



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 13:10-19

“The Christian Altar”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the opportunity to consider again the ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and its significance for us. We thank Thee again for the Epistle to the Hebrews, and for the way in which it has so marvelously unfolded the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in his sacrifice, in his present ministry of intercession for us, and not only that, but has pointed us also to the consummation of the ages when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again, shall appear the second time apart from sin unto salvation. We thank Thee for this season of the year, and the opportunity that is ours to discuss some of the things concerning our Lord Jesus Christ with our friends and acquaintances. Enable us to take advantage of the opportunities, to give a testimony to the grace of God in our lives, and to be an instrument for the spreading of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has saved us from our sins. We ask Thy blessing upon us this evening as we study again in the last chapter of this book; and we pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well, we're turning to Hebrews chapter 13, and I'm going to read beginning at verse 10 through verse 24. If you may remember, in our last study, the writer of the epistle spoke about the fact that we are not to be “carried away by divers and strange doctrines. For it's a good

thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.” And so now, in verse 10, he says.

“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.”

Now, this word “without,” I’m reading the Authorized Version, the word without means outside, outside the gate.

“Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, outside the camp bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.”

That “must” maybe a little bit strong. It’s not really found in the original text so plainly and clearly, but the idea is of the future giving of account, and so you might render it, “For they watch for your souls as those that are to give account or shall give account.

“That they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

That text has been thought by some to think, to teach, that perhaps there had been some disagreement between the author and the local church. He says “we trust” we have a good conscience. But probably not. He’s just expressing what the Apostle Paul expresses, concerning himself in one of his writings, too. And now the last verse.

“But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.”

The subject is “The Christian Altar.” We could have entitled it “The Religion of Christianity.” But “The Christian Altar,” I think, expresses the principal point of this particular section. How difficult it is to break the bonds of the old life; that is, the life before we have come to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Very few believers have not struggled with the fact that there is a break, when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, between the life that we had been living and the life that we live now.

The Hebrews, the professing Hebrew Christians, that the apostle is writing to or the author is writing to were struggling with this very fact. They were struggling with the urge to turn back from Christianity; to go back to the Judaism, which they had been brought up in. And so as you think about the dilemma that faced them, feeling this way, having professed faith in Christ, and now having doubts about it, I’m sure that you can, if you’ve read through this epistle, you can think of some of the things that must have been troubling them. But I’d like to suggest that there are at least three things that must have troubled them.

In the first place, the offense of the cross conflicted with the glory of the temple and the altar. We must remember, of course, that in the case of Israel, Rome had come, had conquered the land. Rome had trampled Israel and now controlled the land. Their religious pride had been largely swept away. The ritual, which had meant so much to them for so many years, was no longer. And so, consequently, you can understand how the cross of Jesus Christ and the things that had to do

with Christianity had blighted the hopes of the nation Israel. And so they were troubled by those things that we, as Christians, think of as the ground of our redemption.

They, however, thought of those things of the Old Covenant as being the things in which they took a great deal of pride. And so they must have been troubled by that. The ritual which was so full and so significant for them is now supposedly found only in the simple meetings in which believers, such as you and I, meet in a home, gather around what parcels of holy Scripture they had, and with fellow believers celebrate the Lord’s Table, and listened to the exposition of the word of God by the gifted men. There was no ritual. There was no liturgy. It was the simple meeting of individuals who met, almost as if they did not have an objective deity to worship.

In fact, we know that it is a fact that many of the critics of Christianity in the earliest days of Christianity asked some of those questions. They wondered if there really was a belief in a God in the midst of Christianity, because they didn’t see any evidence of it. They met in these meetings. There was no liturgy. There were no statues. There was nothing to represent the fact that they believed in the invisible God. And so you can understand how they must have felt.

All the distinctions have been leveled, and the Gentiles now are on the level of the Jews. You remember, the Apostle Paul makes reference to this when in Galatians he points out and asks the question with reference to circumcision, if he really believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation, “Why is he suffering persecution?” He said, “And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision why do I yet suffer persecution, then is the offence of the cross ceased.”

