of the world say, do this, and God will bless you. The gospel says, God has blessed you.

Now do this. Totally different way around. We're not worshipping God to get things. We're worshipping God because in Jesus, we've already got all things.

So the mega theme of Hebrews 13 would be this. Worship pleasingly through Jesus because our God is a consuming fire. Worship pleasingly through Jesus because our God is a consuming fire.

So the anatomy of worship. Hebrews 13 is more than just a checklist for moral living. It shows something remarkable about the worship of God. It is all of life and in everything.

[14:48] It is not climbing to monasteries on holiday. It is not reserved for special days or certain geographical locations. The spectrum of worship in this chapter extends from the prison cell to the bedroom, from the doctrine of the church to the acquisition and use of possessions, from public life to home life to personal prayer life.

It involves everything in all of your life. It is all-encompassing and though the list is not exhaustive, it is a great flavour of what worshipping God pleasingly looks like.

See as well that worship in this chapter is intrinsically other person-centred. How do we worship God vertically?

By serving others horizontally. That's what's going on. What does worship of God look like in your life? Well, it's other person-facing. It's other person-saving.

So in this chapter we have a list of 18 exhortations that are examples of Christian worship not an exhaustive list. And I think they group nicely into words beginning with C.

[16:12] And here's the first. Care. Look at those first two. Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers.

Care for those inside the church. Care for those outside the church. Be a caring person. Let brotherly love abide.

The family that we're brought into in Jesus show us. So wasn't it great this morning to pray for Ecuador? Why do we pray for Ecuador? Because in Ecuador through the Lord Jesus there's brothers and sisters.

show hospitality to strangers that's slightly odd verse. Because some of you have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

I don't think it's saying that Gabriel might pop in for afternoon lunch today so make sure you put an extra portion in the oven. I think it's referring to Abraham back in Genesis which in Genesis 18 and 19 Abraham shows hospitality to strangers and on both occasions some of the party turn out to be angels with important messages for Abraham.

[17:26] See though that it's care within the church and without the church. Be caring. Secondly compassion. Continue to remember those in prison as if you together were with them in prison similarly for being ill-treated.

The first is about family the second is about a body. So what other people are going through go through it with them. Mourn with those who mourn rejoice with those who rejoice bear each other's burdens.

If someone's in prison then act as if you two were in prison with them serve them and love them.

There is no such phrase in the Christian community you've made your bed now lie in it.

There knows nothing of that that we're in this all together. Verse 4 speaks about chastity in two ways. Marriage should be honoured and the marriage bed should be kept pure.

How counter-cultural is that in our 21st century society? It talks specifically about the adulterer and the sexually immoral being judged.

[18:34] Between those two phrases it's a catch-all. The adulterer someone who has an affair outside of marriage and the sexually immoral is a catch-all term for everything else.

Keep sexual expression and sexual desire exclusively for the God-ordained covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. This word sexual immorality covers absolutely everything from your thought life to your internet use to your fidelity in marriage to your conduct while you're dating and who you choose to love with the severe warning for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

Similarly counter-cultural verse 5 contentment keep your lives free from the love of money let's be very clear you don't have to have money to love money in fact it's much easier to love and cleave to money when you don't have it thinking that that is what is going to make me happy and be content be content what an amazing thing in our restless world so I'd like to read you a quote from a magazine called Contentment if television was to become genuinely Christian I would particularly look forward to viewing shows about homes and gardens it would become a five minute program called perfectly adequate homes and very reasonable gardens each week a former bricklayer or plumber would take us on a tour of a bog ordinary family home and say as you can see the Wilson family home has plenty of potential there's lots we could do with this one however it does the job pretty well it's warm and dry and comfortable there are no obvious structural problems we're going to encourage the Wilsons to be content and leave it as it is roll the credits I'm not sure how many people would watch but it would be fun verse 7 remember your leaders those who spoke the word of God to you the new one seems to be those people who shared the gospel with you and have now died that idea of multi generational sharing all of us here have been very well impacted by people saints of old who have shared the gospel with us remember them and then verse 9 do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching make sure you remain orthodox in your understanding of the things of God what a great memory verse it would be for us this week the middle of verse 9 it is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace it's good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace keep yourselves orthodox confess verse 15 let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise the fruit of lips that openly profess his name speaking earnestly and regularly and honestly about the excellency glory and majesty of God we did that this morning in our worship we were declaring how glorious God is we'll hopefully do it in our conversations afterwards we'll do it around our bible study small groups this week we may also do it in our evangelism as we hang out with our friends speaking of God's realness his glory his wonder his excellence verse 16 do good and share again a kind of catch all at the end don't forget to do good and to share with others then we have verse 17 confidence have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority if your leaders are not spouting doctrinal error if they're spouting doctrinal error probably best not to submit but to make as much fuss as you possibly can but to not treat

