

# Leviticus & Hebrews: The Necessity of the Cross

## Lesson 19: Grace Strength Through the Cross

**Key Verse:** *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.~Hebrews 13.8*

Faith Kipyegon is on the cusp of running the mile in under 4 minutes<sup>1</sup>. This barrier-breaking potential is made possible only by the use of pacers. One pacer will run 3 feet in front of her to block the wind, while a second one will run closely behind her to counteract drafting winds, instead providing pushing winds. Pacers must be in ready supply, and able to smoothly switch out from one another. It will take a team for her to successfully defy human limitations. Likewise, the church is full of personal pacers offering a constant supply of God's **grace**, or as we strive to defy our sin nature's tempting instincts. Just as the pacers for her race against time will also be a well-spring of encouragement, the "cloud of witnesses" that surround us are a steady reminder of God's **immutable** nature. Their example of faith in our unchanging God blocks the winds of anxiety and keeps our focus heavenward. In addition, their willingness to come close as we run our race counteracts the drafting winds of sin.

*Righteous God who fulfills Your purpose for me, whose steadfast Love endures forever, Thank You for never forsaking Your work in me (Psalm 138.8). Thank You for grace that keeps Your Promise of eternal salvation secured in Your Son, Jesus. Empower us in Your Spirit to live as active servants building Your Church. Enable us to read this final "checklist of things to do" with an enthusiasm to accomplish Your Will, Your race, for us. Give us eyes to see the strangers, hearts to love the mistreated, and minds fixed on sacrifices of praise and lavish sharing of Your provisions. We beg that Your Spirit pour grace over all that we say and all that we do so that sisterly love continues (V 1) "through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." (V 21)*

**Hebrews 13.1-25** Let brotherly love continue.

<sup>2</sup> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

<sup>3</sup> Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

<sup>4</sup> Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

<sup>5</sup> Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

<sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. <sup>14</sup> For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. <sup>15</sup> Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

<sup>16</sup> Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

<sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

<sup>18</sup> Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. <sup>19</sup> I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, <sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> [Study predicts Kenyan runner Faith Kipyegon could be first woman to run 4 minute mile](#)

<sup>22</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.

<sup>23</sup> You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. <sup>24</sup> Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings.

<sup>25</sup> Grace be with all of you.

**Diamonds:** Paul completes his letter to this church by brain-dumping upon this small, struggling church a monstrous to-do list! However, this to-do list doesn't provide the ability to cross off what has been completed. Rather, Paul is exhorting God's people to move away from the transactional nature of the law and toward a relationship with one another secured by God's immutable nature and solidified by the grace God constantly pours on His people.

1. But for the updates in verses 23-24, the final division of this letter can be understood as a sandwich! The delicious ingredients inside the sandwich are held together by two slices of (fresh sourdough) bread found in verses 1 and 25. What are the two slices of bread? (Write them here)

a. V 1

b. V 25

The intimate relationships within God's church are oiled by His abundant supply of grace. Because of God's grace, we can be honest with one another and receive unconditional love. What a relief it would be to share the trauma of a marriage on the cusp of divorce, of fracturing relationships with adult children, of shame revisiting from a long-ago and long-forgiven sin, of confusion about a woman's role in church ministry and/or their home, of loneliness leading to isolation, of the strain of success requiring long hours and difficult decisions, and so much more.

2. How do you see the ingredients found in verses 2-22 held in place by the bread (V 1 and 25)? In other words, how foundational are verses 1 and 25 to living out any of the church's to-do list in verses 2-22?

The core issue of idolatry is addressed in verses 9-16. There is *much* scholarly debate about the specific religious system Paul is discussing. It is either Judaism under the Levitical law, a form of paganism that deifies food, or food sacrifices required by pagan gods. Regardless, the hearts of people at this false altar have denied the work of Jesus as the final sacrifice, instead adding, or even choosing, food as their source of faith (V 9-10). Any substitution of Christ's atoning sacrifice as the only basis for salvation is idolatry. While we are responsible for treating our bodies as God's costly, set apart temple (1 Corinthians 6.19-20) any notion that salvation from sin and its death can be resolved by our works (V 9), including essential oils, vitamins, and the foods we eat, is a path to idolatry.

Instead, we are called to be counter-cultural (V 10), or to be willing to go "outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured" (V 13). In doing so, we make Jesus accessible to *all*, just as He did when He was crucified "outside the camp" (V 11) like a common criminal, suffering "outside the gate" (V 12) so that His sanctifying blood is available to *all*.

3. Review the deity, "Accessible" from Lesson 2, "Acceptance Through the Cross" (see [pdf here](#)), including your answers to Questions 5-7 from Lesson 2. It is surprising to find that God is accessible first through His law, and then through Christ! Ponder God's unchanging accessibility through your study of the deity (Lesson 2) alongside Hebrews 13.9-15. Document your thoughts:

4. How does idolatry make God *inaccessible* to all?

5. According to verse 15, what is one of the best sacrifices we can offer God today? How does this sacrifice become a safeguard against idolatry and its consequences?

In his closing, Paul again includes multiple action-filled verbs. Paul continues to drive home that though our salvation has been secured in Christ, we are not to stagnate. Instead, our faith will be full of verbs, or actions, that build His Church. In doing so, we too will continue to fulfill God’s command to reveal God to all the nations so that they will also enthrone Him as their God (Leviticus 11.44; 18.1-5, 24-30; 19.18, 20.26; Matthew 28.18-20; 1 Peter 2.9; Revelation 7.9-10, 14.6).

