

HEBREWS CHAPTER 13

[VIII] PRACTISING CHRISTIAN FAITH (13:1-21)

1. Christians are called to live a moral life with high standards (13:1-6)

a. Christians are called to love.

13:1. Let 'love of the brothers' (φιλαδελφια) remain continually (μενετω<μενω)(imperative present active). The love for brothers is not an option, but a command (Psalm 133:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10; 1 John 3:16-18).

b. Christians are called to show hospitality.

13:2. Never forget (επιλανθανεσθε)(imperative present medium) 'to show hospitality' or 'the love for strangers' (φιλοξενια), because thereby 'to do without knowing' ('unawares') (ελαθον<λανθανω)(indicative aorist active) some have entertained (ξενοιθαντες<ξενιζω)(participle aorist active) angels (Gen 18:1-33). To show hospitality is also a command - especially Christian leaders must show hospitality (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:8).

c. Christians are called to care for the persecuted.

13:3. (Continually) remember (μυμνησκεσθε)(imperative present medium) those 'in bonds' or 'in prison' (των δεσμιων) as if you were their fellow-prisoners (συνδεδεμενοι<συνδεω)(participle perfect passive), and those who are (time and again) mistreated (των κακουχουμενων)(participle present passive) as 'being yourselves in (their) body' (as if you yourselves were suffering in their body) (ως και αυτοι οντες εν σωματι).

Lucian (in 'The death of Perigrinus') wrote that Christians left no stone unturned in their endeavour to procure his (Perigrinus') release. When this proved impossible, they looked after his wants in all other matters with untiring concern and devotion. The women and children waited all day outside the prison, the church leaders bribed their way inside to spend the night inside with them and meals were brought in.

Christians should have a capacity for putting themselves in the place of those suffering and ill-treated (1 Cor 12:26) and exercise imaginative sympathy. They should imagine what it would be like when they in their body were in such circumstances.

d. Christians are called to set high standards for sexual morality.

13:4. (Keep) marriage (ο γαμος) honoured (τιμιος) by all; and the marriage bed (η κοιτη) undefiled (αμιαντος). For God will (certainly) judge (κρινει)(indicative future active) the sexual immoral (πορνους) and the adulterers (μοιχους).

The marriage union (including sex within marriage) is divinely ordained and this sacred institution must not be polluted by the intrusion of a third party of either sex.

i) 'πορνους' are people who indulge in all kinds of sexual irregularities besides the legitimate sex in marriage. This includes sex before marriage, sex with a family member (incest), sex with a person of the same sex (homosexuality or lesbianism), sex with an animal (bestiality) or sex in a religious or idolatrous situation. It also includes pornography, dirty jokes and petting.

ii) 'μοιχους' are people of either sex that are unfaithful to their marriage vow. It includes having an affair, polygamy and polyandry and unlawful divorce.

e. Christians are called to set high standards for financial integrity.

13:5-6. 5. (Keep) the way of life (ο τροπος) without the love of money (αφιλαργυρος); (all the time) 'content' or 'satisfied' (αρκουμενοι<αρκεομαι)(participle present passive) with 'the present things' or 'things at hand' (τοις παρουσιν<παρειμι)(participle present active); for he (God) has said (and his word keeps on ringing in our ears) (ειρηκεν<λεγω)(indicative perfect active): for I will in no way 'send you back' or 'leave you without support' (ανω<ανιημι)(subjunctive aorist active) and I will by no means 'forsake' or 'desert' you or 'leave you in the lurch' (εγκαταλιπω<εγκαταλειπω)(subjunctive aorist active). 6. So 'courageously' or 'confidently' (θαρρουντας <θαρρω)(participle present active) we say: The Lord (is) my helper (βοηθος); I will not fear (φοβηθησομαι <φοβεομαι)(indicative future medium); what will man do (ποιησει)(indicative future active) to me?