So the very fact that the apostle did not insist on the rite of circumcision was one of the reasons why he was being persecuted. And he was holding to that and asking them the question, why am I being persecuted. I am being persecuted because I am not exercising the rite of circumcision, not carrying it out, because the message that I’m bringing is salvation by grace alone.

So that would have been one thing that would have disturbed those professing Hebrew people. The glory of the temple and the altar, the symbols of divine redemption, from the

standpoint of the Old Testament, are now blighted by virtue of the claims of the Christians concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

The offence of the cross conflicted with the seductiveness, “the dazzling kind of seductiveness,” someone has said, of the outward shows of Jewish worship. There were no priesthood, that is, no obvious priesthood. There were no priestly vestments. There were no garments like Aaron wore constantly and then on the Day of Atonement, the special garments that he wore then, very impressive after a period of time to the Jewish believers. There were no processions, when they carried out the priestly activities and the times of the feasts. There were no sacrifices. There were no blood sacrifices, and the blood sacrifices were the common experience of the Jewish people, from morning to evening, the sacrifices were carried out. And on certain days, of course, you know, many animals were slain. And those annual seven feasts that were so significant to them, some of them still separated today, the Day of Atonement, the Passover, now none of that, all swept away.

You know, we can see that today in some of our own fellow Christians, some of our own fellow evangelicals. We’ve mentioned this more than once, but the journey back to liturgy. And so the feeling among Christians, who’ve been in the evangelical world for a lengthy period of time, that there should be something else than just meeting to remember our Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and hearing the preaching of the word of God, singing the Christian hymns, and praying. Those simple things, I’m sure that there were many, many of those early Christians who pondered the step that they had taken, and wondered if they were really following the word of God when they reflected on the significance of the great liturgy that characterized Judaism.

And, remember, I know I’ve often said this and you’ve probably heard it by others as well, no religion as such ever was as impressive and ever has been as impressive as Judaism with the garments, the sacrifices, the feasts, the processions, and the significance of the inspired word of the Old Testament in connection with it. The glorious past of the earliest of the men of God, the prophets of the Old Testament, and Moses, himself, of course, the great Lawgiver, they had

everything, if you're looking for something to impress the eyes as well as the mind. And so, I know, that it must have been a very serious thing with a lot of them with all of these distinctions leveled, they were told by the cross of Jesus Christ.

I also ought to mention this; that in the case of Israel, the offence of the cross conflicted with the sense of the great covenantal history of the people of God. I mentioned Moses, but the experience of being brought out of Egypt, which meant so much to them, which the prophets reflect upon, which the writers of the Old Testament speak about it more than once as “in their history,” at particular points the prophets will remind them in order to draw them into obedience or further obedience that it is they whom God brought out of the land of Egypt and the bondage of it, by the mighty, delivering, redeeming hand of the angel of Jehovah, through his servant Moses. So again with all of that great history, with all of that objective liturgical significant kind of ministry and then, the glory of the temple, the glory of the altar.

I know when we read, “We have an altar,” this was undoubtedly stated in order to encourage the Christians to remind them that while they didn't have those things because the New Testament sets forth the teaching of the word of God very plainly that those things had been done away in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. You would naturally have people thinking, “What do we have?”

So, you know, in the earlier days, it was not uncommon for people to say things about Christianity to that effect. I have something in my notes if, I think I can find it in just a moment, the pagan neighbors often thought that the early Christians did not even have a god, as they observed them. And they called them atheists. And the reason they called them atheists was because there was no objective evidence of a god.

They had no altar. They had no sacrifices. They had no buildings. They didn't have the kinds of ceremonies that people have. They did not have any idols, the things that you find around many of our churches now. In our churches, you go in and you see them all. They didn't have any of those things; so they just called them atheists. They didn't believe in God. I'm sure they puzzled

when they met together. If they didn't believe in God that they met Sunday after Sunday and observed the Lord's Supper.

