

Hebrews 13 v 8

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[0 : 00] If you'd like to have your Bibles open in the book of Hebrews, we're going to be looking at several bits and pieces here, but particularly one verse, and that's in Hebrews 13 and verse 8.

Hebrews 13 and verse 8. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

I think it was Benjamin Franklin, one of the early American presidents, I think he was, he was quoted as saying, there are two certainties in life, death and taxes.

But there is another certainty in life and that is that things will change. There is always going to be change. Today is a change.

Today you have a new minister, a new pastor. It's a change for you as a church. It's a change for me and for my family to be once more in a church, in pastoral ministry.

[1 : 11] And again, can I say what a wonderful welcome we've received, I hope for you, as it is for us, a welcome change. But of course there are very much many unwelcome changes.

In fact, most changes in life are unwelcome. They're like party crashes into our lives. We don't like the change that they bring. I mean, who really wanted opal fruits to become starburst?

Were we consulted on the matter? I don't think so. And what about Marathon? That was a perfectly good name for a chocolate bar. Snickers. This sounds American, doesn't it? Like those shoes that they wear when they go running.

And SIF. JIF was much better than SIF. It's a silly name. Well, those changes, of course, are really minor inconveniences.

Even the change that some of us, or some of you probably, experienced. That decimalisation of the currency. What a great uproar that was. But after 40 years or so, we're getting used to the idea by now.

[2 : 14] But there are more important changes. More, well, earth-shattering changes that come into our lives, aren't they?

Changes that throw us off balance. Changes that throw out the course of our lives in such a way that they disturb everything. They disturb us, perhaps, physically.

They disturb us mentally, emotionally, and those around about us. I'm talking about those very personal changes that take place which unsettle us. Our plans and hopes are suddenly thrown off course and we're in another direction altogether.

Our health and our strength is taken from us. We're weak. Weaker than we ever were before. Our peace, even our faith, leaves... We're left reeling by these changes.

And the effects of them can go on, not just for a few moments or weeks or months, but years, perhaps even the very rest of our lives. You know those sort of changes I'm talking about.

[3 : 16] Maybe bereavement. It may be loss of work or situation or health. It may just be that things that we'd hoped for and planned for and dreamt of are just...

The rugs are whipped away from underneath us. Where can we find security in these changes, in these we might call the storms of life, the trials of life?

What can sustain us? What can stabilize us when these changes are going all around about us? And again, in our world as well. Who can we look to?

Who can help us from falling apart when we feel that's exactly what's happening? Well, that's the reason that we're here in Hebrews in chapter 13.

Jesus Christ is the same. Yesterday, today, and forever. There's only one person. There's only one place that we can go to to know stability in the changes of life.

[4 : 16] Because he is unchanging. Because he is certain. Because he is... The theological word is immutable. He cannot be mutated. He cannot be transformed or changed.

Because he is unaltering. So all those who put their trust in Jesus Christ. All those who have their faith and their security in him. Share in that strength.

Share in that solidity. Share in that security. Share in that immutability. Hebrews 13 verse 8, I believe, for me anyway, is the very key verse of the whole of the book of Hebrews.

It's the verse above all else, I think, that really speaks about what the writer is wanting his readers to grasp and comprehend. And therefore us too. So this letter is written to Jewish Christians.

And at the very start of the letter, the writer reminds them again and says the same thing about Jesus as he does here. About him being unchanging. He refers to the Old Testament in this way.

[5 : 19] And refers it to Jesus. Chapter 1 verses 8 and following. But about the Son, he, that's God, says, your throne, O God, will last forever and ever.

And righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Then on to in verse 10. In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens of the work of your hands.

They will remain, sorry, they will perish, but you remain. They will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe, like a garment. They will be changed, but you remain the same and your years will never change.

So there's at the beginning of the letter, speaking of Jesus from the Old Testament, unchanging. Here at the very last chapter of the letter, again, Jesus Christ is the same.

Yesterday, today, and forever. And as we look in Hebrews, we see that this whole book is about the fact that Christ is the certainty in life.