Christians should never live for money! They need to work for an income (2 Thes 3:10). But they must not wear themselves out to get rich, but rather have the wisdom to show restraint (in the area of making money)(Prov 23:4-5). Christians cannot serve God and Money (Mammon) at the same time (Mt 6:24). A man's life never consists in the abundance of his possessions (Lk 12:15) or in his endeavour to keep up certain appearances (clothes, car, home, holidays, etc). The love of money is one of the roots of all kinds of evil (bribery, extortion, corruption, robbery, etc) (1 Tim 6:10). The love of money disqualifies a Christian from becoming a church leader (1 Tim 3:3).

Contentment is the opposite of covetousness. A Christian should already be content when his basic needs are being met: food, clothing and a shelter (1 Tim 6:6-8). He should never be anxious about what food he will eat or what clothes he will wear (Mt 6:25-33). A Christian trusts God to help him find a job and to care for his basic needs.

Psalm 118:6-7. People fear when they lose God out of sight. But when they trust in God and his help their fear disappears. What can any man on earth do to take away the soul (spirit) and eternal life of a believer (Mt 10:28)?

2. Christians are called to follow good examples (13:7-8).

a. Christians are called to follow the example of real leaders.

13:7. Remember (μνημονευετε)(imperative present active) the ones leading (των ηγουμενων)(participle present medium) you; who spoke (ελαλησαν)(indicative aorist active) to you the word of God (τον λογον του θεου). (Continuously) 'scanning closely' or 'looking back carefully' (αναθεωρουντες<αναθεωρεω)(participle present active) the 'successful outcome' or 'result' (την εκβασιν) of the 'conduct' or 'way' of them (of their life), (continuously) imitate (μιμεισθε<μιμεομαι)(imperative present medium) the(ir) faith (την πιστιν).

The leaders are mentioned in verses 7,17 and 24. Verse 17 and 24 definitely refer to the present leaders, but verse 7 may include the leaders in the past, because the (whole) course of their lives, from start to finish, now lies before the eyes of their followers for review and imitation.

Someone is your 'leader' when he speaks the word of God to you and sets a visible example of faith which you are able to imitate. Leaders who lack these two criteria are not your leaders, even if they demand or claim leadership on the basis of the organisation.

b. Christians are called to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

13:8. Jesus Christ is the same (ο αυτος) yesterday and today and forever.

While leaders come and go, and with this their consultation and wise guidance go, Jesus Christ never leaves, remains unchanging year after year and his teaching and guidance are continuously available. The words in the Old Testament (Psalm 102:27: you remain the same and your years will never end) refer to God and are applied in the New Testament (Heb 1:12) to Jesus Christ! Also in the Old Testament God is called 'the first and the last' (Isa 41:4; 44:6; 28:12) and the New Testament applies this to Jesus Christ (Rev 1:17; 2:8; 22:13).

For example, yesterday, Jesus Christ offered prayers with tears in Gethsemane (5:7), today he represents his people in heaven and sympathises with their trials and weaknesses (2:18; 4:15) and for ever he prays for them (7:25). His help, grace, power and guidance are permanently at his people's disposal. Why then should they lose heart? His priesthood is unchangeable (7:24). He never needs to be replaced and nothing can be added to his completed and perfect work of salvation.

3. Christians are called to bring true Christian sacrifices (13:9-16).

(the sacrifice of going outside the camp to bear the disgrace of Christ)

a. Christians are called to give up any interest in religion other than the biblical truth.

13:9. Never be 'carried away' or 'carried about' (παραφερσθε)(imperative present passive)(cf. Eph 4:14) by all kinds of strange teachings (διδαχαις ποικιλαις και ξεναις), for it is good that the heart (remains) established (βεβαιουσθαι<βεβαιοομαι)(infinitive present passive) by grace (χαριτι), not by (ceremonial) food (βρωμασιν); by which 'the walking ones' or 'those eating them' (περιπατουντες)(participle present active) were not 'profited' (ωφεληθησαν)(indicative aorist passive).