One of the interesting historical evidences of this persisting long after the time of the apostles is when Archbishop Laud visited Scotland in attendance on King Charles the First, in sixteen thirty-three, he found that those benighted inhabitants of the land of Scotland had, these are his exact words, “No religion at all that I could see, which grieved me very much.” Isn't that interesting? “No religion at all that I could see.” He was an archbishop. H. L. Menken once said about archbishop, “An archbishop may be defined as a high church official that has more authority than Jesus Christ.” He said, “The archbishops may have seemed that way in some of those churches.”

But how would you meet these problems? How would you meet these problems if, for example, a professing Christian believer came and asked you, “What do we have, in the light of what we have left?” Well, if you will go back and think through the Epistle to the Hebrews, he stresses first of all the sacrifice that provides redemption, as early as the first chapter of the book. He seemed to have had that on his mind because in these opening words of chapter 1 in verse 3, speaking about the Son of God, he says, “He's the brightness of His glory, He's the express image of His person, He upholds all things by the word of His power. What He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” In chapter 9 in verse 26, with reference to the Second Coming of Lord Jesus, he said, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him, the second time, without sin, unto salvation.” And now, in verse 12 of chapter 13, “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.”

So he stresses the sacrifice and he says that it's this sacrifice that is the fulfillment of all of those pictures and types of the Old Testament that takes away our sins. That's one of the things that he says and he makes it very important to point out that it's by the sacrifice by the Lord Jesus Christ that sins are removed.

H. A. Ironside has a very interesting story in one of his books and in the book he says that he and his wife with his children were on their way out west, and they were passing through Colorado. He said that his eldest son, at that time was just a little boy, and he was fond of going back and forth through the train, playing that he was the news agent. And so he would take tracts that Dr. Ironside would give him and go through the train, acting as a news agent, giving tracts out like newspapers, things like that. And Dr. Ironside said, “The reason that he did that, giving them to his son, is that when he used to do it, they would stop him and tell him, ‘You can’t do it.’ So he started having his son do it, the little boy, because they didn’t feel like they ought to stop a little boy from passing out something so he passed out tracts.

He said, “So one day, he was passing out tracts on this particular trip to the west, and he a little later walked through the car and a lady occupying one of the sections stopped him and said, ‘I beg your pardon Sir, but I think it was your child who give me this tract. Was it not?’ He looked at it and said, ‘Yes, it was.’ She said, ‘Won’t you sit down a moment?’ And so I introduced my wife and we sat down.” And Dr. Ironside said she said, ‘You cannot imagine how pleased I am to know that there are other religious people on this train.’ ‘You’re interested in these things?’ Dr. Ironside inquired. ‘Yes, indeed,’ she said, ‘I’ve been religious all my life.’ ‘When were you born again?’ Dr. Ironside asked. ‘Oh,’ she said, ‘My father was a class leader and an uncle and two brothers of mine are all clergymen.’ ‘Well, that’s very interesting,’ Dr. Ironside said, ‘May I ask you again, have you been converted yourself?’ ‘Why, you don’t seem to understand, my father was a class leader and my uncle and two brothers are earnest clergymen.’ ‘But, you don’t expect,’ Dr. Ironside said, ‘To go to heaven hanging on their coattails even if they were born again, do you? Have you been truly converted to God, yourself?’ I asked. ‘Not at all,’ she replied. ‘But I thought if I put it that way, you would understand that religion runs in our family.’ [Laughter] ‘Religion may run in your family,’ Dr. Ironside said, ‘But religion and Christianity are two very different things. They are a great many people who are intensely religious, but they’re not saved. Our Blessed Lord was speaking to a very

religious man when he said, “You must be born again.” He said he had the greatest difficulty to get her to realize that there was a difference between religion and Christianity.