personal preference as a reason to be a pain in the neck

[23 : 13] I remember listening to a retiring minister speak about his church just outside London and they had a real problem because they were full and they wanted to move to the school down the road and he talks about this church meeting where everything's kicking off and then this one guy who had been in the church since his foundation he was 91 years old when everyone had kind of blown a gasket he just stood up and said I have real confidence in our leaders and if they say we need to go to the school I'll be the first one there to open up and if it means more people get to hear about Jesus I'm 100% behind it a guy who wasn't letting personal preference cloud his judgment about the direction of the church and then finally communion communion with others and God in prayer pray for us I particularly urge you verse 19 to pray for me so that

I may be restored to you soon worship God pleasingly through Jesus because our God is a consuming fire here is an example of what that might look like it is all of life incredibly practical and other person centred see how idolatry is the complete opposite of all of these things what if I don't honor marriage and just sleep with who I want when I want then I'm putting the pursuit of my own pleasure and using other people doing damage and disobeying God what if I love my money then it extensively means that I cannot be worshipping God because I cannot have two masters it is impossible what if I am a pain in the neck to those responsible for leading the church well then I am putting my own self-determination and personal preference over the health and needs of the church what if I don't show brotherly love and have a closed home and never show hospitality well then I'm placing my own comforts and the use of my own things over the needs of others in selfish conceitedness but I guess there's another thing thrown up in this list what about the devout Jew who is doing all of these things are they worshipping God pleasingly if they're submitting to the rabbi in the synagogue after all the two quotes in verse 5 and verse 6 are from the Old Testament that seems to be where the motivation comes from what about the Buddhist monk in Tiger's Nest Monastery he's performing some of these duties at least is he worshipping God pleasingly what about our non Christian colleague at work a very upstanding man who is faithful in his marriage who has concern for the poor and marginalized he throws a wonderful dinner party both for those he knows and those he doesn't are they worshipping God pleasingly though unknowingly well the simple answer according to Hebrews 13 is no because our second point is the ability to worship all we have here is a compare and contrast between the old covenant ritual sacrifice particularly the sacrifice for sin and the true sacrifice for sin in

Jesus so on the day of atonement in Leviticus 16 the people would bring their sacrifice it would be killed the sins of the people would be placed on it it would be killed and then the dead animal would be burnt outside the city to signify that the sin was gone however as said earlier in Hebrews this is only a shadow of what was to come in Jesus so we get verse 17 Jesus dying outside the city as the fullness of the sacrifice for sin the one who verse 12 makes us holy through his own blood the one who in Jesus makes us holy through his own blood because he died for us as the sin was placed on the animal that was then killed so our sin is placed on Jesus who is then killed and to be made holy in Hebrews is to be set apart for God us and so what it's saying is the only way we can worship God is if we're those who have trusted in Jesus whose sins have been dealt with meaning that we're now set apart to worship God pleasingly who now don't have God as a consuming fire to be kept away from but have God as a heavenly father to whom through Jesus we can boldly approach we can only worship God pleasingly through and because of Jesus Christ it's the only way our efforts become pleasing see it again in verse 20 now may the God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus the great shepherd of the sheep equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ what is pleasing to him is that which is done in worship through

[29 : 06] Jesus Christ and see that it is this blood in verse 20 that welcomes us into the eternal covenant the new covenant the covenant mentioned back in chapter 8 which does two new things it gives us the ability to know God universally for all of us and it gives us the ability to obey God as he gives us hearts seared with his law without Jesus we don't have this covenant we have no sacrifice for sin and we are unable to worship God pleasingly our ability to worship is only through Jesus Christ now some of you may think that is incredibly arrogant well it's only arrogant if it's not true if God says this is how

I'm to be worshipped and the world says oh no we can worship God any and each way we want then that's what's arrogant thinking that we know better than God but if what he says in Hebrews 13

is true then worshipping God through Jesus is the only thing that is pleasing there's a wonderful illustration of what unpleasing worship results in Leviticus 10 let me just read it for you Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their senses put fire in them and added incense and they offered unauthorized fire unpleasing fire unacceptable fire before the Lord contrary to his command so fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them and they died before the Lord this God has not changed he is the same consuming fire and he's just as concerned that we worship God pleasingly acceptably through

