

Hebrews 13-20-25 **The Benediction!**

Preamble:

In Feb of 2019 (roughly one year ago) we began our sermons series through the book of Hebrews. This morning I will preach the final sermon in this series.

This series is called, "Running to Win the prize." Why this title? The original audience was tempted to stop running the Christian race. They were tempted to leave Christianity for Judaism. The author of Hebrews exhorts them, and he exhorts us, to keep running the race until the very end.

What is next? A five-week series in the book of Jonah followed by a 40-week series in the book of Ephesians.

Prayer:

Please join me in prayer...

Introduction:

For two thousand years millions of pastors have ended Sunday worship services by reading the benediction found in Hebrews 13:20-21.

This morning, thousands of churches around the world will end their worship services by reading or reciting the benediction found in Hebrews 13:20-21.

Hebrews 13:20-21 is by far the most popular benediction in the whole Bible. Why? It is incredibly beautiful.

What is a benediction? The word benediction literally means good word. The opposite is a malediction which means a bad word.

A benediction is a prayer asking God to bless or do good to his people.

Many of the letters in the NT end with a benediction. This letter is no exception.

No doubt, these words were especially meaningful to the original audience. Why? Many of them wondered if they were going to make it until the end. They wondered if God was going to be good to them or bless them until the end?

Maybe you are wondering the same thing this morning???

This prayer of blessing would have given them great hope and confidence that God would preserve them until the end. Let's look at this prayer of blessing in detail. We will look at this prayer under two main headings.

First, the object of the prayer.

Second, the subject of the prayer.

First, the object of the prayer

Who is the author praying to? The object of prayer is described in verse 20...

He is praying to the God of peace!

Hebrews 13:20 (ESV) — 20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

God is the God of peace. Verse 20 describes God the Father. How do we know? As we keep reading verse 20, we learn that this member of the trinity raised Jesus from the dead. Furthermore, the author prays to this member of the trinity. We learn from other parts of the Bible that we pray to God the father, through the son, in the power of the holy Spirit.

God, that is God the father, is the God of peace. This means that he is the source and giver of peace. God is called "the God of peace" at least five other times in the New Testament (Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

I wonder, is this how you think of God the father? Or do you think of God the father as the angry member of the trinity and Jesus as the loving and peaceful member of the trinity? Maybe you think of him as the cold and distant member of the trinity. He seems aloof and unkind. He only loves us because he has to, since Jesus died for us???

Our text says that God, that is God the father, is the God of peace. He loves peace!!! He loves bringing peace to others. He loves getting reconciled to others.

Peace in the Bible is far more than the absence of conflict. Peace comes from the word Shalom and means completeness, wholeness, over all well-being, and universal flourishing.

Application:

God the father is the God of peace, therefore he can provide you with supernatural peace...

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV) — 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What is causing lack of peace in your life???

Something at work?

Your family?

Your roommate?

Your boss?

Your teacher?

God wants to give you peace, since he is the God of peace. The original audience needed to be reminded of this since they were being persecuted, losing their jobs, having this stuff vandalized, and being shunned by friends and family. (See Heb. 10:32-34)

The author is praying to the God of peace!!! But can God actually answer his prayers? Yes. Let's keep reading.

He is praying to the God of peace!

He is praying to the God of power!

Hebrews 13:20 (ESV) — 20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

How powerful is God the Father? After Jesus died on the cross, he was buried in Joseph's tomb, but three days later God the father brought him back from the dead. Do you know anyone else who has the power to raise the dead? No one else on planet earth has the power to raise the dead!!!

The resurrection of Christ is a display of God's mighty power. We see the same theme in Paul's writings...

Ephesians 1:18–20 (ESV) — 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, **19** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might **20** that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

Illustration:

Power is measured in many ways...

Political power (Henry Kissinger lists the 7 most powerful political figures in world history... number one is Julius Caesar)

Financial power (John D. Rockefeller one of the wealthiest business tycoons in world history)

Military power (Napoleon was one of the most powerful military leaders in world history)

Intellectual power (Einstein, Isaac Newton, Kepler)

Physical power (the most powerful man in the world is often determined by the World's Strongest Man competitions started in 1977).

The winner takes home a large cash prize and the coveted title of the world's strongest man.

Many powerful people have come and gone over the centuries....

But no human has ever mustered enough power to raise the dead!!!

God the father has power to raise the dead!!!

He can bring the dead to life. If he has this much power, surely, He can answer the prayers of the saints.

He is praying to the God of peace!

He is praying to the God of power!

He is praying to the God of pity!

Hebrews 13:20 (ESV) — 20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

Jesus Christ is the great shepherd. As the great shepherd he has pity on his sheep. In other words, he is full of compassion for his sheep.

Mark 6:34 (ESV) — 34 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

How much pity did he extend towards his sheep? He died for them!!!

John 10:11 (ESV) — 11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Hebrews 13:20 says that he is not just a shepherd, he is the great shepherd. But why is he called the great shepherd?

He died and then rose from the dead!!! As a result of his resurrection he sits in the place of highest honor, glory and power in the universe.

His exalted state, post resurrection, makes him a great shepherd!!! In his exalted state, at the father's right hand, he has access to unlimited power to do whatever he deems is best for his sheep.

If this shepherd sees a need, He can meet it!!! He is the great shepherd.

Illustration:

Have you ever felt sorry for someone, or felt pity for someone, but you have been unable to help? Visiting Pike Place Market in Grade school and seeing all the homeless people!!!

Seeing all the children in the oncology wing at Sacred heart with incurable cancers!!!

Jesus is the great shepherd, because he not only has pity on his sheep, he is also able to do whatever is necessary to help his sheep.

