

**The Unchanging Saviour - Hebrews 13:8-14**  
**Basil Howlett - Carey Baptist Church – 10 February 2008**

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This letter was written to some Hebrew Christians who were tempted to turn their backs on Christianity and go back to their old Jewish faith, so the writer has been urging them to hold on to their faith in Christ and to keep following him. In the verses before us this morning he gives 3 more reasons why they and we should hold on to the Christian faith at all cost.

**1. As Christians we belong to an unchanging Saviour.**

Verse 7 told them to remember their former leaders and verse 8 tells them that the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom those leaders were so devoted, is still the same. They should be faithful to him as their former leaders were. He never changes. That means:

He is as alive and real today as he has always been.  
His teaching is as true today as it has always been. Don't be led astray (verse 9 'by *all kinds of strange teachings*.' – especially the kind of teaching which says your salvation and spirituality depend on eating or not eating certain foods.

His power is as great today as it has always been.  
His love for sinners is as deep today as it has always been.  
His promises are as reliable today as they've always been. But the other side of that coin is that his warnings also are just as sure and reliable.

**2. As Christians we have an exclusive altar. Verse 10.**

There is little doubt that these Hebrew Christians were being taunted by their Jewish neighbours for not having an altar, but the apostle asserts, '*We have an altar.*' The altar in the OT was the place where the lamb was sacrificed, so the Christian's altar must be the cross where Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice for sin. Verse 12 reminds us that he did this to make guilty people clean and holy.. Our altar is exclusive in that:

There are certain people who have no right to benefit from it. After some sacrifices in the OT, the priests and the people were allowed to take some of the meat and eat it for their own benefit. Verse 10 refers to that custom and says that those who still cling to the old rituals, depending upon them for salvation, have no right to eat from our Christian altar: i.e. they cannot enjoy the benefits of our Saviour's death upon the cross.

The writer illustrates this in verse 11 by referring to the sin offering which was offered on the Day of Atonement. This was different from other sacrifices: no one was allowed to eat the meat of the sin offering. It was all taken outside the camp and burned. Just as those who served in the tabernacle did not benefit physically from the death of the sin offering on the Jewish altar, so those who persist in hanging on to the rituals of the tabernacle, will not benefit spiritually from the true sin offering whose blood was shed upon the Christian altar.

And the reason for that is obvious. They reject the finished work of Christ. (Verse 12). Just as the body of the sin offering on the Jewish day of atonement was burned outside the camp, so on the great Day of Atonement Christ went outside the city, where he endured the 'burning' of eternal punishment for our sakes, to make us holy. He paid the price of sin to the full. So those who trust in any ritual as a means of salvation are denying the finished work of Christ upon the Cross. They cannot expect to benefit from that work.

The writer then makes an appeal in verse 13. He says, in effect, *'Because Christ suffered ridicule and contempt and then died upon the cross outside the camp, outside the city gate, in order to make us holy, then, far from running away from him, let us go to him and give him our total, allegiance.'* This may involve suffering.

### **3. As Christians we look forward to an eternal city (verse 14)**

Earthly cities, their buildings, banks and businesses will not last for ever. That's why it's so foolish to turn away from Christ and just live for the things of this world. As Christian we look forward to a future eternal city (see also 11:10).

Three very good reasons why professing Christian should never turn away from Christ.

Three very good reasons why every non-Christian should turn to Christ.