

Sermon Transcript

10.04.2026

Hebrews 13:9-16

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- Good morning. Please open to Hebrews 13 and as you do, I want to wish a very happy birthday to an institution very near and dear to my heart as today is the 150th anniversary of the opening of the first public college in Texas, Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College, now known as Texas A&M University and my alma mater.
- So happy birthday fellow Aggies.
- For those who may not be from Texas, you need to know that A&M is known for culture. Sometimes that culture is so strange that it might seem like a cult. Culture = you're a cult.
- In fact, we have elaborate indoctrination camps that new students attend before their first semester. You start camp with a fairly superficial understanding of Aggie tradition and by the end of that week, you're fully brainwashed into hating the Longhorns.
- You start saying howdy instead of hi and you learn how to gig 'em.
- You know the yells and the wildcats and history and traditions.
- I've mentioned some of these traditions before. Things like the significance of your class ring and ring dunk, elephant walk, silver taps, muster, bonfire, and midnight yell.
- The way that those traditions function in the life of your average Aggie is to create a sense of belonging. In fact, we have a phrase used of students who aren't infected with Aggie fever. They're called 2%ers. The idea is that the classroom education is only 2% of the Aggie experience, but the traditions and campus life unite current and former students, build camaraderie and foster the Aggie spirit.
- As a result, we don't have ex-Aggies. Texas University calls its graduates Texas-Exes. Texas Tech and Baylor have Ex-Students associations whereas we have an association of former students. There are no ex-Aggies. Once an Aggie, always an Aggie.
- Whether you love it or hate it, you have to admit that A&M has done an incredible job of facilitating community and belonging and a sense of identity, just like a cult.
- You feel like you belong to something bigger than yourself.
- The same could be said more generically of the state of Texas. Very few states have the sense of pride that goes along with being a resident of Texas. How many other states have as many sayings like Texas Proud, Don't Mess with Texas, and Everything's Bigger in Texas? Or come and Take it or Remember the Alamo?
- There's a particular pride associated with the state. A shared heritage and culture that transcends the individual.
- And that's what Hebrews is commending as well. A sense of belonging and identity that goes deeper than the city, state, and time in which we live or the university with which we identify. An identity which, like Christ, is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- And it is that belonging that galvanizes us for action as we'll see in our passage this morning so let's pray and we'll dive in together.
- **Self, others, me.**

- The first rule of hermeneutics or the art and science of interpretation is context. A text without a context is a pretext for a proof-text as someone once said.
- So what's happening in the context of Hebrews 13 in particular and the book in general?
- Let's start with the book.
- What three-word phrase sums up the book of Hebrews?
- Christ is better.
- That one three-word phrase is a key to unlock the deepest vaults of sanctification and joy.
- Each & every time we sin, we're violating that principle. We're saying that the taste of gossip is sweeter than Christ, that those images on the internet are better than Christ, that the lie is better than Christ, that laziness or hoarding our possessions or whatever is better than Christ.
- In effect, we're saying, Christ is not worthy. Not worthy of my attention and affection. That something else will bring more joy and satisfaction.
- So that's one way the phrase functions.
- But in Hebrews, the supremacy of Christ operates on another level.
- The author utilizes the literary device of typology to show Christ's superiority over each and every aspect of the Mosaic covenant.
- If you're relatively new to our journey through the book, typology is the study of God-ordained parallels between the testaments marked by correspondence and escalation.
- By correspondence, we mean that there is similarity. There is a likeness, an analogy.
- But by escalation, we mean that the substance surpasses the shadow. The fulfillment is better than the photo. The anti-type better than the type.
- So we've seen Christ compared and contrasted to Moses and Joshua and the Aaronic priests and the tabernacle and so forth.
- And in that contrast, the author has highlighted Christ's supremacy. He is not merely a new Moses, but a better Moses who leads a better exodus out of a worse slavery and mediates a better covenant. And He is not merely a new Joshua, but a better Joshua who gives a better rest in a better land. And not merely a new priest, but a better priest who has offered a better sacrifice in a better tabernacle.
- What's the result? Well, what the Levitical law and Mosaic covenant were unable to do, that is provide actual perfection, make actual satisfaction for sin, Christ has done!
- So the first 10 chapters establish that typological connection to show the finality of God's work through Christ and to encourage us to draw near rather than fall back or drift.
- Remember that is the concern of the book.
- The audience is suffering. Much of that suffering is in the form of persecution. And so they are facing the temptation to fall back or fall away or drift away from Christ, back to the seeming safety of the synagogue.
- That's where the typology is helpful. Why go back to something that doesn't work? That's imperfect, that's ineffectual?
- Why go back to a dial up connection now that you have fiber optics and wifi or Starlink? Why eat Wendy's when you can have Whataburger? Why be a Longhorn when you can be an Aggie?
- So chapters 1-10 drive that point home and then it culminates in the final verse of chapter 10 which says:
 - *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.* (Hebrews 10:39)
- So you see the two paths. Shrinking back to destruction or believing to preservation.
- But what is faith? What does it look like? That's chapter 11, the hall of faith.

