



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 13:1-6

“Some Imperatives and The Great Indicative” TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] We thank Thee and praise Thee, Lord, for the privilege of the study of the word of God, and again we thank Thee for this great epistle, which has so marvelously set forth the High Priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the comfort and the sense of support that we have from the knowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ has finished His work, and now in His unfinished heavenly work, He prays for those whom He has died, for whom He has offered the sacrifice, and we know from His own lips as He has said, “I know that Thou hearest Me always,” that Thou wilt hear His prayers and that what He has died for shall be accomplished and we shall one day be in His presence and in Thy presence, as well. We thank Thee for the confidence we have received from the study of this epistle. We pray that in our few remaining studies that the Holy Spirit may, again, be our teacher and instruct us in the things concerning His ministry. We pray for each one present in this auditorium and ask Thy blessing upon them, upon their family, upon their friends and upon the whole Church of Jesus Christ. And, especially, Lord, at this time of the year, when so many people are thinking about the birth of our Lord, we pray that it may be within Thy will that the Holy Spirit will guide a number of people to think seriously about the reason for which there is a Christmas celebration. Be with us this evening.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well, we're turning to chapter 13 in verse 1 through verse 6, for this evening. And if you have your New Testaments, follow along with me as I read. I'm reading from the Authorized Version tonight and for no particular purpose but I'm reading from the Authorized Version. And it begins verse 1.

“Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. Marriage is honorable in all.”

And, probably, that should be rendered with imperatival sense. The Greek text may support this type of rendering. “Marriage is honorable in all” or it may support “Let marriage be honorable in all.”

“And the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Let your conversation.”

And this is a word that means your manner of life, your whole, not simply your conversation, but all the things that have to do with your life. It actually means something like “let your way.”

“Be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say or confidently say, “The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

The last passage that we looked at, chapter 12 in verse 18 through verse 29, is something of a climax in the epistle. Not the doctrinal climax because the doctrinal climax was probably reached at chapter 10 in verse 18, where the author writes, “Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” But those magnificent things that the author says we have come to in chapter 12, “Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly of the church of the firstborn, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Those things are something of the glories that have to do with New Covenant ministry and so, in that sense, it’s something of a climax to this epistle.

However, there is an interval between conversion and glory, as we all know, and while this is our destiny, and we’ve been called to these marvelous things, we are still here on the earth and we have a life to live. And as preachers and teachers frequently say, “Our creed is to be followed by conduct.” And so in the last chapter, he will give us some very practical things to bear in mind. And these six verses are filled with them.

This interval, that is, the interval between the present time as redeemed believers, looking forward to the coming of our Lord and the entrance into the experience of these blessings is an interval of struggle. It’s an interval of trial. It’s an interval of testing. And for some of us it’s an interval, perhaps, of suffering, perhaps eased by that powerful word “Thus saith the Lord.”

Man who can grasp by faith, “He hath said,” which is what he writes in verse 5, has a weapon that will do for him in all of the experiences of life, if he can just grasp the fact that God is the one who has spoken these marvelous promises and if the Holy Spirit has given him the trust to rest in those things then he has weapons that slay doubt, that smite fear, that lighten burdens, that open prison doors, and that give spiritual delight in

the experiences that we all must undergo. It's food for every grace and death to every sin.

I'd like for you to notice just, again, verse 5 and verse 6, “Let your manner of life be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me.’”

Well, our subject tonight is “Some Imperatives and the Great Indicative.” The imperatives begin with the imperative of Christian love. “Let brotherly love continue.” How often, the biblical writers underline biblical love. Now, we say “biblical love” because biblical love is different from the use of the term in our society. The use of the term in our society is much shallower. Love is generally affection. It's not anything like the biblical love, which is grounded in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In fact, in the Bible, love is defined as what Christ did on the cross. “Here in His love,” that is, that he has offered Himself as propitiation for our sins. That's biblical love. Total sacrifice, in our Lord's case, and Christian love is sacrificial love. It's not the kind of love that we hear when we hear people sing their music, their popular music, or what ever it may be. Or, even in our society, the sense in which we use the word is just a shallow sense of love. But the biblical command is different. He says, “Let brotherly love continue.” This is the general command. Brotherly love, not mere sentiment, this is also costly love.