[6 : 22] These two chapters and those two passages that speak of the unchanging Jesus are bookends, as it were, within the whole book. And they explain and enlarge that truth all the way through.

See, the writer is showing the contrast between Jesus and everything else that these people trusted in and placed their hope in. Back in the early chapters, he talks about the servants of God in the Old Testament, the angels and Moses, and how Jesus was greater than them.

He talks about the priests of Aaron and the sacrifices they brought, and how Jesus was better than them. These things were all passing. He talks about the people themselves, the Israelites, and about the promised land that they were to inherit.

And he says, all of these things are to be shaken. They don't last. Everything that these people had relied on for their peace and standing before God was movable.

What was just temporary, was just here for a time, and then it was to change. And with the coming of Jesus, there was to come that which was absolutely certain, secure, everlasting, and dependable.

[7 : 35] Only Jesus was the one who was worthy of their undivided attention and faith. And so we have that wonderful verse in chapter 12, verse 2. In showing this contrast, what the writer is urging his readers to do, and what he's urging us to do, is to put aside, to abandon all those things that we have put our faith in before, and to put our faith only, solely, completely, wholeheartedly in Jesus.

Let me say to you at the very start, the only sermon you're ever going to hear from me, for however long God in his goodness keeps me here, and keeps you here, is the sermon of Jesus Christ.

That's all you're ever going to see. That's all you're ever going to hear. So you can either decide not to bother coming, the rest of my ministry, because you're going to hear Jesus.

That he is the one that we're to put our faith in, and to trust in. But the question then comes back to us. Well, we aren't like those Jewish readers. We don't put our hope and trust in sacrifices, and angels, and Moses, and the priesthood.

But what do you put your hope and faith in? Where do you run to, where do you look to, when these changes rattle and shake your cage? Perhaps it may be that you run to your family, to your parents even, or to your partner, and you go to them, and you look to them for the comfort and security.

[9 : 20] It may be that you've got very good friends that you can call upon and look to, to help you and sustain you. It may be, of course, as many people in the world today, they turn to money.

They hope that money will be the thing that will keep them through and get them through. Or even to science and technology and to medicine. Well, I hope that the gene therapy can be improved and it will deal with my problem, this difficulty.

I've got it with my health, or whatever it may be. It may even be, as I think is true of nearly every person, that your faith and hope is in yourself. A man called George Gordon Liddy was one of the Watergate conspirators, one of those American aides to the president who committed crimes in the early 70s, which ended with the president Nixon having to resign his position.

He was put in prison with many others, but when he came out of prison, this is what he said in an interview. I have found within myself all I need and all I ever shall need.

I'm a man of great faith, but my faith is in George Gordon Liddy. I've never failed me. But in reality, we may not say that, but a lot of people feel that and think that way.

[10 : 39] Well, who can you trust? You can only trust yourself. You've only got yourself in this world, and I can trust in myself. I've never let myself down. That's an attitude that is pervasive, and perhaps even pervasive amongst us as Christians as well, if we're honest.

But you see, the reality is that every foundation for security in our lives, and every foundation for salvation, is a false and failing and crumbling foundation, except Jesus Christ.

He's the one foundation, Paul says. That's why he taught that wonderful parable, didn't he, of the wise man and the foolish man. The person ultimately who built their life on Christ, and the person who didn't.

The person who thought they were better than God, stronger than God, they didn't need God, and the person who knew that they did. Who are you? Even as a Christian, dear friends, I need to challenge you about that.

What is my faith in for the changes? What is my faith in for the present and for the future? For what's to come? What's around the corner? Well, we have here this verse.

[11 : 49] Jesus Christ is a saying, yesterday, today, and forever. And it's a verse which is full of boundless truth. Wonderful truths. That we could expand and explore and talk about his nature as being God from everlasting.

Or we could talk about the characters of his grace and his love and mercy and so on. But there's three simple things that I want us to draw on. From the thought of Jesus Christ yesterday in his earthly life.

And Jesus Christ today in the way that he deals with us and ministers to us. And our hope and certainty for the future and the days to come. Because of those things. And the first of these is this.