- And then starting in chapter 12, we see a shift in the rhetorical thrust of the book, a similar shift that we see in many of Paul's epistles – a shift from the indicative to the imperative.
- From what God has done to what we are to do in light of what God has done.
- Chapters 1-11 are mostly just statements of fact, which are called indicatives. But starting in chapter 12, we begin to see a number of imperatives or commands or exhortations.
- We'll see some of those today, do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise, do not neglect to do good and share what you have.
- And as we've said before, the order of indicative followed by imperative is theologically significant because the command is only possible in light of the truth.
- In other words, we can only do what chaps 12 & 13 command us because of what God has done in chap 1-11. Our obedience always flows from a previous acknowledgement of God's grace.
- That's how we avoid both legalism and antinomianism. Legalism says that I can obey apart from grace. Antinomianism says that obedience is impossible.
- So that brings us to chapter 13 which started with a number of succinct staccato commands about brotherly love, hospitality, charity, and chastity. And then last week we saw the command to remember leaders and then a seemingly strange mention of Christ being the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, which relates to the doctrine of divine immutability, the fact that God does not and cannot change.
- And that will then serve as a bridge for our passage today which begins by awakening us to an area of change that is quite destructive to our faith. So let's begin in vs. 9.

Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.
(Hebrews 13:9)

- So, thinking back to last week. The readers were exhorted to remember their leaders and he qualified that by saying, those who spoke to you the word.
- Then we had verse 8 which says:
 - *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* (Hebrews 13:8)
- So the word is unchanging because the Lord is unchanging.
- But that doesn't mean that there aren't deviant teachings. And that's what we are warned about here.
- First look at the verb led away. We see that same verb in Jude 12-13
 - *These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.* (Jude 12-13)
 - Swept along is the same as led away.
 - Or, to use the language from earlier in the book, we might think of drifting as clouds drift through the air, swept along by winds.
 - And the Bible picks up that imagery elsewhere.
 - For example, in Ephesians 4, Paul writes:
 - *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no*

longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Ephesians 4:11–14)

- So by don't be led away, he means, don't drift. Don't drift from the unchanging word and the unchanging Lord.
- Don't drift toward something diverse and strange. Literally strange is the word for foreign, pagan.
- And if you are going to resist the drift you need to be tethered to something. If you want to avoid drifting on the currents in a boat, what do you do? You let down an anchor. Remember that image we've seen before. In 6:19 we read:
 - *We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain...* (Hebrews 6:19)
- So by saying don't be led astray, don't drift, he is saying be established, be made firm. That's the literal meaning of the word translated as strengthened. Its good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, established by grace, made firm by grace as muscles are made firm by effort.
- That grace is what tethers you to God, but also what strengthens you to avoid being led astray. Right now, its pretty easy for me to move my son wherever I want him to go. We'll wrestle and it isn't much of a competition. But 10-15 years from now, things will be different. He'll be stronger and much more able to stand firm.
- But here the context isn't so much on the strengthening of the outer man as that of the inner man. It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace.
- And that grace is contrasted with food. What's that mean?
- Well, I think part of it is simply playing on that outer vs. inner man understanding. The outer man is strengthened by food. You can't get stronger if you aren't consuming enough calories. But the inner man is renewed and strengthened in another way.
- And remember how that outer and inner dynamic has played out in the book so far. Remember that one of the weaknesses of the Mosaic law was that it could only change the outward behavior, not the actual heart.
- Christ talks about this by distinguishing between cleaning the outside of the cup vs. the inside. The deeper the stain, the better the stain remover needs to be. The Mosaic covenant could treat superficial stains, but couldn't really remove them.
- We've also seen an emphasis on food earlier in the book in chapter 9 where we read this:
 - *...According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.* (Hebrews 9:9–10)
- There was a whole lot of emphasis in 1st century Judaism on what you could and couldn't eat and how and when you could eat it. But the author has said those are mere regulations for the body.
- As Paul writes in Colossians:
 - *If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.* (Colossians 2:20–23)
- Notice there the contrast between the body and the flesh. Asceticism can clean the body, but it can't cure the flesh, the residual sin principle of the old man. Severity to the body can't penetrate to the heart, which is where the real problem is.

