

“OUTSIDE THE CAMP”

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The Challenge

I was first challenged by this expression, taken from Hebrews 13:11-13, back in 1952 & 53 while I was studying in a Bible College in order to become a preacher in Christendom. Sad to say, I didn't obey it until later in 1955. One of the reasons it took a process of time in order for me to obey the exhortation is because I really didn't fully understand it. There was a lot of confusion in my mind. I had been a youth leader in the Methodist church, but I had taken my membership out of the Methodists when I became conscious they were fully modernistic and denied basic Bible doctrines. I was already teaching in a certain Baptist church and I clearly saw indicators that they were going in the same direction. I was thinking about aiming towards possible work as an independent evangelist, serving all the “churches,” somewhat like Billy Graham. And then some Christians I happened to meet were trying to help me in my orientation as a Christian and they gave to me this challenge to “go to Him (Jesus Christ) outside the camp.” I had never focused on that statement before. What does this really mean???

There it stands, like a signpost at the conclusion of fourteen epistles from the apostle Paul (at least as those epistles are arranged in our Bibles). It points to a spot where Jesus Christ is standing—“outside the camp”—now go there to be with Christ!

The writer of the book of Hebrews, whom I believe to be the apostle Paul, uses this expression which I learned has stirred a lot of curiosity and questions throughout the last few centuries of the Christian era. The believers that Paul is writing to are called upon to “go out to Him (Christ) outside the camp.” That seems to be an unusual request. In order to understand it I needed several questions answered. First of all, to whom is Paul writing? I needed to know the identity of the believers Paul is addressing. Am I included in this group? *Secondly*, this exhortation presupposes that the people to whom the writer is addressing are in a certain “camp.” What exactly is “the camp” these believers are in? *Thirdly*, I must know what exactly is wrong with this “camp” and why is Jesus Christ “outside” it? *Fourthly*, I needed to be sure there is an application of this exhortation to my situation today. *Fifthly*, I needed to make sure I understood just exactly what is involved in going to Jesus Christ in such a location. Is “going to Christ outside the camp” a simple, joyous journey without any dangers or expenses? Simply put, and to use another expression, I needed to “count the cost.” Before I attempt to answer all these questions let us read carefully the passage (NASB or NKJV)—

*“For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned **outside the camp.***

*Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered **outside the gate.***

*Hence, let us go out to Him **outside the camp, bearing His reproach.**”*

The Explanation

The book of Hebrews, as the name states, was written to the Hebrew Christians of the first century (Hebrews 1:2; 2:3 & 3:1). The “camp” that these Hebrew Christians were a vital part of was, of course, “the house of Israel” under the administration of the Mosaic Law system (Heb. 3:2-5,16 & 8:8).

Originally the thrice holy God of Israel chose to dwell among the people He had redeemed from Egyptian bondage. He placed His name in their midst by the “Angel of His Presence” (Exo. 23:20-23). His glory also marked His presence among them by a cloudy pillar (Exo. 33:9-11). Later this glory abode in the Holy of Holies of the Temple Solomon built (I Kings 8:10,11). Israel therefore must be holy because God was holy. Nothing that defiles or makes unclean can be in His presence. God revealed laws to Moses for Israel’s separation from any uncleanness which would contaminate the moral and physical values that God established for the camp of Israel.

Their separation was twofold. First, it was positive—towards God. Second, it was negative—away from evil. The same is basically true of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is expressed by the apostle Paul in his first epistle. He spoke of the saints of Thessalonica as having “turned to God—from idols, to serve the living and true God” (I Thess. 1:9). The closer one draws to God the further he gets from what is idolatry. And this is done in order to have effective service for God.

The laws for the nation of Israel were for the purity that God demanded of those in His association. Anything that was unclean must be taken “*outside the camp*”—see Deut. 23:9-14 & Num. 5:1-4. Thus the expression that is used in the book of Hebrews comes right out of the Hebrew Scriptures. The bodies of Nadab and Abihu, who had disobeyed the instructions of God, were taken “*outside the camp*” (Lev. 10:4,5). Lepers and all others who were unclean were to remain “*outside the camp*” (Lev. 13:46). The person who cursed was to be taken “*outside the camp*” (Lev. 24:14,23). Miriam in her rebellion was taken “*outside the camp*” (Num. 12:14,15). Sabbath breakers were taken “*outside the camp*” and put to death (Num. 15:32-36). Those defiled in war (Num. 31:19-24) or by other means (Deut. 23:10) were all to remain “*outside the camp*” until cleansed. (There are many other similar uses of this expression.)