Well, I think, that’s one of the problems that we have right here because they were having a problem about Christianity and what really is involved in it though they had made profession of faith. And so the author is bringing them back to what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. As someone has put it in a little stanza, “We rear no altar, Christ has died. We deck no priestly shrine.” He, also, stresses the worship of the new covenant that brings to him and we’ll go and we’ll talk about that in a few moments verse 15 and 16, “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.” And, finally, he stresses the new covenant history, the death, the exaltation of the great shepherd, the one who is greater than Moses.

Now, these are the things that we’ll try to lay stress upon as we look now at verse 10 through verse 14, wherein answer to the problems that they were having, he points to the new sin offering. Verse 10, “We have an altar.” Now there are two sayings here that I want to connect. Verse 10, says, “We have an altar,” and verse 14, says, “But here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” Now, you can see from this that the redemption that the author is setting forth, he recognizes has two aspects to it. It is both complete and incomplete. We do have an altar; but at the same time, we have no continuing city. We seek one to come. So there is a sense in which the Christianity that he is proclaiming is a completed work; and there is a sense in which it is an incomplete work. Obviously, I’m sure most of you, as I recognize you sitting in this audience, you know precisely what we are talking about; that the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, his sacrifice, has been finished. And the forgiveness of sins is available and has been received by those of us who have believed in him. And, in that sense, our future is settled. That’s finished. There will be no more suffering of our Lord. We have the forgiveness of our sins. But the salvation that results from that is not yet complete, the benefits of it. The city that he speaks about in verse 14, the continuing city, which shall continue, the New Jerusalem that is not yet ours. So we can say that Christianity is a finished worked, and there are unfinished things at the same time in connection with it.

Evidently, the Jewish people, the Jewish Christian people, to whom he was speaking, had imbibed the view that to eat and drink at times, such as in connection with the sacrifices of the Old Testament or even in Jewish thinking to eat at a table. To eat and drink was a time of fellowship and that one could receive benefits concerning spiritual life by eating and drinking was one of the doctrines that they were holding to.

So he has said in verse 9, “Do not be carried away with divers and strange doctrines, for it’s a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.” The idea that we can sit down at a table and eat and receive spiritual blessings from that act, was something, evidently, they were holding to and so, our author wants to disabuse them of that. But, at the same time, point them to the reality lying back of what Christ has done.

He says, “We have an altar.” The true food of the believers in the Church of Jesus Christ is not physical food. The true food of the believers in the Church of Jesus Christ is the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Feeding upon him who has been crucified for us. So the altar suggests the sacrifice; this is the use of a term that we know as “metonymy.” That is, the use of one term for another, which is somewhat related to it.

We say, for example, if we were Britishers, we would say that the “Crown did such and such.” Altar? Altar is associated with sacrifice. What he means to say, I mean, what he intends to say, using the figure is that we do have a sacrifice. Just like you might say of some lady who is an excellent cook. I have a good illustration at home. And so I’ll just use the figure. Martha is an individual who sets a good table. But what I mean by that is the food that she cooks is good. Metonymy. So when he says, “We have an altar,” he’s not pointing to anything visible. He’s talking about the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have an altar, but our altar is not something you can see, not like the brazen altar. It’s the invisible altar of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ set forth in the word of God. We are not atheists. We do have no visible means of support; but we have

means of support, nevertheless and our altar is the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessings that flow from it.

Now, notice the next part of that 10th verse, “We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” You’re wondering if, perhaps, you have lost something that is worthwhile, and you might like to have it back. The liturgy? The impressive ritual? The things that appeal to the mind or rather to the eyes and to the emotions.

He says, with reference to this altar, “Whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” Those Jewish believers, or should I say those Jewish people who serve the tabernacle, the priests, they have no right to eat the sacrifice upon our altar. That’s what he means when he says, “We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” The person who has not believed in our Lord Jesus Christ does not have right to the sacrifice for sins, accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ. As long as he serves the tabernacle, in other words, the man who is following Judaism does not have right to the sacrifice. Now, of course, he can give up Judaism, and come to Christ. But if he persists in his Judaism, then he has no right to eat at the Christian altar. He does not have access. He does not have the experience of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. To put it in other ways, you could say the Old Testament offerings are ineffectual for those who persist in Judaism. Ours is effectual for both Gentiles and Jews who come to Christ and give themselves to him.

