



LESSON NINE

Practical Virtues and Experiences of Christ for the Church Life

Scripture Reading:

HEBREWS 13

- 13:1** Let brotherly love continue.
- 13:2** Do not forget hospitality, for through this some, without knowing it, have entertained angels.
- 13:3** Remember those who are imprisoned as bound with *them*, those who are ill-treated as being yourselves also *likewise treated* in body.
- 13:4** *Let marriage be held* in honour among all, and the bed undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.
- 13:5** Let your way of life be without the love of money, being satisfied with the things which are at hand; for He Himself has said, "I shall by no means give you up, neither by any means shall I abandon you";
- 13:6** So that being of good courage, we say, "The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear. What shall man do to me?"
- 13:7** Remember the ones leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith.
- 13:8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, *yes*, even forever.
- 13:9** Do not be carried away by various strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be confirmed by grace, not by the food *of sacrifices*, by which those who walk were not profited.
- 13:10** We have an altar from which they who are serving the tabernacle have no right to eat.
- 13:11** For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the *Holy of Holies* for sin by the high priest are burned up outside the camp.
- 13:12** Therefore also Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.
- 13:13** Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.
- 13:14** For we do not have here a remaining city, but we seek after the one to come.
- 13:15** Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name.
- 13:16** But do not forget doing good and sharing *with others*, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.
- 13:17** Obey the ones leading you and submit to *them*, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.
- 13:18** Pray for us, for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring in all things to conduct ourselves honourably.
- 13:19** And I exhort *you* much more to do this that I may be restored to you more quickly.
- 13:20** Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant,
- 13:21** Perfect you in every good work for the doing of His will, doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.
- 13:22** Now I beseech you, brothers, bear with the word of this exhortation, for indeed I have written to you in few words.
- 13:23** Know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you.
- 13:24** Greet all the ones leading you and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.
- 13:25** Grace be with you all. Amen.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. Explain that Hebrews is a book on Christ for the church.
2. Why do we need brotherly love in the church?
3. What does it mean to hold marriage in honor? What are the examples in the Bible that are not taking this matter seriously?

Section 2:

1. What does it mean to imitate the faith of a leading one?
2. How can we have balance in the matter of leadership in the church life?

Section 3:

1. What are the experiences of Christ shown by the furniture in the tabernacle?
2. Why are the experiences of Christ mentioned in Chapter 13 particularly included in this chapter?
3. Why was the writer emphasizing that Christ is unchangeable?

Section 4:

1. What is the argument used in chapter 13 against the teaching of the Judaizers?
2. What does it mean to go outside the camp bearing His reproach?
3. What does the 'gate' in verse 12 and the 'camp' in verse 13 refer to? What do these verses imply?

TEN PRACTICAL VIRTUES FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

Apparently, the book of Hebrews does not touch the matter of the church. Actually, it is absolutely for the church, because the church is the consummation of God's economy. In Hebrews 2 we clearly see that the resurrected Christ with His uplifted humanity is for the church. According to 2:12, after His resurrection Christ came back to His brothers and, in the midst of the church, He sang hymns of praise unto the Father. In this verse the church is clearly and definitely mentioned in a very deep way. By this we see that Hebrews is not only a book on Christ; it is a book on Christ for the church.

Hebrews 10:25 says not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. As we have pointed out, for the Hebrew believers to forsake the assembling of themselves together with the saints meant that they were forsaking the new covenant way. When the believers assembled themselves together in ancient times, that assembly was the practical and actual church.

As we have seen, in 12:18-24, we have a contrast between the sight of the old covenant and the scene of the new covenant. In the scene of the new covenant, we see Mount Zion, God's holy city, the myriads of celebrating angels, and the church of the firstborn ones. The church is the center of this scene. After the mention of the church, we have the justifying God, the justified spirits of the ancient saints, and Jesus, the Mediator of the better covenant with His precious blood that speaks better than that of Abel. By this we can see that the church is the focus of the scenery of the new covenant.

