

Radical Restoration

Outside the Camp

Dr. David Platt

June 11, 2006



OUTSIDE THE CAMP Hebrews 13:11-14

If you have your Bible, and I hope you do, I want to invite you to open them with me to Hebrews. Hebrews 13. It is way in the back of your Bible. If you are not familiar with where Hebrews is, go to the end there you will find the book of Revelation. Go seven or eight books back to the left, and you will find Hebrews. There are some notes in your Worship Celebration Guide. Feel free to pull those out. They will help guide our time in God's Word together this morning.

It was about a month and half ago when Heather and I came into town to meet with the Pastor Search Team for the second or third time...I can't remember exactly when it was...but we were wrestling with this whole idea, "Is it something that the Lord is calling on us to do, leading us to do?" It was Easter weekend, and I don't know if you were here on the Easter, but if you were, I used some raffle ticket looking things for an illustration during my Easter sermon, so I went to Wal-Mart that Friday night. We were going to meet with the Pastor Search Team the next morning. We went to Wal-Mart that Friday night to buy those tickets and took them to the checkout counter, and the lady who was checking me out said, "So, all right, so what you raffling?" I said, "I am actually not raffling anything. I am actually going to use these in a sermon illustration." She looked at me, and she said, "Oh, so you are a Youth Pastor?" I said, "No, ma'am, actually I am preaching right around the corner here at The Church at Brook Hills." She looked at me, and she said, "You are not old enough to preach there." I said, "Yes, ma'am, I know." She said, "You are supposed to be Youth Pastor. You are not old enough to be a Pastor." I said, "Yes ma'am, I know." About that time, Heather walked up. She looked at Heather and said, "He is not old enough to be a pastor." We said, "We know!"

Then, this last week, we were looking at some homes and giving some inspections. I guess that was little presumptuous that we started looking at homes, but anyway, we were looking, and we were talking with the inspector out in the yard. Kevin Carroll was there and myself and some others. He asked me what was bringing me to town, and I said, "I am coming to Pastor The Church at Brook Hills." He kind of went on and didn't say much in response. We got inside, and we were talking again, and he said, "Now what is bringing you to town again?" I said, "I'm going to Pastor The Church at Brook Hills." He kind of laughed, and then he said, "No really, what is bringing you to town?" That is when Kevin Carroll looked at him and said, "I am the Student Pastor; this is the Senior Pastor." Well, I've got a feeling that is not the last of the questions, and I've got a feeling that a lot of people are going to ask a lot of different questions along the way in the coming days.

This morning, though, I want to ask the questions. I've got a few questions that I want to ask The Church at Brook Hills; questions that I believe will ultimately determine what God does in and through this church; questions that are much deeper than how old your pastor is. I think they are questions that the church in America needs to answer, and, specifically, The Church at Brook Hills needs to answer. They come from this passage in Hebrews 13. Let

me start with you in verse 11, and we are going to read a few verses, and then we will dive into what this Word means to us this morning.

It says in verse 11:

"The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come."

Now, this passage may surprise a few of you. Kind of a weird passage. Kind of an interesting passage to preach on this morning. Some of you are thinking, "Well, the new pastor may be kind of weird preaching on blood of animals and bodies burning outside the camp." However, I believe this passage right here, believe it or not, sums up the whole message of the book of Hebrews, and it posed some questions and some challenges for those believers a couple of thousand years ago that, I believe, are the same questions and challenges that we need to face up to today in the American churches, and, specifically, here at The Church at Brook Hills.

Three Questions for the Church at Brook Hills

Will we die in our religion or die in our devotion?

So, I want to ask three questions this morning. I will be honest with you. I want us to dive in from the deep end from the start if that is okay. However, if you have got your notes there, three questions for The Church at Brook Hills. Question number one based on this passage: Will we die in our religion, or will we die in our devotion? Will we die in our religion, or will we die in our devotion? Now, this question springs from the context of this passage. You have to understand the context in order to understand what this passage really means.