- So again, this call to be strengthened by grace and not food is a warning against returning to the Mosaic covenant. Grace contrasted with food is like the gospel contrasted with the law.
- IOW, if you are tempted to adopt the OT cultic system to solve the problem of sin, you're consuming a placebo. You are taking a bite out of a shadow and hoping to find sustenance.
- But speaking of eating, the author will continue that imagery in vss. 10-11.

We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. (Hebrews 13:10-11)

- Why does he mention an altar? Well because food was offered up under the old covenant on an altar. And where was it offered? In the temple eventually, but originally in the tabernacle...or, as it says here, the tent.
- Now, chapters 8 and 9 went into elaborate detail on the tabernacle so we won't go into that here, but just suffice to say that careful readers of Hebrews will pick up on that theme.
- So those who serve the tent are the Levitical and Aaronic priests. Remember the distinction. Both Moses and his brother Aaron are from the tribe of Levi. The Levites are set apart as priests, but Aaron and his descendants are consecrated as high priests.
- The Levitical priests did the daily mundane tabernacle tasks such as baking the bread and lighting the incense, but the Aaronic high priest was responsible for the day of atonement sacrifice when blood was sprinkled in the most holy place.
- And the general expectation for priests was that they could eat from what was offered.
- But the particular sacrifice of the day of atonement offering could not be eaten. Leviticus 6:30
 - *But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place; it shall be burned up with fire. (Leviticus 6:30)*
- So the author is drawing an analogy to the day of atonement sacrifice, and as we'll see, connecting that to the death of Christ, but we'll get to that.
- First, he talks about the disposal process. As Leviticus 6 says, it is not to be consumed by the priest, but rather consumed by fire. And where does that take place?
- Hebrews says outside the camp.
- He gets that from Leviticus 16:27
 - *And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned up with fire. (Leviticus 16:27)*
- Notice that the burning was holistic. The entirety of the animal, skin, flesh, even their dung was burned. In other words, there are no leftovers for the priest.
- They had no right to eat to eat then and certainly have no right to eat of this altar now. After all, now that a better priest has offered a better sacrifice in a better tabernacle, the old has been eclipsed. It is now obsolete.
- If that word obsolete bothers you, it shouldn't. It's a biblical word.
 - *In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Hebrews 8:13)*
- In time, that will occur physically. Depending on when Hebrews is dated, this is right before or right after the destruction of the temple in 70AD so the altar and the sanctuary will quite literally vanish, but spiritually, typologically, that's already happened through Christ.

- So the Levitical priests have no right to eat of it, they are living behind the times so to speak. As Hebrews says, we are in the last days, but they're living in the past. So they can't eat of this altar, but the glory of Hebrews consists in the fact that we can do what they could not. They could not draw near. The whole architecture of the tabernacle signified the inaccessibility of God.
- Man was separated from God by curtains, courtyards, & cherubim that all screamed, do not enter.
- But we not only can draw near, we are commanded to do so. So they can't benefit from the altar, but WE have an altar. And the meaning of that is expounded in vss. 12-13.