In this message we come to chapter thirteen. Although the word church is not found in this chapter, the entire chapter is concerned with the church life. The experiences of Christ (vv. 8-15) and the ten practical virtues (vv. 1-7, 16-19) covered here are for the church. Nearly everything mentioned in verses 1 through 7 and 16 through 19, such as brotherly love and hospitality, is for the church life, not just for the Christian life. If we would have the proper church life, we need all ten of these virtues. Let us now consider each of them.

I. BROTHERLY LOVE

Verse 1 says, "Let brotherly love continue." No one can say that brotherly love is not for the church life. If we were not in the church life, we would not need brotherly love, for we would be far away from one another and would not need to love one another. But because we have been flocked together, we need brotherly love to continue.

Every local church passes through a honeymoon period. I believe that all the churches in the United States and Canada have passed through their honeymoon. After the honeymoon is over, every newly married couple will eventually have a collision. In order to stay married, we must have the marriage love. In the church we need brotherly love, and in our families we need marriage love.

First Corinthians 13:13 says, "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (Gk.). According to this verse, love is the greatest virtue. It is also the most excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31, Gk.). The most excellent way is not the way of gifts or teachings but the way of love. Love is the most excellent way because it is the expression of life (1 Cor. 13:1). Love is just life appearing in another form. In 1 Corinthians 8:1, Paul says, "Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up" (Gk.). If we would be built together, we must have brotherly love.

II. HOSPITALITY

Verse 2 says, "Do not be forgetful of hospitality, for through this some have entertained angels without knowing it." How we need hospitality in the church life in the Lord's recovery today. Hospitality truly edifies. It brings much new blood into the fellowship of the Body. How we thank the Lord for this! In Romans 12:13 we are told to pursue hospitality, and in 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8, and 1 Peter 4:9 (Gk.) we are admonished to be hospitable. Among us, brotherly love should continue and hospitality should not be forgotten.

III. REMEMBERING THE SUFFERING MEMBERS

Verse 3 says, "Remember the prisoners as bound with them, and those who are ill-treated as being yourselves also in the body." Remembering the suffering members is undoubtedly for the church life. If we remember the suffering members, it means that we are living in the Body and have

the sense of the Body. When one member suffers, all the members sense it and suffer with him (1 Cor. 12:26). This is the Body life. Hence, to remember the suffering ones is a function in the Body, in the church life.

IV. HOLDING MARRIAGE IN HONOR

Verse 4 says, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and the bed undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” Apparently this is unrelated to the church life. However, marriage is a very important factor in the church life. Whether a church is sound and healthy or loses its element and essence is very much dependent upon the marriage life. Do not consider the matter of marriage to be a light thing. We must hold it in honor. This means that we must possess our body, our vessel, in sanctification and honor (1 Thes. 4:3-4), that “no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter” (1 Thes. 4:6). In the church life, the brothers and sisters must contact one another in a holy way. This means that we honor our marriage and others’ marriage. To honor marriage means to possess our body in sanctification and honor and to flee fornication.

In the church life, contacts between the brothers and sisters are unavoidable. Hence, for our protection from falling into defilement, we must hold marriage in honor and not behave loosely. This is a matter which seriously affects our birthright in God’s economy. Reuben lost it due to his defilement (Gen. 49:3-4; 1 Chron. 5:1), and Joseph received it because of his purity (1 Chron. 5:1; Gen. 39:7-12). God will judge fornicators and adulterers, and the church also must judge them (1 Cor. 5:1-2, 11-13). Nothing damages the saints and the church life so much as this defilement.

Verse 4 says that God will judge the fornicators and adulterers. Hebrews is a book concerning God’s holiness. The holy God will never tolerate any defilement among us. He will judge His people (10:30; 12:23).

V. WITHOUT LOVE OF MONEY

Verse 5 says, “Let your way of life be without love of money, being satisfied with your circumstances.” Surely money-lovers cannot enter into the reality of the church life. Every money-lover is a Judas, a traitor, betraying the Lord, the Lord’s testimony, and the church life.

It is impossible for such a person to live the church life.

