

## **Hebrews 13:1-8 “Jesus Christ Remains the Same!” Pentecost 15 August 28, 2016**

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God’s grace and peace are yours from your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who does not change! Amen. Today we hear words of encouragement to strengthen our faith and to encourage others in Hebrews 12:1-8 These are Your words heavenly Father so that in troubling times our trust in You will grow. Your Word ...

Dear Christian Friends,

As people grow older they consider passing on important things to their children or grandchildren. They might have tools, dishes, jewelry, old pictures, or other keepsakes. They hope that the next generation will value them as much as they did. As Christians, our greatest concern is not who is going to get the family homestead, but will the next generation keep the true faith to receive an eternal inheritance? Will they prize the saving truths of Jesus or see no value in Him? We are always one generation from losing the Gospel as a nation. This has happened in other countries where governments banned the Gospel or where parents didn’t instruct children in God’s truth. Could such a thing happen here? Yes! The Gospel is being forced out our homes - not by our government, but by prosperity that puts possessions ahead of spiritual matters and by mindset that puts down the importance of hearing God’s Word and sharing it with others. The world and its ideas will constantly change, but we can trust in Christ to keep His promises as we listen to Him.

### **Jesus Christ remains the same!**

**First, many people want us to change and be without Jesus.** The author to the Hebrews quotes Psalm 118 which states, *“The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”* (v.6) That is a good question! What can people do to us? Unbelievers will try to do one of two things, either win us over to their evil side or do everything they can to stop us from believing or living by the truth.

The author warns that unbelievers will try to change our godly morals. He gives the example of marriage, writing, *“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”* (v.4) The unbelieving world says that it is good outside of marriage to take pleasure in sexual lust and actions. But the Bible reminds us that God instituted marriage at the beginning. Sexual actions outside of marriage despise what God has instituted and will bring His harsh judgment! Like King David who committed adultery, any of us who get caught up in any sinful thoughts or actions can repent, turn away from that sin, and find full forgiveness in Christ the Savior.

The author describes another attack against the Christian faith: which is greed. The sinful world often values people by what they own, like the rich and famous, not by what kind of person they are. But, the Bible clearly shows that greed can take over people’s lives like an addiction. It drives people to always want more. The world says, *“The person who dies with the most stuff wins.”* That is so false. Jesus told a parable in Luke 12 about a man who filled his hands and heart with riches that he had no room for God. God ended his life and he had nothing to prepare him for eternity. (v. 13-21) If people do not have Christ’s eternal riches, even if they gain the whole world they will lose everything for their souls. Paul warned, *“The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”* (1 Timothy 6:1) So, we are warned in God’s Word not to be overcome by sinful sexual desires or by sinful coveting of wealth at the cost of our spiritual lives in Christ.

If the devil and the world cannot overcome our morals, they will try to oppose us so that we either give up the faith or suffer for it. It states in verse 7, *“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”* Many commentators think that the letter to the Hebrews was written to Christian Jews in Rome. By the time of this letter Nero’s persecution of believers was in effect. The Apostle Paul had been executed most likely by the sword and the Apostle Peter had been executed by reportedly being hung on a cross upside down. But, the Hebrews were to remember that these leaders died holding to the saving faith in Christ.

Earlier in Heb. 10 the writer described these Jewish Christians as suffering for their faith without dying. Jews who became Christians were shunned by their community. Their Jewish family treated them as if they were dead and would not ever speak to them. Others had property or businesses confiscated, leaving them homeless or in poverty. Others were mocked and ridiculed for their faith. It was in the context of these difficulties that it states in verses 1-2, *“Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers....”* Due to the hatred toward Christians, it was imperative that Christians continue to support and encourage each other like a family. Believers who were driven from their homes needed places to stay as they traveled. Christians needed to care for each other because the rest of the world didn’t care! Some Christians were put in prison for their faith. They also needed help with food and words of encouragement.

Many similar types of persecutions continue today in Moslem-controlled or communist countries. We have been blessed so far in our nation that we have not suffered such types of persecution. But believing students in the U.S. are ridiculed as fools by university professors if they hold to a six day creation or speak against immorality. Christians today are still shunned by unbelieving families or friends and left alone. Believers who don’t go along with sinful practices at work miss promotions or raises. Christians still need our encouragement. We need to pray for each other and remember each other during times of trouble.

**Second, Christ is the only answer.** We are tempted to think that evil is in control of life. When we suffer or have serious problems we question what God’s plan is. God reminds us in verse 5, *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”* This verse is based on Joshua 1. Joshua was about lead Israel into the promised land against powerful enemies. It seemed impossible that he could win. The enemy was huge and his army unprepared. It would be like a high school football team playing against the Green Bay Packers. Keep the ambulance near as they get carried off the field. They can’t win! But, God was true to His promise and did not leave him or his people, but He gave them victory after victory as long as they trusted in Him.

God never promised we would be immune from problems or suffering in life. Jesus said, *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33) While Jesus lived on earth, He suffered rejection and persecution because He said He was the Son of God and the only way to be in heaven. Jesus never gave up despite the rejection. He kept His word. Hebrews states, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*(v. 8) In the past, Jesus took away our sins by His sinless sacrifice. In the present, Christ is our Savior risen from death and He rules to assure us that our future is certain. It is not because of our earthly treasures, it is only because of Christ our Savior. Peter wrote to suffering Christians who lost their possessions: *“In [God’s] great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you... and ready to be revealed in the last time.”* (1 Peter 1:4-5)

What do we hope to pass on to the next generation? Is it an heirloom that’s been in the family for years? Above all, we want to pass on the most precious thing, the saving truths of Jesus. His innocent death in the past that won salvation hasn’t changed. His resurrection and ascension and His rule over all things for our eternal good affects us today. He will continue to save His people in the future until the end of the world. He doesn’t change. But He has changed us so that despite the sinful world we are prepared us for heaven. Amen.