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. (Hebrews 13:12-13)

- Now the analogy. Christ's sacrifice is compared & contrasted with the day of atonement sacrifice.
- And with all typology, we should expect correspondence and escalation.
- So what's the correspondence, the similarity?
- Well, like the yom kippur, day of atonement, sin offering, Jesus was outside the camp. Or, here, he writes outside the gates since Jerusalem is a walled-city rather than a wilderness camp.
- And where does this idea of Jesus suffering outside the city come from?
- Well, it is most clearly seen in John 19:
 - *So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. (John 19:16-20)*
- Notice that he goes OUT and that the place was near the city, not in it.
- Even if the Bible didn't say this, we could infer it from common Roman practice in which they would crucify on trade routes on the edge of town.
- And, there is another overlap w/ OT law because not only was the day of atonement offering burned outside the camp, but blasphemers & other rebels were to be executed outside the camp.
- So that's the analogy. The correspondence. The sin offering was burned outside the camp and Christ suffered outside the camp. That's the similarity.
- Now the escalation. Where is the dissimilarity?
- Its in the inefficacy and imperfection of the sin offering. Remember that it had to be offered year after year after year.
- Perhaps you remember the kids riddle which says: Pete and Repeat were in a boat, Pete fell out, who's left? Repeat. Pete and Repeat were in a boat. Pete fell out, who's left.
- You get trapped in an infinite loop. That infinite loop corresponds to the Mosaic covenant and the Levitical priesthood and the various offerings. They never perfected, they never sanctified.
- Like the perpetual loop of being an Aggie fan and thinking this year will be different only for every year since 1939 being about the exact same. We never can quite close it out, finish the fight. That's like those Mosaic sacrifices.

- Whereas Christ suffered to sanctify and that purpose has been perfectly accomplished.
 - *And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* (Hebrews 10:10)
- So we see the who, what, where, why, and how all converge in this passage.
- Who suffered? Christ. Where? Outside the gate. In Aramaic - Golgotha. In Latin - Calvary. Why? To sanctify the people, that's the whole theology of Hebrews. We need to be sanctified to what end? So that we can draw near, so that we can approach the throne of grace with confidence.
- And then lastly, how? Through His blood, poured out for us.
- For whom? For the people? Which people? The people whom He intended to sanctify.
- A lot of people get confused about the L in TULIP as a summarization of Calvinism. The L stands for limited atonement which isn't a great phrase because we all limit the atonement. Unless a universalist, unless you think everyone will be saved, then everyone limits the atonement.
- You either limit its intentionality or its efficacy, its width or its depth. You either have to say that He intended to sanctify everyone but was frustrated in that desire. Or you have to say that He only intended to sanctify the elect & has done absolutely everything necessary to effect His will.
- So, He has suffered outside the gate to sanctify the people through His blood. So what? What then? What do we do with that?
- That's the indicative. What's the accompanying imperative?
- *Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.*
- As Christ says, a servant is not above his master. If He suffers, then we will suffer.
- In Acts, when the apostles were dragged before the Sanhedrin & beaten & warned we read
 - *Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.* (Acts 5:41)
- What would cause sane persons to rejoice at suffering? That's unnatural. And yet it makes sense in light of their belief in the superiority and supremacy of Jesus Christ. They were willing to go outside the camp and bear His reproach because Christ is better.
- In the OT, being outside of the camp carried the connotation of alienation, humiliation & a curse.
- And yet Christ Himself becomes a curse. As the OT says, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. And Christ takes that curse and turns it inside out. Now, alienation is turned into acceptance, humiliation into glory, a curse into blessing. As 1 Corinthians 1:28 says;
 - *God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are...* (1 Corinthians 1:28)
- So that's why Jesus can declare in the Beatitudes,
 - *Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.* (Matthew 5:11)
- Or Peter can write in his first epistle:
 - *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.* (1 Peter 4:14)
- We read in chapter 11 of Moses choosing the harder path rather than the comforts and treasures of Egypt.
 - *He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.* (Hebrews 11:26)
- Why was Moses willing to leave the glories of life in Pharaoh's household? For the better glories of God's household. So He bore the reproach for the sake of the reward.
- So we too are called to embrace the reproach.