Christians are commanded not to be swept off their course by all sorts of outlandish teachings, like Hinduism (New Age), Buddhism, Islam and modern cults, like Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses and Scientology. The passage refers also to the syncretistic gnosis prevalent in Asia Minor (Col 2:16-23) and Rome (Rom 14:17): where all kinds of food-rules, fasting and celibacy were enforced on people. But eating food or abstaining from eating food does make a person better or worse - they never help people to maintain a closer walk with the God of the Bible (1 Cor 8:8). To put such indifferent matters or external rules in a place of central religious importance would diminish the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. Not the food of religions, but the grace of Christ establishes people.

b. Christians are called to find their spiritual nourishment and refreshment only in Christ.

13:10-11. 10. We have (εχομεν) an altar (θυσιαστηριον)(metonymy for 'sacrifice) from which those who minister (οι λατρευοντες) at the tabernacle have no right (ουκ εχουσιν εξουσιαν) to eat (φαγειν<εσθιω)(infinitive aorist active). 11. For the bodies of those animals (ζωων) whose blood is brought (again and again)(εισφερεται)(indicative

present passive) into the holy place (εις τα αγια) by the high priest (as an offering) for sins, are burned (again and again)(κατακαιεται)(indicative present passive) outside the camp (εξω της παρεμβολης).

During the Old Testament period the Jews had an altar and sacrifices of atonement. But the priests were not allowed to eat the flesh of animals sacrificed on the Day of Atonement or of certain sin offerings (Ex 29:14; Lev 4:12; 8:17; 9:11). The bodies of the sacrificial animals were carried outside the Israelite camp and completely burned (Lev 16:27). Although the Jews had an altar and sacrifices, they were never available and had to be repeated endlessly.

In contrast, the New Testament people of God have an altar and a sacrifice of atonement that is permanently available and never needs to be repeated! The altar was the cross and the sacrifice was the sinless body of Jesus Christ. Since that sacrifice had been brought, Jesus Christ is permanently available as the source of *spiritual nourishment and refreshment* of believers who by faith (Jn 6:40) feed on him in their hearts (Jn 6:53-58).

Neither John 6 nor Hebrews 13 refers to the Lord's Supper. The physical body of Christ was given only once for all in history (and is never repeatedly as in the Roman Catholic mass). In the Lord's Supper, the bread as a symbol of the body of Christ is given and received (taken and eaten) only in a spiritual manner, by faith (and it is never changed or transubstantiated into the physical body and blood of Jesus as Roman Catholics teach)!

c. Christians are called to go outside the camp and bear the stigma of Christ.

13:12. 12. Wherefore Jesus also, in order that he might (once for all) sanctify (ινα αγιαση)(subjunctive aorist active) the people (τον λαον) through his own blood, suffered (once for all)(επαθεν<πασχω)(indicative aorist active) outside the gate (εξω της πυλης). 13. Therefore let us go out (again and again)(εξερχωμεθα)(subjunctive present medium) to him outside the camp (εξω της παρεμβολης) bearing (all the time)(φεροντες)(participle present active) his 'reproach' or 'insult' or 'stigma' (τον ονειδισμον αυτου).

i) Outside the camp during the Old Testament period.

- During the Old Testament period the animal sacrifices were slaughtered within the camp. Only the red-heifer, which was also a kind of sin-offering, was slaughtered *outside the camp* (Num 19:3). It was completely burned and its ashes were mixed with water in order to ceremonially cleanse people from sin (Num 19:9).
- After Israel's idolatry with the golden calf, Moses took his tent and pitched it *outside the camp*, far off from the camp, and it was called 'the tent of testimony'. Every Israelite that sought the Lord would have to go outside the camp to the tent that was outside the camp (Ex 33:7).
- After the priests Nadab and Abihu had offered unauthorised fire and incense before the Lord, fire from God consumed them and they were carried outside the camp (Lev 10:1-5).
- The blasphemer was stoned to death outside the camp (Lev 24:14,23),
- The leper Miriam was shut outside the camp for seven days (Num 12:14-15).
- The scapegoat laden with the sins of the Israelites was taken as far outside the camp as possible (Lev 16:20-22).