He is praying to the God of peace!

He is praying to the God of power!

He is praying to the God of pity!

He is praying to the God of promise!

Hebrews 13:20 (ESV) — 20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

The phrase "blood of the eternal covenant" is a reference to the New Covenant, which the author of Hebrews described in great detail in chapters 8,10.

A covenant is a binding agreement or a promise that governs a relationship. God always keeps his promises. God promised way back in Jeremiah 31:31-33 that a new and much better covenant was coming. God kept that promise.

Jesus came and inaugurated the new covenant.

If you are in the new covenant God has promised to

Write his laws on your hearts...

Fill you with his spirit...
Wash away all of your sins...
And enter into an unbreakable relationship with you...

How do we get to be members of the New Covenant? We simply believe...

It is called eternal because it was planned in eternity past and its benefits will last forever.

The inauguration of the New covenant in Christ is proof that God never breaks his promises. If God never breaks his promises, the author of Hebrews can pray boldly, knowing that God will answer his prayers, if he prays according to God's will.

The author of Hebrews prays to

The God of peace!
The God of power!
The God of pity!
The God of promise!

The original audience may have been thinking, "does God have the ability to answer the prayer for blessing in verse 21?"

Verse 20 answers this question decisively. Since he is praying to the God of peace, power, pity, and promise we can know for a fact that God has the ability to answer prayers...

If we want something done, we need to go to the appropriate person.

If you want your car fixed you need to go to a mechanic.
If you want your kidney stones fixed you need to a urologist.
If you want your bathroom plumbing fixed you go to a plumber.
If you want your finances fixed you go to a financial planner.

If you want your prayers answered you go to the God of peace, power, pity, and promise. He has the ability to do what you are asking him to do.

But what is the author of Hebrews specifically praying for? This brings us to the second main point.

First, the object of his prayer.

Second, the subject of his prayer

What is the author of Hebrews praying for? A few things...

He prays for equipping!

Hebrews 13:20–21 (ESV) — 20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, **21** equip you with everything good that you may do his will,...

What does the word equip mean?

In the ANE this word was used by doctors “to set a broken bone.”

By fishermen “to mend a broken net.” (see Matt. 4:21).

By sailors to “to outfit a ship for a voyage.”

By soldiers “to equip an army for battle.” (Wiersbe)

The author of Hebrews prays that God would equip us with good things to do his will. What do we need to be equipped with? In other words, what good things do we need to help us do God’s will?

The answer depends on the situation...

You may need to be equipped with a friend to endure your trial.

You may need to be equipped with a challenging word to overcome temptation.

You may need to be equipped with a book recommend...

You may need to be equipped with a doctrine...

You may need to be equipped with a sermon...

You may need to be equipped with a chapter from the Bible...

Illustration:

Being equipped with the right tools really makes a difference... Trying to fix my sprinkler head with my wife’s kitchen aid blender or spatula is not going to go well.

Being equipped for a trial...

Application:

More than likely the author is praying that the original audience would be equipped with everything they need to persevere. We can pray the same for each other and ourselves.

Can God answer this prayer? Yes, based on verse 20.

He not only prays for equipping!

He prays for enablement!

Hebrews 13:21 (ESV) — 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

In verse 21 we see the tension, we often see in the NT, between our role and God’s role in sanctification or the Christian life.

Justification is monergistic but sanctification is synergistic (explain)

21a “equip you with everything good that you may do his will” we need to do God’s will, He is not going to do it for us.

21b “working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.”

We can only do God’s will in absolute reliance on Jesus Christ, whom we are united to by faith.

We see this tension often in the scriptures...

Philippians 2:12–13 (ESV) — **12** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, **13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

1 Corinthians 15:10 (ESV) — **10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Hebrews 13:21 highlights Christ's enabling power. Our power is found in him or through him, which is a reference to our glorious union with Christ or in Christ.

“According to the famed Greek scholar Adolf Deissman, the term "in Christ" or "in Christ Jesus" occurs some 169 times in Paul's writings. Perhaps the most famous of Paul's "in Christ" statements is 2 Corinthians 5:17 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"” (K. Hughes)

Illustration: moving to St. Louis... trying to find a hotel late at night in Eastern Montana, getting stuck in the parking lot, could not turn the Uhaul truck around with the car trailer on the back, trying to move the car trailer by myself. It is way easier to move a car trailer when it is united to a truck.

Application:

We must rely fully on the enabling power of Christ found in our union with Christ...

The author of Hebrews prays that we would rely on Christ's power!!! Can God answer this prayer? Yes...

How do we rely on Christ's power? We ask God for help in the moment of need!!! It is a simple prayer, but a profound prayer!

The original audience needed power to persevere. God is able to grant that power!!! When he grants the power; he gets all the glory.

This brings us to the last part of verse 21.

*He prays for God's equipping!
He prays for God's enablement!*

He prays for God's glory!

Hebrews 13:21 (ESV) — **21** equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Why did God create universe? For his own Glory!
Why did God send his son? For his own Glory!
Why did God create and save you? for his own glory.

All that God does, he does for his glory.

God is glorified when he displays his peace.
God is glorified when he displays his power.
God is glorified when he displays his pity.
God is glorified when he is true to his promises.

God is glorified when he equips us to persevere.
God is glorified when he enables us to do his will.

Conclusion:

Why did the author of Hebrews write this letter? He wanted to encourage the saint to persevere in the midst of opposition and persecution.

He ends this letter by praying for them. He prays that they would be enabled and equipped to do God's will so that they will persevere until the end.

What is our confidence that God will answer this prayer? Our confidence is rooted in the fact that God wants to be glorified in us. Let's pray...