

An Established Heart (Hebrews 13:8, 9)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (3/4/2018)

Introduction

1. “*The same*” (lit. “*the he*”) in verse 8 is a divine title taken from Psalm 102:26–28: “*They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end. The children of your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before you.*”
2. The Authorized Version fails to provide the verb *is* in its rendering of verse 8, which complicates it. Is the statement a sudden affirmation of the deity of Christ? Why would the apostle suddenly break his train of thought to make an affirmation that has already been well established in the epistle? Was it necessary to insist on the essential immutability of Christ as the Son of God at this point?
3. The truth of verse 8 supports the exhortation of verse 7—“*imitate their faithfulness.*” Let us observe how this applies.

I. The Foundation of Confidence (v. 8)

A. What does it mean that “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*”?

1. Be careful; the apostle is *not* using this statement in the way it may naturally appear to us, reading the text in an English translation.
 - a. While it appears to be an absolute declaration of truth concerning an attribute of the eternal God, the reference is to Jesus incarnate. To take it as a truth-statement of an attribute of God the Son creates a problem.

Did the incarnation change anything about the person of Christ (Hebrews 1:6; Galatians 4:4; John 1:14)? Did His life on earth involve any changes with respect to His human experience (Hebrews 2:9, 10; 5:8–10)? Did His death and resurrection bring any change to His person (Hebrews 10:5–7, 12, 13)? Then, the statement cannot be a blanket reference to the Son’s immutability.

- b. The key to interpreting the statement is the title, “*the same,*” given Jesus as noted in the introduction.

Jesus is His given human name, and Christ is the office of His earthly ministry. Because He accomplished the Father’s plan, He became both offerer and offering, having been appointed High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:15–22). Thus, Jesus is identified with the One called “*the same*” in Psalm 102:26–28.

2. The declaration is to remind the reader of the ministry of Jesus Christ as eternal High Priest.

The God-man, having passed through His experience and suffering, will be the faithful High Priest forever in His mission, unlike all the priests of Aaron that preceded him (2:17). One eternal sacrifice satisfying the justice of God saves eternally those who trust Him. Christ’s appointment to the office of High Priest guarantees His commitment “*to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them*” (7:25).

B. The theme of the epistle: Christianity is superior to Judaism and, thus, has replaced it.

1. As Jesus is in His *divine* person—eternal, immutable, and unchanging—so is He now in His office.
2. The consequence and comfort of the statement is a motive to faithfulness—“*The children of your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before you*” (Psalm 102:28).

Jesus promised to be with the believers through every circumstance (v. 5). Jesus supported their deceased leaders, who passed through their trial to victory. He was “*the same*” for them as He is and will be “*the same*” for all who persevere.

II. Confirmed in Grace (v. 9)

The fact that Jesus is “*the same*” results in the saints being established or *confirmed* (ESV, *strengthened*). All who follow Him must, thus, be confirmed in that “sameness” that characterizes Christ (Ephesians 4:13–16).

A. The negative: “*Do not be led away with diverse and strange teachings.*”

1. Truth is a perfect unit—“*one faith*”; hence, doctrine, as related to truth, is always in the singular (“*the teaching*,” John 7:17; 2 John 9; or “*the faith*,” Jude 3) as opposed to doctrines (plural; “*doctrines of men*,” Colossians 2:22; “*doctrines of demons*,” 1 Timothy 4:1).
2. The means that the enemy uses to lead souls away from the truth are:
 - a. Not receiving what is plainly taught in Scripture because it does not agree with one’s ideas or opinions
 - b. Adding man-made doctrines to what is revealed in Scripture as the Judaizers did
 - c. Confusing personal *experience* (what is felt or impressed) with Spirit-revealed truth in the Holy Scriptures

B. The positive: “*It is good for the heart to be strengthened [confirmed or established] by grace.*”

1. The elder-pastors to whom they were to look for leadership demonstrated this facet of faith—their refuge in Jesus enabled them to remain loyal to Christ to the very end of their trials.
2. The heart must be established by grace as a *means*. To put it another way, only God’s grace can establish the heart in full confidence. Grace is defined as the free, eternal, sovereign favor of God toward His people by which God supernaturally accomplishes the purpose of His will (2 Timothy 1:9).

What can we take away?

1. No matter what your circumstances, Jesus is and ever remains “*the same*”—a faithful High Priest, sustaining, comforting, interceding, saving. He is “*the same*” yesterday, today, and forever in His love and covenant faithfulness. Cleave to Him with absolute confidence. Trust Him. Rest in Him (Revelation 5:6).
2. Emptied of all creature-dependence and self-sufficiency, we must recognize that grace is God’s loving means to apply all the merits of Christ to His people in His time and in His way. Thus, we must learn to wait upon God with broken hearts and humbled spirits when He has given us true sense and sight. Only when we are taught of God through His Word (Colossians 1:5, 6) will we receive the inward work of the Spirit. This work is evidenced by our waiting upon God (Isaiah 30:18) and earnestly seeking after Him (1 Chronicles 16:11).