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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Hebrews 13.

(2013)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man. As to such I neither claim special knowledge or perfect understanding.

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Hebrews 13.

INTRODUCTION: this letter is written to Hebrews who had been enlightened, endured sufferings, been publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, stood alongside others who were persecuted, had compassion on those in prison and joyfully accepted others plundering their property (probably the Romans) knowing they had an eternal possession (Heb. 10:31-36).

It appears they had a faith in Christ, but were still bound by the Levitical priesthood and the Jewish religious system and because of this the author brilliantly uses Moses Tabernacle, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place and Old Testament Scriptures to prove Jesus is the only High Priest anyone needs and that it is by faith in Christ and God's grace not religious works that God's people are counted righteous. The blessing of this letter is not limited to the Hebrews since everyone who is seeking God or who is a brother or sister of Christ will be overwhelming awed as they read this well-crafted and awe-inspiring letter as it beautifully progresses through the chapters proving Jesus is the Christ.

Topics.

- Some have entertained angels.
- Let the marriage bed be undefiled.
- Keep your life free from love of money and be content with what you have.
- Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever.
- Jesus suffered outside the gate to sanctify people through his own blood.
- We have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.
- God raised from the dead the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep.
- The everlasting covenant.

In the Previous Chapter.

The author spoke about believers being surrounded by a great a cloud of witnesses, laying aside every sin which clings so closely and of Jesus being the founder and perfecter of our faith. He talked of Esau who found no chance to repent; even though he sought it with tears and told those in Christ they have come to Mount Zion the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. He spoke of the blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel, of God shaking not only the earth but also the heavens and of acceptable worship.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

Brotherly Love.

Hebrews 13:1 ----- ¹Let brotherly love continue.

Following are some interesting facts concerning the word brothers: -

- The word brother does not always refer to Christian brothers sometimes it simply refers to people of the same nation. The Jewish nation viewed a Jewish man or woman as a brother regardless of their belief or whether they were female or male.

- The expression brothers is an ancient expression that shows a kindred spirit, either as belonging to the same family, the same nation or the same faith, but does not always mean that two people are united in friendship.
- An example of this is seen in Paul writings; in his letter to the Galatians he refers to false teachers as brothers not because he is one with them in spirit or friendship (obviously), but because they belong to his nation Israel. Which means a brother in Bible language can be an enemy to Christ or a friend depending on the context.
- Another interesting fact regarding the use of the word brothers is that during the ancient Roman era even women (especially those who had authority) were still referred to as brothers by the Roman Empire.
- In Christ's time the word, brothers was not limited in its use to men only, but included both men and women since it was an expression that signified a person belonged to the same family, the same faith, the same nation or the same group of people etc.
- The word, brothers was not used to differentiate between male and females during the Roman and New Testament era unless the context specifically states it.

Let Brotherly Love Continue: the spirit of Christianity is a spirit of love, especially brotherly love, since brotherly love is a love without sensuality and a love that protects and watches out for their-own family members. When applied to those in the family of Christ it refers to that special and spiritual affection that exists amongst faithful brothers and sisters of the Lord).

The words, "Let brotherly love continue" implies the following two things: -

1. The Hebrews had this love one for another.
2. The author was concerned it may not continue. It is most likely the author feared that this brotherly love amongst the Hebrews was in danger of being lost, because of the contentions between those who still placed value on the ceremonial laws of Moses and the Levitical priesthood and those who were embracing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew's that the author of this letter is writing to were not like the chief priests, the Pharisees and scribes of Jesus era. These Hebrews were not against Christ, they did accept the Lord at some level, but still placed value on the Levitical priesthood and the Jewish ceremonial rites, religious customs and traditions that they had been indoctrinated in for over four-thousand years.

The author understands this and therefore shows great grace and patience toward them throughout this letter, he no-doubt fully understood that it is not easy for people who have held fast to a faith for such a long period of time to embrace something totally new, especially when it means they have to forsake all they had held dear for so long.

Since the author of this letter has a brilliant knowledge of both the Old and New Testament he would certainly understand the dangers of contentions over religion and have seen throughout his ministry that they often result in a decay of Christian affection. Thus his words of encouragement, "Let brotherly love continue" means continue to support each other, be patient, graceful and tolerant as they struggle through their differences seeking together to find the truth.