- The exact type of reproach may differ. The type of suffering can ebb and flow. In the first century, these Hebrews were being imprisoned and defrauded.
- Some of their leaders and certainly the apostles bore the reproach unto death.
- For others we might lose our job or reputation. There may be a day where we face imprisonment for proclaiming the truth. We might have our families or friends reject us.
- And yet, what makes it worth it is that Christ is better.
- Moses said the wilderness is better than Pharaoh's palace if the wilderness is the path of faithfulness to YHWH.
- You see, one of the great enemies of this type of faith is pragmatism. The philosophy where we choose whether or not to obey not on the basis of the command itself, but on the perceived results of obedience.
- The command is to go to Christ. To bear reproach. The results are in His hands. Our job is to obey
- To go out to Him by sharing the gospel with our neighbors and coworkers. To go out to Him by refusing to compromise on truth.
- So where are you remaining in the camp so to speak? Where you are avoiding the reproach?
- Do you believe that Christ is worth it or do you believe that your name or job or reputation or home or whatever is superior?
- Let's keep going. Vs. 14.

For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. (Hebrews 13:14)

- Alright, why should we go outside the camp?
- Well, for the same reason that Moses left Pharaoh's palace or Abraham left Ur, because they were sojourners. Living in a land that wasn't their true home.
- We've seen this imagery a few times in Hebrews already.
- Speaking of Abraham leaving his homeland in chapter 11 we read:
 - *For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. (Hebrews 11:10)*
- Remember that Abraham lived as a sojourner. He never put down roots, never lived in a city with foundations. But he could endure the sojourn because by faith he saw a future hope.
- And summing up the experience of the patriarchs as a whole in vs. 16 we read:
 - *But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:16)*
- Better city and better country refer to the same reality. And by heavenly, that doesn't mean that our ultimate destination is in heaven. Instead as we read in Revelation 21:2
 - *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2)*
- So our hope, our eternal destiny is the promise that the heavens will come down to earth and God's dwelling place will be with man on the new earth.
- And then in chapter 12 we read this about a city:
 - *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering... (Hebrews 12:22)*
- So this should be a common image by now.
- It fits with the NT theme that we are sojourners, pilgrims, aliens in a sense and as such we should expect a certain degree of suffering. That's why chapter 12 and its emphasis on the redemptive role of discipline and suffering was so helpful.

- So we see two different strands when it comes to our relationship to the earth and these strands present a type of theological tension.
- On one hand, our citizenship is in heaven. Here we have no lasting city. Our hope is not tethered to this present world.
- But on the other hand, our hope is tied to this earth. Just in a newer and better state. A state of re-creation and restoration and redemption.
- So we shouldn't have an escapist mentality that says, who cares about this world, we're going to heaven sort of mentality. We shouldn't be indifferent to marriage and institutions and culture and politics and so forth. We shouldn't circle our wagons and watch it all burn.
- But neither should those things hold our ultimate allegiance. When we exalt our family or our country or our job or our reputation over the kingdom and the city of come, that's when we've swung the pendulum into worldliness.
- So that's the tension we have to maintain.
- As we've read before the earth will be shaken until only that which is unshaken remains. So are you investing in what cannot be shaken? In the work of the gospel, the work of the kingdom, the making of disciples, the attempt to be salt and light and push back the darkness.
- To do that, we must go outside the camp to Christ.
- And in order to do that, we must bear in mind that Christ is better.
- As Moses left Egypt because of the promise of something better, so we go outside the camp in search of something better because Christ Himself is better.
- As we read throughout the NT, Christ never compels us to self-denial as an end, its always a means to some greater end. The goal isn't to escape pleasure like in some eastern and new age religions, but rather to deny lesser ones for the sake of greater.
- As we read in Hebrews 11:6,
 - *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* (Hebrews 11:6)
- What would compel someone to go outside the camp and face reproach? In one word, rewards.
- We seek the city to come.
- Again, this is why the truth of Christ's supremacy is so important. Because everything we do is motivated by what we believe will bring us more happiness. Even when we do something we don't want to do, that merely exposes a deeper desire.
- For instance, I may not want to go to the gym, but I do want to be the type of person who is disciplined and I want to be strong and I want to be healthy and that means I need to exercise. So even in not wanting to go in some sense, I want to go in another.
- Even if someone puts a gun to my head and makes me do something I don't want to do, I'm still doing what I want to do in a sense as my desire to stay alive is winning out against my desire to not do that thing.
- As Augustine says:
 - "My weight is my love; by it I am carried wherever I am carried." (Augustine)
- Your will is always inclined to follow your heart.
- Or as Edwards writes in his treatise on the philosophy of human will
 - "The will always is as the greatest apparent good is." (Jonathan Edwards)
- In other words, you always do what you want to do. That is hardwired into humanity.
- You literally can't do otherwise.
- So our actions are a reflection of our affections. If we are willing to endure reproach for Christ, it is evidence that we believe Christ is better. Whereas if we are unwilling, then it demonstrates to us that we believe that our reputation or our life or our job or whatever is better than Christ.

