

OUTSIDERS FOR JESUS

Hebrews 13:13

INTRODUCTION

- As humans, we all have a natural tendency to conform ourselves to the wider majority group of society
- Conformity is motivated by the need to be liked, and have the approval of others
- The Scriptures appropriately liken us to sheep – animals that are gregarious, prone to go astray, require guidance and protection, and tend to follow the flock
- Our tendency to follow the flock of humanity becomes a problem with most of humanity is going the wrong way (Ephesians 2:1-3; Matthew 7:13-14)
- Picture a wide road full of people, all heading in one direction, and at the end of that road is a cliff that drops into a fiery pit – that is the situation of mankind
- The world is constantly working to conform us to its thinking and ways
- It is only by the grace of God that any of us can be delivered from joining the herd in their descent to hell
- The Christian is now commanded to “be not conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2)
- Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews to encourage and exhort Jewish believers who were suffering for their allegiance to Jesus Christ
- There was a cost for a Jew to believe in Christ – shunning by the community, expulsion from the synagogue, loss of employment, and many other consequences
- For some, there was the temptation to give up on Christ, and go back to Judaism, thereby avoiding hardship
- Hebrews demonstrates the folly of such a thought, showing how much *better* Christ is
- There are a number of exhortations throughout Hebrews, and a recurring expression, found 13 times, is “Let us”
- v.13 is a reminder of the Biblical truth that the Christian life is not an easy, comfortable path
- It refutes much of modern Christianity and evangelism that promotes a popular, inoffensive and shallow “gospel” that omits the heinousness of sin, the need of repentance, the taking up the cross, and the shame and reproach of the world
- Being a Christian is to trust in Christ’s atonement for salvation
 - ✓ It is to be born again by the Spirit of God
 - ✓ It is to be yielded to Christ as your Lord
 - ✓ It is to follow Christ in all things
 - ✓ It is to be identified with Christ and his sufferings

I. LET US FORSAKE THE WORLD

- A. From the beginning, God has called his people to be separated from the world unto himself
 - 1. Enoch (Genesis 5:24)
 - 2. Noah (Genesis 7:1)
 - 3. Abraham (Genesis 12:1)
 - 4. Moses (Hebrews 11:24-27)
 - 5. The nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6)
 - 6. The church (1 Peter 2:9)
 - 7. All believers (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

- B. "Without (outside) the camp"
 - 1. The camp is an allusion to the tribes of Israel in the wilderness, camped around the tabernacle
 - 2. For the Jewish believers, the camp refers to the Levitical sacrifices and rites, centred in the temple at Jerusalem
 - a. To believe and follow Christ is to leave all those shadows and types behind, and embrace Christ only, who is the fulfilment of them
 - b. Those who remain trusting in the rites and sacrifices of the law exclude themselves from having an interest in Christ
 - c. The Christian's altar is not in Jerusalem or any other earthly place, but is Christ himself, the one sacrifice for sins forever (Hebrews 13:10)
 - d. The bodies of the animals were burned without the camp (Exodus 29:14; Leviticus 4:11-12, 21; 16:27)
 - e. In the same way, Christ did not offer himself within the city of Jerusalem, but "suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12)
 - 3. Generally, the camp signifies all false, anti-christ religions, and the world system itself, which is under the control of Mystery Babylon (Revelation 17)
 - 4. This is a clear call to forsake all other beliefs, hopes, idols, loves, indeed, everything else, to follow and serve Jesus Christ alone (Matthew 6:24; Luke 14:26,33)

II. LET US FOLLOW THE LORD

- A. It is not enough to *only* leave the camp of error and sin
 - 1. Many people today are waking up to the lies of media and governments, and see the need to come out of this wicked system

2. But they are not coming to Christ
 3. Others separate from evil outwardly, but in their hearts they long to return
 - a. Lot's wife (Genesis 19:26)
 - b. Israel in the wilderness lusting for Egypt (Numbers 11:4-6)
 - c. Eventually such hypocrites will apostasize and return to the world, as the dog returns to its vomit (2 Peter 2:22)
 5. Some are like the Laodiceans, with the mere form of godliness, yet Christ has no place in their religion (Revelation 3:17)
- C. We must both leave sin and the world, *and* flee to Jesus Christ
1. He graciously invites the sin-burdened to come unto him for rest (Matthew 11:28-30)
 2. Christ gathers his people unto himself as his possession, under his protection and leadership (Genesis 49:10; Matthew 23:37; John 10:16; 12:32)
- D. To be a Christian is to be identified with Christ
1. The Christian publicly confesses Christ as his Lord (Romans 10:9-10)
 2. In baptism, we "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27)
 3. The early believers were dubbed "Christians" for their allegiance to Christ (Acts 11:26)

III. LET US FELLOWSHIP IN HIS REPROACH

- A. Christ formed a lonely figure on his procession to Golgotha
1. The crowds that formerly followed him, now disowned him
 2. Even his disciples forsook him
 3. When there is a cost to following Christ, few are willing to own him (cf. 2 Timothy 1:15-18)
- B. The Christian is called to suffer with Christ, even as he suffered
1. He suffered verbal insults and slander, so must we
 2. He suffered physical violence, so must we
 3. He suffered rejection by his own people, so must we
 4. He suffered loss of property, so must we
 5. He suffered unjust legal process, so must we
 6. He suffered public humiliation, so must we

- C. We are promised suffering as Christians (2 Timothy 3:12; Acts 14:22; Philippians 1:29)
- D. It is a special privilege of the believer to suffer with Christ
 - 1. Paul's desire was to know Christ and "the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10)
 - 2. The apostles rejoiced, "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41)
 - 3. As the believer is persecuted, it is Christ who is being persecuted with him (Acts 9:4)
- E. Those who bear the cross will wear the crown
 - 1. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:12)
 - 2. The believer here has "no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14)
 - 3. Moses chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (Hebrews 11:25-26)
- F. As we suffer, we are to do so:
 - 1. Willingly, not begrudgingly
 - 2. Joyfully, not miserably
 - 3. Boldly, not fearfully
 - 4. Patiently, not impatiently

CONCLUSION

- 1. Just as few were willing to accompany Jesus on the *Via Dolorosa*, so relatively few today are willing to stand with the despised and rejected Redeemer, bearing the reproaches of the world
- 2. Christians should be the ultimate non-conformists, refusing to follow the course of this wicked world, regardless of the cost
- 3. Christ calls his people out of Babylon, from her sins, and from her plagues (Revelation 18:4)
- 4. Will you resolve to go forth unto Jesus Christ, bearing the reproaches of the world, for his name and glory?