Brothers (and sisters) of a natural family often fight with each other, but it is soon forgotten and the relationship is restored. This is what brotherly love is about, it means always living as spiritual brothers and sisters and being fully aware that there will be struggles as each family member grows in the fruits of the Spirit and in the knowledge of Christ. Providing we remain humble toward one another and not allow the devil (i.e., self, ego and pride) gain the victory, we will be able to sit down and reason together in the Spirit that is from above and not in the spirit that is earthly and from below.

The more we grow in affection toward Christ our Saviour our perfect eternal brother and understand God's grace the more we will grow in love toward his brothers and sisters and the more we will be able to show the same love and grace that Jesus did to all who came to him.

Show Hospitality to Strangers.

Hebrews 13:2 ----- ²Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Hospitality: means to welcome people with warmth, friendliness, kindness, generosity and pleasantness.

The author has just told those in the Kingdom of God to love each other as brothers and sisters belonging to the same family. Now no-doubt to prevent our community from isolating itself from the world and only caring for those in our spiritual family he tells us to show hospitality not just to each other, but to strangers. The word strangers means to those we don't know, they could be of any faith, religion or secular people of the world, clearly no community of Christian believers are called to form a commune and live a life solely amongst themselves and for themselves.

Some have entertained angels: the word angels (aggelos) means to bring tidings (notifications, reports, messages) the word angels can refer to a human messenger, (i.e., a pastor or minister or simply a brother and sister who brings a message of the Lord, especially one of Good News) or it can refer to God's heavenly angels. The context of the verse determines if the word angel refers to a human messenger or God's supernatural angels.

For further information see the title: -

- Angels can be Human Messengers.
- In, Angels (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The words, "Some have entertained angels unawares" (v2) can apply to two groups: -

1. God's heavenly angels as they appeared to Abraham in (Gen 18), and Lot (Gen 19:1-11) though today it is unlikely that this will ever be our case since we do not need angels today to proclaim God's will and revelation to us since we have it in print in the cannon of the Bible, nevertheless since God is sovereign we cannot annihilate His dominion to do as he wills so it is possible that God might send a spiritual angel in some form to help a person suffering a great crisis or great need, but this certainly is not the norm for Christian life today neither should we live with the expectation of it since most in the Bible who had angels visit them were taken by surprise and were certainly not expecting them to appear.
2. To human strangers who we show hospitality and kindness to and they turn out to be an enormous blessing to our lives, either financially, emotionally or spiritually or in any other way that lifts a great burden from us. Even those in the world use the expression "They were like an angel from heaven to me" referring to a human person who has greatly helped them through a difficult time.

Many men and women throughout history have been involved in accidents, natural disasters and such like things that have threatened their life and a total stranger has come to their rescue. It is right and proper for the person whose life was saved from certain horror or death to say to their friends that, "The stranger was an angel of God sent to their rescue."

Jesus himself said of brothers and sisters who had helped strangers: -

- I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me (Matt. 25:35-36).

Here is true Christianity in action, the brothers and sisters replied saying: -

- Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?

Jesus answered them: -

- Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me (Matt. 25:37-40).

This is glorious Christianity these brothers and sisters did not even realise or consider that they were doing anything special or out of the ordinary for the Lord; in fact they were totally unaware that they were being faithful servants of the Lord. They only found this out when Jesus told them. They were being faithful servants of Christ even though they were unaware of it, this is why Christ was so thrilled with them, they clearly were not doing what they were doing for their own reward or eternal gain, but simply because they had compassion in their hearts for the less fortunate.

It is certain, that Christ will bestow much reward on many who like these faithful servants do not even realise that the good that they do is storing up treasure for them in heaven.

Remember those in Prison.

Hebrews 13:3 ----- ³Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

There was persecution of those who proclaimed Christ during this age, visiting those in prison; is primarily referring to visiting those who are in prison for their faith, we know this because the verse says since you are also in the body implying that those in prison are in the body of Christ. To visit brothers and sisters in Christ in prison was of course a dangerous thing to do since those in authority who were against Christianity would clearly see that you were a follower of the faith.