- Rather than denying the inconsistency between our confession and our lives, we should instead repent and ask God for greater faith. I believe, help my unbelief as the father cries out in Mark.
- And we can do the same with any sin. The battle for sanctification is a battle for supremacy. Will we choose broken cisterns that can hold no water or will we choose the fountain of living waters?
- Let's keep going. Vs. 15.

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. (Hebrews 13:15)

- To this point, Hebrews has taken pains to show us that the sacrificial system has been rendered insolvent by the supremacy of Christ. The Mosaic Covenant is obsolete, the Levitical priesthood is bankrupt, the tabernacle is desolate, the altar is closed.
- And yet, though the altar is closed, that doesn't mean that we're finished with sacrifices. Rather, those sacrifices have been redefined and reoriented.
- As Romans 12:1 says:
 - *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)*
- As Paul adapts the image of a sacrifice and applies it to our entire lives, so the author of Hebrews speaks of a sacrifice of praise.
- That praise is through Him, that is through Christ.
- We've talked before about the significance of prepositions. God's grace flows from the Father, through the Son and by the Holy Spirit. And our response is an inverse of that pattern. In general we pray by the Holy Spirit, through the Son, to the Father.
- So our praise is through Christ, enabled by His work. That's why we pray in Christ's name.
- And our praise is described as a sacrifice.
- This is something we see in the OT itself.
 - *Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High... (Psalm 50:14)*
- In the LXX, the word translated thanksgiving here is actually the same as is translated praise in Hebrews 13.
- And to make this even more interesting, look at the previous context.
 - *I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? (Psalm 50:9-13)*
- There is one of the hints even in the OT itself the sacrificial system wasn't intended to be permanent or perfect...that God's desire was always the heart and praise and thanksgiving vs. the blood of bulls and goats.
- That corresponds to why salvation is by grace through faith, by the way. We contribute nothing to our salvation except sin and so we have nothing in which to boast. So we pour out gratitude rather than blood.
- Now, this shouldn't be overly spiritualized as if the only thing we offer up is something spiritual like praise. As we read in Romans 12, our bodies are offered up. And elsewhere in the NT, we read about financial contribution to the work of the church as being a spiritual sacrifice. And in

the next verse we'll see that good works and charity are described as sacrifices which are pleasing to God.

- Let's look at vs. 16

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (Hebrews 13:16)

- So we continue to see the sacrificial imagery used here. It isn't just praise, but a transformed life that impacts your community.
- That's what Paul means in Romans by presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice. A holistic, exhaustive, comprehensive offering.
- And here in Hebrews the idea is that God's benevolence to you should compel you to show a similar benevolence to others.
- Or, as Christ summarizes the law, a love for God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, overflows into loving your neighbor as yourself.
- So we are to do good and share what we have.
- Now, this was implied already a couple of weeks back in the call to brotherly love, hospitality, and contentment, but he returns to the idea and says to share what you have. That word share is interesting. Notice some ways that the Greek word is translated elsewhere:
 - *For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. (Romans 15:26)*
 - *begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints (2 Corinthians 8:4)*
 - *By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others... (2 Corinthians 9:13)*
- Lest there be any confusion, there is a clear financial connotation in the call to share what you have. As we talked about in TEC last month, there is an abiding command of believers to give to support the work of the church and the kingdom.
- And this is true because of what we talked about this morning in TEC and we'll talk about again next month and that is the centrality of the body of Christ.
- That word translated as share has another connotation in the NT as well.
 - *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:42)*
 - *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:14)*
 - *because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. (Philippians 1:5)*
- What do fellowship and financial support have in common? Well, one is founded upon the other.
- As we read earlier in chapter 13. We are to remember those mistreated. Why? Because we also are in the body.
- In other words, we belong to the same body. Or, to change the metaphor, we are of the same family.
- The same way that Aggie spirit is built upon a sense of shared identity, so the church functions on the basis of recognizing our shared identity in Christ.