Verse 5 also tells us to be satisfied with our circumstances, for the Lord has said, “I will by no means cease to uphold you, neither by any means will I forsake you.” We must be satisfied with whatever we have and with whatever circumstances we are in, knowing that we have the Lord and that we can trust in Him for our living. We should always be satisfied with our circumstances that we may not be distracted from the church life by mammon. Since we have the Lord as our helper, we should be content and at peace that we may be fully kept in the enjoyment of the church life.

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VI. REMEMBERING THE MINISTERS OF THE WORD OF GOD

Verse 7 says, “Remember the ones leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God, and considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith.” This is essential in the church life. Verse 7 is a continuation of verses 5 and 6. Their “manner of life” here must refer to the way of life pursued by those ministers of the word of God—without love of money and being satisfied with their circumstances. Their “faith” must refer to the fact that they trusted in the Lord, who is their Helper, for their living. The word which they ministered and the life which they lived should all be Christ, and their faith should be the faith in Christ, of which Christ is both the Author and Perfecter (12:2). Such a manner of life and such a faith are surely worthy of imitation by the believers.

The ministers of the word of God should have a manner of life that issues in an example of faith for the church members, the receivers of the word of God, to imitate. Then the church members will not only receive the word they minister, but also imitate their faith expressed in their manner of life. Their manner of life should be that of trusting in the Lord for all their needs. How different this is from the worldly manner of life! As the believers consider the issue of the manner of life of those who minister the word of God to them, they will be influenced to imitate their faith in God.

VII. DOING GOOD

Verse 16 says, "Do not be forgetful doing good and sharing with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." This verse speaks of doing good. This is not the good of good and evil; it is the good in God's economy. Doing good according to God's economy, which is a sacrifice well-pleasing to God, is according to God's working within us (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13), that is, according to the working of the law of life. Our outward doing good must be according to the inward working of the law of life.

VIII. SHARING WITH OTHERS

Verse 16 also speaks of sharing with others. This is necessary for a proper church life. It is really improper if in the church some needy saints are not well cared for. This means that the sharing with others is absent or inadequate. Sharing with others is also a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. Its purpose is to supply the want of the needy saints for equality (2 Cor. 8:14-15). Those who have more than they need should share with those who have less than they need. When those who have more share with those who have less, there will be an equality among us. This is similar to the gathering of manna by the children of Israel in the wilderness. In those days, "He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack" (2 Cor. 8:15; Exo. 16:18). As a result, there was equality among the children of Israel.

IX. OBEYING THE LEADING ONES AND SUBMITTING TO THEM

Verse 17 says, "Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will give account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable to you." I have heard of many so-called spiritual people who say that as long as we have the Spirit, we all are leading ones and we do not need anyone to lead us. They say that it is wrong to have leaders among us. According to them, having leading ones means to have an organization with a hierarchy and a pope. We must be balanced in this matter.

In every household there are, in addition to the parents, the older brothers and sisters. Suppose there are six children in a family. Spontaneously, each one of them knows his order. When the oldest brother speaks, all the others listen to him. But if the third brother would presume to be the oldest brother, all the others would refuse to

listen to him. If we would maintain a good order in the house of God, we must have the leading ones, and all the saints must obey them and submit to them. This is necessary for the building up of the church.

This matter of leadership, however, should not be too official. For example, in a family there is no need for the oldest child to say, "I am the number one child, and you all must realize that I am the leader of the children in this family. Since I have this position, I am God's deputy authority."

If a brother is truly an elder, everyone will realize it, and he will have no need to assume any authority. If you are the oldest child in a family, all the other children realize this. There is no need to exercise yourself to assume authority. Rather, you should take loving care of your younger brothers and sisters. Likewise, the elders in the churches should not assume authority but take loving care of the saints. Elders, forget your authority. On their side, the saints must obey you and submit themselves to you. On your side, however, you should not assume authority. Nothing is uglier than assuming authority. We should simply be what we are without assuming anything. Nevertheless, in the house of God and for the building up of the Body of Christ, we must have a beautiful order among us.