There are a lot of things we don't know about the book of Hebrews. We don't know exactly who wrote it. There are all kinds of opinions on who wrote the book of Hebrews, and nobody really knows for sure. We don't even know exactly the people that it was written to, where they were living at that point. What we do know is this: It was written to a group of Jewish Christians at a time where they were facing some pretty intense persecution, or at least the threat of persecution. There are different theories on exactly what timeframe it was written in. However, we know from the whole tone of this book that it was written to Jewish Christians who were tempted, amidst the persecution around them, to fall away from their faith or just fall away from the mission that God had given to them, that God had entrusted to them, to make the glory and salvation of Christ known. They were facing this temptation, and they were almost going into hiding; almost a little scared to step out. So that is who this book is written to.

So, he looks at them, and he says, "Jesus suffered outside the camp." We'll get deeper in that in just a minute. He says, "We need to go with Him outside the camp." Foundationally, the camp literally means that the people of Jerusalem and the Jewish people, contemporary Judaism in that day that revolved around the temple worship. They were tempted at this

point to kind of sit back in the camp, in the Jewish camp, almost trying to live out the Christian life while still living out the Jewish life in the Jewish camp. This guy says to him, "We have got to make a decision at this point."

Two Problems ...

I think if we were to sum up the people that are being addressed here in the book of Hebrews, they had two main problems. Problem number one: They were driven by their formalism. They were driven by formalism. Here is what I mean by that when I say they were driven by formalism. Basically, they had become so engrossed in how they worshiped, that they had forgotten who they worshiped. They had gotten so caught up in all the religious practices of Judaism that they would do, day after day, week after week, go to the temple, and do this, do this, bring the sacrifice, bring this offering; they had missed out on the whole point of who they were worshipping. It was style without substance, and it is the same exact temptation we face today.

We are not Jewish people going to a temple, but we know that in our culture today, particularly our church culture, that there is a great temptation for us to have a lot of style with no substance. There are crowds gathering all across the United States this morning who are gathering together to hear a great, great speech and to sing some great music and walk away and leave unchanged. It is just empty. It is formalism. That is what they were driven by. They were so engrossed in how and what they were doing, that they missed the whole point all together. They were driven formalism.

Number two, they were paralyzed by fear. They were paralyzed by fear. They were looking around them, and they know that if they step back, step out of the camp, so to speak, of Judaism, they could be expelled from that camp altogether, or they could be imprisoned or even worse. So, you had a picture of people who were driven by formalism and paralyzed by fear, and basically, they had two options in front of them.

Two Options ...

That is what author of Hebrews is saying right here. "Here are your two options. Number one, you have a mission in front of you to make the gospel known. You can either retreat from that mission, or number two, you can risk everything for that mission. You can either retreat or risk everything."

Now, what I want us to do this morning, in order to grasp the gravity of what is going here with this option of whether to retreat or risk everything for the mission, is I want you to see in the Old Testament, how over and over and over again, God's people have faced these two options. Either retreat from the mission or risk everything for the mission.

Hold your place here in Hebrews 13. If you have a Bible, turn with me back to Numbers 13. Let me encourage you do this. If you don't have a Bible, try somebody around you who does. Kind of share with them or something like that. I want you to be able to follow along and see this unfold in the Old Testament. Turn back to Numbers, fourth book in the Old Testament. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, then come to Numbers 13.

As you are turning there, let me just give you the picture of what we are about to come in on. Moses has led the people out of Egypt. They have been delivered from Egypt, saved from the slavery they were in there, and there they stand at the edge of the Promised Land in a place called Kadesh Barnea. That is the place where they were ready to go into the Promised Land. Moses takes twelve guys, and he says, "You go into the land, the land of Canaan, the Promised Land that God has promised to give us, and you see how it looks, and you come back and give us a report." So, they come back. The land is great. Joshua and

Caleb, two of the guys, say, "Man, we need to go." However, the other ten rise up and say differently. Look at Numbers 13. Look with me at verse 31. It says,

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them. That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

Do you see the picture? There they are on the edge of the Promised Land, and they have two options: Retreat from the mission or risk everything for the mission. To go into the Promised Land, so named because God had promised it to them. They start to retreat. Basically, what happens after this is Moses and Aaron pray to God. "God, please forgive them. God be gracious, don't let us go back to Egypt where we were slaves. God forgive us."

