

'STABILITY DURING CHANGE' TFBC May 18, 2008

Hebrews 12:1-3; Heb. 13:8 "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow."

I. Introduction

A preacher proudly boasted that he does not preach doctrinal sermons. They are boring, he asserts, and people don't understand them or relate to them. Furthermore, he says, I am a preacher not a theologian. I like to get down to where people live. I deal with the practical issues.

I think he is wrong on several important points that can affect us all. First, all of us are theologians, because theology is nothing more than what you think about God. Even the protester who says he doesn't believe in God has a theology. That is his theology! And when the preacher says he deals with practical issues only, I say, there is no difference in good theology and good practice! We all practice our faith according to what and how we think.

The Apostle Paul, on the other hand, often made statements that could be said to be definitive statements of our faith, classic one-liners, we might say in our day, but good sound theology. Hebrews 13:8 gives us one that is staggering in its scope and depth for the church and the world. In fact these words contain the bases for faith and practice at any moment in all of history!

II. Body

The name of Jesus, someone has said, is the minimum and maximum for Christian faith and living. In Jesus' very name, God meets us in the most dynamic moments of our lives. The 2 names tell us what can be known of God and all that is needed for faith. Colossians says, *"in Him all the fullness of God dwells."*

Dr. E. Stanley Jones, great missionary teacher and theologian of another generation, was challenged by an Indian student asking what Christianity had that other religions didn't have. Dr. Jones answered quickly, *"You don't have Christ!"* And that is the reason that our faith is distinct. Jesus is central, at the heart of our faith and the whole structure of our lives when we live by faith.

A. The minimum is the common everyday name, Jesus. It speaks of the man who walked the earth, spent time with people in the marketplaces, taught in the temples, grew up in a family, encountered poverty, argumentative doubters, angry politicians and cynical pundits. This name speaks of the one who maintained surprising humility in his attitude, but with brilliant descriptive teaching gave us a new grasp and a magnificent understanding of The Heavenly Father. The facts of Christianity are rooted in the Jesus who lived in time and gave His life a ransom for ruined sinners such as you and me.

Like the Samaritan woman, we can exclaim, *"I have found the one who has told me everything about my life! I have found God's Son!"* Like Thomas, we can dig through all the rubble of our honest doubts and confusion and finally conclude, *"My Lord and my God!"* Like Peter, we can profess to be full of unbending faith. We may then blatantly deny Him many times, only to find ourselves understood, accepted, loved and forgiven! These are the irresistible expressions of those who find Him and realize that, in truth, it was He who found them!

B. In the moments of now, the day-to-day experiences we all live right now, the 2 names, Jesus Christ, explain our salvation, the experience of being freed every day from the 2 traps that can

wipe us out. These are our faults and flaws, whether big or small, and death, either natural or untimely and heartbreaking.

Jesus was the name given to Mary which meant, he would save the people from their sins. The name, Christ, or appointed one, says God planned it all. God sent him knowing we needed him, and that God intended for us to have this liberty, this glorious freedom in our souls, and that God Himself went to the very depths to make it happen.

C. So, here in this short verse, we can put our finger on something of our faith that rings with expertise and logic. It says there are 3 dimensions of faith in our unchanging Lord Jesus. There is faith of **yesterday**, one rooted in his life in actual time and history. Then there is faith for **today**, as our Savior is with us, relevant and available, applying His love and power to everything that contorts life today.

Now there is a faith also for **tomorrow**, that Christ Jesus can give any person a reason to hope courageously, to look forward to all that is yet to come! This is our tomorrow safely guarded by God and for God. It is a reunion for us with God. Jesus made it clear when He taught, and He never changes the message.

This tomorrow dimension has inebriated the imagination of some whose lives and circumstances have been so ordinary, so humble, so degrading, or so hopeless, that many have tacked their sails to the heaven-bound side of religion with a constant celebration of happy hopes. This has produced some of the most delightful gospel music and heartfelt preaching that can fire the hearts of any us who get bogged down in our impossibilities and forget God's possibilities. As one friend said to me, "I'm pickin' and

grinning, just singing and servin', till my Jesus comes to take me home to heaven!"

Then there are scholars of the relics of Word and fact and ancient thoughts that can ground us in a life of a sobering search for truth, an honest reflection. These can lead us on a pilgrimage that will keep us in awe of God's greatness and everlasting character, something we have barely scratched the surface of! While others may thrill more to the Heavenly Portals where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, they can help us find infinite glory in the earthly life and times of Jesus!

But here is the glorious truth we have in it all....., ***"Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow!"***

III. Most all of our information and communication today focuses on the changing world all around us. But it is changing only on the superficial level, where we make changes, where we invent things to take care of what we have invented. But there are the great depths of life where we cannot create anything that changes one iota of difference.

Love is still the greatest power in the universe, and people still are changed when they encounter the love of God in Jesus Christ. He came in the first century as one who went about doing good. He laid down the law of love as the basis for all of life. Love was first to be directed toward God, then equal amounts of love for a neighbor as for yourself. Love included all relationships. New life came to those who met Jesus yesterday.

The Bible presents Jesus as doing the same things today that he did yesterday. Jesus' teaching on love still penetrates our conscience and transforms our lives. It is only God the Creator that can restore and renew life, and He does it through Jesus Christ. Jesus brings the good news of the unchanging love of God

which gives meaning to life and a creative purpose to live in our radically changing present.

There is no scheme spelled out for the future, but it should be enough that the God who was in the past, who was the same for us today, will be there. When we have Him, we have enough for any situation in life. History teaches us about the futility of plotting the future and making any interpretations of the times and the seasons. As we mature in believing, we learn to trust our plans to His plan for the future. He who never failed before will be there.

IV. Conclusion

This is the Christian faith, a faith rooted a Savior who never changes, a faith rooted in history, that's relevant for our lives today, and a faith that gives us a sign, a word and a promise about the future. This faith finds its confidence and hope in **"Jesus Christ" who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.**

It is Jesus who never changes! Jesus gives us desperately needed stability for these changing times. This congregation will change with each succeeding generation. This building will be reshaped to fit the times and the ideas of every generation. Even its existence depends on the existence and needs of this community.

But the anchor holds. This Word to us is a living word, Jesus Christ, and in him we hear the promise of God, "I will never leave you or forsake you."

END (1st draft)