That Jesus Christ is the same in his sympathy towards us. In his sympathy towards us. Go back in Hebrews to chapter 4. As I said, we're going to shoot a little bit here and there in the book of Hebrews.

But here we have a wonderful few verses concerning Jesus. Beginning at verse 14. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens.

[12 : 54] Jesus, the son of God. Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. But we have one who has been tempted in every way.

Just as we are. Yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence. So that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

The essence of this verse is this. That Jesus who lived and dwelt in humanity. In a human body. And therefore understands and felt and experienced.

All that we experience in humanity. Is just as sympathetic to our weaknesses now as he was then. Just as understanding. Just as compassionate. Just as thoughtful.

Yesterday he lived that human life in this world. He felt everything of our humanity. That's what we read as we did from chapter 2. Earlier on.

[13 : 52] Verses 14. Since the children have shared a flesh and blood. He too shared in their humanity. Then verse 17. This reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way.

Verse 18. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted. He is able to help those who are being tempted. Do you get the sense there? The reality there. We know that Jesus Christ is the son of God.

We rejoice in that. We hold that. We won't be moved from that. But we must hold to. And we must rejoice in and delight in that he is the son of man. Ultimately. Truly. Human in every way.

All that we go through. All that we face. The changes. The trials. The difficulties. He experienced himself. In the fullest measure. And those first hand experiences.

Haven't left him. Because he has now returned to heaven. Because he is now at the father's right hand. Because he is now seated with the father in glory. He hasn't stopped being sympathetic.

[14 : 51] He hasn't as it were forgotten you or I. And the struggles that we face. And the trials that we go through. His heart still is feeding towards them. Surely one of the most painful things that we can experience.

One of the most distressing things that we go through. When we go through a loss. And real change. And upset in our lives. Is we feel as if we're all alone. And nobody really understands what we feel like.

And we can have friends. It's lovely to have friends. But sometimes when they say. I know what you feel like. You feel like saying. No you don't. Don't we? Well I do anyway. Perhaps you don't.

But that's how I feel. You don't understand what it feels like. You may have been through something similar. You may have had experiences. And they would have been very difficult. But you don't know what I feel like. We feel that way don't we?

We feel some pain. We feel some distress. We feel on our own. Well here's the truth. Here's the joy. Here's the reality. Jesus Christ does truly sympathize.

[15 : 50] Does truly understand. Does truly. Has truly been through what you are going through. You're not alone.

You have. Someone in the person of Jesus Christ. Who has gone there before. And who still feels. Still feels.

What you feel. A number of occasions of course. In the life of our Lord Jesus. In the gospels. We have that. That insight into the heart of Jesus. The gospel writers tell us.

The secret things of Jesus' heart. And what do they tell us? They tell us often. Over and over again. Of his great compassion. And you know. The AV would speak of the fact.

That his bowels were moved. His innermost being. Was moved. And he felt this great longing.

[16 : 44] And love for people. Think of Martha and Mary. There they are. Facing the sorrow. And the bereavement of their brother. Lazarus dying. And what's Jesus doing. When he comes alongside.

He's weeping. He's weeping with them. And even the people around about. Say see how he loved him. This is the Jesus. When a man comes to him with leprosy.

From head to toe. He is so moved with compassion. The scriptures tell us. That on the spot he healed him. And when the crowds came to him. And they were lost. And they were struggling.

We're told that Jesus felt deep pity for them. As sheep without a shepherd. Again and again. Yesterday. In his earthly life. His heart was a heart which was moved.

And with compassion and sympathy. For those who were in need. Dear friends. Because he is in heaven. His heart has not changed. Towards you.

[17 : 41] His dear people. Whatever you are experiencing. Whatever earth shattering. Shaking things are taking place in your life. The Lord Jesus Christ.

Who ascended in heaven. Has sympathy. And understands. And engages. With you in that. There's no distress. No upheaval. There's no trial.

That can diminish his love for you. That's exactly what the devil wants to tell us. Every time these. Earth shattering changes take place. He says. Where's your God? Now. What's he done?

Where's he gone? And you're able to say to him. Dear friends. He's right here. With me. Where's his love? Is his love diminished?