I want you to go over to Numbers 14. Look with me at verse 20. See how the Lord responds to them. They retreat from the mission. Moses prays, "God forgive them." Look at Numbers 14:20.

The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times - not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it."

You got the picture. This is God's mercy and His judgment wrapped in one. He is merciful. He is gracious. He forgives them. He is not going to let them go back to Egypt where they were slaves, but at the same time, we see His judgment. He says, "You retreat from the mission, you will wander in the wilderness until you die." You have that picture? It continues on. Look at verse 32. It is pretty serious.

But you—your bodies will fall in this desert. Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert. For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.' I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this desert; here they will die."

They retreated from the mission, and every single person from a certain age would wander in the wilderness and completely miss out on the Promised Land.

Let me show you another picture. Judges 2. Turn over a few books to the right there. After Joshua, you come to Judges 2. Another scenario. Now, they are in the Promised Land, and one of the main commandments they were given when they went into the Promised Land,

they had begun to take a bunch of cities in the book of Joshua. You get to Judges, and God had told them over and over again, "Rid the land of the Canaanites." They were pagans who followed all kinds of pagan gods. They had set up all these altars to false gods, and God said, "You need to get rid of that completely."

What happens is they get into the Promised Land, and they don't do that. They start to take some of the places, but they don't get rid of all the paganism that was there, just as God had commanded them to do. Look at Judges 2:1.

The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.' [That is what you are supposed to do] Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this? Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you."

See why it was so important for them to get rid of all those altars that the Canaanites had set up? Because God wanted to show His holiness to all those nations in the Promised Land. He wanted to show His greatness. When they didn't do that, they retreated from the mission. They said, "No, we are not going to do everything you told us to do." The result was they fell into sin.

If you come over to Judges 2:10, it says,

After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. In his anger against Israel the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the LORD was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. And they were in great distress.

Do you have the picture again? To retreat or risk everything? They retreat, and they miss out.

One more time: 1 Samuel 8. Go over to the right. After Ruth, you will come to 1 Samuel 8. Now God's people are in the Promised Land, and all these different nations around them have kings, and that is how they show their power and their glory, by the kings that they follow. God has set it up so that He is going to be the King for the people of Israel. They don't need an earthly king. He is going to be the King, and they are going to show the power of the nation that has God as their King. That is what God has set up. Look with me at 1 Samuel 8:6.

But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt

until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."

So, Samuel does that and come to the end of that chapter in verse 19. Are the people going to retreat and say, "We want a king," or are they going to risk everything and say, "We will follow God as our King."? The people refused to listen to Samuel. Verse 19,

But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles." When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king." Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Everyone go back to his own town."

They retreated. "We are not going to give ourselves to the mission of showing the nations what is like when Yahweh God is our King." God hands them over to all the judgment that would come as a result of that. You have got to picture over and over throughout the Old Testament God's people face these two options: Retreat from the mission or risk everything for the mission.

We come to...fast forward in the book of Hebrews, and we see these people steeped in Jewish tradition, knowing the history of the people of God, and the author of Hebrews comes to them and says, "You have two options: Stay in the camp and retreat from the mission or go outside the camp, where Jesus is, and risk everything for the mission." The mission they had been given is in Acts 1:8. You will take the gospel from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and where? To the ends of the earth. You will take it to everybody. You will take it to everybody! You will risk your lives to take it to everybody. That was the mission that they had been given, and here they are in the book of Hebrews, and they are cowering back in fear, and they are going into hiding.

Now some of you are thinking, "Dave, thanks for the history lesson. What does this have to do with us today?" Let's fast forward 2,000 years to God's people in this room on June 11, 2006. Let me tell you what I see. I see 6,000 people who are swallowed up in an earthquake two weeks ago in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim dominated nation. Over 600,000 who are now homeless, hungry and susceptible to all kinds of diseases. All this following a year where a quarter of a million of them were swept into the ocean by a tsunami. Most of them who had little to no knowledge of Jesus Christ. I see hundreds of thousands of Sudanese in the western Darfur region and other places like the guys you met a couple of months ago, who are living on less than a meal a week. Many of them are brothers and sisters.