X. PRAYING FOR THE APOSTLES

Verses 18 and 19 say, "Pray for us, for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring in all things to conduct ourselves rightly. And I beseech you much more to do this that I may be restored to you more quickly." Praying for the apostles is also an aspect of the church life. To pray for the apostles is not to pray in a personal and private way; it is to pray for the ministry and to participate in the Lord's move for the fulfilling of God's purpose. I thank God for the prayer meetings in Anaheim. Every week we spend a long time praying for the Lord's move on earth and for the fulfilling of His purpose.

As we consider these ten virtues, we see that they are all necessary for the church life and should be practiced among us.

THE EXPERIENCES OF CHRIST FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

In this message we come to the experiences of Christ for the church life (13:8-15). Before I come to this matter, however, I am burdened to say a further word about the way, the race, and the paths, particularly about the one race becoming the many paths.

By looking at the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle, we can see how Christ is the way and the race, and how the one race becomes many paths. As we have seen, the altar and the laver are in the outer court; the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar are in the Holy Place; and the ark, containing the golden pot, the budding rod, and the table of the testimony, is in the Holy of Holies. The altar, laver, incense altar, and ark form a line, and the showbread table and the lampstand form an intersecting line. These two lines form a cross. Each of these items signifies an aspect of Christ.

Consider the experience of a sinner who comes to Christ. Firstly, he comes to the altar where he kneels down, makes confession, and takes Christ as his substitute, Redeemer, and Savior. Here at the altar he begins to enjoy Christ. After experiencing Christ at the altar, he goes to the laver, which signifies that the Redeemer has become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17), and there he experiences the washing of the living water. The washing of the water in the laver is different from the washing of the blood at the altar. The blood at the altar washes away our sins; the water of the laver washes away the earthly dirt.

While many Christians go back and forth between the altar and the laver, the laver and the altar, we need to take a straight path into the Holy Place. Once we are in the Holy Place, we make a right turn to the showbread table where we enjoy Christ as the bread of life. Before coming into the church, we never heard that Christ was eatable. But the Lord Jesus said, "I am the bread of life," and "He who eats Me shall also live because of Me" (John 6:48, 57, Recovery Version). Now, after coming into the church, we have been helped to eat Christ, to feed on Him, and even to masticate Him. After feeding on Christ at the showbread table, we must make an about-face and take a straight path to the lampstand. Here at the lampstand we are enlightened by the light of life (John 1:4), that is, by the light which comes from feeding on Christ.

At the lampstand we make another about-face to the central line, and then make a left turn and go to the incense altar to experience Christ in resurrection as the sweet fragrance by which we are accepted of God. This experience of the incense altar will then usher us directly into the Holy of Holies. In the tabernacle we can see several paths: the path from the cross to the laver, from the laver to the showbread table, from the showbread table to the lampstand, from the lampstand to the incense altar, and from the incense altar to the ark in the Holy of Holies. Once we are in the Holy of Holies, we are in the shekinah glory. But we should not stop there. We must proceed even further and experience all the contents of the ark, feeding upon Christ as the hidden manna, partaking of Him as the budding rod, and experiencing the working of the law of life. As we have seen, the working of the law of life will make us the corporate reproduction of God's standard model for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. All the paths from the altar in the outer court to the ark in the Holy of Holies are the way for us to have the fulfillment of God's economy and the enjoyment of the birthright. Ultimately, it is the way into perfection, glorification, and the full taste of God. Everything we need is on this way.

Once we are on this way, we should not linger or hesitate. We must run the race, forgetting Judaism, Christianity, and every other religion. As soon as we start to run on the way, it becomes a race composed of many paths. The path from the altar to the laver, from the laver to the showbread table, from the showbread table to the lampstand, from the lampstand to the incense altar, and from the incense altar to the ark—these are the paths which compose God's unique way.