Now, in verse 11, he says, “For” in order to explain, he says, “The bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp.” Now, if you’ve been reading your Bible this year, you may have gotten to Leviticus. And in Leviticus chapter 16 in verse 27, well, I can really be what’s the proper term I can really be, I want to say satirical. Well, anyway, in chapter 16, I’ll think of the right word, in chapter 16 of Leviticus. Chapter 16, verse 27, we read and this is on the Day of Atonement, and we read these words.

“And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.”

So the bullock for the sin offering, for the high priest, the goat for the sin offering, the children of Israel, those animals, after the blood was offered, were taken outside the camp, and there they were burned. Our author is thinking about that in verse 11, when he says, “For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.”

Now, of course, this is a type by way of contrast. The Old Testament priests could not partake. We can. The Old Testament offering was ineffectual. Ours is effectual. And so then having pointed out that fact, he says in verse 12, “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.” So pointing to what transpired on the Day of Atonement, animals slaughtered, blood brought in, sprinkled on the mercy seat, and then the bodies of those animals burned outside, represented for him significant typical things.

He says in verse 13, then, “Let us go forth therefore unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach.” Now, without the camp, outside the camp, where God dwelt was inside the camp. Outside the camp represents that which is not within Judaism. So these animals were taken outside the camp, and there they were burned.

You may remember one time in Israel’s history when Israel was so disobedient, Moses departed from the camp, went outside, and erected a worship place, a place of worship, outside the camp to signify that God was no longer in harmony with those within the camp of Israel, until there was repentance. So “Let us go forth then,” is a call for them to reflect upon the fact that they have been, by identifying themselves with Christianity, they just as those animals in the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement were regarded as rejected. So, they too, have represented that which is rejected and our Lord is the one, of course, who is the rejected one.

So “Jesus also that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.” He was, of course, brought outside Jerusalem, in evidence of the fact that the Jewish authorities condemned him for what he had claimed to be, the eternal God, and therefore, he was crucified on Calvary’s cross, rejected by Judaism.

Now, if that is true, then to feed on him, we too, the author points out, must abandon Judaism even in its purest state because, of course, in its purest state, it has now been fulfilled by the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, any religious system that dishonors our Lord Jesus Christ is to be rejected by the believers. They are to leave it, and turn away from it.

Paul wrote some interesting words to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 3 in verse 5, which may bear on something like this, because he says, “This know that in the last days perilous times shall come. Men shall be lovers of their own selves.” And speaks about them and then in verse 5, he says of them, “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away.”

So let me summarize it by saying it’s something like this, in a figurative way, in the Old Testament the animals were slain, the blood was brought in and sprinkled on the mercy seat, but the animals were burned outside in token of rejection. In the fulfillment by our Lord Jesus Christ our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified by the Jewish authorities in token of the fact that he was rejected. He is like the bodies of those animals. He was rejected.

Now, in the case of the believers, he calls upon them, if they are to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, verse 13, “Let us go forth therefore unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach.” There are two positions that a believer may reflect upon as he thinks of our Lord’s work in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Remember, a great part of this epistle has pointed out our Lord as one who is inside the veil. He has died. He’s been resurrected. He’s ascended to the right hand of the Father and there behind the veil, he carries out his work of high priest, ever living to make intercession for us. The author has pointed that out, he’s expounded it. One of the texts that makes reference to it is chapter 7 in verse 25, “Wherefore, He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” In chapter

9, near the end of that chapter, he talks about our Lord coming forth again, a second time, so he’s in the veil. He’s in the veil, standing for every believer, for whom he has died.

That’s one of the most marvelous things about Christianity that we have a living Savior at the right hand of the throne of God who is there as my representative, standing for me, having accomplished the atoning work for me, for my sins. And not only has he done that, but there he constantly prays for me at this very moment. He prays for all of us at this very moment. For believers, our Lord is constantly praying for us. He is inside the veil. That, in a sense, is our position, because we are inside the veil since he represents us there.