6. Below is a list of verbs from Hebrews 13. Choose the one that is most challenging to you today. According to the verse(s), what benefit is obtained by fulfilling, or complying, with your challenging verb? Why is it worth struggling to fulfill what is so difficult for you?

V 1 Continue	V 9 Be strengthened
V 2 Show hospitality	V 13-15 Go to Him, Bear, Sacrifice
V 3 Remember	V 16 Share
V 4 Honor	V 17 Obey, Submit
V 5-6 Be content	V 18 Pray
V 7-8 Remember, Imitate	V 24 Greet

**Deity: Immutable**<sup>2~</sup> (Hebrews 13.8) “...simply an emphasis on the unchanging character and dependability of God (Exodus 3.14-15; Isaiah 44.6)...God’s immutability is His perfect unchangeability in His essence, character, purpose and promises (Isaiah 41.4)...Immutability does not mean that God is static or inert, nor does it mean that He does not act distinctly in time or possess true affections...His emotions are an active and deliberate expression of His Holy disposition, not (as if often the case with human emotions) involuntary passions by which He is driven (Psalm 102.25-28).”

“A good way to understand God’s apparent ‘changes’ in Scripture is to consider that God reveals Himself in relation to people. They perceive only one aspect of God at a time. God never changes, but creatures do change, and they perceive God’s perfections and actions according to their current state. Thus, God’s actions do not imply a change or essence or purpose (Isaiah 48.12-13; Malachi 3.6).”

<sup>2</sup>MacArthur, J. & Mayhue, R., *Biblical Doctrine*, A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017) pp. 169-70, 929~all quotations

“For example, the language of God ‘repenting’ or ‘changing’ in any way is anthropopathic (attributing human feelings to something that is not human) language—figurative expressions that communicate to man on his level of understanding about changes of disposition or actions. Thus, God’s perceived ‘changes’ are always in the context of His eternal omniscience and will, so they are never because God is surprised and has to adjust (Numbers 23.19-20; Isaiah 43.10-13). They are done in harmony with His truth and faithfulness (Lamentations 2.22-24; 1 Samuel 15.29). All His acts that might be perceived as changes are eternally foreknown and predetermined.”

7. Regardless of when you joined this study, or how faithfully you were able to complete weekly lessons, the connections between Leviticus and Hebrews are voluminous. As we end this year's study, share a connection that has surprised you, strengthened your faith, answered a question you had about God, or illuminated a new or an old truth:

8. How does your connection reveal God as immutable? How does understanding your connection as revealing God’s immutability also strengthen your faith?

**Doctrine: Grace**<sup>3~</sup> (Hebrews 13.25) “Our salvation is *sola gratia*, by grace alone (Romans 4.1-8; Ephesians 2.8-9; 2 Timothy 1.8-10)...Grace is the *unmerited* favor of God (John 1.14-18). It is an action or disposition of God towards us (Romans 3.21-24; 2 Corinthians 8.9). Grace is not a substance that can inhabit our souls (2 Peter 3.17-18). We grow in grace, not by quantitative measure of some substance in us, but by the merciful assistance of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, acting graciously toward us and upon us (2 Corinthians 12.9-10; Ephesians 4.7; Titus 3.4-7; 1 Peter 5.10; James 4.6). The means of grace God gives us to assist us in the Christian life (1 Peter 4.10-11) include Scripture, the sacraments (i.e., the Lord’s Supper, baptism), prayer, fellowship, and the nurture of the church.”

9. From any of your study of Hebrews, as well as Leviticus, how do you see “the means of God’s grace” given to assist you in living faithfully and boldly as a singularly devoted servant of God (Leviticus 25.55) through:

a. Scripture

b. The sacraments (i.e., the Lord's Supper, baptism – see Lesson 9, “Anchored by the Cross”, Question 2 for help)

c. Prayer

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<sup>3</sup>Sproul, R.C., *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 1992) pp. 205-206

d. Fellowship

e. The nurture of the church

**Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:**

**Lecture Outline:**

**Aim:** True faith is expressed in God-pleasing action.

- I. God-Pleasing Behavior (Hebrews 13.1-8) **T1:** God-pleasing believers bear the marks of Christ's love, holiness, and trust in God.
  - a. Which marks of true faith do you bear? Which do you lack?
  - b. What changes do you need to make to more closely imitate Christ's love, holiness, and trust in God?
  - c. Whose faithful walk could you imitate?
- II. God-Pleasing Belief (Hebrews 13.9-19) **T2:** God-pleasing believers hold fast to true biblical teaching in obedient faith.
  - a. Which lessons from this year's Bible study have you applied to your life? How have you been transformed?
  - b. In which areas of your life do you need to hold fast to the truth of the Bible and walk in obedience to it?
- III. God-Pleasing Benediction (Hebrews 13.20-25) **T3:** God-pleasing believers stand firm in the faith by God's equipping grace.
  - a. How does God's grace equip you to stand firm in the faith?
  - b. What specific truths have you gleaned from Hebrews about God's holy character? How might those truths give you the grace-strength to endure when your faith is challenged?

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Hughes, R. Kent, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015) pp. 433-476  
Phillips, Richard D., *Hebrews*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006) pp. 586-631