

## Living Acceptably – Walking with Jesus

Hebrews 12.14 – 13. 15

<sup>20</sup> 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,  
<sup>21</sup> 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 for ever and ever.  
Amen. <sup>22</sup>

Words of the writer's prayer in v20 of chapter 13. Some of the last of the letter to the Hebrews.

In light of Jesus. All he is and what he's done. That's my prayer for you he says.

Now, there is such a thing as a pointed prayer. Where you pray in the presence of the person you're praying for. And you say. Lord I pray for Marjorie. That she'd be kinder. That she'd be more forgiving. That kind of thing.

Lord I pray that Anne would learn to control her children a bit better. It's a sort of a back door way of saying something you want to get off your chest.

And I won't say this is back door. But there's definitely something being said. .

This is my hope. He's saying.

Here's a letter that's so focused on the person of Jesus and his work.

And maybe you noticed.....here's a PRAYER that's book ended the same way.

May God who brought Jesus back from the dead

Equip you to do his will – work in us what's pleasing

Through Jesus Christ – to whom. That is, Jesus, be glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

That's my prayer and hope.

Now I take it that a significant part of the equipment he's hoping God will use for you to do his will. Is the 13 chapters he's just written.

So as we consider the prayer.

And the next verse. 22. Where he describes the letter as a word of exhortation.

It's worth having a quick recap. Seeing it's been 9 weeks getting to this point.

Remember in the first instance he's writing to Jewish Christians. So they'll keep following Jesus and not go back to the temple and the sacrifices and those things that were fulfilled in Jesus.

So they'll keep going in spite of the troubles that go with the territory.

And I think it's fair to break it up into four areas. Four big things that have been said about Jesus. So we'll persevere in faith.

Here's the 4 things:

The **first** thing that he pointed out right from the start. Is the **supremacy** of Jesus above everything else. He says in chapter 1:

SLIDE - **Hebrews 1:3** <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

In other words – Jesus is God the Son.

And angels bow down to him.

And Priests. Temples. Even great prophets and leaders like Moses. . . . just don't compare. Jesus is **supreme** over all.

So make sure you pay attention and don't drift away.

That's the first thing.

The **second** thing he wants us to see at the other end of the spectrum – is that the supreme one **sympathises** with our weakness. Like the CEO who spends a night on the street like a homeless person. Jesus was made a little lower than the angels. He shared our flesh and blood. And the one who laid the foundations of the earth.... suffered.

SLIDE - **Hebrews 2:18 - 3:1** <sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

In a way that's hard to get your head around. Even God the Son learns obedience through suffering. Jesus is our sympathetic middle man.

SLIDE - **Hebrews 4:15** <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.

Jesus can sympathise. So let's approach the throne of God with confidence – says the writer.

So Jesus is SUPREME. And he sympathises.

And that combination takes us to the third thing. Jesus in his infinite superiority. And because of his sympathy in identifying with us..... is **sufficient**.

Jesus' death for our sins, is once for all. Not like those old sacrifices that they had to do over and over again. Jesus offered himself up a complete, effectual payment for all of our sins.

The earthly priests went into the man made tent that was only a shadow of the real thing. Jesus' went through the heavenly tabernacle. The priests took the blood of animals. Jesus took his OWN BLOOD into the sanctuary. Not the blood of goats and bulls. His sacrificial death, his poured out blood is **sufficient**.

SLIDE - **Hebrews 10:18** <sup>18</sup> And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

In chapter 10 it says, that we've been sanctified through the offering of the **body** of Jesus Christ once for all....and where our sins have been forgiven, <sup>18</sup> there's no longer any offering for sin." Jesus is sufficient. So we can have assurance. And confidence.

And the **fourth** thing, the last thing, is that Jesus gives us **strength** to go on. Chapter 12 . . .

SLIDE - **Hebrews 12:1-3** ...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. <sup>2</sup> Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

"let's run with endurance the race that's set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross ...

Consider him who endured from sinners such opposition..... so that **you** may not grow weary or fainthearted.”

You think about that great cloud of witnesses. Those heroes of the faith from chapter 11. And then to top it off consider Jesus himself. And find strength to go on.

So there's four things that the writer has been showing the Jewish Christians. Four reasons to press on in faith, to persevere and not turn back to their old Jewish days: the **supremacy** of Jesus. His **sympathetic** ministry. The **sufficiency** of his death. And the **strength** we get by keeping our eyes fixed on him remembering what he's achieved for us.

There's a mixture of warnings and encouragements along the way. And you either stand or fall in spectacular fashion. As a result of which path you take.

And in a sense it seems like a bit of a no brainer. I mean - why would you choose to shrink back and be destroyed. As opposed to receiving the promises? It's not like a choice between the money and the box. Between a known and an unknown. It's between certain judgment on one hand, and certain reward on the other.

But as I said before and as you can see if you've got your bible open there in chapter 13. This is a word of exhortation. Because the threats along the way are real and they're dangerous.

You wouldn't think people would drink and drive. That's a no brainer as well. But they do. Maybe you have. Or you've kept driving when you're dead on your feet. And that little voice is saying. Don't worry. It'll be ok.

