

13:1 - "Let brotherly love continue."

In closing the last chapter, the author stated that the grace of salvation enables one to serve God in an acceptable manner. (Heb. 12:28) The author now addresses Christian duty, defining specific behavior in the life of the Christian which bears witness to the Spirit of God within him.

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."
Titus 2:14

This letter has shown that these Christians had great love for each other and this love had continued, according to this verse. Their love however, was now being put to the test. The Hebrew people were divided religiously as well as politically in this period preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. The believers needed this bond of love more than ever, and are here exhorted to practice the brotherly love taught and commanded by God.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"
Rom. 12:10

"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."
I Thes. 4:9

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:"
I Peter 1:22

"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."II Peter 1:7

13:2 - "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Times of persecution are times of suspicion. It was mentioned earlier that some even avoided assembling together with one another. (Heb. 10:25) They were probably suspicious of anyone who approached them for help in the name of Christ. The exhortation seems to be not to let suspicion and worry become an excuse for neglecting Christian duty. Many true brothers were probably being turned away in time of need by their own brothers in Christ.

The stories the Hebrew readers were very familiar with were the stories of Abraham and Lot. Both received angels into their home not being aware of the

strangers true identity. Of even greater importance than the prospect of receiving angels are the words of Christ.

"And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Matt. 25:40

13:3 - "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

The readers were to identify with their fellow Christians who were in trouble and not shun them to protect themselves or to keep their Christian identity secret. In former times of persecution this church had banded together, risking their own lives and reputations for their brother's sake. (Heb. 10:32-34) Following the example of Christ, they were to put others above themselves, remembering that they were all of one body.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each person esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:"

Phil. 3:3-5

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

I Cor. 12:26

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Gal 6:2

13:4 - "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

The topic of marriage is discussed, for families are the building blocks of a fellowship. A husband and wife must be bonded together and of the same mind before they can reach their full potential within the body of Christ. A prerequisite of an elder is to have his own house in order.

"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity: (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)"

I Tim. 3:4-5

The author had already warned them of impurity and the danger it would pose to the church. (Heb. 12:15-16) Marriage is an alternative for everyone and sexual relations within that union are blessed by God. This verse proves wrong

anyone that holds celibacy is a more spiritual lifestyle. In fact Paul calls this teaching a doctrine of the devil.

"Now the spirit speaketh express, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."
I Tim. 4:1-3

God will judge those who do not take his commands concerning marriage seriously.

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather give thanks, for this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."
Eph. 5:3-6

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom to God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, no thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom to God."
I Cor. 6:9-10

13:5 - "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

They are not to allow the things of the world to enter into competition with God for their affections. Many of the readers had lost their possessions during a previous time of persecution. (Heb 10:34) Since that time it is possible that they have been preoccupied with getting back what they lost. Maybe those who regained their possessions did not want to let them go again. The Christian cannot preoccupy himself with trying to gain material things. Desiring the things of the world takes the Christian's focus off the things of God.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
I Tim. 6:10

The opposite of covetousness is contentment. A life of contentment demonstrates faith and trust in God.

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

I Tim. 6:6-12

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Phil. 4:11-13

The Christian has accepted Christ as Savior and Lord. As the Lord of his life, the Christian has submitted himself to the will of God as his Father. A spirit of covetousness is a spirit that is in opposition to the will of God. Again, it is by faith that the Christian can live a life of contentment. By faith he can rest in the promises and assurance of God, knowing God will never be far from him.

"And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it; fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord."

I Chron. 28:20

13:6 - "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

The Christian must have confidence in God. He can believe with full assurance that God is his helper. A trial does not arise in the life of a believer that God is not fully aware of. The Christian should not fear for his possessions but focus on God, the Christian's help and strength.

"The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?"