'The camp' is a symbol of the established fellowship and religious ordinances of Judaism. The Jews had become accustomed to think of 'the camp' and all that was inside it as 'sacred', while everything 'outside the camp' was 'profane and unclean'. The Jews felt secure inside the camp amid its familiar installations. Inside the camp the Jews were insulated from the outside world.

ii) Outside the camp during the New Testament period.

- Jesus 'suffered' (referring to his death: Lk 22:15; 24:46; Act 1:3; 17:3; 1 Pet 2:21; Heb 9:26) outside the gate (Jn 19:20). In contrast to the ceremonial cleansing during the Old Testament period, his 'blood' procured spiritual, perfect and everlasting cleansing. It 'sanctified' or 'set his people apart' to worship God with a purified conscience (10:10,14,29).
- Jesus suffering outside the camp was a token that the Jews, Jerusalem and Judaism had rejected the messianic claims of Jesus. This rejection by the Jews was a stigma. The crucifixion outside the gate of Jerusalem was an added stigma.
- Already during the Old Testament period Moses regarded the stigma that rested on God's Anointed greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt (11:26). *Now the Hebrew (and Gentile) Christians are called to "go out of the camp to Jesus Christ" in order to also bear his stigma.* The people of Christ must regard the stigma of Christ (and of being a Christian, a follower of Christ) greater wealth than anything they could hope to gain by declining to burn their bridges and boats and commit themselves unreservedly to Christ.
- In contrast to the familiar religious rituals inside the camp during the Old Testament period, Christ called his people to come to him outside the camp and share the psychological insecurities of being Christians in the world. In contrast to the Jews who claimed Jerusalem inside its gates, Christ claimed the world outside its gates. *To come to Christ as a former Jew, a person must come out of the Jewish camp to Christ and give up the external Jewish religious rituals and follow Christ and his completed work of salvation. The future no longer lies with the limited Jewish camp, but with the enormous worldwide Gentile mission.*

- Time and again during the New Testament period, individuals and churches had to come out of their secure and familiar (denominational) camps and go out to the unknown and unfamiliar world to occupy new territory under the leadership of Jesus.

d. Christians are called not to settle down, but to be pilgrims and strangers.

13:14. For here we never have (εχομεν)(indicative present active) an abiding city (μενουσαν πολιν)(participle present active), but we (continually) seek after (επιζητουμεν)(indicative present active) (the city which) is to come (την μελλουσαν<μελλω)(participle present active).

The Jews kept in their hearts clinging to their old securities, but *these securities themselves were insecurities!* With the first coming of Jesus Christ the perfect and eternal high priest had arrived (4:14; 7:16,24-28), the perfect sacrifice had been brought (7:27; 10:14), the Old Testament law was fulfilled, cancelled, changed (Mt 5:17; Col 2:14; Heb 6:12) and the old securities crashed! The curtain separating the presence of God from people was torn in two (Mt 26:51). The middle wall of separation and hostility between Jews and Gentiles (the ceremonial law) had been abrogated (Eph 2:15). The kingdom of God was taken away from the unrepentant Jews and given to Jews and Gentiles who would bear the fruit of the kingdom (Mt 21:42-44; Rom 11:16-24). With the first coming of Jesus Christ the old order (covenant) was fulfilled and replaced by the new order (covenant)(8:6-13). The letter to the Hebrews was probably written about A.D. 64, just before the persecution of Nero against Christians in Rome broke out. The external city of Jerusalem and the temple were doomed to be destroyed soon (Lk 19:43-44; 21:20-24; Jn 2:19). They were consequently destroyed in A.D. 70. *With the first coming of Jesus Christ the old order crashed.*

The writer to Hebrews said that by leaving a 'city' which was doomed to pass away for a 'city with foundations whose architect and builder is God' (11:10), the Hebrew Christians would be the gainers.

Now at present (about 2000 years later) 'the heavenly city' was yet to come, but everyone (whether originally Jew or Gentile) who goes out (of the present world order and its institutions that will be shaken)(12:26-29) to Christ, is already enrolled in the heavenly register of citizens (12:23; Gal 4:26). *Man cannot find 'the permanent and eternal rest' in any of the present institutions in the world: whether they are political, social or religious institutions. Christians are called not to settle down, but to be pilgrims and strangers within the present world order* (11:13; Phil 3:20; 1 Pet 1:17; 2:11).

e. Christians are called to bring spiritual sacrifices.