Why do we need so many turns in Christ as the way? Because we need the cross to eliminate all the negative things in us. I have already pointed out that the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle forms the symbol of the cross. The way in Christ is in the shape of a cross. In fact, the way even is the cross. When we begin at the altar in the outer court, we are filled with many negative things, such as sin, the world, the flesh, lusts, and Satan. But as we move along the paths, making all the turns, these negative things are crossed out. Once we reach the ark in the Holy of Holies we are a purified person. I say again that all the negative things are crossed out by the turns which form the paths. What remains after making all these turns is a resurrected, uplifted humanity which is suitable to be mingled with

divinity. How marvelous this is! Only God could have designed it.

Now we may come to the experiences of Christ in 13:8-15. Since so many things have been covered in the first twelve chapters of Hebrews, why does the writer include the experiences of Christ found in chapter thirteen? Because the Judaizers were using a certain aspect of their religious ceremonies—the eating of the festival food—to attract the Hebrew believers. According to the Old Testament, the children of Israel came to Jerusalem three times a year for the worship of God in their annual feasts, coming together to feast for several days. In these feasts they ate the festival food. This eating together, which was a very attractive thing, is the background of verse 9, which says, “Do not be carried away with various and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be confirmed by grace, not by foods, in which those who walked were not profited.” The word “food” mentioned here is in contrast with “grace” and refers to the foods of the ceremonial observances of the old covenant (9:10; Col. 2:16) which the Judaizers used in their attempts to carry away the Hebrew believers from the enjoyment of grace, which is the participation in Christ in the new covenant.

At the time of their festivals, all the Israelites were excited, much more excited than Americans and Europeans are at Christmas time. It was very difficult for the seekers of Christ to stay away from such a charming attraction. The Judaizers might have come to the Hebrew believers, saying, “In a few days the feast of tabernacles will begin. If you don’t go, you will lose all the enjoyment. Where will you be while we are singing, dwelling together, and enjoying all the riches of the good land? You will be assembling with that church in a little house. What will you have to eat there? If you go there, you will lose the right to kill the sacrifices for your eating. If you want to eat, you must go with us to the temple. But you have given up our precious feast. This means that you so-called Christians have lost all this enjoyment.” If you were a Jew and had been there at the time, could you have withstood this attraction? Most of us would have been unable to resist. Then a fellow believer might have come to the Hebrew Christians, saying, “Don’t go back to the temple. If you do, you will fall away from the grace of God. Don’t listen to the strange teachings about the food in our old religion. Christ is the reality. He is everything.” In the midst of such a dilemma, the Hebrew believers did not know

what to do. Because of this, the writer gave them a strong word in chapter thirteen.

I. CHRIST BEING UNCHANGEABLE, REMAINING THE SAME FOREVER

Verse 8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” The Christ, who is the word which the ministers of the word of God in verse 7 preached and taught, who is the life which they lived, and who is the Author and Perfecter of their faith, is perpetual, unchangeable, and unchanging. He remains the same forever (1:11-12). The writer seemed to be telling the Hebrew believers, “Brothers, God sent His messengers to preach to you the word of Christ. Christ was not only the word they preached, but the very life by which they lived. This Christ is always the same. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If you accepted Him as the Christ in the past, you should not change your concept now due to the strange teachings about eating. Do not sell your birthright in Christ for one meal of this ceremonial eating. If you had not received Christ, I would not speak to you this way. But you have received the unchangeable Christ. Since He does not change, you should not change either. Do not be distracted by the strange teachings about ceremonial eating. That eating means nothing.”

II. HOLDING ON TO THE UNCHANGEABLE CHRIST FOR A TRUE AND STEADFAST CHURCH LIFE

Verse 9 mentions “various and strange teachings.” For a true and steadfast church life, we must hold on to the unchangeable Christ and not be carried away with various and strange teachings used by Satan to cause dissension and even division in the church. Because of the dissension and division caused by strange teachings, the apostle charged people “not to teach differently” (1 Tim. 1:3, Gk.). These various and strange teachings must have been taught by the Judaizers at that time. The writer warned the Hebrew believers not to let the teachings carry them away from the church life under the new covenant. There must not be “another Jesus,” “another gospel,” preached in the church (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:8-9). For a true and steadfast church life, we must hold on to the Christ who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and not be carried away with various and strange teachings.