NOTE: this does not mean that visiting criminals in prison is a wrong thing, in fact it could be one of the most rewarding ministries for the following reasons: -

- It you find someone who is willing to listen you know where they will be and that they have very little else to look forward to in life.
- Many in prison are in prison simply because they have never known what it is to be loved, to see such a person discover the love and grace of God would give overwhelming joy not only to them, but also to the one ministering to them.
- Many are there not because they have evil hearts, but because they did a foolish thing for reasons that they regret.
- Those ministering to prisoners maybe the only hope the prisoner has remaining of finding Christ and securing their eternal future.

There is no-doubt whoever commits themselves to this type of ministry will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ, since unlike many television evangelist they will never become rich, well-known or famous, nor will they ever gain any worldly reward or wages, but there is no-doubt they will grow to a spiritual depth in the love and grace of God that not many of us fully attain to.

Let the Marriage Bed be Undefined.

Hebrews 13:4 ----- ⁴Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

This is a fabulous verse since to achieve the first statement the second statement has to be fulfilled, if the second statement is abused there is no way people are going to honour a person's marriage.

The words, "Let the marriage bed be undefiled" means don't have affairs, don't commit adultery, don't have sex with someone other than your married partner, but remain faithful to your spouse we know this is what the author is saying, because he goes on to say, "God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous" the sexually immoral in this context refers to a married person who has sexual relationship with someone other than their husband or their wife and by betraying and deceiving their partner in this manner they are being adulterous.

Keep your Life Free from Love of Money.

Hebrews 13:5 -----⁵Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Paul in the book of Timothy wrote: -

- Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction, because *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils*. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

NOTICE: Paul does not say that "Money is the root of all evil," or even that it is an evil at all. It is the love of it which is the source of the temptations that certain people who desire to be rich fall into. It should also be noticed that Paul says: -

- The love of money is the root of all kinds of evils (v10).

Obviously money cannot be the root of all evils since rape, child abuse, arson and such like things are not motivated by money and it certainly was not the root cause of Adam's and Eve's transgression. The author here warns brothers and sister to: -

- Keep their life free from love of money (v5).

Because craving after worldly wealth and the promises riches hold out seduces a believer to turn away from their faith to pursue the temporal pleasure and comfort of this present world. It is almost certain that the author had observed throughout his ministry believers who had forsaken their faith to pursue worldly riches and seen that not only had they been overtaken with stress, worry, anxiety and the fear of losing it once they achieved it, but that it also opened doors to all sorts of sinful pleasures that they became seduced by and thereby traded their faith for the riches of this world.

In contrast to those who seek after worldly wealth are those who have learned: -

- To be content with what they have (v5).

They endure in their faith through the hardships and troubles of life and remain faithfully devoted to the Lord. These believers will be rewarded with eternal joy and happiness to be lived out in everlasting glory with their beloved Redeemer. Whereas all that is awaiting those who turn aside from their faith, is a coffin and a grave since these are ultimately all that the richest man in the world can have from all his wealth.

NOTE: this does not refer to a Christian brother or sister who has the gift of establishing and running a successful business through which they become rich, there is nothing sinful in succeeding in honest work. Added to this a percentage of the profits their successful businesses make can be used for works of charity and expanding the Kingdom of God. Being rich and wealthy only become sinful when a brother or sister running the company is driven by the love of money and greed and the craving for far more than they need and therefore not only do they forsake their faith, but they oppress their workers to make greater profits to fulfil their own selfish ambition and lust for worldly riches.

Be Content with What You Have: contentment in this context carries the idea of being grateful, being at peace and being happy, the opposite of contentment is covetousness (i.e., having an over-eager desire for the wealth of this world and envying those who have more than ourselves).

Covetousness is a secret lust that lurks in the heart and if not rooted out will like a cancerous virus sinfully infect our thoughts, our conversation and our behaviour. Adam was in paradise, yet not contented; but the apostle Paul, though abased and empty, had learned in every state to be content. He wrote: -

- For the sake of Christ, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities (2 Cor. 12:10) because I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content” (Philip. 4:11) and in the book of Philippians he said, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me (Philip 4:13).