Listen to what the Apostle John says with reference to biblical brotherly love, in 1 John chapter 3 in verse 16 through verse 18. He writes.

“Hereby perceive we the love of God or Hereby perceive we love because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. For whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

So brotherly love is very, very serious sacrificial love that costs the other brethren. It always is like that. The kinds of things that we think of in our society as love, even in Christian society, love is the affection that we have for other fellow believers, who may like the same things that we like. But, brotherly love and Christian love is so much deeper.

You’ve heard people say, “I love all the saints; but some I love better at a distance.” Well, that’s not Christian love. “I love them all, but there are some I don’t like.” Well, that’s not Christian love either. Those may be facts about our human experience, but they’re not Christian expressions. It certainly is not the ideal. “Let brotherly love continue.”

In fact, we all know that the only way in which we can love brethren is by the divine love that is in our hearts by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit. And so we all need to call upon the Holy Spirit within to enable us to love our Christian brethren and sisters.

I know you have to call upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit to love me. And some of you, I may have to call on the Holy Spirit to love you, too. We are in this together and we each need the ministry of the Holy Spirit to carry out the responsibilities that are set forth for us in God’s word. Remember, this is God’s word. “He has said.”

Now, the special applications of it follow, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.” This was very important, in the early days particularly. It’s important now. There are times in the life of Believers Chapel when it is most helpful and loving to minister to the needs of some of our brethren and some of our sisters who are in financial needs and in other types of needs, which we can supply for them. But hospitality, in those days, particularly, was one of the great virtues. In fact, in Romans chapter 12 in verse 13, the apostle there, speaking about hospitality, says that individuals are to be given to hospitality and Christians are those who should be given to hospitality. Roman inns,

hotels, were not like Hiltons or Ramadas or Marriotts that we have in our society today. In fact, I know many of our Christians in this room you wouldn't even like to stay at a Marriott maybe. You want something a little better than that. You want at least as good as Hilton and some even beyond that, if possible. Fairmont? But in those days, when a Christian went out on the road, he didn't have any place to stay except some of the inns, which were horrible. Those inns were known in ways that you would not like for anything to be known.

I have a description of some of them here, but some of them were the kinds of inns in which there were, not simply no provision for good food, but the morals of the place were very bad, and they were dirty and filled with all kinds of disease. In fact, in “The Frogs” that Aristophanes wrote, Dionysus asks Heracles, when they are discussing finding a lodging, if he knows one where there are “fewest fleas.” So that, evidently, was the experience of the people of that day. Entertain strangers, why, of course. And even in Christian circles, it was an exhortation that was needed. “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.”

One of the most interesting things, I think, is a statement that is written in the *didakae*.” The *Didakae* is a second century document, which is composed of some information concerning how the Christian life should be lived and some other information. It was written in the second century. And in it there is a passage to the men of that time and to the churches of that time that has to do with how they should entertain people who might be visiting. And this is what it states, “And concerning the apostles and prophets, act thus according to the ordinance of the gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord.” Now, when he's used the term “apostle,” he's not speaking of the Twelve; but he's speaking of anyone who is sent from one place to another. “Let him not stay, this one, let him be received in the Lord, but let him not stay more than one day or if need be, a second as well. But if he stays three

days, he’s a false prophet.” So there’s a practical information for individuals who might want to take advantage of the hospitality of the Christians.

And he goes on to say, “And when an apostle goes forth, let him accept nothing but bread, till he reaches night’s lodging. If he asks for money, he’s a false prophet.” That was some good, practical advice, because it would be easy for people to take advantage of the Christians. In fact, they do that today. That’s precisely what they do. They come into our society and they beg for money. If they can get in, that’s what they love to do; come in and beg for money. But even in the second century, they already had difficulties with that.

What our author is thinking about, obviously, is an instance in the Bible. And you may remember it. “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” And you’ll remember and since this author has already written many verses about Abraham that would immediately come to your mind. And you would remember when Abraham had the visit from the three persons who came to him. And when they came, remember, it’s in the 18th chapter of the Book of Genesis, Abram recognized that there was something different about them. “The Lord appeared unto him on the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, “My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant.” Evidently, one person had a kind of bearing that immediately marked him out as different to Abram. “Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, ‘So do, as thou hast said.’”