III. BEING CONFIRMED BY GRACE TO REMAIN IN THE NEW COVENANT TO ENJOY CHRIST AS GRACE

As the Judaizers used the foods of their ceremonial observances of the old covenant to distract the Hebrew believers, so the writer of this book charges the believers to be confirmed by grace. At that time, to be confirmed by grace was to remain in the new covenant to enjoy Christ as grace (Gal. 5:4) and not to be carried away to Judaism to participate in the eating of foods in the Jewish religious ceremonies.

In principle, *a number of saints* have been drawn away by today's religious attractions as the Hebrew believers were by the festival foods in the first century.

IV. THE CROSS BEING OUR ALTAR ON WHICH CHRIST OFFERED HIMSELF AS THE SIN OFFERING

Verse 10 says, "We have an altar, from which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle." This altar must be the cross on which the Lord Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins (10:12). According to the regulations regarding the offerings in the Old Testament, the sacrifice for sin, or sin offering, whose blood was brought into the Holy of Holies or Holy Place for atonement, afforded nothing for the offering priest or the offerer to eat. The entire offering was burnt. Hence, from the altar of the sin offering those who served the tabernacle have no right to eat. Verse 10 is a strong argument against the food used by the Judaizers in their strange teaching, attempting to carry away the new covenant believers from the enjoyment of Christ. As we have seen, their emphasis was on the food which they enjoyed in their religious services. But the writer of this book argues that in the sin offering, the basic offering for their yearly atonement (Lev. 16), there was nothing for anyone to eat. With the sin offering it is not a matter of eating, but of receiving its efficacy. Now the real sin offering is Christ, who has offered Himself to God for our sins and accomplished full redemption for us that we might be brought into the enjoyment of God's grace in Him under the new covenant. What we need today is not to eat the foods of the old covenant services, but to receive the efficacy of Christ's offering and follow Him in the new covenant grace outside the camp, outside the Jewish religion.

In this book Christ is presented only as the sin offering, not as any other offering. Since our problem with God is basically a problem of sin, the sin offering is the basic and most crucial of all the offerings. If our problem of sin had not been solved, our problem with God would still remain. Several times in this book we are told that Christ offered Himself (7:27; 9:14), but each time we see that Christ offered Himself as the sin offering. Thus, the argument in chapter thirteen is this: however much the Hebrew Christians went to the festivals to eat the ceremonial meals, they could not eat of the sin offering. But now they enjoy Christ as the sin offering. Of this offering there was nothing for those in Judaism to eat. Furthermore, verse 11 says, "The bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the Holy of Holies by the high priest concerning sin, are burned outside the camp." Christ's body was carried outside the gate. There He suffered death and, in a sense, was burned. As the sin offering, Christ is not for food but for sacrifice outside the gate.

V. CHRIST'S BODY SUFFERING THE DEATH OF THE CROSS OUTSIDE THE GATE AND HIS BLOOD BEING BROUGHT INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES FOR OUR SANCTIFICATION

Verse 12 says, "Wherefore also Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate." The blood of the sin offering being brought into the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement to make atonement for the people and its body being burnt outside the camp (Lev. 16:14-16, 27) typify the blood of Christ, the real sin offering, being brought into the true Holy of Holies to accomplish redemption for us and His body being sacrificed for us outside the gate of the city of Jerusalem.

This book unveils that God's heavenly calling is to make us a heavenly people (3:1), a people who are sanctified unto God. Christ is the Sanctifier (2:11). He suffered the death of the cross, shed His blood on it, and entered the Holy of Holies with His blood (9:12) that He might be able to do the sanctifying work by the heavenly ministry (8:2, 6) of His heavenly priesthood (7:26), and that we might enter "within the veil" by His blood to participate in Him as the heavenly Sanctifier. By participating in Him in this way, we shall be enabled to follow Him outside the camp by the sanctifying pathway of the cross.