In this context this means Paul can handle and manage all situations with Christ who strengthens him (i.e., whether in prison or a rich man’s home Paul has learned to be content in Christ). Learning to be content as Paul was no-matter what our state or circumstances should be the heartfelt prayer of all who belong to the family of Christ. To be content with what God gives us from day to day even though it may fall short of what we might wish or of our expectations we must learn to bring our minds to accepting our present condition since this is the only path to contentment and happiness. We must let go of the things of the past since they cannot be recalled and not stress over future things since they are in the hand of God.

The words: -

- I will never leave you nor forsake you (v5).

Are the foundation and comfort of our contentment, these words were originally spoken to Joshua (Joshua 1:5), but by extension apply to every faithful brother and sister of Christ since Old-Testament promises may be applied to New-Testament believers. The words, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” contain the substance of all the promises since these glorious words of comfort not only apply to our life here and now, but in death and in eternity.

They mean despite the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that dwell in our corrupted fallen body the gracious, spiritual and eternal presence of God will never leave us or forsake us as long as we continue trusting by faith in Christ and in God’s grace and not our own self-effort and religious works, ceremonial rites, Holy days and religious customs and traditions to be counted righteous and worthy before God of eternal life.

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ who trusts by faith in Christ and in God’s grace for righteousness that leads to eternal life can boldly say: -

- The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do unto me (v6).

The reason the writer states they that they will not fear what men might do to them is because no-one can rob us of our eternal inheritance, they may kill our mortal body, but God will raise it to eternal life. In this sense those in Christ are indestructible; invincible they cannot be killed because their faith in Christ not only guarantees that God will raise their body to eternal life, but also guarantees He will cloth it with immortality.

Added to this glory is God’s promise that whatever men do to us in this world, God will turn it to our eternal good. This is because when a brother or sister faithfully endures in their faith despite persecution, suffering, sorrow and the hardships and troubles of life, they are storing up treasures in heaven which Christ will reward them with when he returns in glory.

The Lord is My Helper.

Hebrews 13:6 ----- ⁶So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

The words, “The Lord is my helper” does not mean that a faithful brother and sister in Christ will never suffer illness or troubles, but it does mean that the Lord by his Spirit will help them through the hardships of life and the words, “What can man do to me?” does not mean that those who trust in Christ will never be persecuted or even put to death for their faith. Clearly many faithful Christians throughout all ages have suffered persecution and others have suffered death rather than deny their

faith which means the words, "What can man do to me?" do not apply to our mortal life, but to eternal life. In regards to eternal life every brother and sister in Christ is indestructible, invincible and eternal, no mortal man can kill them eternally.

Consider for a moment: if our world's top scientist and medical practitioners could invent a pill that would give people eternal life, the billionaires of this world would write out a cheque no matter what the cost to buy them for all their family and friends, and almost all the world would sell everything they had to purchase one. This is the high value the apostles, Paul and the faithful placed on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. To them there was nothing in this world more valuable for any man or woman to possess than the gift of eternal life.

It is from this mindset that the author here says: -

- I will not fear; what can man do to me?

His value of eternal life was such that everything in this world faded in comparison. How sad it is that in some modern churches today this high value of eternal life has been lost and replaced by a Gospel that focuses on a blessed, prosperous and successful life now in this mortal and corrupt world and messages that appeal to self, ego and pride. Especially when one considers what it cost God the Father and the high price his Son paid to purchase this gift of eternal life for all who would humbly accept by faith the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When someone that a brother or sister in Christ has deeply loved dies and they are standing at the foot of their loved one's grave watching their coffin being lowered into the darkness of the earth everything in this world suddenly becomes trivial except the dead person's eternal state. No-matter how noble, how important or how rich they were none of it counts for anything in the grave.

The only thing of value to a person facing death is faith and being raised to eternal life and everlasting glory. When a doctor tells a brother or sister in Christ that they have a terminal illness the value of eternal life, by far supersedes anything this world can offer. This is why the author had no fear over what mortal men might do to him, because his focus was on eternal life not the things of this world.

Matthew wrote," Do not fear those who kill the mortal body but cannot kill the spirit, rather fear God who can destroy both the spirit and the body to eternal death" (Matt. 10:28).

Remember Your Leaders who Spoke to You the Word of God.

