

Hebrews 13:20-21

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[0 : 0 0] spoken by the Father to His Son at the dawn of Jesus' public ministry, You are my Son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased. And similar words spoken by the Father from heaven at the Mount of Transfiguration, You are my Son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased.

And the Father, of course, had good reason to be well pleased with His Son. Jesus lived and died to please His Father. As Jesus Himself expressed that reality, as it's recorded for us in John's Gospel in chapter 5 and verse 30, I seek not to please Myself, but Him who sent Me. And this is what Jesus did and does, eternally and perfectly. The letter to the Hebrews ends with a benediction that contemplates each of us becoming like Jesus in this regard, pleasing to the Father. Let's read the two verses of the benediction in Hebrews 13 and verse 20. May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, we have described the one who is blessing, and now we enter into the blessing itself, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him. The goal of this benediction, of this prayer, is that we would be pleasing to Him, that we would be pleasing to the Father through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Such an outcome allows us to consider and to contemplate the delightful prospect of us hearing the words of the Father addressed to us, to you and to me, you are my son, you are my daughter whom I love, with you I am well pleased. As we consider this a benediction, let's do so with this prospect very much to the fore in our minds and thoughts. Now, the actual content of the benediction, strictly speaking, is to be found in verse 21 and is preceded by a description of the one who so blesses in terms of what he has done, an act of the God who blesses that serves as the ground and basis for the blessing he extends. And with this in mind, this recognition of how these two verses are divided, we can divide our thoughts and our consideration of the benediction in the terms of what God, the God of peace, has done in the past, that is spoken of and referred to in verse 20, what he has done in the past and what he is doing in the present, which is really the concern of the benediction itself, what God is doing for us in the present. So, what God has done for us in the past and what he is doing in the present. And as we draw things to a close, we'll also note that implicit in the blessing, though not as evident or not as explicit as the first two aspects, implicit in the blessing is also an assurance concerning what God will do in the future. So, very clearly, we're given a description of what God has done in the past, the God who blesses. The blessing itself concerns what he is doing in the present, but implicit, there's also an assurance of what he will do for us in the future. So, with that structure, in mind, we can continue forward. First of all, then, what the God of peace has done in the past.

Now, we can further order what we want to say under this heading by distinguishing between what he has done and how or through whom he has done it. The text itself does that. So, we're considering what he has done, but we're then noticing this distinction between what he has done and how he has done it or through whom he has done it. What then, first of all, is what God has done, what the God of peace has done? Well, what does the text say there in verse 20? May the God of peace, who through the blood of the covenant or the eternal covenant, brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep. What has he done? Well, he's done this. He's brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep. And in what the writers say is concerning what God has done, we're told both the identity of the one who died and the fact of God bringing him back from the dead.

[5 : 3 0] The one who died, the one who died, and of course, even pointing it out may seem unnecessary. It's so clear who it is that is being spoken of. Indeed, he's identified, but let's just go through the process so that we can draw some of the lessons of how he is described. The one who died, the one who was brought back from the dead, is the Lord Jesus. And he is then further

described as that great shepherd shepherd of the sheep. Let's just pause for a moment and think about this title or description that is given to the Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep. This title or description of Jesus serves to both explain his death, from which he was then brought back to life again, and also to confirm his continuing pastoral care over us in the present. He died as the great shepherd. He died as the good shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep, as he himself speaks, again recorded for us in John's gospel in chapter 10. He laid down his life for his sheep, this great shepherd. He did so on our behalf and in our place. This is what he did in dying. But he remains our great shepherd. This is written after these events had occurred, and yet it's written in such a way as to identify Jesus as the one who continues as the great shepherd of his sheep. And so he continues to shepherd over us with tender and loving care in the present. So this is the one that the God of peace brought back from the dead.

This is the one who died, who was dead, who was buried in the grave, and yet who by the deliberate action of the Father was brought back from the dead and is alive today as our resurrected great shepherd.

This is what the God of peace has done. But how did he do this? Because our text covers that or also gives us an insight into that matter of how the God of peace did what he did or through whom he did what he did. What does it say? May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead. So there's an indication of, I suppose we could call it instrumentality, how it is that God did this. How is it that he brought back Jesus from the dead? Well, he did it through the blood of the eternal covenant. What does that mean? The words are familiar. They're Bible words. They reappear in different combinations throughout the Bible, and especially in the letters of Paul and others. But what does it mean that the Father brought back Jesus from the dead through the blood of the eternal covenant? Well, the eternal covenant, and with the emphasis very much on this adjective that describes it, the eternal covenant, points to the plan and purpose of God conceived in eternity to save a people for Himself. And this plan, this eternal plan, became concrete and took shape through the covenant that God established with Abraham and through Abraham with His people. And it involved the reconciliation of His people with Himself, with God, by means of an atoning sacrifice, by means of the shedding of blood, or to use the language of the benediction, the blood of the eternal covenant. What or whose blood could secure this reconciliation? Well, it needed to be the blood of a perfect sacrifice without spot or blemish. And of course, we know that it was the blood of Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep. It was His blood that was shed. It is His blood that is the blood of the eternal covenant.