I see a country like India where there are more people living in that country below the poverty line than there are people in the United States as a whole. Nearly half the world I see is living on less than two dollars a day while all of us, without exception, every single one of us in this room sits here filthy rich compared to the rest of the world. I see a world where eight million people will die this year alone due to diseases related to their poverty. A world where 300 million people are suffering today from diseases that are curable. Most of them are under the age of five years old, suffering from diseases that are curable. In addition to the 40 million who are suffering from HIV/AIDS and millions others with cancer. I see thousands upon thousands of our brothers and sisters in countries like China and Laos and North Korea and Saudi Arabia who, today, are sitting in prisons, or today are going to

be killed because they have placed their faith in Christ. On top of all that, I see a billion people...over a billion in this world who have never even heard the name of Jesus.

Now, I see all of that, and I look back, and the church in America as a whole, ladies and gentlemen, we have retreated. We have retreated. We have retreated into our nice, big buildings where we sit in our nice, cushioned chairs, where we are isolated and insulated from the inner cities and spiritual lostness of the world. While we should be on the firing line for God, most of us are still in the nurseries of our churches drinking spiritual milk, and I believe that we stand at our Kadesh Barnea with the mammoth needs of a lost world without Christ in front of us, and a mission to make His glory and His salvation known among those nations, and we have two options: We can either retreat from the mission into a land of religious formalism and style without substance, where we have a good time every Sunday, but it doesn't matter to the rest of the world, a land of wasted opportunity. Or we can risk everything to give ourselves the global purpose for which we have been created as a church.

I want to say to you this morning at The Church of Brook Hills: Let's risk it all for the sake of the billion people in the world who have never heard the name of Jesus. Let's risk it all for the million people in metro Birmingham; let's risk it all for the sakes of the lost people in your workplace, in your neighborhood, in your families who are headed toward Christless eternity; let's risk it all for the sake of lives, our families, our children's lives; let's risk it all. Because, ladies and gentlemen, let me remind you, that if we don't risk it all, if we retreat from this mission, and if we forsake this mission, our God will be faithful to forgive us. He is gracious and merciful, but He will leave us to wander in the wilderness of our religion until we die. I believe He has done it to thousands of churches across the United States, even denominations that are dying because they have retreated. I don't want to die in my religion. I want to die in my devotion. Will we die in our religion or die in our devotion? I told you we were jumping in the deep end from the start. "Dave, don't you mean 'Die in our religion' or 'live in our devotion'? Are we going to live in our devotion to Christ?"

Will we embrace our comfort or will we embrace His cross?

That leads us to question two. Question number two for The Church at Brook Hills: Will we embrace our comfort or will we embrace His cross? Let's dive a little deeper into what Hebrews 13 is telling us. If you will go back there with me. He starts talking about how the high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering. This is referring to the Day of Atonement. Look in Leviticus 16. They would take the blood of animals and that would cleanse them. Once a year they would do this for all the sins of the people, and they would put the sins of the people on those animals, and they would sacrifice them as symbolic of the forgiveness that God would bring them.

Then, what they would do, they would take the animal outside the camp to burn the animal outside the camp, because it represented their sins. Then, it also says that Jesus also suffered outside the city gates to make the people holy through His own blood. Jesus wasn't crucified in the middle of Jerusalem. Where was He crucified? John 19 tells us it was outside the city gate. Right outside the city gates of Jerusalem. A place that was cursed, that was set apart from Judaism, completely expelled from Judaism.

So, then he says, "We need to go outside the city gate with Jesus bearing the disgrace, the humiliation, the degradation that He bore." Now, what I want us to do is I want us to take one more journey very quickly into the Old Testament just to get a picture of what this phrase, "outside the camp" really means. Let me show you three times in Leviticus. Turn with me to Leviticus 16. Leviticus 16. I want to encourage you to maybe even underline these verses in your Bible every time you see in these passages "outside the camp." Kind of underline them. Maybe you put a note out beside them, Hebrews 13. If you are borrowing someone else's Bible, make sure you get permission before you do that. Leviticus 16. This is talking about the Day of Atonement, what I just described. In order to help us a couple of thousand years later understand what he means, "outside the camp", let's go with Jesus to three types of places.