Psalms 118:6

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Matt. 10:28

13:7 - "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

The readers were to call to mind and contemplate the lives of their former leaders. They were the elders and teachers of this church who had since passed away. The author may be referring to those who led this church in the 'former days' when this church stood strong in the midst of trials and persecution. The exhortation is to remember the council, instruction, and teaching of these men, for they spoke the word of God. This may be referring to the apostles and other great leaders of the early Jerusalem church. They were to look at the lives of these leaders from beginning to end, to remember how these men lived and how they died. These men were evidently strong in their beliefs. They held fast to their profession to the end, having confidence in God. They did not faint in the midst of persecution or put their trust in worldly needs, but looked to Jesus Christ to deliver them. The readers were to imitate these men, to follow their example just as they were instructed to follow the examples of the old testament saints presented in chapter 11.

13:8 - "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

After presenting an entire chapter of examples of whose faith the readers were to imitate, the author then immediately presented Jesus Christ as the ultimate example upon whom their focus should be. (Heb. 12:1-3) Here the author instructs the readers to contemplate the lives of their former faithful leaders, but then immediately brings them back to Jesus Christ.

The old covenant had come and gone. They had known apostles and leaders among them who lived and died, but the thing that continues is the truth of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is unchangeable and eternal. Here lives their confidence, their hope, strength, and deliverance. Because of his unchangeable nature they could put their faith in him. He is the rock and foundation. They could look at the old testament saints as well as the lives of their former leaders and know that in Jesus Christ they would not be disappointed.

The behavior which the author has so far in this chapter exhorted the readers to exhibit, was the behavior exhibited by their former leaders. The same behavior is expected of them. The same Christian teachings are to be practiced, for Christ is the same and through his eternal life will so remain.

13:9 - "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."

Jesus Christ has been presented throughout this letter as superior to all things. He is God's truth and fulfillment of God's plan. Jesus Christ as well as the truth he represents is unchangeable, and so the exhortation follows not to deviate from the truth of Christ. Since the garden man seems to be particularly vulnerable to the mixing of Satan's lies with the truth of God. The ministers of Satan follow closely behind preachers of the truth and so leading many astray.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring upon themselves destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

II Peter 2:1-2

The truth of the gospel was being perverted by many gospels and in many ways. The particular danger in this church was probably the doctrines of the Judaizers. They insisted on incorporating Christ into their already perverted Jewish system. These doctrines were not what they were taught by their former leaders and so were different and strange from the gospel message. Law could not be mixed with grace so the doctrines proved to be confusing and unsettling.

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Gal. 1:6-8

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn among you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

Gal. 3:1-3

The excellent thing was to have one's heart established in the grace of God. God's grace provides assurance and security instead of confusion. In the scriptures the heart represents one's entire being. It is one's belief and so the driving force behind one's actions. It is one's motivation. This is contrasted

with a religion of superficial head knowledge of such things as dietary laws. One who has been established with grace has the laws written on his heart. The doctrines of the Judaizers were totally irrelevant and useless. What was important was to be changed by and established in the doctrine of the grace of God, and not being tossed to and fro by every new attempt to combine law with grace.

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" Eph. 4:14

13:10-12 - "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."

The Judaizers did not believe that the sacrificial system was abolished. The author answers the objections of the Judaizers as to the absence of an altar and sacrifice within Christianity by again presenting the old system as a shadow of things to come and Christ as the fulfillment. The author states that Christians do indeed have an altar. This altar is different than the altar of the temple for it is in the heavenlies and everlasting. Those of the old system cannot partake of this altar.

The fact that they had no right to partake in the things to come while under the old covenant was made clear within their system. The priests were not permitted to eat of the sin offering on the day of the Atonement. Not even the high priest could eat of this sacrifice, but it had to be taken outside of the camp and burned.

"And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung." Lev. 16:27

It was shown earlier how this system demonstrated and reminded the people that they could not have true and total access to God under the first covenant. (Heb. 9:6-9) Christ was of a different and superior priesthood. It was decreed by God that the old system would be fulfilled, and so changed and perfected. (Heb. 7:11-12) Christ was slaughtered outside the camp and there remained.

His blood was not sprinkled upon the Levitical altar but was applied in the heavenly sanctuary once for all. (Heb. 9:23-26)

The Roman Catholic doctrine says the Mass is a real sacrifice. That it is a sin offering. Eating a sin offering is forbidden in the old testament. The old testament foreshadowed things to come, but did not contradict the things to come. If the Mass was truly instituted by God as a sin offering than the so called host would have to be offered and burned.

