



# JUST JESUS

## *The Book of Hebrews*

### Lesson Nineteen

#### **TEXT**

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. 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? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken-- that is, created things-- so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

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

Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

*"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

So we say with confidence,

*"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

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

Obeys your leaders and submit to their authority. 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, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Brothers, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written you only a short letter. I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you. Greet all your leaders and all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings. Grace be with you all.

**Hebrews 12:3-13:25**

## **CONTEXT**

### **Hebrews 1:1-2:18**

God spoke in various ways to our fathers through the prophets, but now he has spoken his final word to us in his Son, his perfect representative. The Son of God is his agent not only in creation and revelation, but also—and pre-eminently—in the salvation of the human race. He is greater than any prophet; he is greater even than the angels, as the ancient scriptures abundantly testify. It was through angels that Moses' law was communicated, and its sanctions were severe enough; how much more perilous must it be to ignore the saving message brought by no angel, but by Jesus, the Son of God!

Jesus, the Son of God, is the one to whom the dominion of the world has been committed for all time to come. As the eighth psalm teaches us, God has put everything under the dominion of human beings, and it was the nature of humans—*our* nature—that the Son of God took upon himself in order to win back this dominion. To do this he had to conquer the devil who had usurped it, and rescue those whom he held in bondage; and he conquered the devil when in death he invaded the realm of death, which the devil had controlled until then. It is

because Jesus is truly Man, moreover, that he is qualified to serve as high priest on his people's behalf; he knows all their trials from his own experiences and therefore can give them the timely help they need.

### **Hebrews 3:1-4:14**

But let us beware: those who rebelled against God in the days of the wilderness wanderings were excluded from his rest in the promised land. There is, however, a better rest than that which the Israelites found in Canaan; it is the rest which awaits the people of God. We must take care not to forfeit that rest by rebelling against God, when he speaks to us no longer through his servant Moses, as he did in those days, but through his Son, one greater than Moses.

### **Hebrews 4:15-6:20**

As has already been said, Jesus is our great high priest, able to sympathize with his people and help them. We may safely look for understanding and delivering grace to the one who endured the agony of Gethsemane. He has been called to his high-priestly office by God himself, as an inspired oracle makes clear: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.'"

(I should like to enlarge on this subject, but really I do not know if I can; you are so spiritually immature. I must warn you solemnly that those who have once been baptized and tasted the blessings of the new age can never repeat the experience of repentance and conversion if they commit apostasy. Not that I think you actually mean to be apostates; I have better hopes of you than that. I want you rather to press on from the point you have reached, so as to attain full maturity, instead of sticking there, or slipping back.)

### **Hebrews 7:1-28**

Jesus, then, is by divine appointment a high priest of Melchizedek's order. You remember the story of Melchizedek, priest of God Most High. He appears suddenly in the sacred record, without antecedents, and nothing is said of his subsequent career. Yet he was a very great man; our father Abraham paid him tithes and received his blessing. You might even say that Levi, ancestor of the priestly families of Israel, paid Melchizedek tithes in the person of his great-grandfather Abraham. This implies that Melchizedek is greater than Levi, and Melchizedek's priesthood better than Aaron's. And indeed that is obvious, for if perfect access to God had been attainable under the Aaronic priesthood, why should God have acclaimed the Messiah as priest of a different order?

In many ways Jesus' priesthood after Melchizedek's order is superior to Aaron's priesthood. Jesus, unlike Aaron and his successors, was confirmed in office by the oath of God. Jesus is immortal, whereas the priests of Aaron's line die one by one. Jesus is sinless, whereas the priests of Aaron's line have to present a sin offering for their own cleansing before they can present one for the people. *Their* sacrificial service must constantly be repeated because it is never truly effective; Jesus, by the single sacrifice of himself, put away his people's sin forever.

### **Hebrews 8:1-10:18**

The Aaronic priests minister under the old covenant instituted at Mount Sinai; Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant—the covenant whose inauguration Jeremiah foretold. The introduction of a new covenant means that the former one is obsolete. The old covenant made provision for the removal of external pollution by means of animal sacrifices and similar rites, but these things could never remove sin; under the new covenant Jesus, by yielding up his life to God as an acceptable and efficacious sacrifice, cleanses the conscience from guilt and thus abolishes the barrier between his people and God. The Aaronic priests minister in an earthly sanctuary belonging to the old order, where access to the divine presence is barred by a curtain; Jesus exercises his high priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary, where there is no such barrier between the worshipers and God. And this heavenly sanctuary in which direct access to God is accorded through Jesus is that spiritual and eternal order of which the earthly sanctuary is only a temporary and inadequate copy. For the new order into which Christ brings his people is to the old Levitical order as substance to shadow.