And you remember that when they did all of that, the Lord gave Sarah the promise that she would have a child and Isaac of course was born. Two of the three went down

to Sodom, and there in Sodom they entered into the house of Lot. And you'll remember what happened. They were angelic beings. And, as a result of the angelic ministry, Lot was preserved. And the incident must have been clearly on the mind of our author. So he reminds them that when you entertain strangers, as Abram did, you might find out that some of them are angels. So “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” He's not telling us that all strangers are angels. But it just might be that you would entertain someone who really is, as Abram did, an angel.

He goes on to say more about others. He says, “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.” That is, to enter into the feeling of those who are bound in the prisons for various reasons, because the Christians visited the prisons often. Paul tells us that he visited prisons often, and other Christians, also, were in the prisons often.

So “Remember those that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.” That is, human beings, and therefore, exposed to such things.

There are a number of things that are written by some of the earlier men about this and I'd like to read a few of them, because they will give you some idea of what happened in the early days so often.

Tertullian in the third century in “The Apology” writes, “If there happens to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in prisons for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God's church, they become the nurslings of the Christians.” In other words, it's our responsibility to take care of them.

Aristotes, the heathen orator, said of the Christians, “That if they hear that any one of their number is imprisoned, or in distress for the sake of their Christ's name, they all render aid in his necessity, and if he can be redeemed, they set him free.”

When Origen, another third century earlier Christian, when he was young it was said of him, “Not only was he at the side of the holy martyrs in their imprisonment and until their final condemnation, but when they were led to death, he boldly accompanied

them into danger.” Sometimes Christians were condemned to the mines, which was almost like being sent to Siberia, that is, a few years back.

The Apostolic Constitutions, another work, lays it down, “If any Christian is condemned for Christ’s sake, to the mines, by the ungodly, do not overlook him. But from the proceeds of your toil and sweat, send him something to support himself and to reward the soldier of Christ.” And, again, “all monies accruing from honest labor do ye appoint in a portion to the redeeming of the saints, ransoming thereby slaves and captives and prisoners, people who are sore abused and condemned by tyrants.” When the Numidian robbers carried off their Christian friends, the church at Carthage raised the equivalent of a thousand dollars to ransom them and promised more.

Now, this is most striking, I think, there were actually instances when Christians sold themselves as slaves to find money to redeem their friends. So you can see what bound the early church together. The bonds that bound them together in a hostile society and it led to these exhortations. “Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body.” I think you can see that this understanding of what brotherly love is is far deeper than we would think of in our society as being brotherly love.

Now, that’s the first imperative. And the second one is the imperative to chastity. And if ever a society needed this, it surely is our society today. Let marriage be honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, or kept pure. “But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” The sinfulness of adultery and fornication in chapter 12 in verse 16, just the preceding chapter, he has said, “Lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.” If there is a word for our times, it surely is this 4th verse. “Marriage let marriage be honorable in all, and let the bed be undefiled. But the adulterers and the fornicators God will judge.”

We live in the era of moral pigmies. Hawk-string slogans of new morality, free love, free sex, fed on some years back on Freud, Kinsey, reinforced by the pill. We’re not

content to learn from the word of God. We want to learn by experience. And the result is some of the difficulty that we're having today. People have hit the experimental trail, ending in tragedy of guilt and suicide.

And one of the most interesting things to me is that this is not really new. I know that people are inclined to think that this is something nineteen hundred and sixty up to our day. In seventeen twenty-one, think of it, the year seventeen twenty-one, Harvard undergraduates formally debated the question, “Whether it be fornication to lie with one's sweetheart before marriage.” Seventeen hundred and twenty-one. So this is not something that's twentieth century or late twentieth century. This is something that's been with us all along.

We know that the Scriptures speak very plainly that it's God who has created us male and female. And so, consequently, sex, the sexual relationship is something that has begun in the mind and purpose of our Triune God in heaven. I know that people like to put it this way that it's God who came up with the idea of sex. Well, it's much more marvelous than that. But we can say that it is God who determined that there should be the sex of male and female. It, therefore, we may expect, is a great thing; and it is surely here to stay, as long as we are here upon this earth and it's incumbent upon us to know precisely what the Bible does say about the differences that exist between males and females.