13:13 - "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

Based on what the author has just presented, the exhortation is to leave the doctrines and principles of the old system and be identified with Jesus Christ. When Jesus died on the cross the veil in the holy of holies was torn in two. God was no longer present in, or working through the Jewish system. Without God it became a religion of man, and the rituals not any different than pagan religious rites. In its fulfillment God had forsaken the old system and so they must forsake it. They must find God outside the camp, meaning outside this system. When Israel had forsaken God and built the golden calf, God left the camp. All who wanted to approach God had to go outside the camp.

"And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp."
Ex. 33:7

The readers were to totally forsake the old system which meant to bear the ridicule, the shame, contempt, and even death as did Jesus Christ.

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." John 15:18-20

By totally identifying with Christ, they not only leave the camp of the Jewish religion, but also the camp of the world, the camp of sin, and even the camp of themselves. They are partakers of Christ, and partakers of the sin offering by being crucified with him. They are cleansed by his sacrifice which is always fresh upon the heavenly altar. (Heb. 10:20)

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"
Rom. 6:3-5

The Christian is a partaker in Jesus Christ and so a partaker in the sin offering. (Heb. 3:1, 3:14, 6:4, 12:10) The purpose of these verses is to show them that they had to totally leave the old system. They had to 'come out of the camp' no matter what the cost. John MacArthur states, "A Christian Jew had no more right to hold onto Judaism than a Gentile Christian had to hold onto the worship of Jupiter."

13:14 - "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

The readers should be willing to suffer the shame and reproach of Christ for they are not of this earth, but wait for their permanent dwelling in heaven. Jerusalem was not their permanent dwelling, the Jews were no longer their people, and within the old system was only judgment. Believe it or not these words are the words of comfort showing them that they are giving up very little compared to what they have gained in Christ. (Heb. 11:10, 13-14, 24- 27)

13:15-16 - "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

In the former system the readers offered sacrifices to God through the priests. Christians have a great High Priest in Jesus Christ. They are to offer sacrifices to God through Jesus, who fills this priestly role perfectly and forever. Christians are to offer to God through Christ the sacrifice of praise. They are to acknowledge God for what he has done and simply for who he is, by being thankful and living a life of content. Our very purpose is to praise and glorify God. It is what the Christian will do for all eternity.

"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
I Thes. 5:16-18

The sacrifice of praise must be accompanied by the sacrifice of good deeds and a holy life. 'To 'communicate' basically means to share. To share both material as well as spiritual blessings. Praise of God in both word and deed cannot be separated.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1:27

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."
I John 3:18

The Christian is called to give himself totally to God through Jesus Christ. The Christian himself is to be a sacrifice.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Rom. 12:1-2

"Ye also, as heavenly stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." I Peter 2:5

13:17 - "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

The setting of this letter is one of spiritual as well as political chaos. These Christians were not banding together, gaining strength and security from each other as they did in the 'former days' of persecution. Some were neglecting the church assemblies and they were filled with suspicion and fear. Some were questioning their faith, being drawn back to the old system and the doctrines of the Judaizers.

God ordains men within the church to be overseers. These men have hearts which are established with grace (v. 9) and provide stability, leadership and guidance. The author had already exhorted them to remember the lives and teachings of the leaders which held the church together in the former days (v. 7), and here assures them that men of this caliber are still present within the church. One of the reasons for their situation was that they were not heeding these men. God ordained leadership did exist in this fellowship and the exhortation is to obey and submit to these men. God commands Christians to obey the civil authorities as being established by him. How much more should a Christian obey the men ordained by God to care for their souls? Those of the fellowship are to respect the leaders as being ordained by God. They are to obey their council and heed their exhortations and rebukes.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Rom. 13:1-2

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." I Thes. 5:12-13

The weight of this exhortation to obey and submit is on doctrine and holy living. The elders are to teach the word of God, to uphold it, and to govern by it. However, every group needs rules to be enacted which are necessary for the group to run smoothly and efficiently. These rules should also be obeyed much like we are required to obey the civil rules of our society.