### **Hebrews 10:19-12:29**

Let us, then, abandon the old, obsolescent order and approach God along this new and living way which Jesus by his death has opened up for us. Let us maintain steadfast hope and faith in him. Thus we shall have a firm assurance of those eternal realities which are invisible to the outward eye; we shall be able to look forward with eager expectation to the sure advent of the Coming One. It was by such forward-looking faith that the saints of earlier days won the approval of God; they lived in the good of those promises whose fulfillment has come in our day. Let us follow their example; better still, let us follow the example of Jesus. He ran the race of faith from first to last, undeterred by the disgrace of the cross, and is now enthroned at God's right hand.

Let us not grow faint-hearted because of our trials: these trials are the proof that we are indeed the trueborn sons of God. And think of the glory which is our heritage in this age of fulfillment—something far surpassing what men and women of faith experienced in days gone by. How could we ever think of going back to the old ways?

### **Hebrews 13:1-25**

So maintain your Christian confession in patience and hope; live as Christians should; and may God, who raised Jesus from the dead, help you to do his will in all things.

Summations from F.F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. xix-xxii

## **SUBTEXT**

The remainder of chapters 12-13 form one large section which focuses on the journey of faith. Christians those of committed faith who are on the pilgrimage of the Christian life, moving toward the "City of God"—ultimate healing and rest in the Kingdom of God.

Lane give us this helpful breakdown of the last two chapters:

- A. Disciplinary sufferings and pilgrimage (12:4-13)
- B. Pilgrimage to the City of God (12:14-29)
- C. Mandates for pilgrim (13:1-9)
- D. Concluding benediction upon the pilgrim (13:10-21)

*In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

*Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.*

### **Disciplinary Suffering and Pilgrimage**

Here the author is reminding us that facing difficult times, even times of persecution, are not the result of chance, or idle forgetfulness on God's part.

#### **Meaning of Discipline**

At the heart of the biblical idea of "discipline" is training rather than punishment. The Greek word παιδεύω can have reference to training through education or training through correction. Diligence, steadfastness is encouraged, irresponsibility is exposed and corrected.

The author is clear that at times, God's use of circumstances to provide this correction is unpleasant. But it never originates from anger, or because of a divine whim. It is carefully measured medicine, calculated to bring us to maturity.

#### **Purpose of Discipline**

The author points out that when we come under God's discipline this provide irrefutable proof that we are indeed his daughters and sons. The purpose is two fold: 1) that we might not lose heart (cf. v. 4 as well)—often time "disciplinary" circumstances force us to places where we must cling more tightly to God.

2) that we might share in God's holiness—discipline is one of God's divinely appointed tools to bring us into complete conformity with Christ.

#### **Our Response**

Rather than seeing these things as God's rejection of us, or a "I'm God, you like what you get" power play, the author urges us to see discipline as a sign of God's ultimate love, and embrace God's purpose in our discipline by preparing and strengthening our selves for the journey that lies ahead. Each valley of correction offers to us the opportunity to learn more fully what it means to be truly dependant on and in love with God's desires for our lives.

*Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.*

*You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those*

*who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."*

*But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

*See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. 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? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken-- that is, created things-- so that what cannot be shaken may remain.*

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

## **Pilgrimage to the City of God**

### **The Priorities of the Pilgrim**

Our author now gives us 4 priorities of those who are pilgrims if we are make progress toward our destination.

A Peaceful Disposition

*Make every effort to live in peace with all men...*

Holiness of Life

*...and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

An Active Sense of God's Grace

*See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

Moral Responsibility

*See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau...*

### **The Destination of the Pilgrim**

Our author begins by addressing the goal of our pilgrimage negatively, contrasting it with the experience of Israel after the Exodus. Unlike Israel we do not find ourselves facing God in all of his terrible, majesty and holiness. Rather we find Christ reigning over the gathering of his redeemed creation under his new covenant and welcoming us to him. The exhortation is clear—God is both the God of the old covenant and the new, do not forget that while all of the promise of the new covenant are your and offered freely, you may not choose to walk away from them without confidence. Therefore, be sure you are hearing Christ's message, the gospel, very clearly and seeking to align yourself with it. There is everything to gain and nothing to lose by doing this.

*Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

*Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,*

*"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

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*"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

*Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

*Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.*

*The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

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

*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. 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, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

### **Mandates for the Pilgrim**

Having outlined the nature of hardship and suffering as essential for the pilgrimage which is taking us to the ultimate reality of Christ and his eternal church being displayed in glory, our author now turns his attention to mandates that are necessary for those adopting a pilgrim lifestyle.

The section begins with the mandate (present, active imperative) to **Keep on loving each other as brothers**. This is really the central mandate of the section which is then expanded through a wide range of actions. The mandate to **keep on loving each other** is rooted in two supporting statements concerning God's ongoing presence with them during the journey and the unchanging character of Christ (v. 5 and 8 respectively).

<i><b>As an Expression of Brotherly Love...</b></i>	Practice Hospitality (v. 2) <i>Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.</i>
<i><b>As an Expression of Brotherly Love...</b></i>	Demonstrate Practical Concern for Others (v.3) <i>Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.</i>
<i><b>As an Expression of Brotherly Love...</b></i>	Cultivate Fidelity in Marriage (v. 4) <i>Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.</i>
<i><b>As an Expression of Brotherly Love...</b></i>	Preserve a Freedom From Greed (v. 5) <i>Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have,</i>
<i><b>As an Expression of Brotherly Love...</b></i>	Respect Those in Authority (vv. 7, 17-19) <i>Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.</i>

	<i>Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. 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, for that would be of no advantage to you.</i>
<i>As an Expression of Brotherly Love...</i>	Keep Right Teaching Central (v. 9-10) <i>Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them.</i>
<i>As an Expression of Brotherly Love...</i>	Celebrate the Praise of God (vv. 15-16) <i>Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise-- the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.</i>

### SUPPORT ONE: THE UNCONDITIONAL PROMISE OF GOD (V. 5)

*"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

### SUPPORT TWO: THE UNCHANGING CHARACTER OF GOD (V. 8)

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

adapted from Lane, *Hebrews*, pp. 171-175

It is interesting to note that when writing to a church under severe persecution, the author insists upon a number of expressions of love, that we today who are under no particular outside constraints consider to be optional niceties at best. Notice, "You may die a tortuous death tomorrow, but never the less be hospitable today."

#### Concluding Benediction Upon the Pilgrim

***May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.***

The concluding benediction offers us a rich theological word-picture. In the midst of persecution and hatred, the author is invoking the *God of peace*; spiritual war and physical affliction may reign for a time, but God controls our destiny and has purposed to bring us safely home to peace. To those tempted to try to slip back into their former Hebrew religion the author points out that they are part of the *eternal covenant* which has been sealed with the blood of the *Lord Jesus*, who had been *brought back from the dead*. There can be no going back to the "older administration" of grace because it has been completed by the "newer administration." To those feeling alone, scared, isolated and perhaps forgotten, the author reminds them that Jesus is *that great Shepherd of the sheep*, calling to mind images of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who finds the lost, protects his own, who calls to them so that they know his voice and who ultimately lays down his life for them. The author then makes two requests of the God who has raised Christ the Great Shepherd from the dead: 1) May he *equip you with everything for doing his will*; and 2) *may he work in us what is pleasing to him (self)*. In the midst of their trials, the author's prayer is that God himself will divinely enable them to stand fast and be faith by whatever means necessary so that God will also be able to work through them in a way that is pleasing to himself. Notice, his prayer is not for ease, a cessation of hostility, blessing, prosperity or peace. It is that God for his own glory would equip them and work in them in the midst of a horrendously difficult situation.

The means by which the this equipping and working is to take place is through Christ himself, God's decisive revelation to his people, and our "champion," brother, sympathetic high priest, and sacrifice.



## **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE**

**Based on our time together this year (starting back with the first week of Idolatry 101 and up until this morning), how have you...**

**Seen your sin more clearly?**

**Understood and received Christ's work on the cross more deeply?**

**Been released and enabled to live as son or daughter of the King?**

*Additional Questions for Reflection based on 12:3-13:25*

**The author points out several places where in order to be “free” to pursue our pilgrimage we must limit ourselves (e.g. sexual purity, greed). What do you think about this idea of being restricted in order to be more free?**

**In our “churchly” society it is easy for us to have a very shallow view of what demonstrating “brotherly love” looks like. What did you find encouraging and/or challenging about the ways in which real love is to be demonstrated on a day to day, external basis?**

**What part of the benediction speaks most deeply to your current spiritual, emotional or life stage circumstances?**