13:15-16. 15. Through him therefore let us (continually) offer up (αναφερωμεν)(subjunctive present active) a sacrifice of praise (θυσιαν αινεσεως) to God continually (δια παντος), that is the fruit of lips (καρπον χειλεων) which (continually) make confession (ομολογουντων)(participle present active) to his name. 16. But never forget (επιλανθανεσθε)(imperative present medium) to do good (της ευποιας) and to share with others (κοινωνιας), for with such sacrifices God is (all the time) well pleased (ευαρεσταιται<ευαρεστεομαι)(indicative present medium).

The Jews and Gentiles thought that 'religion' is only valid when there are 'sacrifices'. The Old Testament Jews brought sacrifices prescribed by the law of Moses. Hindus, Muslims, African and South American religions still bring blood sacrifices in their religions. They taunt Christians by pointing out that Christians have no sacrifices and no altar.

Christians are called to bring the bloodless sacrifices of a grateful, joyful and dedicated heart.

- In the Old Testament order there were 'sacrifices of restoration (peace)' that included 'thanksgiving' (Lev 7:2). The Greek translation says, "If he offers it (the restoration or peace offering) for praise, then he shall bring for the sacrifice of praise loaves of fine flour ...". This corresponds with Leviticus 7:12, where 'the sacrifice of thanksgiving' was accompanied by bloodless cakes and unleavened bread (Lev 7:12). The sin-offering for Christians is also their restoration or peace offering - something that was impossible under the old order.

- Already during the Old Testament period believers like Asaph recognized that animal sacrifices could not really please God (Ps 50:9-13), but that the real sacrifices are brought by the lips (thanksgiving and fulfilling promises or vows and praying to God)(Ps 50:14-15).

- The prophet Hosea proclaimed that Israel should return to God with sacrifices that consist of 'the fruit of the lips' that consisted of repentance from sins and thanksgiving for forgiveness and gracious reacceptance (Hos 14:1-2).

- Christians are called to continually praise God (13:15).

- Christians are called to continually confess Christ openly to people (13:15; Mt 10:32-33).

- Christians are called to continually do good and to share what they have with others (13:16).

- Christians are called to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God (Rom 12:1).

- Christians are called to support needy Christian workers with their possessions (Phil 4:18).

- Christians are called to pray for other Christians (Eph 6:18-19).

- Christians are called to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (Js 1:27).

- Christians are called to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:5).

True Christian worship is an attitude of awe, adoration, submission and dedication, expressed in different kinds of prayer and a godly lifestyle. Christianity is sacrificial through and through. It is founded on the one self-offering of Christ. The offering of his people's praise and property, of their service and their lives, is caught up into the perfection of his acceptable sacrifice, and is accepted in Christ.

4. Christians are called to submit to their real leaders (13:17)

13:17. (Always) obey (πειθεσθε)(imperative present medium) those who (continually) lead (τοις ηγουμενοις) (participle present medium) you and (always) 'submit' or 'yield' or 'give in' (υπεικειτε)(imperative present active) (to them): for they (continually) 'watch' or 'keep themselves awake' (αγρυπνουσιν<αγρυπνω)(indicative present active) in behalf of your souls as they that will (certainly) give an account (λογον αποδωσοντες)(participle future active); that they may (continually) do (ποιωσιν)(subjunctive present active) this with joy and not with (constant) grief (στεναζοντες)(participle present active): for that would be 'unprofitable' or 'harmful' (αλυσιτελης) to you.

Someone is your real leader when he is *continually* present to care for you, develop you and lead you. Such leaders are accountable for the spiritual well-being of those placed in their care. This responsibility may cause them sleepless nights. The believers are called to co-operate with such leaders in order to make their task and responsibility easier and more joyful to carry out. Their responsibility should not become a burden under which they 'groan' all the time.