Even those sacrifices that depicted the removal of sin by substitution were to be taken “*outside the camp.*” The sacrifice of the red heifer for purification was made “*outside the camp*” (Num. 19:1-3). All the bodies of the sin offerings were taken “*outside the camp*” and burned (Exo. 29:14; Lev. 4:12, 21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27 & Lev. 6:11). These are also what the writer to the Hebrews is actually referring to. On the great Day of Atonement the Scapegoat, bearing all the sins of the nation upon it, was also taken out into the wilderness to be abandoned (Lev.16).

As long as God remained within the camp everything that was unclean in and of itself, or had become contaminated by substitution was to be taken “*outside the camp.*”

At this juncture in our study the last place we would want to be is “*outside the camp.*” “*Outside the camp*” is where all that is defiled and unclean is taken. God is not there. Normally, God is inside “the camp,” not “*outside the camp.*”

The Immediate Application

Interestingly enough, this expression is first used in a reverse context. It is introduced after the people of Israel sinned at the foot of Mount Sinai and committed idolatry with a golden calf. At this time God, Himself, remained “*outside the camp*”—see Exo. 33:7-11. During that time Moses took his own tent and pitched it “*outside the camp*” in order to communicate with God. Later, after Israel was judged, Moses made two new tablets of stone and the Covenant was renewed with Israel. Then the Tabernacle was assembled and situated within the center of the camp of Israel, and then God resumed His presence within their midst. So it is illustrated for us, that when “the camp” becomes *contaminated by sin*, to the extent that God positions Himself “*outside the camp*,” then to meet with God as did Moses, you would go “*outside the camp*,” yourself.

Now, the amazing thing about this Biblical story is that “at the end of the ages” (Heb. 9:26) Jesus Christ, as Israel’s Messiah, was rejected and literally delivered up to be crucified “*without the gate*” of the city of Jerusalem. In addition, He was the anti-typical “Sin Offering” Who was taken “*outside the camp*” to be consumed in judgment. This all happened not because Jesus had sinned but rather because of Israel’s self-righteous apostasy and unbelief. Israel had perverted judgment. On the other hand God allowed it and used it, by His divine providence, as the basis for the redemption of Israel and the whole world. Israel did not realize what they were doing (Luke 23:34).

No doubt, the final breaking point came when, at the beginning of that final week of Christ’s sojourn on earth, He “cleansed the Temple” and drove out all the money changers. This was a clear slap in the face of the authority of the religious rulers, who allowed and even encouraged such activity, since it meant further *revenue* for their system. Christ’s action was intolerable and the final straw—Jesus must be put to death!

So there we have it! The writer to the Hebrews has been telling the Hebrew believers, now called “Christians” (Acts 11:26; 26:28 & I Pet. 4:16), that the nation of Israel was being set aside in God’s dispensational dealings because of sad unbelief. Furthermore, Christ was horribly misunderstood and treated as a criminal to be cast out of the camp. He was held in ultimate contempt and reproach by the nation of Israel under the direction of its leadership. Yet in reality, it was Israel herself that was contaminated by self-righteous hypocrisy and unbelief. Therefore, Christ, having been cast out, is positioning Himself “*outside the camp*” once again. There He hangs in great “*reproach*” immediately directed upon Him by the religious establishment.

The Reproach

To go to Christ “*outside the camp*” is one thing, but to stand with Him in such “*reproach*” is something else! No one wants the eyes of all to look down upon him in contempt, and yet that is exactly what this stand will involve. When I really think about the “reproach” that Christ experienced, it scares me. In the prophetic Psalms where it speaks about Christ’s suffering and death, it also speaks of this *reproach*—“*Those who hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of My head*” (Psalm 69:4). “*I have become a stranger to My brothers and an alien to My mother’s children*” (69:8). “*Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take*

pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (69:20). “*You have put away My acquaintances far from Me; You have made Me an abomination to them*” (Psalm 88:8). This type of reproach is beyond any of our endurance. No doubt the pain Christ endured was not merely in the physical brutality that had been administered, but in the mental and social ostracizing that attacked His moral character and emotional person. Indeed, there is no punishment any greater than such public humiliation. Before the spear had pierced His heart this cruel ostracism had “broken His heart.”