Hebrews 13:7 -----⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

The author is writing this letter to Hebrews who accepted Christ, but still place value on Moses laws of purification and the Levitical Priesthood, so the words remember your leaders refer to the men and women of faith that the author spoke of in the previous chapter (i.e., Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph Moses, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets just to mention a few). He is encouraging them to consider their faith and imitate it, live and endure in faith as they did. Some received great blessing others suffered persecution but all remained faithful looking to the heavenly city God is building without hands.

By extension the same principle applies to us today (i.e., consider the apostles, Paul and all the faithful who went before us and imitate their lifestyle their faith and their endurance). Take notice of how they journeyed through this world fully aware that their citizenship was not of this world, but of the heavenly city the New Jerusalem who's royal King is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday and Today and Forever.

Hebrews 13:8-9 -----⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.

The words, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever means the following will never change: -

- Christ priesthood and the promise of salvation in Christ to eternal life.
- The Gospel of Christ and the doctrine of Christ.
- The resurrection and Christ's return to gather the faithful to everlasting glory.
- All the words Jesus spoke.
- Christ's love and grace toward the lost and especially toward those in his family.
- Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.
- No-one can come to the Father except through Christ.

This is what the words, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" mean, (i.e., Jesus Priesthood, Kingship, his love, compassion grace and mercy, his forgiveness, everything he spoke and the cleansing power of his blood to save to eternal life will never change).

Strange teachings: refer to doctrines contrary to the grace of God which establishes the heart securely in Christ, whereas these strange doctrines (referring to foods) (v9) keep the heart always fluctuating and unsettled since they teach that spiritual life and righteousness is attained through perishing and little trivial external things such as meats and drinks.

Those who were most taken with these strange teachings and taught them, got no spiritual good from them for their own spirit nor did they make them more righteous or more humble or more heavenly. The strange teachings the author has in focus are any teachings that lead away from grace and bring people under the bondage not just to the law, but to foolish and trivial things such as eating or not eating certain foods etc.).

NOTICE: grace is good for the heart (v9) one of the best ways to remain healthy and young (of course there are many others) is to live in God's grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is because abiding in grace will keep the mind free from guilt, condemnation and a sense of unworthiness, living in the grace of God keeps those who belong to the family of Christ in the love of God and the mind in peace.

Jesus Suffered outside the Gate to Sanctify People through his own Blood.

Hebrews 13:10-13 --- ¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the most holy place by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹²So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.

The tent references back to the tabernacle of Moses. In reality at this time the Hebrews would have been worshipping at Solomon's temple that Herod had restored from its ruin, but the author here uses the word tent for three reasons: -

1. It was the first worship centre for the Hebrews and the place that God's Shekinah glory rested upon amongst the nation of Israel,
2. Every Hebrew throughout history considered Moses tabernacle to be the true temple of God.
3. Every other Jewish temple that was built after Moses tabernacle was designed and built to the pattern God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai.

The altar: we have is the cross of Christ (the symbol of grace and the New Covenant) those who serve in the tent (a symbol of those who deny, Christ, deny grace and trust in religious works) have no right to eat of our altar because they

trust in their own self-effort and religious works to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life rather than trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace. The following words of Paul are not only breath-takingly awe-inspiring and overwhelming comforting to all who fully depend by faith on Christ and on God's grace for salvation to eternal life but also show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ. Paul in his letters wrote: -

- I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose.

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value. Equally as horrific as this Paul states: -

- When we forsake grace we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by grace that God made us alive in Christ.

Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that: -

- It is only by grace that any brother or sister has been saved.

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life.

Thus; in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, Grace and Faith, are all on
an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to
eternal life without any one of them.

(Gal. 2:21) (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5) (Eph. 2:8).

Outside the camp: only the Jewish high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place and only the Jewish Levitical priests were allowed to enter the Holy Place of the tabernacle it was forbidden for anyone else to enter the tabernacle this is why God in His eternal plan purposed that Christ would be sacrificed outside the Jewish temple and outside the gates of the city of Jerusalem.

The blood of sacrificial bulls and goats was taken by the Jewish high priest once a year into the Most Holy Place of Moses tabernacle on behalf of the sins of the nation of Israel, while the body of the sacrificed animals were taken outside the camp of Israel and burnt. Likewise Jesus was crucified outside the gates of the earthly city of Jerusalem the place of God's temple and the Levitical priesthood so that no-one seeking God need go to a religious temple made with human hands or a human priest to be justified, redeemed and saved to eternal life.