Perhaps the writer makes this exhortation because the Hebrew Christians kept themselves aloof from the Christians leaders of the larger Gentile Christian part of the church at Rome.

Perhaps the Christians were plagued by teachers and leaders that proclaimed new and esoteric doctrines and made such leaders look more attractive and interesting personalities than the local leaders who never taught anything 'new', but were content with the conservative line of apostolic preaching (the bible) and had all the time taken care of their spiritual needs.

Nevertheless, true Christian leaders are those appointed according to biblical teaching and standards (Mt 20:25-28; Acts 20:17-28; 1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4) and the wrong leaders should not be acknowledged or followed (Act 4:15-16; 5:29; 2 Jn 9-11; 3 Jn 9-10).

5. Christians are called to pray (13:18-21).

a. Christians are called to pray for others (13:18-19).

13:18-19. 18. (Always) pray for us (προσευχεσθε)(imperative present medium): for we (remain) 'persuaded' or 'confident' (πειθομεθα)(indicative present medium) that we (always) have a good conscience (καλην συνειδησιν εχομεν), (always) desiring (θελοντες)(participle present active) to 'live' or 'conduct our lives' (αναστρεφεισθαι) (infinitive present medium) honourably in all things (εν πασιν καλωσ). 19. And I exhort (παρακαλω)(indicative present active) you more exceedingly (περισσοτερως) to do this, that I may be restored (αποκατασταθω)(subjunctive aorist passive) to you the sooner (ταχιον).

The writer requests prayer. This may suggest that he occupied some position of responsibility in regard to his readers. He desires to have 'a good conscience' and this will be the result when he has discharged his responsibility well (cf. 2 Cor 2:12; 6:3). He had tried to visit them earlier, but for unknown reasons has not been able to do so.

b. Christians should know that others pray for them (13:20-21).

13:20-21. 20. Now the God of peace, who (once for all) brought again (ο αναγαγων<αναγω)(participle aorist active) from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep (τον ποιμενα των προβατων) with the blood of an eternal covenant (εν αιματι διαθηκης), even our Lord Jesus, 21. may he 'make perfect' or 'equip' (καταρτισαι)(optative aorist active) you in every good thing to do his will, (continually) working (ποιων)(participle present active) in us that which is well-pleasing (ευαρεστον) in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom (be) the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The prayer is directed to 'the God of peace' (Rom 15:33; 16:20; 1 Thes 5:23). Perhaps there was some disunity among the (Jewish and non-Jewish) Christians at Rome. This disunity required to be healed before God would be pleased with them.

The prayer is based on the completed salvation work of 'the shepherd of the sheep'. In the Old Testament, Moses was called the shepherd of God's people, whom God leads up out of the Red Sea (Isa 63:11; cf. Ps 77:20). In the New Testament Jesus is called the Shepherd of God's people, whom God leads up from the dead. The 'sea of reeds', which Israel crossed on their way out of Egypt, is a type in the New Testament of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ into which his people are baptised (1 Cor 10:1-2). Jesus coming up from the dead with 'the blood of the eternal covenant' means that his resurrection is a demonstration that the sacrifice of himself has been accepted by God and that the new covenant has been established on that basis.

The prayer is about spiritually equipping God's people for every form of good work, thus fulfilling God's perfect will for their lives as God works in and through them through the Spirit of the resurrected Christ. 'To equip' means 'to put into a proper condition' or 'to make complete'.

[IX] POSTSCRIPT (13:22-25)

1. Personal notes (13:22-23).

13:22. But I (continually) exhort (παρακαλω)(indicative present active) you, brothers, (continually) bear (ανεχεσθε) (imperative present medium) with the word of exhortation (του λογου της παρακλησεως): for I have (this one time) 'written' or 'sent a letter' (epistle) (επεστειλα<επιστελλω)(indicative aorist active) to you 'in few words' (δισταβραχων).