Actually, it is only an individual, who has experience in even a small part of this type of reproach in his identity with Jesus Christ, who can also experience the *comfort* from Christ. I remembered again recently the beautiful story of Christ healing the man born blind (John 9), and how the religious leaders “*cast him out*” of their association (9:22 & 34) because of his testimony about Jesus. All of his own family and friends left him. Yet Jesus “*found him*” (verse 35). I like to think of Jesus coming up to him and putting His arm around him and saying, “It’s all right—I understand how you feel, and I hurt with you. But don’t worry; it will be worth it all.” No doubt the believer would say, “Yes, it was worth it all.”

There is another aspect of this that is important to realize. Christ is still a Jew! He never ceased being an Israelite! However, He is outside the camp of apostate Israel. In the Bible it is made very clear that there are two kinds of Jews and two kinds of Israelites. Paul speaks of the “outward Jew” and the “inward Jew” (Rom. 2:17-29). He makes it very clear that the real Jew is one that is not merely circumcised in the flesh, but in the heart (spiritually) as well (verse 29). Likewise, there is merely the Israel in the flesh and then there is the real Israel of God, who are those saved Israelites (Rom. 11:1 & Gal. 6:16). So, for the Hebrew believer to take a stand “*outside the camp*” was not a denial of his Jewishness nor of being an Israelite—but rather of not being identified with the apostate contaminated system. This, of course, brings the reproach upon the believer from those still in that system who refuse to clean out the contamination and hypocrisy of the system. They seem to be very happy with the system in spite of God’s Word about such deviations from the truth. Jeremiah described it perfectly in his day—“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power (authority); and My people love to have it so” (Jer. 5:31).

The Application Today

Furthermore, it is not at all difficult to see that there is an obvious application to me as a Gentile believer in Christ. Once again, in the very first letter Paul wrote to the Gentile believers at Thessalonica he identified them with their Jewish brethren. First of all they heard the gospel from the Jewish apostle (1:5). Then they were told to be imitators of the apostle and of Christ (1:6). And they are further told to be imitators of their Jewish brethren because in reality we are “one body” (2:14 & I Cor. 12:13). And finally, that they, themselves, would receive and experience the very same persecution (2:14). Consequently, the exhortation in Hebrews 13:11-13 very definitely has an application to all Christians everywhere.

Jesus Christ had already experienced the hurt of people separating from any association with Him before His death on the cross. In John six we have the record of

many people, who had professed to be His disciples, who “went back and walked with Him no more” (John 6:66). These people left because they did not have the proper heart attitude to hear and understand the words of Jesus Christ. We might say they were too ingrained with ritualism and could not understand the spiritual truth Christ gave. “Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’” (John 6:67, 68). The people who left following Christ are like many professing Christians today who return to the ornate, ritualistic hypocrisy in Christendom. They have little appreciation of spiritual realities. Therefore, they return to the man-made, artificial, corporate religious structures.

The real question is, “What ‘camp’ are we in today?” And, does this charge of “going to Him (Christ) outside the camp” further apply to us in regard to our present situation? As I said at the beginning of this paper, I was in a “camp” all right—it is called “Christendom.” I was studying to be a preacher in this “camp.” I already knew there were some brands of “Christendom” (like the Methodists) that I needed to stay away from. It was somewhat of a shock to find out, by reading the Scriptures, that Christ was not a Methodist! I knew that the Methodists had a great early start and made some bold claims, but I also knew where they had drifted, and I was not going with them. It was like being on a boat in a strong current, headed for a waterfall. When I finally got the strength to get out, I was glad and relieved. When I was in Bible College I was already beginning to suspect that Christ was not a “Baptist,” either. I never saw so much politicking and religiosity and slippage into the same stream that the Methodist denomination was floating down. I had finally climbed into a boat called the “Independent Fundamental Churches of America,” I.F.C.A. for short. They finally dropped the long name and called its modern version simply “Bible Churches.” It was “the closest thing to the truth,” they said. Its preachers believed the Bible literally, and had missionaries all over the world. Of course, I realized early on they also were dabbling in artificial man-made “churchanity.” The same people who presented to me the challenge of Hebrews 13:11-13 also said to me, “Why be in something ‘closest to the truth’? *Why not just walk in the truth?*”

Walk In The Truth

That brings us momentarily to another facet of this subject. Are the truths in the Word of God on the subject of the church of Jesus Christ practical? Did the One Who said “I will build My church,” desperately need man’s engineering genius in order to do it? The answers to these two questions are simple to one who reads his Bible! Yes, the truths about the church of Jesus Christ must be practical or Christ would not have revealed them. In other words, just as we were initially saved by faith and not by works, so it is that we can exercise faith in God’s revelations about the organization of the church and then walk in them and not trust in man’s works. And, secondly—No, Christ does not need man’s organizational efforts in order to make an orderly system for the church of Jesus Christ. In fact that is one primary problem. All of man’s organizational efforts have only confused the status of Christianity and disorganized Christendom.