We are going to see those in Leviticus. Leviticus 16. Look at verse 27. This is talking about the offering we were just talking about for the sins of the people. It says,

"The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, [here it is] must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and offal are to be burned up. The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp."

Let us go with Jesus to the ...

So, there is the first time. When Jesus calls us to go outside the camp, and the author of Hebrews says this, first of all, he is telling us to go to the dirty places, the places that represent the sins of the people. That is where you would take this animal, instead of burning this animal up there, you have to take it outside the camp. You have to burn it there because it is such an unclean thing. This is a dirty place outside the camp. It is, number one, when Jesus calls us to go outside the camp, He calls us to go to the dirty places.

Number two: He calls us to go to the despised places. Turn with me over to Leviticus 13. Leviticus 13. This passage that we are coming in on is talking about regulations for people who have serious diseases or infections. I want you to look at what verse 45 says. Leviticus 13:45 says, *"The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp."* So, if you get this infectious disease, then you have to cover yourself. If anybody comes near you, you yell out, "Unclean, Unclean", and you have to go live alone outside the camp. Now, maybe that is not so bad if you are sick for a week. What about a leper that never gets clean? To be alone outside the camp. Despised where nobody else wants to go. Where you have to yell out to make sure I don't even come near you.

The dirty places, the despised places and, number three, the dangerous places. Look over in Leviticus 24. Leviticus 24. This is talking about people who blaspheme against the Lord, who are criminals, and what is to be done, their payment, basically, their restitution. Look at verse 13. It says,

"Then the LORD said to Moses: 'Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him. Say to the Israelites: 'If anyone curses his God, he will be held responsible; anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death.'"

Where does that happen? Outside the camp.

You don't want to go outside the camp. It is dirty, it is despised and it is dangerous. There is nothing good that happens outside the camp. So, it is a pretty bold move when the author of Hebrews says to these guys, "Jesus went outside the camp." Where Jesus is is where we need to go. We need to go outside the camp with Him, bearing the disgrace that He bore. Don't forget. Galatians 3:13 tells us that Jesus, with His death on the cross, on a tree, showed Himself to be cursed by God in their tradition. They believe that Jesus was completely cursed, expelled Him from Jewish camp, sent Him outside, and this author is telling these Jewish Christians, "You need to do the same thing. You don't go to the cultural places; you go to the dirty places and to the dangerous places, and the despised places."

It would be like the author of Hebrews coming to us today and saying, "You need to go where the drug dealers are, where the pimps and the prostitutes are, where the unpredictable gangs are, where the housing projects are, where the poor and the destitute and the needy and the abandoned and that people that nobody else wants to be around, that is where you need to be. The places in the world where the disease is most rampant, and the places in the world where terror is most rampant, those are the places that Jesus is, and you need to go to Him."

However, if we are honest...if we are honest, those are not the places we are. We have to a dangerous tendency to create an imaginary Jesus, a most respectable Jesus. He is clean; He is comfortable, even up scale. He doesn't call us to go, but He calls us to stay. He wouldn't put us in uncomfortable situations. He says, "If you follow me, you will experience prosperity and financial gain and everything will be good with you and well with you and your family will be okay." He says, "You don't need to go to any extremes. Just keep living your life according to the standards of the rest of the world. Make your money, attend your church, please your conscience Sunday in and Sunday out, even get a good feeling there. You go on living life, kind and well and retire comfortably, and that will make everything fine."

What I want to say this morning is if that is the Jesus you are following, you are not following the Jesus of the Bible. Because the Jesus of the Bible went to the dirty places and the despised places and the dangerous places. He loved those who were unlovable, He touched those who were untouchable, and He paid for it. He was threatened, He was mocked, He was beaten, He was scourged, people spat in His face, and He was nailed cruelly to a cross in utter humiliation and degradation and disgrace. That is where Jesus is.