No. It cannot possibly diminish. It has not changed. And secondly. Briefly again. We see. Jesus Christ is the same.

[18 : 33] Yesterday. Today. And forever. Because he is unchanging. In his. In his energy. Towards us. His sympathy. And in his energy. Towards us. Again. If you're in Hebrews. This time.

Chapter 7. And verse 25. Chapter 7. Verse 25. Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore. He is able to save.

Completely. To save to the uttermost. To save. To the very. Nth degree. Those who come to God. Through him. Why? Because he always lives.

To intercede for them. In other words. He's always at work. For them. To intercede. Is to act on the behalf. Of somebody. He's always actively. At work. On the behalf.

Of those. Who've come to God. Through him. His energy. Towards us. Never ceases. Jesus made a wonderful promise. Didn't he? To the apostles. Back in Matthew.

[19 : 29] Chapter 16. Concerning the church. Of which we are a part. I will. Build my church. No. He didn't say. I have built my church. He says.

I will build. There's a sense of. Continuous. Activity. I'm going to build. My church. Until it is complete. I'm going to keep on working. Until it's finished. Until it's perfect.

And for the Christian himself. Paul is encouraged. And assures the Christians. In Philippi. That he has a confidence. He has an absolute certainty. What's his certainty? That he.

Who began a good work. In you. Will carry it on. To completion. Until the day of Christ Jesus. Do you see. When Jesus returned to heaven. It's not. We have of course.

The truth. And we're not looking at it now. He went to heaven. And we're told. He sat down. At the father's right hand. But it doesn't mean. He stopped working. It doesn't mean. That Jesus is in heaven. Taking it easy. If I can put it that way.

[20 : 22] Or just sort of. Hanging around. Until it's time to come back. He is actively. At work. In his church. And in the lives of his people. He is powerfully engaged. Whenever we are involved.

In evangelism. Dear friends. We are not going. In our own strength. Whenever we are witnessing. And speaking to people of Christ. It is not on our own. It is always with the power. And the energy of Christ himself.

This church dear friends. Is part of that promise. I will build my church. I don't know what God's going to do. In the next months and years. But I know that he will be working.

And he will be working. Tirelessly. And endlessly. For the good of his people. For us. And in your life and mine dear friends. Personally and individually. You may feel that you have hit a hiatus.

In one sense. A flat plane in your life. Where you think. Well. I seem to have stagnated. Well let me assure you of this. That Christ hasn't stagnated. But he is still at work.

[21 : 21] It may be perhaps. That you have got yourself. A little bit too tied up with things. Maybe that perhaps. You haven't been. Really seeking his face. And asking him. Lord.

What would you have me to do? Where will I first be going? What's going on? Let me encourage you. He wants to do a work in you. He wants to change you. He wants to take you on. From where you are.

And he will do that. And perhaps dear friends. You are going through those times. Where you are worried about your own.

Salvation. Am I really a Christian? I know I. My faith in Christ. Some years ago. And. I don't know. Am I still his? I'm afraid.

Perhaps. I'm afraid of falling. I'm afraid of losing. That faith. I'm afraid. That perhaps when. When I face. Old age. Or when I face death. Perhaps. It will all fall away.

[22 : 15] Let me assure you. It will not. Because you are not kept. In your salvation. By your own strength. And power. But you are kept. By Jesus Christ. He is able to save.

To the nth degree. Because he ever lives. To make intercession for you. He's ever at work for you. Ever acting on your behalf. And again. We can see that.

Yesterday. Can't we? In the life of Jesus. In his earthly ministry. In his earthly life. Jesus was always at work. He said this. Concerning himself. In John. Chapter 5. My father.

My father is always at his work. To this very day. And I too. Am working. And we can see that. Can't we? The reason that the. Religious leaders. Got upset with Jesus.

Was because. He didn't stop. Even on the Sabbath. They kept healing people. And teaching people. And helping people. They got really upset with that. But this is his response. I can't stop working.

[23 : 12] Not that Jesus is a workaholic. But because that's his very nature. And his ministry. And his grace is such. That he has to keep on working. For the people whom he loves. He's motivated.