We're living in a society today, which is opposed basically to the word of God, not entirely, but basically to the word of God, which would like to make us think that there is very little difference between the male and female, other than the sexual organ itself. But it's far different than that, when one reads Genesis chapter 1, chapter 2 particularly, and Genesis chapter 3. He created us male and female for a great purpose, for the means of consummating the most exciting relationship in life, marriage in which two people become one flesh in a unity that is illustrative of the unity of the church with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Every time the sexual act is committed, ideally, it should be an act in which not only is there the experience of the joy of the sexual act, but reflection upon the fact that this is illustrative of the oneness that exists between the church and Jesus Christ. So that the sexual act is a spiritual act, ideally, as well as a physical act. So “Let marriage be honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but adulterers and fornicators God will judge.” Symbolic of the most important relationship in the spiritual life.

Why does the Bible speak as it does? Well, for one simple reason that pre-marital sex leads to guilt. It's God who brings it. He naturally brings it. No individual can commit pre-marital sex without the sense of guilt because he's violating the word of God. And so, consequently, he feels the sense of guilt. It's God who brings the sense of guilt. It cheapens the person. He's given part of himself away; given away to anyone with whom he happens to be aroused. And the results that flow from that, sometimes, are unwanted pregnancy, disease. But, according to the word of God, here, divine judgment. It's kind of a cheating. It's kind of a robbery. Free sex is surely not free. If there is anything that free sex is not, it's free. It's not that.

And we live in the day of not gonorrhea or syphilis, but with AIDS one surely understands that when one engages in that kind of sex, he stands under the judgment of God. And what he is doing is robbing himself and others, if they are involved in the same situation, of the highest and the best. And, unfortunately, when it happens, it's something that cannot be regained. That's why our young people should be taught plainly and firmly that if they engage in that kind of sex, they are giving something away they can never regain.

The Bible talks about the “marriage” supper of the Lamb. This itself suggests the honorable nature of marriage. So the imperative of chastity. We need that. We need that in our society.

Now, we come to the last of the imperatives; and this is an imperative to contentedness. But, it's related to the preceding. Notice, he said, “Marriage is honorable

in all, the bed is undefiled, adulterers and fornicators” or fornicators and adulterers God will judge. “Let your conversation,” your manner of life, “be without covetousness.” Well, he’s just been talking, therefore, about sexual covetousness. Now, it’s financial covetousness. But they are related. So “Let your manner of life be without covetousness.” So he’s referring in that statement, evidently, not only to love of money or greed, but to illicit sex as well. But he makes the transition now, to money, after, “Let your manner of life be without covetousness, be content with such things as you have.”

Without covetousness, without the love of money, now, our Lord speaks about these things, too, back in Matthew chapter 6 in verse 24, he makes this statement, which bears on this. He says, “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Paul speaks about it with reference to the elders and he tells those to whom he write, Titus and Timothy, that those who are elders are not to be greedy of “filthy lucre.” No one has ever found a better translation than that, in my opinion. “Filthy lucre.” I know, that’s Old English; but that’s precisely what it is, when a person is greedy for money. It’s filthy lucre. And the elders, particularly, are singled out as individuals who are not to be greedy of filthy lucre.

Our Lord tells parables about riches and the proper attitude that we should have to it. And one stands out, I know, to most of us, the parable that he tells in Luke chapter 12, of the rich man. And we read these words in Luke 12, verse 15.

“And he said unto them, take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, ‘The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully’: And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?’ 18And he said, ‘This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build

greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.’ And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul,’[That’s so interesting to me, I can’t help but smile at that. Soul, this man talking to his soul. Soul] ‘Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.’ But God said unto him, ‘Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?’ So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

There is a passage in 1 Timothy that some think is a reference to Judas and it’s like this. It’s 1 Timothy chapter 6 in verse 10, and Paul writes to Timothy, “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” And the picture, the vivid picture who sold our Lord for thirty pieces of silver and then committed suicide, comes to mind as you read this.