Do we really want to be where Jesus is?

The question that I want to ask you this morning is, "Do we really want to be where Jesus is?" Don't answer that question too quickly. Do you really want to be in the dirty places, the places that you can't protect your family completely from? Do you really want to be in the despised places, where you don't get credit for being there? You don't even get a thank you from the people who are there. Do you really want to be in the dangerous places? Let's be honest, out of the hundred most unreached groups in the world today, the majority of them, the overwhelming majority, are in countries or areas of the world where people are resistant, maybe even hostile, to Christian missionaries. They don't want us there.

So, are we really willing to be where Jesus is? This is the part we struggle with the most I believe, because we have this idea: We can't figure out why God would reward our obedience and our commitment and our sacrifice...why He would reward our obedience with suffering. Why would God not reward our obedience with prosperity and things going better

for us? Why would He reward our obedience with suffering? That is completely foreign to the American mindset. It is completely foreign to it, but it is completely biblical.

Mission without suffering is Christianity without a cross.

Please don't miss this. Mission without suffering is Christianity without a cross. Mission without suffering is Christianity without a cross. If we expect to accomplish this mission of making disciples of all nations as a church, apart from suffering, then we are following the wrong Jesus. It just doesn't work that way. We have sung about His death and His taking our sin upon Himself, and we have rejoiced, and we have lifted our hands, and we've smiled, and we've sung about how great that is, but that is not where it stops. It stops when you walk out of here imitating Him. He wasn't joking when He said, "If you come after me, you will deny yourself and take up your cross, and you are going to follow me."

When Jesus calls us to Himself, He calls us to suffer. Because you and I know, this world and Birmingham is not going to be reached by a bunch of people who have everything and everything goes well for them, and we just turn it into gratitude on Sundays. That is not how we are going to impact this city. This world beyond Birmingham is not going to be reached by people who have everything, and everything goes well for them. It is going to be reached by a people who embrace suffering and pain and difficulty and, in the middle of it, they say, "Christ is my all. He is all I need. He is all my family needs. It doesn't matter if our house is plundered, all we need is Jesus." That preaches volumes to a lost world.

Suffering is a central strategy for achieving our mission.

We get this idea, "Well, if we give ourselves to the mission, if we really do that, then suffering will come." However, even that is not completely true. You've got the next thing in your notes. Don't miss it. This is huge. Suffering is not...well I should have put "just" there. It is not just a consequence of our mission. Suffering is not just a consequence of our mission. Suffering is a central strategy for achieving our mission. You got that? If we are going to show Christ to the world, then we have got to show the true Christ. Not the imaginary Jesus, the true Christ of Scripture, and He is outside the camp. That is where He is, and that is where He calls us to go.

I want to share with you a quote that I read in this whole process. From the first day that the Pastor's Team met with me and Heather until now, this quote sums up probably the biggest struggle that we have had in our hearts when it comes to this whole idea of possibly pastoring The Church at Brook Hills. It is from a guy named Joseph Tson. Joseph Tson is a Romanian pastor who has experienced big persecution. He was under house arrest there for a long time, beaten, tortured, and he wrote a book, basically, on the theology of suffering.

It is a very challenging book, and I want you to hear what he writes when he is summarizing Paul's philosophy. He is summarizing Paul who went out from the Church at Antioch and made the gospel known in very difficult places, and he paid for it. I want you to listen to how he summarizes Paul's philosophy. He pictures Paul thinking,

If I had remained pastor in Antioch, in that affluent and peaceful city, in that wonderful church with so many prophets and such great blessings, nobody in Asia Minor or Europe would have been saved. In order for them to be saved, I have had to accept being beaten with rods, scourged, stoned, treated as the scum of the earth, becoming a walking death, for when I walk like this, wounded and bleeding people see the love of God; people hear the message of the cross, and they are saved.

Then, these two sentences, "If we stay in the safety of our affluent churches, and we do not accept the cross, others may not be saved. How many are saved because we don't accept the cross?" That pierces me. It shows a picture of a guy who said, "I am not going to pastor in Antioch, because I want to show the sufferings of Christ to the world. I am not going to stay in the comfortable affluent place."