The reason this submission is warranted is because they have been ordained by God to care for the church's spiritual needs. They do not hold the position for their benefit, but for the group's benefit. It is for the members welfare and for the members furtherance in the grace of God.

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." I Peter 5:2-3

When a fellowship submits to the rule of a group of elders, these elders are then accountable to God for their actions and the decisions they make concerning that fellowship.

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." James 3:1

The fellowship is not putting their faith in these men, but their obedience and submission demonstrates their faith in God. This parallels the marriage relationship described in I Peter chapter 3. By submitting to her husband in obedience and faith in God, her husband becomes accountable to God for his actions and the relationship. When the wife is in subjection the burden of accountability falls on the husband.

Obedience and submission by the fellowship will allow the faithful overseer to give account to God with great joy. The opposite is the leader who must come before God in unhappiness, groaning over the state of those over whom he

has been given charge. When people despise the efforts of a faithful leader it is they who suffer great loss for they despise the provision of God.

Moses as well as Jeremiah are examples of faithful ministers who suffered much grief because to the disobedience of their people.

"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies; but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord." Jer. 9:1-3

The Corinthians and Galatians caused Paul much grief.

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Receive ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain." Gal. 3:1-4

Paul and John also experienced the joy of leading obedient and God fearing churches.

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." I Thes. 2:19-20

"For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;" I Thes. 3:9

"I thank God upon every remembrance of you, always in prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;" Phil. 1:3-5

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." III John 1:4

13:18-19 - "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner."

Nearing the end of a very strong letter, the author asks his readers for prayer knowing that if they pray, his letter was taken to heart and the bond

between them would be strengthened. He requests their prayer with a clear conscience. He has spoken the truth and has incorporated his words and beliefs into his lifestyle. As an obvious leader he seeks their obedience and submission, but also puts himself in debt to them for their prayers and fellowship. The author specifically asks them to pray that he may visit them soon, that he can personally take his place as a leader among them. As a faithful overseer his great desire is to minister to them.

"Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."

I Cor. 12:14-15

13:20-21 - "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

The author offers a prayer for his readers, in it reminding them of many great truths which pertain to their situation. The author calls upon the God of peace. It is only God who can dispel the confusion and doubt in their hearts. (Chapter 3 dealt with entering into God's rest) The resurrection of Christ from the dead and his eternal position as the great High Priest is the means as well as the reason of God's peace. The new covenant was established by the blood of Christ and is superior and everlasting.

The author's prayer is for their spiritual growth. He appeals to God to cause the readers to enter into the fullness of his grace and provision. To be made complete and carry out his will which is to bring glory to him through Jesus Christ.

13:22 - "And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words."

The author urges the readers one last time to take his message to heart. Many choices have been presented in this letter. Among them were God's rest versus death in the wilderness, law versus grace, human priesthood versus the everlasting High Priest, and Mt. Sinai versus Mt. Sion. The author here exhorts them to heed his message and to make the proper choice. The author had much

to tell them and wanted to visit them, but felt this letter was necessary until that time.

13:23 - "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you."

The author shares with them the news that Timothy had been set free. We assume that this is the same Timothy mentioned elsewhere in the scriptures. The author knew Timothy was coming to see him and if this came about without any delays, they would come to visit the Hebrew church.

13:24-25 - "Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. Grace be with you all. Amen."

Emphasizing the fact that the letter was addressed to the Hebrew church, the author instructs his readers to greet the leaders as well as all members of the church. The letter was not addressed to the leaders to hand down to the people. Throughout this letter the author is careful not to exalt men or their position in any way. They were used to a priestly system and looked upon these men as closer to God. Even when referencing the old testament he never mentions the human authors. (Heb. 2:6) They were all of the priesthood of believers.

The letter was written in Italy and probably from Rome. The Italian church recognized and greeted them. Only by grace had they come to know the truth and only by grace could they grow in truth and heed the author's message.