Now, why should we let our conversation be without covetousness? Why should we be content with such things as we have? Why should we not be grasping? The whole world’s grasping? Why should not we be grasping? Well, he tells us why. He says, “For he.” That is, God, “He has said, I will never leave thee or forsake thee.” Now, this is why we do not have to worry, even if our bank account is zero. This is why we do not have to worry. He says, “I will never leave thee or forsake thee.” Someone has said, “Never is a very long word.” Well, it’s five letters, but it’s a very long word. “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” To be forsaken by God would be the worst thing in the world. To think of living and being forsaken by God, and move that into eternity; and to be absolutely alone, nothing could be worse. Alone, I mean, not alone with your friends, or your family but absolutely alone.

Well, the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, was alone. He says that. He said he had made himself alone, and he was. When he died on Calvary’s Cross, he cried out, “My God! My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That’s one of the reasons the suffering of our

Lord is so costly to our Lord, and why he cries out as he does to be separated from the Father not only separated from the Father, but at the same time bearing the punishment for our sin. “My God! My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Now, I want you to take a look at that statement a little because we need to kind of roll this around in your mouth a little, so you'll enjoy it, like some of the Christmas goodies that some of you will be eating shortly. He says, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” You know, in the original language, that statement has five negatives. “I will by no means and no, I will by no means forsake thee.” I will by no means leave thee and no, by no means will I forsake thee. Five times he uses the negative.

Mr. Spurgeon has a marvelous sermon on this. You know what his title is? It's “Never! Never! Never! Never! Never!” five times for those five negatives. “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” It's even stronger in the original text, and you get all of those five negatives, in which we are told that God will never, never, never, never, never forsake us. Streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise, we sing. Nothing could be more remarkable and wonderful than this.

Well, this is why we need not worry. Now, can you give me a good reason why you should worry? I'm open for some of you to stand up, if you like, and tell us now why we should worry. Would you like to stand up and say why you should worry? I have to worry because of my glasses. [Laughter]

But, anyway, would you like to stand up and say, yes, there is justification for worry because and give us your reason? I know this is probably something you hadn't anticipated being expected to answer. So I'll give you next week, and you can stand up if you like next week, and tell us why you should worry. But according to the author of this epistle, he says that we are to be content with the things we have, for he has said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” And if I have the Lord God, then I don't need all of these other things. I don't need an account at Nations Bank, really. I mean “need” it in the ultimate sense. Because, if I have the Lord, I have all of my needs met in him.

He's a better bank. More assets in the heavenly bank than the one hundred and fifteen or so in Nations Bank or what ever bank it is that you've got your money in. One hundred and fifteen billion.

So now, the result of this is, since he has said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” so we may boldly say, we may confidently say, the Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

In other words, we may say, because he has said. Isn't that plain? It's so simple a child could understand that. He has said this; so we may say this. He has said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” so that we may boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” So I have all of my needs met and I don't have to worry about any enemies because in having the Lord I don't have fear what man will do unto me. Boldly! Confidently! Even the day of doubt!

So think of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, when Satan said, “Yea, hath God said,” and Eve begins to worry. We don't have to worry. We don't have to worry. He will never leave us nor forsake us. We may boldly say, “The Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” This word which is translated “helper” is one that is derived ultimately from two words. One that means a cry, *boe* and *thos* which means to run. And so it means to run at the cry of someone else. So it's a tender, almighty kind of helper that we have. And, furthermore, he's a present help, so the Psalmist says. He's an immediate help, because the text says “The Lord is my helper,” not necessarily “will be” or “has been” but “is my helper.” So we can look at it as if it's something at our beck and call under any circumstances. And, furthermore, it is “my” he is “my” helper. That is, a special relationship to me. To everyone of us Christians, he has a special relationship.

I know we tend to think at times that he has a special relationship to some special Christian we know, and of course that's true. But he has a special relationship to us, too! Because we are special, every one of us, we belong to him. We're part of the family of God. He has given the Lord Jesus Christ for us! For me! Isn't that marvelous to be able to

say that? He has given the Lord Jesus Christ as a penal substitutionary sacrifice for me. That's how much we owe to him.

So he says, “I will not fear.” Why shall we not fear? Well because every divine attribute, whether communicable or incommunicable, to use the theological distinction between the two sets of attributes, all of those attributes, all of those properties of deity which you think about, all of the properties of the greatness of our Triune God in Heaven, all of those special relationships and just think of one of those communicable ones his goodness, his mercy, for example. Those are mine. All of those things are engaged on my behalf. So in the experiences of life, if the Lord is my helper, all of the things that belong to him are at my beck and call.