The deception of sin. The hardness of our own hearts. Our desires for other things. Our natural tendency to laziness. The fact that we can't SEE the prize. The struggles of life. Not wanting to be shamed. All those things. Trying to swerve us off the road.

It's a significant list. And the writer's got a bit of a list here. As he wraps up. You can see the sorts of things he says there from verse 14 – chapter 12. And all of these are freighted with what he's just said about who Jesus is and what he's done. Because Jesus is superior. Because Jesus sympathises. Because he's sufficient. Because of the strength he gives. Because of those things.

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and be holy.

For the same reasons. Make sure no one misses out on God's grace.

Make sure there's no bitter root that grows up to trouble people. Be a stumbling block.

Make sure there's no sexual immorality or godlessness like Esau who probably takes the gong for the most short sighted act in the bible. As he trades the promises of the firstborn for a bowl of soup.

It's not a list of commandments. But it's a high benchmark.

And there's more to come shortly.

But here's the rationale.

It's because of the great privilege of what it means to have Jesus as your high priest. That you ought to live and act like it.

I think that's the point of the picture here. And I'm not sure if this is supposed to evoke joyful expectation or sheer terror.

You see there verse 18

You haven't come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm;

He's talking about Israel under Moses. When they come to Mt Sinai. You can read about it in Exodus 19. It's the ultimate in multi-media reality. There's the sight of the smoke, the heat of the fire. The sound of the trumpet at 150 decibels from out of nowhere. And a voice. Darkness, gloom and storm it says here. Everyone's terrified, including Moses.

And they should be.

And you would think it's good to do what God says under those circumstances.

But don't linger on that too much. Because if you're a Christian - you haven't come to the scary touchable mountain.

You need to look up from there.

Read it with me from v 22.

<sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion, to the HEAVENLY Jerusalem, the city of the living God. (hard to picture it) YOU HAVE COME to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, <sup>23</sup> to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

Now I'm not exactly sure in what capacity we've arrived. But in some way. That's the reality of coming to Jesus.

You know - I get a bit sick of hearing that song -You raise me up. You know the one. I think Westlife sang it. You can guarantee you'll hear it at a carols service. But in Christ there's a sense where that's true. At the Mt Sinai it was access denied. On pains of death. Even to a small bit of the earth. Because God's holy. But in Christ you've come such a long way from there - it's like there's access all areas.

Not because there's some kind of change in God's holiness as though he's dropped his standards and anyone can come in and wipe their dirty feet on the carpet. God's holiness hasn't changed. But because of the sufficiency of Jesus' death. Your status has - been changed.

You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, <sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

So I think the point is. How much more appropriate is it for you to live differently. Given the change.

And again. Here's a beautifully woven picture of sober warning and encouragement at the same time.

If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?

And more than that. If you think it was scary for Moses. When he comes again. He'll shake the heavens as well as the earth.

I said before it's because of the great privilege of what it means to have Jesus as your high priest. That you ought to live and act like it.

The writer of Hebrews puts it another way. Probably better. You be the judge.

<sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, <sup>29</sup> for our "God is a consuming fire."

Now if you hear that word worship and straight away start thinking about a church service. He's not thinking of that at all. He hasn't been talking about church meetings. He's talking about kingdom living. 24 hours a day. Seven days a week.

So even though it's hard.

There's a list there at the start of chapter 13.

In Jesus, you've come to the heavenly Jerusalem. So

<sup>NIV</sup> Hebrews 13:1 Keep on loving each other as brothers.

You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly

So<sup>2</sup> Do not forget to entertain strangers

You've come to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven

- so

<sup>3</sup> Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,

So honour marriage.

to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant of his blood, so

<sup>5</sup> Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have

You're receiving a kingdom that can't be shaken. So live like it. And you'll demonstrate your proper reverence and awe for God.

There's a few more things.

Remember your leaders. And don't be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.

And whatever you do. Don't go backwards. To those religious ceremonies. Because grace is what you need. And you find it in the person of Jesus.

There's plenty of food for thought.

And at the end of the day it's a pretty simple question. Are you with Jesus or not?

The first readers had to either stay, or go. Stay with the temple and the sacrifices and maybe stay safe. Keep their good name. Or stick with Jesus and be kicked out and mistreated like he was.

But the gain is far better than the loss. Verse 10.

We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

So let's go to Jesus outside the camp he says. Let's bear the disgrace he bore.

Sometimes the decision's that simple. Are you willing to identify with Jesus. Bear the same sort of disgrace?

Because you're looking forward to that enduring city to come.

Or are you too cool for school? And you need that praise from men. You find your security there.

One more thing I have to point out there in verse 17 if I don't point this out I'm not sure when I'll get the chance again.

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. Did you get that?

They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden

Just a little bit of self interest there.

I take some consolation from this letter because he's saying. Being a Christian is hard. But it's more than worth it. The writer of Hebrews is saying. **Keep going.**

Because Jesus is the supreme Lord of all.

His death for you is sufficient.

He sympathises with you struggles.

And he'll strengthen you to go on.

Let me just finish our run through Hebrews with the same prayer we started with.

In light of who Jesus is and what he's done.

<sup>20</sup> 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,

<sup>21</sup> 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 for ever and ever.  
Amen.