- You see, you'll never grasp the call to share with the body until you first grasp the meaning of the body, the significance of the church....until you are compelled by a deep and abiding love and appreciation for the body of Christ.
- As long as the church is something out there and not in here, you'll never love your neighbor as yourself. You might love them, but always at a distance, always detached, always as a spectator.
- Whereas belonging is what the author of Hebrews is presupposing. That's why he commands us to exhort one another each day in chapter 3, to not give up meeting together in chapter 10, and to show hospitality and share what you have in chapter 13.
- Because we are one.
- Because we are members not only of Christ's body, but of one another as Romans 12:5 says:
 - *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* (Romans 12:5)
- We belong to one another and thus are responsible for one another. Christ hasn't merely called us out of sin, but called us into relationship with Him and each other.
- Which takes us back to the beginning of our passage and the call to not be led astray by strange teachings. How do we keep from drifting? Well, one way is by being anchored. We talked about that already.
- Another way is by being strengthened by grace to withstand. For instance, the Mormons and JW's who show up to your door are going to have a much harder time seducing you with their doctrine if you've adequately studied Christology and trinitarianism and are well aware of their arguments.
- But there is a third way to keep from drifting and that is by latching arms with others. We had a lot of rain here in N. Texas this past week. Think about historic floods that you've seen on tv and the images of people forming human chains to rescue someone from a roof or car or tree or something. Well, that's one of God's primary means for preserving his people.
- He hasn't merely said, you individual make sure that you individual don't drift, but instead has said see to it that none of you drift. Look after the needs of those around you. Because again, we belong to each other. We are members of the same body.
- In the Ephesians 4 passage I read earlier, we see this:
 - *so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.* (Ephesians 4:14)
- But there is a little line I didn't emphasize then, that I want to highlight now
 - *until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...* (Ephesians 4:13)
- Notice that phrase the unity of the faith. How do we resist the cultural currents? By community.
- By knowing and being known by the body. Not existing on the fringes, but joining hand in hand and arm in arm to advance the kingdom together, to watch each others back, to exhort and rebuke and encourage one another to be more like Christ.
- So how do we please God? At least in part by not neglecting to do good and sharing what we have.
- Let's pray for the grace to obey.

Communion

- Fence table

- As we participate in communion, I want to remind you of the multi-faceted meaning of the meal. Yes, it is about our communion with God, but also with each other.
- In fact, the Bible says that's the significance for the original institution of one loaf and one cup, to signify our communion with each other as members of the same body.
- And in 1 Corinthians 11, when Paul gives instructions about examining yourself before partaking of the meal, the context is about division in the body.
- So I want to encourage you to take a second and consider whether you have any bitterness or frustration or unreconciled relationships in the body of Christ that you haven't tried to resolve. Are you harboring any discord or division in the body?
- If so, I want to encourage you to heed the words of Matthew 5 which says:
 - *So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.* (Matthew 5:23–24)
- You might even do that literally. If you realize there is someone in this body in particular or in the larger body of Christ that you haven't done all that is in your power to reconcile with, you might even refrain until you can have a conversation or make a phone call or send a text or whatever. You can just hold on to the elements as a form of accountability.
- And perhaps you search your heart and can't think of anyone that you have division with in the body. If that's the case great. Will you take this time to just thank the Lord for unity and pray for the church to experience deeper community.
- So take a few minutes and we'll partake together shortly.
- On the night...