So "Why?" people ask me. "Why are you going to The Church at Brook Hills? Don't you know there are 1,300 churches in Birmingham? Why are you going to a place that has so much when it comes to comfort and religion?" Heather and I have always said...we have always said, "The only reason we are living here in the United States is because we are convinced that we can do more to affect over there when we are here, and if any time that becomes a moment that that is not true, then we are taking a one way trip out of here. Why come to pastor The Church at Brook Hills? Because I want to be a part of a missional awakening in the church that says, "We are going to show the cross, and we are going to risk it all to impact nations for the glory of Christ." That is what I am about, and we have got to be a people who are about the same time.

I was in East Asia a couple of weeks ago...a few weeks ago and working with the house churches there. Got picked up. Put my hood on. The guy who was picking me up has spent time in jail for his faith. They speed us off to this hidden apartment where we go upstairs. We were kind of sequestered inside; we couldn't go outside the whole time we were there training these believers, and then we snuck out that last night, late at night. We were getting our stuff ready...backpack. It was almost kind of funny. I am sitting there, and the two guys that are Americans who are with me are dark hair, dark eyes, and so they can blend in a little better than this blonde hair, blue eyed guy.

I am sitting there in the chair with my backpack ready to go, and the guy who has been spending time in jail as the leader in the whole movement, he keeps walking around me kind of walking in circles, shaking his head. Looking at me and shaking his head like I am the blonde hair, blue eyed guy, who is going to get him back in jail. I just feel horrible, and he puts this huge coat over me and says, "What you are going to do is we are going to walk down. Hopefully, there won't be anybody there, and you are just going to keep your head down and follow in my footsteps, and we'll get to the getaway car, so to speak."

So, I put the jacket on, and I'm like, "Please Lord, don't let me be that guy who ruins the whole thing, okay?" So, we got down, we opened the door outside, and there are people everywhere. I don't look up to see the people everywhere, but I see their steps everywhere. So, I am just following this guy right in front of me. When get up into the car, and he kind of pushes me. He told me to get in really quick. We he pushes me, just nails my head on the side of the car door there and just banged my head. I just said, "Ow." He starts pushing me in and trying to push something really big through a little hole because I had my backpack on, and he is just trying to push me. It was the most graceless getaway ever.

We speed off, and these guys, I found out the next morning, totaled the car. They were driving like crazy. This is a daily reality for them. This is what they do. They are not retreating from the mission. They are risking everything for the mission. They are out there. They are doing it. This is a daily reality for them. I am sitting there the whole week and half we were there, with a group of about 20 believers, all of them learning Arabic, so they can go into Muslim nations so they can proclaim the gospel. Three of them are going to Yemen. One girl with tears, saying, "I want to go to Iraq. I have a burden for Iraq." One going to Afghanistan. One going to Africa...North Africa.

At the end of that time, they asked me to go around and pray for each of them, and I did. I went around, and I prayed for them one by one. I want you to know that, as I prayed for them, I prayed for you. At this point in time, things were pretty much moving forward with this whole deal, and you were on my heart, and you were on my mind constantly. I prayed for you, and I prayed that God would raise up some students from this room with a burden for Iraq. I prayed that God would raise up some businessmen who would take their families to Afghanistan. I prayed that God would raise up some women who would get a heart for thirteen year old girls in the Tukulor Muslim people of West Africa, who are being sold into prostitution today. I prayed that God would raise up families that would adopt unreached people groups, and I prayed that God would raise up some retirees who would say they would live out their golden years making the gospel known among the people that have never heard the name of Christ. I pray...I pray that God would make us a people that embrace His cross before our comfort.

Will we live for pleasure in this world or paradise in the world to come?