And driven by that love. So hard did the Lord Jesus work. In his earthly life. That it often exhausted him. Physically. Didn't it? When he's in the boat. And they're crossing the stormy sea.

And all the. All the fishermen are. Panicking. And the sea. Tossing and turning. What's Jesus doing? He's so exhausted. He's asleep. In the back of the boat. He's asleep. They're to wake him up. And now the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is glorified. Now he's in heaven. Now dear friends. He has no longer. Any of the physical weaknesses. That he had on earth. Therefore. If you can put it this way. He's working even harder.

And more constantly. For your good. And for mine. And he's working. In the midst. Of every circumstance. And situation. We find ourselves.

[24 : 11] It's not that. As we might think. That. And as the world may joke. At times. When things are difficult. And things. Things. Things. Things. Things. Are wrong. And things.

Are upsetting. Well where's God. He sort of left the building. He's not there anymore. He's taking time off. He's on holiday. Well that's. That's not the case. That can never be the case. And when you are going through times of trial.

And those things. Are shaking your very foundations of your life. To the very pits. He is not taking time off. He is still at work for you. And he is working in those things.

That's why we have that wonderful promise from Romans 8. Don't we? And we know that in all things. God works. For the good of those who love him.

The good of those who love him. He's always at work for you dear friends. He is always at work for your best. For your blessing. And that is even in those times where we cannot see him working.

[25 : 09] And we cannot see what he's doing. It's a bit like I suppose. If you've ever been to see a sculpture. Or a painter.

And they're doing their work. And they think. What the hell? What's it going to be? Do you remember Rolf Harris? He said. Can you see what it is yet? Well often when we look at ourselves. When we look at the church. We can't see what it is yet.

We can't see what God is going to finally produce. But he's at work. And he'll continue to be at work. One last thing then dear friends. And this is ultimately the conclusion.

This is ultimately the reality. If we believe. And know that he is sympathetic towards us. That his love is towards us. And we know that his energy is towards us. Then we can understand that Jesus Christ is the same today.

As yesterday, today and forever. Because of his loyalty towards us. His loyalty towards us. Here we have it. It's in that passage in Hebrews 13. Just two verses earlier.

[26 : 06] Hebrews 13 and verse 5. For God has said. Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you. Never will I leave you.

Never will I forsake you. If God is God. If this Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, forever. Then dear friends. He is utterly trustworthy. He's utterly reliable. He's utterly dependable.

We sang I think in the hymn just previously. When all around my soul gives way. He still is my hope and stay. This is because the Lord Jesus has made an unbreakable covenant with you, dear friend.

A covenant is an agreement. The simplest thing that we have in comparison with that is a wedding. A marriage between a man and a woman. Two people covenant together. They make agreement together to love one another.

And support one another. The Bible is full of the language of covenant. And the Lord Jesus Christ has entered into, even before the world was made, an agreement, a covenant with you.

[27 : 11] On your behalf. To be your saviour. To be your Lord. And to keep you. And to look after you. And to save you. Hebrews chapter 9 speaks just of one part of that covenant.

And verse 15. For this reason Christ is the mediator. The one to go between. The one who acts of a new covenant. That those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

Mystery and marvel and wonder though it is. Before the world was made. The Lord Jesus Christ with the Father and the Son. Made a covenant together. An agreement together to save and rescue you, dear Christian.

And every other single Christian who will come and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Before you were born. Before you drew breath. Before your parents even drew breath. And thought about you. Before you were twinkling your father's eye.

God in Christ made a covenant and an agreement. To have you for himself. To have you for himself. And to keep you. And to look after you. And to bring you into all the blessings and the treasures of heaven.

[28 : 18] That's why he's loyal. There's nothing in hell or heaven or earth. Is ever going to change Jesus' loyalty towards you. There's nothing that you can do or I can do.

That is going to make him say. That's it. I've had enough. Blow you. I'm not going to bother with you anymore. There's nothing that can remove you from his hand. There's nothing that can make him give up on you.

You may have given up on yourself. You may have given up even on certain of your loved ones. That they'll never be saved. But if Christ has made a covenant to save them. Then they shall certainly be saved. And even if you've given up on yourself.