Now even those in the earthly holy city of Jerusalem have to by faith go outside its gates and its religious systems to the altar of the cross on the hill of Calvary and there humble themselves before the man nailed to it and through faith in him and God's grace they will find God.

Christ Cleanses People through His Own Blood.

The words, "Jesus sanctifies people through his own blood" (v12) is in contrast to the blood of bulls and goats. The author here is telling his Hebrew listeners to forsake Judaism, the Levitical sacrificial system and leave the religious system of their temple and go outside its walls and suffer the reproach, mockery, ridicule and persecution they may receive from their fellow Hebrews as Christ did.

We have No Lasting City, but we Seek the City that is to Come.

Hebrews 13:14-15 ---- ¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. ¹⁵Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

The words, "We have no lasting city," refer to the city of Jerusalem and by extension the world because both are only temporary and offer no lasting life, in contrast "The city that is to come" refers to the Holy City, New Jerusalem that a godly man named John exiled on the island of Patmos saw in a vision coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. In this vision John heard a loud voice from the throne saying: -

- Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away (Rev. 21:2-4).

A sacrifice of praise to God: the word sacrifice immediately brings to the mind of all Hebrews the sacrifice of an innocent animal being taken and offered on the altar for the sins of the guilty. There was no question to the Hebrew mind that the word sacrifice referred to something that caused a loss in some-way it could be a sacrifice of a life, of time, of money, of rejection, of being mocked or of being persecuted. In the context of these verses it is a sacrifice of praise a sacrifice of our lips, this means that it is something we say from our mouth that cause us a loss in some-way, which clearly does not refer to praising God with heavenly music in the safety of a church building with our brothers and sisters since this kind of worship is a joy not a sacrifice and rather than cost us something lifts our hearts and minds into heavenly places.

The "Sacrifice of praise to God" the author has in mind in these verses is witnessing, it is confessing the name of Christ and proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel to those outside the Kingdom of God. Testifying of our faith in Christ is called a sacrifice of praise because to speak of the goodness of the Lord is praising Christ, but at the same time can bring rejection, mockery or persecution upon us as it did the apostles, Paul and many other faithful brothers and sisters throughout history.

Do not Neglect to Do-Good.

Hebrews 13:16 ----- ¹⁶Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Doing-good and sharing what we have can also be seen as a sacrifice of praise, since to do-good to others and share what we have is not only pleasing to God, but will cost a sacrifice of time, labour money or a loss of some other form, but whatever the sacrifice there is not only a spiritual, mental and emotional reward now in this present world at seeing the joy our help has brought to another person, but any sacrifice made for the benefit of others, whether they are in the Kingdom of God or outside of it is storing up treasure in heaven that Christ himself will hand out when he returns in glory.

- Micah wrote: "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10).
- Isaiah says: "The LORD loves justice, hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8).
- Jeremiah said: "Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show us that the people the LORD loves are not only those who acknowledge God, but who also uphold justice, do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right, show respect and give help to others when able and make choices that lead to peace. These are the things the LORD delights in and that bring His favour.

Obey your Leaders and Submit to Them.

Hebrews 13:17 ----- ¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

The words, "They keep watch over your souls" show that the leaders in focus are leaders who are in the faith. We should not only submit and obey those who rule well (meaning with integrity and honesty spending their life to serve others), but also consider them worthy of double honour especially those who labour in preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17) because they will have to give an account to God on the way in which they have served their congregations (v17). James in his letter warns his readers about becoming teachers because whoever teachers will be judged with greater strictness (James 3:1).

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians wrote: -

- No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, they will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, they will suffer loss, though they themselves will be saved, but only as through fire (1 Cor. 3:3-15).

This means that on that day when our work is revealed by fire, those who are leaders will be tested with greater scrutiny and if the work that they have done in Christ's name survives the judgement they will receive a greater reward, but if their work is burned up they will suffer a greater loss than those they have ruled over, though they themselves will be saved, but only as through fire (1 Cor. 3:11-14). This is why the author is saying don't be moaners, (i.e., complainers, protesters, gossipers and backbiters against leaders who rule well but encourage, reassure and support them so they can rule with joy), since they are putting their eternal reward on the line on your behalf.