The blood of our Savior Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, the one who could and would and did lay down His life for sinners. But in what way can it be said that it is through this shed blood, or in this blood of the eternal covenant, that the Father brought back Jesus from the dead? It's only now simply to identify the one who shed His blood. How does that work? How is it that the shed blood of Jesus is able to grant to the Father this capacity, if you wish, to bring Him back from the dead?

Well, to speak of the Father bringing back Jesus from the dead through the shed blood of Jesus is an acknowledgement of the perfect nature of the sacrifice offered that we might even say demanded the vindication provided by the resurrection. It could be no other way. It could be no other way.

[10 : 58] There could be no other outcome to the offering of a perfect sacrifice than the resurrection of the one who so offered Himself. In that sense, it is through that blood of the eternal covenant that the Father brought back Jesus from the dead. It's also the case that this required resurrection, if we can use that language, serves as testimony to the world of the Father's approval. To use the language we use at the beginning, we might say the Father's pleasure with the perfect sacrifice offered.

It could be no other way. Given the blood that was shed, the perfect sacrifice that was offered, there could be no other outcome than the Father bringing back Jesus from the dead. And in so doing, there is also this powerful testimony given to all who would notice and take note that the Father was pleased with what the Son had done, the offering that He had made of Himself. This is what the God of peace has done in the past. And this in turn provides both the backdrop, but also the foundation for what He is doing in the present. We move on to the second element now. What the God of peace is doing in the present. Well, what is it that He's doing? Well, we're told in verse 21, equipping us. May He equip you with everything good for doing His will. Let's just take it up to there

for the moment. Equipping you with everything good for doing His will.

This recognition of what God has done in Jesus to make us who we are, to redeem us, to bring us into God's family, and the immediate moving on to what He requires of us reminds us that there can be no divorce between being and doing. By the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have been redeemed to be God's people, and in consequence to also do the works that correspond to God's people. And it is this doing that is the central subject of the benediction, what God is doing in us and through us in the present. So what is He doing? Well, again, we can distinguish between the what and the how. We did that as we thought of what He'd done in the past. Well, we can do the same as we think of what God is doing in the present. What is He doing, and how or through whom is He so doing? What is He doing? Well, as we've already noticed at the beginning, the heart of what God is doing is making us pleasing to Himself. But notice what is involved in us doing what is pleasing to Him. Or to put it in terms of a question, how do we get there?

How do we get to that place that the lives that we live and what we do would be pleasing to God? How do we get there? Or perhaps it would be better to express it, how does He get us there, to that place that we are pleasing to Him? Well, we've read what He does. God equips us. God equips us with everything good for doing His will. You see, even as those redeemed by the blood of the eternal covenant, we are not equipped to do God's will in our own resources or in our own strength, even as believers. And so God equips us. This equipping involves both providing spiritual resources for us, His Word, prayer, fellowship, and also molding us into men and women capable and desirous of knowing and doing God's will. So we are the ones who need to do His will, but He is the one who equips us so to do. Well, again, we see how there is, as we've come across this time and time again, as we've looked at the benedictions, how there is this work in harmony and partnership between God and the believer that we might enjoy the blessings that He would grant to us. That is already evident, even in this first part of the benediction in verse 21. But there's more, because the writer goes on to speak of how God does more in helping us and in working in us. Because we read, equip you, may He equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him.

Or perhaps that second clause in verse 21 could be more helpfully translated, working in us what is pleasing to Him. So what I mean by that, or what I'm trying to draw out from that, is that we shouldn't see these two parts of verse 21 of the benediction as a separate or distinct activities of God that He is doing in and for us, but rather related. So we could put it this way, that the manner in which He equips us with everything good for doing His will is by working in us what is pleasing to Him.

[16:28] So it's one whole, and I think it's best seen in that manner. God not only saves us, He not only equips us, but having equipped us, He continues to work in us, to help us and to enable us to please Him. This present and active work of God in us is conducted by His Holy Spirit who indwells us. Our doing God's will and so pleasing God is both our duty and responsibility, and yet also, as is very clear from the benediction, it is also from beginning to end God's work in us. God saves us in order that we might do His will.

God equips us with everything good for doing His will, and God is working in us permanently to enable us to do His will and so please Him. That is what God is doing in the present. But then there's also the matter of how He does that, or perhaps rather, through whom does God do this? Well, again, the text gives us the answer to that question. Having concluded this aspect of what the benediction involves, us being equipped, being enabled, God working in us, we then go on and read through Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus Christ that the Father so works. But what does that mean?

Again, the terminology, the language is so familiar. It comes off our tongue very easily, through Jesus Christ. We're always reading that. But what does that actually mean? What it means is that all that the Father does, all that He's doing now, equipping us and enabling us, all that He's doing is through or on the grounds of what Jesus has done as our Redeemer. Certainly it means that. But there's possibly a second and complementary sense of this expression employed by the author through Jesus Christ. Namely this, that what we do for God, which is the concern, it's the outcome that is desired, that we would please God. Well, what we do for God, what we offer to God, is also through Jesus Christ. It's offered to Him and is acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the mediator of the Lord. So we've seen what God, the God of peace, has done in the past, what He's doing in the present, but finally, what He also implicitly and necessarily will do for us in the future.