The other position that our author is making here and making plain, I think, is that there is a sense in which while we are inside the veil in the person of our Lord, we are also in the person of our Lord, outside the camp. That is, religion. For him, of course, it was Judaism. We are outside the gate. And so he calls upon us to go forth, therefore, “unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach.” Our Lord has been rejected by Judaism and, furthermore, he has been rejected by humanity.

In fact, we can say surely, can we not, he’s been rejected by Gentiles. The Church of Jesus Christ is almost an infinitesimal, the true Church of Jesus Christ is an infinitesimal minority among the people of this world. The Scriptures make that very plain. In fact, the Scriptures say that he who is a friend of the world is an enemy of God. The world is the place of rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see it in our society in the United States, where there is a great deal more profession of Christianity than many of the scores of nations on the face of this earth. So it’s true to say in the typical sense, our Lord is outside the camp, so far as they are concerned. He was outside the camp of the Judaism, the greatest of the religions in the history of mankind because it had divine authority, he was outside the camp and he’s outside the camp today.

And so he calls upon us to go forth, therefore, if we are going to be truly identified with our Lord, we will only find him outside the camp. So there is a sense that every Christian who has truly

believed in the Lord Jesus Christ stands in rejection with our Lord. The one who is a friend of the world is an enemy of God.

Why is it that so many of us Christians spend so much of our time trying to be friends with the world, which hates our Lord Jesus Christ? We are strangers and sojourners, the Scriptures say. We are individuals who are in a sense alien to this whole society, this whole globe, if we are to find our Lord Jesus Christ, we have to go outside the camp to be identified with him. And in identification with him, we bear his reproach.

Just like our author speaks of Moses and his faith in chapter 11, “By faith Moses when he was come of years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

Why do we fume and fret because we are not of the world? Why is it that we feel so strange with reference to the world? If we are truly Christians, there is a sense in which we always feel out of harmony with the world about us. That’s because we are different, if we have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our fundamental understanding of human nature, and particularly of ourselves, is different. We are different from this world.

The man who has become a follower of Jesus Christ is different. Our future, the future of the, as far as an individual is concerned, the future of the Christian is not with this world. The future of the Christian is with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is outside the camp. In fact, as far as Judaism is concerned, as he was speaking to the Jewish professing believers here, as far as Judaism, that is, Judaism apart from Christianity the future was no longer with the camp. The future is with the Gentile mission. But, further, because Paul has been called to minister to the Gentiles, but further not even with the Gentile mission in its entirety, but with the mission and the results, the resulting salvation of the individuals out of the Gentiles, who with the believing Jews make up the Church of Jesus Christ. So our author says, “The Lord Jesus Christ was rejected by Judaism and,

therefore, we are to go forth,” speaking, of course, primarily of these professing Jewish believers, “Let us therefore go forth unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach.”

So my fellow believers, there is a sense in which you and I must learn to cope with the fact that we are different and to have the courage to stand for the position in which we find ourselves. We are different from the world. We have, we are to have the boldness and the courage to speak for our Lord Jesus Christ wherever God leads us and in the situations in which we are found.

Everyone of us in this room has opportunity to give testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. How many times have we kept quiet? How many times have things been said, even in our presence, when others are about, which are clearly contrary to the word of God, and an opportunity is afforded for us to say something concerning our Lord and we keep silent? We’re not willing to bear the reproach. It’s almost as if contrary to Moses, we don’t have recompense any sense of the recompense of the reward. It seems to me that this is something very, very significant for us who are professing believers. “Let us therefore go forth unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach.”

That very phrase, incidentally, is a phrase so similar to our Lord going out to Calvary that many commentators have pointed it out. Our Lord Jesus Christ went out to Calvary. What was he bearing? In fact, the same expression is used, bearing his what? Bearing his cross. He went out bearing his cross. And so here we are to go out, without, outside the camp, bearing his reproach. What is his reproach? The cross and all that that signifies. Identification with Him. A Christian who believes. This is what we believe.