'The word of exhortation' refers not to Hebrews 13:1-19, but to the whole epistle of Hebrews. Hebrews can be read aloud within an hour. This is 'a few words' compared to known speeches and sermons. The writer had more to say, but this was not the time for it (5:11; 9:5)

13:23. Know (γινωσκετε)(indicative present active) that our brother Timothy has been set free (and continues to be free) (απολελυμενον)(participle perfect passive); with whom, if he comes (ερχηται)(subjunctive present medium) soon, I will see (οψομαι<οραω)(indicative future medium) you.

The 'Timothy' is almost certainly the known Timothy, Paul's co-worker. The word 'release' could refer to his 'release' by the church to go on a missionary journey (cf. Act 13:3), but most probably refers to his 'release' from an imprisonment about which we know nothing. It is quite possible that Timothy travelled from Ephesus to Rome when Paul summoned him from his final imprisonment in Rome (2 Tim 4:9). He might have gotten imprisoned in Ephesus or Rome on account of his association with Paul. Nevertheless, by the time this letter is written, the writer knows that he has been released. When Timothy arrives at the location of the writer, they would travel together to the readers of Hebrews.

2. Final greetings and benediction (13:24-25).

13:24. Greet (ασπασασε<ασπασομαι)(imperative aorist medium) all those leading you (continually) (τους ηγουμενους)(participle present medium) and all the saints (believers) (τους αγιους). Those (coming) from (απο) Italy greet (ασπασονται) you.

"Those coming from Italy" could mean that the writer is writing outside Italy to Hebrews living in Rome and that Italian emigrants are sending their greetings to the Hebrews in Italy. But the phrase can also mean the Italians are living in Italy and are sending their greetings to Hebrews living somewhere else. The best translation is, "Greetings to you from our Italian friends".

13:25. The grace (η χαρις) (be) with you all.

The benediction of blessing is like that in Titus 3:15. The word 'χαρις' can mean 'hail' at the beginning of a letter and 'farewell' at the end of a letter in the Greek letters of this time.

ADDENDUM: THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

1. Christians are called to dynamic faith and discipleship that cannot be tamed into fixed forms of Christianity.

Christians are Christians by virtue of certain definite acts of God which took place at a definite time in the past.

But these acts of God have released a dynamic force which will never allow Christians to settle down and stick fast at any point in their pilgrim's journey short of that 'divine rest' God has set as the goal for all Christians. The divine rest is always a goal to be aimed at and is never a stage which has been reached. *'The faith once delivered to the saints' is not something that can be caught and tamed and poured into fixed confessions, traditions, liturgies and church structures.* The Christian faith continually leads Christians forth to new ventures in the cause of Christ, as God calls again and again.

2. Christians are called to go 'outside the camp' of a secure form of Christianity to the onward-moving Christ.

Abraham was called out of his traditional country to go to a place he knew not, His firm faith in the unchanging God made him so ready to go forth when God calls even when he did not know where God would lead him.

Henoah, Noah, Abraham and Moses all saw with their spiritual eyes the reality and presence of the invisible God and they followed him where he led them.

Christians may no longer stay at the point to which some revered teacher of the past (church reformer, church planter or church leader /pastor) has brought them, out of a mistaken sense of loyalty to him.

Christians may no longer continue to follow a certain pattern of religious activity or attitudes just because these were good enough for their fathers and is assumed would be also good for their grandchildren.

Every fresh movement of the Spirit of God tends to become stereotyped in the next generation. What we have heard with our own ears or what our fathers have told us becomes a tenacious tradition encroaching on the allegiance which we ought to give only to Jesus Christ and his teaching in the bible.

When a Christian surveys the world today, he sees very much land waiting to be possessed in the name of Christ. But in order to take possession of it calls for a generous measure of that forward-looking faith, which the letter to the Hebrews urges his readers to have.

The Hebrew Christians were living in a time when the old cherished order was breaking up. Attachment to these venerable traditions could help them nothing in this situation. Only attachment to the unchanging and onward-moving Christ could carry them forward and enable them to face a new order with confidence and power.

Therefore, in the day when everything that can be shaken is being shaken before our eyes and beneath our feet, Christians should thank God for the unshakeable kingdom they have inherited - the kingdom which will endure when everything else to which people may pin their hopes disappears without even leaving a trace.