What is it that this benediction assures us will be what God will do for us in the future? Well, it relates and it follows on very organically, we might say, to what we've already noticed. And it is this, that He will complete the work that He is doing in us. He's equipped us, He's working in us. It's an ongoing work, that's what

He's doing now, but it's an ongoing work that will be completed. He will complete that work. He will make us perfect. He will transform us into the image of His Son. And so we will be, to go back to where we began, we will be altogether pleasing to the Father. Nobody, not even we ourselves, can bring to a definitive halt or finally sabotage His work in us. We may be very foolish and not cooperating with God as we ought. We may put obstacles in the way of the work that God is doing, but whatever we do, however foolishly we act, however unwilling we are to cooperate with God, we cannot finally frustrate His purposes and the work that He is doing in us. And what a comfort that is when we see how foolish we are and how prone we are to put obstacles in the way.

[21 : 10] And of course, we're not commending or encouraging that we would do that, but what a comfort to know that even when we do, that will not finally frustrate God's purposes. In the words of God, spoken through the prophet Isaiah in chapter 43 and verse 13, that we can apply to this matter as to many others, God spoke and continues to speak, I will work, and who shall hinder it? I will work. I have determined what my purpose is for you, my son and my daughter, and I will work, and I will bring that work to completion. And so, in the benediction, we have this implicit assurance of what God ultimately will do for us as He brings to perfection and to completion His work in us. And so, in the light of all this, we can and must join with the author of the benediction in grateful and spontaneous praise to whom be glory forever and ever. Glory to the Father who so works, and glory to the Son through whom He works. May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing

His will. And may He work in us what is pleasing to Him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Well, let's pray. Our God and Heavenly Father, we thank You for all that You have done in the past, all that we know of, and indeed so much more that we know nothing of. But we thank You also for all that You are doing now in us. We thank You for the way which You graciously and generously equip us for doing Your will. We thank You that You are the God who is working in us. And day by day and moment by moment, whether we are conscious of it or oblivious to it, You're the God who is working in us. We do pray that You would forgive us for how slow we are to work with You. Forgive us for the times when we do, consciously or unconsciously, put so many obstacles in the way. When we consider ourselves and we look at ourselves and we see so little progress towards what will be that final, finished work. And yet we thank You that slow though the progress may be, yet it will not be stopped or finally frustrated. For this is Your work and You are a God who finishes what You have begun and none can stand in the way. And we thank You for that. We do pray that You would help us even in this week that has begun to live lives that show more and more evidence of Your work. And we pray that You would help us even in this week so to live.

And these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing now as we draw our service to a close. We're going to sing the second hymn on the sheet that you received earlier on. And we're going to sing this hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness.

Great is Thy Faithfulness, O God my Father. There is no shadow of turning in Thee. Thou changest not. Thy compassions they fail not. As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be. Great is Thy Faithfulness.

Great is Thy Faithfulness. So let's sing this hymn. We'll stand to sing. Thank you for this hymn.

[25 : 34] It is thy faithfulness, O God, my Father. There is no shadow of journeying with thee.

Thou changest thought, and compassion's faith in God. As thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

Greatest thy faithfulness, greatest thy faithfulness. Morning by morning, new blessings I see.

For I have been, and thy hand doth provide. Greatest thy faithfulness, O God, to me.

Summer and winter and springtime and always. Summer and summer and summer and summer.

[27 : 03] Greatest thy faithfulness, greatest thy faithfulness. Join with the nature in manifold witness.

To thy faithfulness, mercy and love. Greatest thy faithfulness, greatest thy faithfulness.

Morning by morning, new blessings I see. Morning by morning, new blessings I see. All I have been, and thy hand doth provide.

Greatest thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. ch is for which Faith, O God, my Father.

■■■ Spirit, II selon Your Son, Eunice ■■ de César 2014, lerinã hêary prêr Hêy ash■■■ lhe■■■ is months dîme sanctify, Thine H driversunlnâ■■■ iniedy.2 Bi-gonne hêy thù put hêr r■■■ vhem blúw■■■ us, grow Lord, r boowin whole day.

[28 : 22] ■■ É placeh ân Regional dîmâs se gîsprit, hêr chce fêr qîr ÷ do nîtem ah tîmmixes h ■■ òmix boaWeipp hêr O fêr ân j ■■■■■. And for today, and bright hope for tomorrow, Blessings of man with ten thousand beside.

Great is thy faithfulness, Great is thy faithfulness, Morning by morning new verses I sing, All I have needed by hand of provided, Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.

May the God of peace, Who through the blood of the eternal covenant Brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, That great shepherd of the sheep, Equip you with everything good for doing his will, And may he work in us what is pleasing to him, Through Jesus Christ, To whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.