It is not the purpose of this study to go into the beautiful details of that “Holy Temple” that Christ is building (Eph. 2:19-22). Nor is it the purpose of this study to look any further into those divine building blueprints that were revealed to the apostle Paul—

see I Cor. 3:9-17. It is our beautiful privilege to read the Scriptures on the subject of the church of Jesus Christ and believe them—that the truths are workable and practical. The church of Jesus Christ is well organized. What I did come to realize is, indeed, we can “*just walk in the truth*” on that subject! That will keep us focused on true Bible Christianity and the practicality of “the church which is Christ’s body” (Eph.1:22,23). Believers who see the holiness and vitality of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ will hate the superficial, man-made form of Christendom. We can and should step “*outside the camp*” of apostate man-made professing Christendom. It has only brought a reproach upon the name of Christ throughout its history.

To walk outside of man-made, religiously incorporated Christendom does not mean that everyone in that system is a lost, unsaved person. On the contrary, though Christendom is overwhelmingly full of, as Pope Paul the VI said, “baptized pagans,” yet the vast majority of those who are true Christians are still in that system. In addition, the vast majority of the work and testimony for the Lord is yet from within the system. That does not justify and make the system right! The “work of the Lord” is being done in spite of the system of compromise and corruption. God’s Word reveals the whole truth about the church of Jesus Christ. The blueprints have all been laid out in the revelation of the Greek Scriptures (II Tim. 3:16, 17). Christians will be judged according to the standard of God’s Word when their final judgment measures what God calls “good works” which they have done (I Cor. 3:11-17). Those works which do not match up with the blueprints will be “burned up” and the believer will “suffer loss.”

There are other Scriptures that speak of this “separation” from what is unclean in Christendom and encourage us to walk in the reality of true Christianity. Here are a few.

“*Vessels of Dishonor*”

*“For every house is built by someone, but He Who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all **His house** as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward. But Christ as a Son over **His own house**, whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end”* (Hebrews 3:4-6).

*“...how you ought to conduct yourself in **the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (I Tim.1:15).

*“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ But in a **great house** there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work”* (II Tim. 2:19-21).

The church of our Lord Jesus Christ includes all true Christians everywhere, known by God alone. Sad to say in these last days of religious apostasy the vast majority of true believers are carnally intermingled in the whole realm of professing Christendom. This last passage would most certainly admonish conscientious believers to separate

themselves from those professed believers who are walking in dishonor. Of course, the Scriptures clearly spell out for us the conduct of professed brethren who walk in such a manner as demands our separation from them.

Like Israel of old, when they were walking in separation and holiness, God was in their midst. Then proper judgment against the unruly and contaminated individuals meant they were to be placed “outside the camp.” So it is in the proper church life. There are many exhortations to deal with unruly members who are not repentant. Those who cause divisions—Rom. 16:17-18. Those who teach contrary—I Tim. 6:3-5. A man that is factious or a heretic—Titus 3:10,11. A brother that walks disorderly—II Thess. 3:6, 14,15. Those who commit fornication, or covetousness, extortionists, idolaters, etc.—I Cor. 5:9-11. One who will not hear the church—Matt. 18:15-17.

On the other hand the whole philosophy of man-made Churchanity is one of compromise and carnal mixture under the guise of tender love and acceptance. Such “tender love” is nothing but feigned contempt for the holiness of God.

“Unequal Yokes With Unbelievers”

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore, ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.’ Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

What an amazing passage of Scripture! What does it mean to those in the vast camp of humanly “organized Christendom”? Very little, if anything—“After all, we are not mingled with pagan idolaters!” they think to themselves. (Actually, most of them are idolaters themselves and are blind to it!) What does it mean to those real Christians in sectarian Christianity? It means a little more to them, I am sure. However, they are taught that this only applies to mixed marriages or certain business arrangements. What does it mean to conscientious Christians who “fear God”???