Jesus Christ let's be clear this worship is costly it's not called a sacrifice of praise because it's cheap but if you go out and do all these things the one thing you will do is look weird so the last point is the absurdity of worship in a sexualized world chastenedness is swimming against the tide of public and societal norm the world says you can do what you want with who you want whenever you want and so to say no I'm going to be chased I'm going to honour marriage I'm going to be show fidelity in my married life that's to look weird and to paint a target on your back in our ravenous consumerist culture that wants more more more for me me me to say no I'm content it's going to look weird you're going to stand out to not think our stuff is ours but to hold it loosely to share it with others and to enjoy it with others as worship of our

God that'll stick out to love people as brothers and sisters who weren't related to us people who think that's very odd to confess the glory and beauty of God all the time it's going to look mighty strange to show hospitality to strangers that word hospitality if we shrink it down we get the word hospital not inviting people in to exhibit and project to them how well I'm doing but I'm inviting them into my home because my home is to be a hospital where we can minister to each other and help each other this is real it's not the von Trapp family no one needs to line up the children for a it is tough to stand up and stand out for Jesus and our temptation outside the safety of Sunday is to whisper our worship to be like the sun barine and as we leave we just put the periscope down sink below the waves of popular culture only to pop up again next

Sunday that is why verses 13 and 14 are so important verse 13 let us then go to him outside the camp bearing the disgrace he bore what did Jesus worshipping God look like it looked like disgrace shame ridicule mockery and he did it anyway and he did it for us and therefore as we respond to that grace we're prepared to be mocked shamed derided put down in response in order that our worship of God might be the driving force in our lives so let me just reflect on three things that I think this means the first one is this if you're not a Christian here today if you haven't trusted Jesus it is impossible it is impossible to worship

[34 : 31] God pleasingly it doesn't matter how well you belted out all of our hymns it doesn't matter how many people you let to get to the milk in front of you it is not worshipping God pleasingly because the only way worship is pleasing to God is through the Lord Jesus he transforms our mundane efforts into pleasing praise so you have a choice you can keep on doing your best doing good but it is futile and it is vain or you can turn to Jesus and know a heart strengthened by grace which transforms our worship and means that we can worship God pleasingly through Jesus secondly if you are struggling and we're all struggling well you have those days where you go I can't worship God today I've messed up

I've done that again I haven't done that should have done that I've messed up I'm too sinful to draw close to God not pleased him the great truth of this passage is that because of Jesus we're always welcome to worship God he stands in our defense his blood speaks a better word he is as verse 8 says the same yesterday today and forever he is there for us meaning that if we worship God through him claiming our forgiveness our inheritance claiming that we are children of God because of him we're free to worship God it's not about running from God when we mess up it's about running to God and trusting that the gospel is true and Jesus stands in our defense also that Jesus is the ultimately pleasing worshipper of God the one who perfectly personified each of these behaviors all the time in every area of life who always had time for outsiders was sexually pure for all of his life on earth who never ceased confessing God in a continuous sacrifice of praise who never stopped doing good who is the source of the grace that nourishes our hearts who never pursued money and was always content in doing the will of the father and it is his record that's attributed to us which means that doesn't matter what goes on it doesn't matter the amount of what your past holds the sexual brokenness the self centered sacrifice selfishness the embarrassed silences when you didn't speak up the prayerlessness or the discontentment what it means that if Jesus is the perfect worshipper then if we're worshipping God through Jesus we're welcome just

imagine Jesus was like your mum on the first day of school kind of had your hair brushed and everything and like all mums do you know they spit on the handkerchief and do that thing on your face don't do that that is just horrible and so they got us to the school gate and then they just let us get on with it well that would be terrifying

Jesus just cleaned us up and then said right now go and worship probably last about a minute and a half but the truth is Jesus is the big brother who not only gets us to the school gate but he holds our hand and walks us through the entire school day meaning that trusting in him we can worship God pleasingly finally persevere in worship how it ends is the same way it begins keep on going notice all of these commands all of these exhortations are present continuous keep on do not forget continue to remember move continually offer pray for us all present continuous it's not a checklist to work through and then move on from it is behaviors to assimilate into your very life keep going keep doing these things keep on worshipping

God pleasingly through Jesus Christ because our God is a consuming fire and without Jesus it's nothing but judgment and fear keep on worshipping God pleasingly through Jesus Christ because our God is a consuming fire let's pray father god we pray that we would be those who know you the God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus our great shepherd of the sheep father may you equip us with everything good for doing your will and may you work in us what is pleasing to you through Jesus Christ and we pray that he would get all the glory forever and ever amen God we have to ■■■ escol our

[40 : 03] God some of all God is we assist Him He mean He exc fin