

Hebrews 13:18-25: Unless You Know Jesus as a Real Person He Can't Help You

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I. Introduction

Life for a Christian is hard, Jesus warned us that it would be. But that's life; we live in a broken world. So there will be *heartships*, but that's not the problem. The problem is how they beat us down, how they define and shape us over time so that we end up with a miserable, hopeless view of ourselves and our life. How do we escape this? Jesus promises to give us a new life and everything we need to live it, but He can't help us unless He's a real person to us.

II. Hebrews 13:18-25: Unless Jesus is More than a Bible Story to You, He Can't Help You

In closing the letter the author encapsulates what he's talked about throughout the letter, especially in his tremendous benediction: Jesus won't just rescue you from trial and tragedy, He'll give you wings to fly to heights unknown to you before He found you. Through Jesus Christ, God will completely equip you to live your life with success and without regrets despite any and every *heartship* or adversity.

13:18-19, the author concludes the letter by asking this audience to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (12:28)" which includes how they treat strangers and their fellow brethren, how they treat those imprisoned and persecuted, how they behave in their sex life, how they see wealth and their financial resources, will they respond to God when they're in trouble, will they remember the example of those who used to rule over them, where will they get their spiritual guidance: Jesus or the world, how will they respond to Jesus' call to hand over their lives to Him, will they glorify God and thank Him, will they be good and generous, and will they submit to the elders who rule over them? How can this audience do all this, especially while under persecution?

The author uses himself as an example: he's currently imprisoned, so he asks for their prayers so that God will free him. If they've been paying attention, they know that they can go to God with this impossible request (4:16). As for the author he's confident about his situation. Why? Because he and his companions "have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably." He's 100% sure that he's done nothing wrong, nothing deserving of imprisonment. Why is his conscience so clear? Under the Law and the Levitical System, it was impossible to have a clear conscience (9:9). But now that Jesus has come, now that He's removed all sin forever, the author's conscience has been cleared, it's been cleansed, which has freed him "from dead works to serve the living God" (9:14; 10:14, 22), which is why he desires to live honorably in all things.

13:20-21, next the author utters an incredible benediction over his audience. He begins by calling God a "God of peace." Why is this significant? When you enter God's world, when you live your life in His Kingdom, this is what you can expect, absolute peace: Romans 8:6; Galatians 5:22. Why is this important to this audience, why is it important to you? They're living under persecution, what are you living under and would you like a break from it, peace in the midst of your storm (Mark 4:39)?

But He's not simply a God of peace; He's a God of tremendous power, He "brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead." If He can do that, what *can't* He do for you (Romans 8:32)? How difficult is this audience's persecution for God to handle, how hard is your difficulty for God to handle? And who is Jesus? He is our great Shepherd. What's the job of a shepherd? To watch over every need of the sheep. Do you know Jesus that way?

How is God going to help this audience, what is the means by which He will help them and us? "Through the blood of the everlasting covenant." God defeated your real enemy, Satan, and set death and destruction back (2:14-15) through His Son's sacrifice on the Cross...FOREVER! His Covenant is everlasting! What He has promised you will never go away; nothing can ever stop Him from helping you, not your troubles, not your circumstances, not your fears, NOTHING! (Romans 8:38-39). His promise to you is everlasting!

And what has He promised you? To "make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight." He's promised to equip you with everything you need to be someone who is well-pleasing in His sight. Everything you will face in life, EVERYTHING, you can and are able to do. And at the center of what He's provided you is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is in you ready to lead, guide, and equip: He has removed the sting of sin and death forever (2:14-15; 9:12; 10:10), He's cleansed you from all your mistakes (9:14; 10:14), He is there to help you anytime we need it (2:18; 4:15-16), He's able to save you from everything (7:25), He prays for you (7:25), He's granted you 24/7 access to God (6:19-20; 8:1-2; 10:19-22), and He's defeated the one who keeps stealing, killing, and destroying you (2:14). This is why Jesus should be praised forever and ever (1:1-4).

13:22-25, in his closing words the author asks them to bear with this brief word of exhortation. Hebrews is one of the longest epistles in the New Testament, so why does he call it brief? He's actually saying that it's brief in comparison to what he could've said; he actually could've written at even greater lengths about much of what he covered, e.g., 5:11. And he wants them to see this long letter as encouragement, why? Because in Jesus they have everything they need for life! He also informs them that Timothy has been set free (whether from prison or other legal trouble) and if the author is released, then they both will visit this audience. Finally, he wants them to greet all those who rule over them and all the saints (those from Italy who are with the author send their greetings). He closes by asking God to grant them His grace, which is what saved them initially and what will continue to save them now (2:9; 4:16).

Unless you know Jesus as a real person, He can't help you, Christianity is not about going to church, praying, singing songs and reading your Bible. Those are part of Christianity, but they are not Christianity. **Christianity** is about walking with the person of Jesus Christ. It's about living your life with Him, about taking every heartache, every decision, every confusion, every need and every success to Him and then listening for His voice and following it.

III. Conclusion

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.