NOTE: the key words are rule well, meaning they have proven themselves to be leaders of integrity, compassion, humble and full of grace. No-one is called to submit to a ruler who is self-serving, dominating and controlling, nor to one who by their teaching leads people away from grace and back under the law (i.e., trusting in ceremonial rites, religious works, customs and traditions to be counted righteous and worthy of eternal life).

Pray for Us.

Hebrews 13:18-19 ---- ¹⁸Pray for us for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honourably in all things. ¹⁹I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

The author earnestly desiring to see those he is writing to asks them to pray for him and those ministering with him that the Lord would open a door for him to be able to visit them again. The words, "We are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honourably in all things" means that they keep their conscience always before the Lord in all that they say and do. They examine their motives and intents against the life of Christ and measure what they do by the Lord's humbleness and readiness to serve others. They pattern their life on Christ's death (i.e., his willingness to lay his life down for others) and on the grace and mercy he showed to all people. Their deep desire was to act and behave in such a manner that their life would bring glory to God and not hinder anyone from coming to the Lord Jesus Christ.

God Raised from the Dead the Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep.

Hebrews 13:20-21 --- ²⁰Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Peace can refer to both outward peace and spiritual peace.

Outward peace: refers to a world free of wars, murders, rapes, abuses, oppressions and such like things, it refers to a world united in love.

Spiritual peace: refers to peace within the mind in contrast to all that would disturb or trouble it. It carries the idea of happiness and having a calm quiet mind and conscience free of guilt and fear.

God's peace enters the mind of those whose faith is rested solely in Christ and trusting in God's grace for their justification and pardon of sin and when beneath all the business and troubles of this temporal life there is in the mind the eternal thought of everlasting happiness in eternal glory quietly permeating with excitement in the deep recesses of the heart like the bubbling of a volcano hidden below the surface of the earth waiting for that day when it can display to the world the glory of its wonder and its power.

The God of peace: this title of God shines a brilliant spotlight on the following two truths: -

1. God's presence dwells amongst gatherings of peace.
2. Wherever there is strife, envy contention, quarrels and such like things God is not in the room.

James wrote: -

- If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts it is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly and unspiritual, but the wisdom from above is peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere (James 3:14-18).

God brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus: clearly show that it was Christ's heavenly Father who raised Jesus from the dead to eternal glory and to be seated on the throne of God at His right hand side. Scriptures such as these (and there are many) should cause those who mistakenly teach that Jesus is God to begin to question such a doctrine, especially since all Scriptures that teach eternal salvation clearly state that to be saved to eternal life a sinner must believe Jesus is the Son of God. Since the teaching that Jesus is God has such a strong hold on much of traditional Christianity the following will encourage and comfort faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who maybe in some doubt and unsure of what to believe concerning the Father and the Son. The Bible very clearly shows that even if Jesus was God no one has to know this to be saved to eternal life since there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states: -

- We must believe that Jesus is God to be saved.

Nor is there one verse from Genesis to Revelations that says: -

- Whoever believes that Jesus is God the Son will be saved.

In total contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures throughout the pages of the New Testament that very clearly proclaim: -

- We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved.

And that say: -

- Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved.

Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God to be saved to eternal life Jesus, the apostles and Paul would have told us at least once in all their teaching concerning salvation, but all we hear from Paul, the apostles and Jesus himself is them saying that we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved to eternal life. Jesus himself said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

For further information see the title: -

- Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity) in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The great Shepherd of the Sheep: is not a New Testament title of Jesus it was given to him by the prophets thousands of years before his appearing and would have been a very familiar title to his Hebrew readers.

David prayed: -

- The LORD is my *shepherd*; I shall not want (Psalm 23:1) and again, “Give ear, O *Shepherd* of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth (Psalm 80:1).

Isaiah wrote: -

- He will tend his flock like a *shepherd*; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young (Isaiah 40:11).

Micah said: -

- He shall stand and *shepherd* his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth (Micah 5:4) (and of course there are many more).

Matthew wrote: -

- You, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will *shepherd* my people Israel” (Matt. 2:6) (cited from Micah 5:2)

Jesus said: -

- I am the good *shepherd*. The good *shepherd* lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11) and later stated, “I am the good *shepherd*. I know my own and my own know me” (John 10:14).