He will never ever give up on you. That's why we can come to him in prayer. That's why that Hebrews 4 passage which speaks about him being sympathetic with us. And understanding our weaknesses.

That's why the conclusion of the chapter is this. Let us then. Therefore let's approach the throne of grace. That's coming to God in the heavens in prayer. With confidence. So that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

[29 : 19] How can we do that? How can we be certain that he's going to hear us? That he's going to receive us? That he's going to answer us? Because of who he is? Because he's unchangeable. Because just as he was in his earthly ministry.

So he is in his heavenly ministry. And so he will be for all of our life long. And all through eternity. Jesus never turned anyone away who came to him.

Did he? It doesn't matter who they were. The lepros. The tax collectors. The prostitutes. The thieves. Even the man on the cross. Who is a murderer and revolutionary. Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Today you'll be with me. Jesus said himself in John chapter 6 verse 37. All that the father gives me will come to me.

And whoever comes to me I'll never drive away. You may think you're not good enough. Will you not? To come to Christ. You may think that he'll never accept you and receive you.

[30 : 17] You're wrong. He will. You may think you've let him down too many times. Failed him too many times. Well dear friends. You can never let him down and fail him too many times. He'll always receive you.

He received the undesirables of society. Those on the fringe. He received them. And so he receives those and us now. And will always receive us now and forever too.

As he ministered on earth so he ministers in heaven. Now we've known what it's like to have fair weather friends. Haven't we? We've known and experienced the sadness of people that we've trusted in and relied upon.

And we thought that they'd always be there for us. And they were fail and they were faulty people. And they let us down. Just as an aside. That's exactly how I'm going to be with you. I'm going to let you down dear friends.

I'm not going to do it intentionally. I'm not going to do it on purpose. But I'm a failing, faulty, frail, sinful man. And I'm going to let you down. And you're going to let me down. But Jesus is never going to let us down.

[31 : 23] Neither me nor you. We've experienced people like that. Jesus is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. He'll never fail you. He'll never forsake you. He said to his disciples as he was about to return into heaven.

Look, I'm with you definitely. Right until the end. To the end of the age. There's never going to be a time when I'm not there for you. His loyalty towards us is unchanging.

I just want to close with a little bit of culture. Shakespeare. I know nothing of Shakespeare. But Shakespeare wrote some amazing sonnets. Sonnet 116 exalts and expresses true love.

And there is no love that compares with the love of Christ for us. But this is what he says of love. Think of this and think of the love of Christ for you, dear friends. And it may warm your hearts to trust him and commit yourself to him afresh.

Love is not love which alters when its alteration finds. Or bends with the remover to remove. Oh no, it is an ever-fixed mark.

[32 : 31] That looks on tempests and is never shaken. It is the start of every wandering bark. Boat, in other words. Let's pray together.

Amen. We confess our Father and our God that we are changeable people.

One minute we're up, full of faith. Yes, Lord, we'll do this for you. Yes, Lord, we're on fire for you. And then next minute we're nowhere to be found. We don't pray.

We don't read. We're absent from fellowship. And, Lord, we confess that we are changeable and frail. And we're not dependable like you are.

You are so faithful. So reliable. And so, Lord, we come to you again. And we ask, first of all, that, Lord, you would help us to trust you more. Help us, Lord, to commit ourselves into your care.

[33 : 32] We pray about those matters that are especially in our hearts, those things that are really, well, doing our heads in, Lord, because they're throwing us off kilter.

And we ask for, again, Lord, that you would stabilize our hearts and minds on Christ, that we may rest in his great love and power and faithfulness.

And, again, we ask, O Lord, that as we do that, that you would so work in us and change us, that we might be more dependable, faithful, loyal, trustworthy. Lord, not only in our relationship with you, but to others around about us.

Thank you you've placed us in a church, because you know we need one another. We pray, O Lord, that we may indeed so rely upon you that our lives are able to support and care for one another too.

We thank you again, Lord Jesus, that you are who you are. And we ask that, O Lord, we might know you more and love you more. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[35 : 03] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

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[37 : 00]

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Thank you.

Thank you.