VI. GOING FORTH TO HIM “OUTSIDE THE CAMP” BEARING HIS REPROACH TO FOLLOW HIM IN THE SANCTIFYING PATHWAY OF THE CROSS

The Lord’s blood, through which He entered into the Holy of Holies (9:12), has opened a new and living way for us to enter “within the veil” to enjoy Him in the heavens as the glorified One (10:9-20); and His body, which was sacrificed for us on the cross, cut the narrow way of the cross for us to go outside the camp to follow Him on earth as the suffering One. Verse 13 says, “Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” If we would be real Christians, we must experience Christ, not in the way of eating a religious meal, but in the way of going outside the camp to bear His reproach, following Him in the sanctifying pathway of the cross. If we would experience Him in this aspect, we must enter “within the veil,” that is, enter into the Holy of Holies, to enjoy Him as our heavenly Sanctifier in His heavenly priesthood (10:19-20; 6:19-20).

The principle is the same today. Those who have forsaken the church meetings and have returned to the religious practices in Christianity have given up their birthright. Those who have done this do not care for Christ and the church; they only care for today’s religious attractions. Since they have sold their birthright, they can neither enjoy Christ nor exercise the priesthood and the kingship. Do you think that such believers will enjoy the birthright as the reward in the millennial kingdom? According to the clear revelation in the New Testament, if we do not exercise our spirit to remain in the church, enjoy Christ as our good land, and practice our priesthood and kingship today, we shall not deserve to enjoy our birthright as a reward in the millennial kingdom.

In order to remain in the church, we must drop every religious practice. Our heart must be confirmed by grace, not by any religious food, that is, not by any religious attractions, positions, titles, and practices. We must forsake them all.

Grace is on the race, on the path. We should not be distracted from any path of this race, but continue on the race of grace. But many things are waiting for an opportunity to distract us from the paths of this race, that is, from the enjoyment of grace. As the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle reveals, every path of this race is

an aspect of the enjoyment of Christ. Never be distracted by titles, positions, or religious attractions, all of which are merely religious “foods.” We must experience Christ as our grace for the church life.

If we would experience Christ in this aspect, we must take the way of the cross, suffering persecution, rejection, and opposition from religion. Christ suffered outside the gate, and we must follow Him outside the gate to bear His reproach. If we share His suffering today, in the future we shall share in His glorification. If we experience Christ in this way, bearing His reproach on the pathway of the cross, we shall be kept in the rich church life, and every meeting of the church will be uplifted and enriched.

VII. HAVING HERE NO PERMANENT CITY, NO ORGANIZED REALM, BUT SEEKING THE COMING ONE, GOD’S HOLY CITY, THE NEW JERUSALEM

Verse 12 speaks of being “outside the gate,” and verse 13 tells us to go “outside the camp.” The gate here is the gate of the city of Jerusalem. The city signifies the earthly realm, and the camp signifies the human organization. The two signify one thing, the Jewish religion with its two aspects, the earthly and the human. Judaism is both earthly and human. Verse 14 says, “For here we do not have a permanent city, but we seek the coming one.” This means that we do not have a permanent city, any organized realm, but we seek the coming one, God’s Holy City, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2, 10). By using the pronoun “we” in these verses the writer was considering himself and his readers as real river-crossing Hebrews like the patriarchs (11:9-10, 13-16).

VIII. IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES, OFFERING UP THROUGH HIM THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE TO GOD

Verse 15 says, “Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name.” Since in the church life we enjoy the unchanging Christ as grace and follow Him outside religion, we should offer up through Him spiritual sacrifices to God. Firstly, we should offer up through Him a sacrifice of praise continually to God in the church. In the church, He sings hymns of praise unto God the Father in us (2:12). We also should praise God the Father in the church through Him. Eventually He and we, we and He, will praise the

Father in the church in the mingled spirit. He as the life-giving Spirit praises the Father in our spirit, and we, by our spirit, also praise the Father in His Spirit. This is the best and highest sacrifice we can offer to God through Him. This is greatly needed in the church meetings.