Now, we have a few moments, and so I'm going to ask you to turn to a few passages, to let you know that this is not something that's just found here in the Epistle to the Hebrews; and maybe it's subject to Dr. Johnson belaboring it a little too much. We're going to turn back to a few passages now, and talk about this promise that he will never leave us nor forsake us. And the first one I want you to turn to is in chapter 28 of the Book of Genesis and I'm sure you remember the story of this. And Jacob has been forced to leave home, because of some things that were a little bit shady that were done by his mother and by him, and so, now, he's very fearful that Esau is going to find him and his mother, Rebekah, is a very clever woman. She and he determine it's best for him to leave. And so he flees, and he goes out, verse 10 of Genesis 28, from Beersheba and he went toward Haran “And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.” This is the crooked guy, who's just cheated Esau out of his birthright and his blessing. Well, I say, not cheated. He's kind of tricked him out of the blessing. But he bargained him out of his birthright. “And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” And then the Lord stood above it.

And, incidentally, the Lord Jesus uses the term “ladder” in John chapter 1, to let us know that the ladder is figurative of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who puts his hand upon heaven and upon the earth. And so you can think of the ladder in that way, but the angels go up and down on the ladder, ascending and descending.

He cites it this way that they ascend and descend upon the “Son of man.” So the ladder and our Lord are both symbolic of mediation, between heaven and earth.

And, we read, 13, “The Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” These are unconditional promises to this sinner. “And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” Unconditional love for Jacob.

Turn over to Deuteronomy chapter 31 in verse 6. Deuteronomy 31 in verse 6, we read, Moses is preparing to die, and he gives these words to all Israel. “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” Once ought to be enough, but notice the 8th verse. “And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.”

Well, when they come into the land, he has a word for Joshua. In chapter 1 in verse 5, of the Book of Joshua, we read these words. The Lord is speaking to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, and in verse 5, “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”

And then, turn over to 1 Chronicles chapter 28 in verse 20. You might expect that he would say something to David. He has some word for David. But David speaks to

Solomon here and we read in 1 chronicles chapter 28 in verse 20, “And David said to Solomon his son, ‘Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.’” All these promises, incidentally were kept, were they not?

Then, Isaiah chapter 41 in verse 17. 41, verse 17, and here we read these words, “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” What a wonderful refuge this is against the sins of covetousness, anxiety, fear, in the help of the Lord. Just as Jacob was on his way, ultimately, to heaven and then finally to the possession of the land that God had promised to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and just as in the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ tells us that he will be with us, he will never forsake us, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” So the pilgrims of the Lord God bind this pledge to their hearts and make their way into the future with the confidence that the Lord is with us in all of the experiences of our lives. As we sometimes sing, “The soul that on Jesus hath learned to repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes. That’s so thou all hell should endeavor to shake, I’ll never, no, never, no never.” Well, the song, he had to make his rhyme, I guess. So we add three more, “No never, no never, no never forsake.” This is what God promises to those who belong to him. And I submit to you, that if we remember this promise, and if we remember that it is something that the Lord God has said and has carried out in the word of God, we have reason to trust him in all of the experiences that lie before us.

May God help us to do it.

Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are so thankful to Thee for these marvelous promises, for they sustain us in all of the experiences of life; they sustain us when we lose loved ones, when

we lose those in our family who are dearest to us, when we suffer the financial reverses that many must suffer, when we have the other kinds of trials, personal trials, family trials, the things that make up the experiences of our lives. These are the things, Lord, that under gird us and that strengthen us and uphold us, and we know from experiences that these promises that Thou hast made to us, we shall see fulfilled. And as we, like so many of the saints of the past ages and even of recent times, lying upon their last bed, their deathbed, have known Thou art with the saints, will carry them on into Thy presence and on throughout eternity. This great promise rings in our hearts. “I’ll never, no never, no never, no never, no never forsake.” We thank Thee, Lord! We pray that it may be our experience to know the joy of the fulfillment of it, in the trials of life.

For Jesus sake. Amen.