One more question, and then we will be finished. Will we die in our religion or die in our devotion, will we embrace our comfort or will we embrace His cross, and will we live for pleasure in this world or paradise in the world to come? There is not a lot of time to camp out here, and I want to just fly through this, but when we come to the end of Hebrews 13, he give us the reason. Some of you are kind of thinking, "Dave, the way you are talking is a little insane. It is a little pathological. Why would you embrace suffering? Why would you embrace a cross like that? That is a weird way to live." It is a weird way to live in our culture, but is not pathological, and it is not insane. Here is why: We have an enduring city that is to come. We don't live for this city. The author of Hebrews is saying to them, "You don't live for the camp of Judaism; you don't live for Jerusalem; it is not the city you live for; you live for a New Jerusalem. You don't live for pleasure in this world. You live for paradise in the world to come."

That is why, one chapter before this, you look at Hebrews 12, you remember these verses, verses 1 through 3? "*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the...*" What set before him? "*...the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame.*" How do you go the cross with joy? You go to the cross with joy because you know you are about to sit at the right hand of the Father. Jesus didn't stop to enjoy the pleasures of the world on the way. He knew where His home was. He knew what He was living for. He wasn't living for the city of Jerusalem. He was living for the city to come. That is a radically different way to live.

I think the author of Hebrews is saying to you and me this morning, "Jesus did not die to make our lives in Birmingham a paradise. He didn't die to make Birmingham a place of pleasure. Jesus died so that we would forsake the pleasures of Birmingham and live for the paradise that is to come." What did Jesus do when He went outside the camp? Hung on a cross, and He turned to a dirty thief, and He said to him, "Today you will be..." Where? "...in paradise." What Jesus is saying to us in this passage is, bottom line...bottom line, two things.

The greatest earthly security is ultimately insecure. Your 401K, your investments, your job, your career, whatever you place your security in, is ultimately insecure, because the bottom line is, we are living for another world. If we live for the other world, we will have to endure

much in this world, and we will miss out on many of the pleasures of this world, but the results will be that it will be worth it. The bottom line is it is worth it.

The Biblical Truth

Jesus calls the church to live according to a radically different definition of success than the rest of the world.

That leads us to an overarching biblical truth that I want us to close with in two sections. Number one: Jesus calls the church to live according to a radically different definition of success than the rest of the world. Jesus calls The Church at Brook Hills to live according to a radically different definition of success than the rest of the world. The success of the rest of the world is measured by how big things are, how much things are, how prosperous things are financially. That is not how we measure things in the church. Success in the church is measured by the fact that we are outside the camp with Him. This set is designed to give a picture of the church as an institution.

A church's buildings that are set up as a place for us to come, and the most chilly part of this passage of Scripture is, if this what the church is about, even this building and getting success the way the world would define success...if this what we are about, the most chilling part of this passage of Scripture is we will go through the history of The Church at Brook Hills, and Jesus won't even be there. Did you catch that? Because He is not inside the camp; He is outside the camp. That is where He is, and it is very possible for people to go through an entire life of going to church and completely miss out on the Jesus who is outside the camp the entire time.

These guys over in Asia told me...I wrote it down, "We have noticed that many Westerners tend to be excited and motivated by numbers, but we are not. Our goal is nothing less than the completion of the Great Commission, so that the Lord Jesus Christ will return for His Bride to bring all of human history to the moment in Scripture where voices are heard in heaven proclaiming the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever. That is our goal and our purpose, and we are willing to do whatever it takes to fulfill this mission and be obedient to our calling."

What I want to say to you this morning is The Church at Brook Hills is success will not be determined by how many or how much. Success will be determined based on whether or not we are fulfilling the Great Commission that has been entrusted to us, because I want to be where Jesus is.

Jesus calls me to live according to a radically different definition of success than the rest of the world.

To make it a little more personal, not only does Jesus call the church to a radically different definition of success, but Jesus calls me. I want you to put "me" in that blank. You to live according to a radically different definition of success than the rest of the world. Guys, let's be honest, if we really took this to heart, our lives would look a lot different than the rest of the world, and our church would look a lot different than the rest of the world. However, I believe that is what God has designed for us to do, because that is when His glory will be displayed most clearly through us. I pray that it would not be said that The Church at Brook Hills is a church that has a great music program or a great preacher. I pray that of The Church at Brook Hills, it would be said, that God is showing His glory to the world through that church! I want to be a part of that. Will you bow your heads with me?

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