Everyone in this audience is a Christian, you would agree. But how often we keep silent. There is no salvation except in Jesus Christ. How often do we say that? In the circumstances in which we find ourselves? There is no salvation except through Jesus Christ. That’s what Scripture says. “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” Christianity is exclusive, so far as the term of salvation is concerned. You should never, never, never act the coward and fail to make that claim.

I know I was converted because people had the courage to say to me that there is no salvation except through Jesus Christ. I can remember when I used to argue very strongly. I had many arguments. I won a lot of those arguments, I thought. But, finally, I realized I was wrong. The Scriptures make it very plain that I was wrong. And then many other things contributed to it. I'm thankful that I lost that argument.

Now, our author goes on to say, “For we have here no continuing city.” So, “Let's go forth unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach, for we have here no continuing city, we seek one that is to come.” Why should we be so excited over this world? We're not excited over this world. Our hopes are not in this world. Our great pleasures are not in this world. The Cowboys don't play in heaven. Maybe some of you didn't know that. [Laughter] They don't play in heaven. A few of them will make it up there. There are some good Christians out there playing football on Sunday afternoon. That's very evident. But our desires, our occupations are often not the kinds of things that our author would have us think about. He's inside the veil. That's our position. Outside the camp is where we are in practice and our lives ought to be lived in the light of that.

And so we suffer his reproach here, for our city is above, and it's a coming city. As he said in the preceding chapter, “But ye are come unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.” That's where we are to go. Verse 15 and 16, he answers the question, do we have no worship? Oh, no, we have a worship. When he says, “we have no continuing city here,” he doesn't mean we don't have a worship. And with those who thought about Judaism as a system of worship with all of its splash, he reminds us that we have a worship. He says in verse 15, “By Him.” Notice, incidentally, that no worship is acceptable to God unless it is “through Him.” Through him. Through him, verse 15, “Therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But to do good.” And to communicate or to have fellowship, forget not, “For with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Well, it turns out, we have an altar, we have sacrifices. We have an altar; our altar is the cross. We have sacrifices. What are they? Well, as a matter of fact, there are four of them here, that are expressed, three of them in this passage, one elsewhere.

You may remember the passage in Romans chapter 12, I'll just read it really quickly to you because here the first sacrifice that the Apostle Paul speaks about is the sacrifice of our person, if I may put it that way, because I want to speak in such a way that you will remember it, verse 1 of Romans, chapter 12.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

The Christian's sacrifice is, first of all, the sacrifice of himself, of his person. But, now, turning to our passage in Hebrews 13, next he speaks about the praise that we offer. “By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God, continually.” Not morning, not evening, not in the morning and in the evening but, continually, continually; this is the kind of attitude, ideally, that Christians have. Not on the Lord's Day, not on Monday or Wednesday but Monday through Sunday, all of the twenty-four hours, characterized by the spirit of praise; that's our sacrifice, praise.

The second, it's praise without ceasing. What do you do when you give God praise without ceasing? Well, you think about the things that the Lord has done for us and you give him thanks for what he has done and for what he continues to do. If you think about your life, day by day, it's remarkable how many times you've been the recipient of the blessings of God. Even the fact that when you're in the Galleria, you have your electric razor with you, and when your beard is growing, you can shave your face. No, I'm serious. Almost all of our days, if we just reflect upon the things

that happen to us in the twenty-four hours of our lives, you would be reminded, it would surprise you, how many things you could be thankful to God for and give him praise for.

The third thing in verse 16, he says, “But to do good.” This is the Christian’s philanthropy. So he’s to offer his person, he’s to offer praise, he is here to do good. Incidentally, these things in verse 16, here, that conclude the verse, that to do good and to communicate are connected together and I’m going to separate them; but they really are somewhat together. To do good, in other words, good works; they characterize the Christian’s life.