When one whose eyes are opened comes to the shocking realization that there is more idolatry in the world today than there ever has been, only now it is in the form of Christendom’s inventions, and under the name of “Christianity,” he will fall upon his face before God and ask “Oh Lord, give me strength to clean it out of my life!”

Some brethren I know realize that according to this Scripture it would be wrong to create a man-made church organization that unsaved people could join themselves to, because then they would be “unequally yoked with the unbeliever.” And they are correct! So then they turn around and create an artificial religious organization with the State,

which has no “formal” membership, and think this is O.K. because they are not unequally yoked with any unbelievers—not realizing that the very State who created the organization in the first place, is a very plain “yoke” with the infidel unbeliever. In fact, the whole organization incorporated by the state is an artificial man-made religious organization and is, therefore, in the same category as an idol’s temple. And sad to say, in most cases it has some form of Biblical word or idea in the name.

Some brethren I know think it is Biblically wrong for them to create and incorporate with the state a “man-made religious organization” like a “church,” in the first place. And they are correct! But then these brethren (believers) turn right around, incorporate with the state (the unbeliever) a “man-made religious organization” like a “ministry,” which is a part of a church, and think that is O.K. Amazing!

Again, some Christians I know smugly think that the passage above only applies to having “membership” in a man-made religious organization. “Ah,” they say, “We don’t have any ‘formal’ membership, so that makes it O.K.” They don’t want to admit that tacit association is no different than formal association. In fact, it really makes no difference to most organizations whether you’re a formal member or not—just as long as you are happy and content to operate under it. Most religious corporations today are not formal membership corporations because that is too cumbersome an operation.

By way of comparison, we would normally judge a person who wrongfully divorces his wife and ‘formally’ marries another, to be committing adultery! Well, what about a person who leaves his wife and goes out and does not formally marry another, *but only lives with her??* Is that O.K.? Is the fact that he does not formally marry mean that he is not an adulterer?? How shallow and stupid would be the conclusion. The same applies to those who smugly take comfort in not having ‘formal’ membership in their religious corporations. Just remember, Christ is on the outside of ANY man-made religious organization. And please remember also, Christ was put “outside the camp” because He boldly corrected the religious leaders of His day, *who had compromised the Temple by how they handled money*. When “handling money (or saving a dollar)” compromises spiritual realities of the Temple Christ is building today (text above)—what are you going to do? What gain will “saving a dollar” be at the judgment seat of Christ?

The text above (II Cor.7:1) talks about “filthiness of the FLESH and SPIRIT.” Physical adultery is one thing. *Spiritual adultery* is clearly spoken of many times in the Scriptures. It is far worse than the physical. And speaking of spiritual adultery—

“Come Out Of Her, My People”

**“MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH**

And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement”

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, My people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues’” (Rev. 17:5,6; 18:4).

Remember, though this system will receive its destruction in the near future, and though this call is specifically to those people who belong to God to get out before that

judgment, yet this system is in operation RIGHT NOW! And furthermore, this command has been posted down through church history for longer than the system has existed.

*Are You willing to—
Walk with Christ “Outside the Camp”?*

Inside the Veil - Outside the Camp

Through Thy precious body broken—
 Inside the Veil.

Oh! What word to sinners spoken—
 Inside the Veil.

Precious as the blood that bought us;
Perfect as the love that sought us;
Holy as the Lamb that brought us—
 Inside the Veil.

When we see Thy love unshaken—
 Outside the Camp.

Scorn'd by man, by God forsaken—
 Outside the Camp.

Thy lov'd cross alone can charm us;
Shame need now no more alarm us;
Glad we follow, nought can harm us—
 Outside the Camp.

Lamb of God, through Thee we enter—
 Inside the Veil.

Cleansed by Thee, we boldly venture—
 Inside the Veil.

Not a stain; a new creation;
Ours is such a full creation;
Low we bow in adoration—
 Inside the Veil.

Unto Thee, the homeless stranger—
 Outside the Camp.

Forth we hasten, fear no danger—
 Outside the camp.

Thy reproach, far richer treasure
Than all Egypt's boasted pleasure;
Drawn by love that known no measure—
 Outside the Camp.

Soon Thy saints shall all be gathered—
 Inside the veil.
All at home—no more be scattered—
 Inside the veil.
Nought from Thee our hearts shall sever;
We shall see Thee, grieve Thee never;
“Praise the Lamb!” shall sound forever—
 Inside the veil.

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