Peter wrote: -

- When the chief *Shepherd* appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:4).

In the Book of Revelation it is written: -

- For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their *shepherd*, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Revelation 7:17).

The Great Shepherd: -

- Provides all we need for eternal salvation and true happiness.
- Leads and guide us with his love and tender care through the troubles of life and in the right way to go.
- Lays his life down for whoever would come to him for salvation.
- Knows his brothers and sisters and calls them his friends
- Keeps those in his family safe and secure for eternal life.
- Will be great to the ends of the earth and glorify his heavenly Father.
- Guides those in his family to springs of living water and when he returns will grant to them an eternal crown of glory.

The blood of the eternal Covenant: the words, “The blood of the eternal covenant” (v20) do not refer to any previous Old Testament blood covenant since those blood covenants were not eternal covenants, but have waxed old and vanished away.

To help understand what the blood of the eternal covenant refers to it becomes much plainer if we connect it with the verse that immediately follows it:-

- Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, make you, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, perfect in every good work to do his will (Heb. 13:20-21).

The blood of the eternal covenant in this context refers to the New Covenant made through the blood of Christ which is eternal in contrast to the Old Testament blood Covenant of animal sacrifices which were a shadow and type of the true Lamb of God and the eternal sacrifice to be made once for all. The Christian faith is called the eternal blood covenant to distinguish it from the temporary covenant made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai; and to show that it is the last dispensation of grace to the world and will endure to the end of time.

The blood of the eternal covenant refers to the covenant of grace which is also called the new and better covenant, of which the author of Hebrews says: -

- Jesus was made a surety and guarantor of a better covenant (Heb. 7:22).

Unlike previous covenants this better covenant will never be succeeded by any other covenant, but will endure for ever.

It is called eternal (or everlasting), because: -

- It was planned and purposed in Gods eternal mind before the world began.
- It is to continue forever.

The blood of the eternal covenant refers to the blood of Christ shed upon the cross of Calvary. The death and resurrection of Christ confirmed the covenant of grace and through it redemption, peace, pardon, justification, and eternal life in everlasting glory. While it is clear that the raising of Christ from the dead abolished the Old Covenant and introduced the New, it is interesting to notice that the Covenant is nowhere in the New Testament associated with the resurrection, but rather with death, especially in this letter to the Hebrews.

This of course is in total harmony with the Old Testament sacrifices since it was the shed blood that confirmed the Covenant and clearly not a resurrection. The eternal New Testament Covenant in contrast to the Old Testament temporal Covenant which was confirmed by the blood of bulls and goats is confirmed by Christ's own blood. Christ laid down his life to a cruel, brutal and bloody death not for himself, but for us and the Father raised and crowned him with eternal glory. Jesus blood was the seal of the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son. The blood of Jesus the Son of God was shed and Christ was raised, then Christ's people will be raised in the same manner at the right time to eternal life and everlasting glory.

It is called the blood of the everlasting covenant' because it is by
Christ's shed blood and his resurrection that we have
entry into eternal life and everlasting glory.

May God Equip You that You May do His Will.

The author in verse twenty-one is praying that God would equip those he is teaching with good things so that they would also be able to do God's will that is working in the author and those ministering with him which are pleasing in God's sight because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (v21).

Everything good and doing God's will; refer to the following: -

- To everything regarding the Lord Jesus Christ that the author been teaching the Hebrews in this letter.
- To the fruits of the Spirit (i.e., love, compassion, mercy, grace, kindness and such like things).

- To trusting in Christ for righteousness that leads to eternal life and not the Levitical Priesthood, self-effort and religious works as the Hebrew were.

The things working in the author and those ministering with him that were pleasing to God refer to their faith in Christ, their good conscience before God and to everything they are teaching the Hebrews in this letter.

Through Jesus Christ: means that everything they say and do arises from their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and throughout eternity it is to Jesus that all worship and praise will be given.

Greet all your Leaders and all the Saints.

Hebrews 13:22-25 ---- ²²I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. ²⁴Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. ²⁵Grace be with all of you.

The heartfelt desire of the author is that the Hebrews would heed all that he has written in this brilliant letter and his hope is to visit them with Timothy.

NOTICE: this letter is thirteen chapters and yet the author says he has written briefly.

End.