And then, finally, the fourth thing in that word, verse 16, to communicate. That, probably, is a reference to sharing our financial resources. But to do good and to communicate. It has the idea of sharing. It probably is broad enough to include other ways to share, too, because there are many other ways in which you can help your fellow believer or your friend that might be a way of giving testimony for our Lord. But these are the four, this is the fourfold ritual liturgy of Christianity. It’s our religion in the words of James chapter 1 in verse 27.

What is the Christian religion? Well, the Christian religion as a word that describes what we do is we offer the sacrifice of our person, we continually offer the sacrifice of praise for God’s care over us constantly. We also offer the sacrifice of good works and we offer the sacrifice of the sharing of the possessions that we have with others. So if you were speaking to a person and said, “Do you have a religion in Christianity?” Yes, we have a religion, using the term in that sense, true religion that James talks about; the expression of the outgrowth, the outworking of what we have received within our hearts through Christ.

Now, the final verse that we are looking at tonight, incidentally, we are saving the last part of chapter 13, which has to do with the everlasting covenant because it’s such an important passage for exposition, next week, in our next meeting. But in chapter 13:17 through 19, the author speaks very briefly of some new responsibilities. This is a word of support for their leaders. He says in verse 17, “Obey them that have the rule over you.” We’ve made comment on that previously. Those that have the rule over them are their elders. “Obey them that have the rule over you and submit

yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as they that are to give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable to you.”

So this is a word of support for the leaders; to pray for them. They are individuals who lose sleep over the saints. When they are good leaders, those good elders that really care for the flock are the kinds of people who lose sleep over the things that are transpiring within the local church. That’s what’s meant by that word “watch.” “Who watch for your souls.” That’s a word that, actually, in the Greek text connotes that idea to watch, to lose sleep over, to catch sleep over. Those individuals who are the ones for whom they have oversight. So obey them, they are individuals who are to give account, they are to stand at the judgment seat of Christ as elders, and should give an account of the ministry that is given to them. And we want to obey them, submit ourselves to them, because they are the ones who are to give account for their ministering. And how marvelous it is when they do it they are able to do it with joy and not with grief. For that will be profitable for us. For to do it with grief would be unprofitable for us.

And, finally, verse 18 and 19, the author says, “Pray for us.” I wish he had said his name but he doesn’t. He says, “Pray for us; for we trust, we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly.” Paul says something about that one place, but this is no evidence that he’s the author of this epistle. It’s one of those little pieces of evidence that scholars like to think over. “But I beseech you, the rather, to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.” Oh, if he had just named his name; then we would not have wasted so much time trying to figure out who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, but he doesn’t do it.

Well, let me sum up what I’ve been saying. The bonds of the old life are very difficult to break. It’s true. But the remembrance of our altar and our sacrifice reminds us of the fact that though we don’t have any outward religion such as Judaism had or any outward ceremonies such as some of the churches today have, carrying over from the Judaism of the Old Testament, we, nevertheless, do have an altar, the cross of Christ. And we have sacrifices, the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of ourselves, good works, the sharing of what we have with those who have need. These are

things that make up the Christian search, which is work. From which our Lord’s sacrifice, the altar, comes our redemptive setting apart for the worship of the Lord God. That’s sufficient reason to go forth to him outside the camp and at the same time continually praise his name. May the Lord help us to do that. We do need so much in Christianity. And we need it in Believers Chapel, so much. We need Christians who have the courage and the boldness to speak to their friends and acquaintances concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and to urge them to consider the claims of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord, by his grace, enable us to do that.

Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for these words of exhortation, given to us. We surely need them. We thank Thee for our altar, the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, once and for all, paying for our sins. And we thank Thee, too, for the sacrifices which we are to offer, which we may offer, which are privileges, the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the good work, the sharing; these things that make up the life of the Christian church throughout this age. We pray for Believers Chapel and for its leadership. May, Lord, Thy presence be with us for the glory of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray, in His name. Amen.