

The Great Shepherd of the Sheep

On June 7th last year we begin a sermon series going through the book of Hebrews.

Today 7 months later we are going to finish our journey through this glorious book.

We have seen that Jesus is better

- better than Moses,
- Old Testament High Priests,
- Old Testament Sacrifices,
- better than Aaron,
- better than angels
- better than the law

We spent a few weeks answering the question: How Shall We Then Live focusing on the five core principles of the reformation

- Scripture Alone
- The Glory of God Alone
- Christ Alone
- Faith Alone
- Grace Alone

... also known as the *5 Solas* of the Reformation

We've covered such topics as

- The Importance of Corporate Worship
- That Jesus is the only true mediator of Salvation
- Jesus is the express image of God the Father
- The Nature of Biblical Faith

Today we are going to conclude this study with the point of all of this that we have investigated and considered in this great letter.

All of these great truths points to a certain reality— Jesus is The Great Shepherd of the Sheep

²⁰ Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, ²¹ equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20-21)

In this seemingly simple benediction, the author of Hebrews is asking us to believe 6 things ...

... 6 glorious things which enable us to live the Christian life.

... This is what the author of Hebrews wants us to know that is why he writes: *Now the God of peace ... equip you in every good thing to do His will.*

He wants us to know that every child of God (by virtue of being a child of God) is equipped to Do God's Will

God has not left us to live the Christian life on our own.

Jesus didn't save us from our sins and then say, "Okay, you're on your own. Go do the best you can."

He has equipped us in EVERY GOOD THING!

There is nothing that we need that we don't have to live for God!

God graciously equips His people to do His will.

Augustine, in his Confessions records this prayer he prayed: **"Lord, Command what You will and give what You command."**

Augustine is saying, *"Lord, you can tell me to do anything as long as you'll help me do it."*

The writer of Hebrews is saying that this is exactly what God does!

God has given us 6 things to equip us to live for Him.

1. We have been given peace!

“now may the God of peace.”

That is a very telling statement because not everyone can call God, “the God of Peace.”

If you’ve read much of the Old Testament you have read God being called “the Lord of hosts” as well as “the God of armies.”

... many times, in the Old Testament we see God **marching onto the battlefield** to avenge His name, His glory, His reputation, and His people.

... God is against sin.

... Sinners are the enemies of God.

... I was sinner!

... I deserve to have my sins judged!

But at just the right time, God’s in His great love sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for me ... for us

... for the ungodly

... for the wicked

... and because of that I am (we are) no longer under His wrath

... we were no longer at enmity with God

... Not only are we not His enemies, but we have also been brought into His loving friendship and glorious fellowship.

That, my brother and my sister, is good news!

Do you see it?

We do not obey the commands of Christ so that we can have peace with God

... NO!

We have been GIVEN peace with God—that is why we obey and follow the Lord Jesus Christ!

We are not paying a debt in order to be saved ...

... He has paid the debt He did not owe so that WE MIGHT be saved and have peace!

He is the giver ... we are merely the receivers!

2. We have been given resurrection power!

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep

In this benediction the writer of Hebrews is reminding us that the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is at work in us ...

... this is the power that enables us to live the Christian life.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom. 8:11)

Paul is saying that the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you and me to give us the power to live the new life—the Christian life.

... and Paul goes even further on the implications of Resurrection power.

¹² So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- ¹³ for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:12-15)

Resurrection power gives us the strength to put to death the deeds of the body ...

- ... to live by the Spirit and not in the flesh
- ... and to not be enslaved to the power of fear
- ... this is the power that enables us to be adopted into the family of God.

And that is exactly the thought that the author of Hebrews is drawing to our attention to ...

... *"who brought us again from the dead through our Lord Jesus, so that we might do His will."*

Do you know how many times the resurrection is mentioned in the book of Hebrews explicitly?

Only 1 time ... right here.

The writer of Hebrews has waited all the way until the end of his epistle for this great reveal!

"Dear Christian, the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is at work in you so that you can live the Christian life. That is how you're equipped for every good work!"

3. We have been given the great shepherd

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep

All the way back in John 10 Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd"

... and even then, Jesus was pointing back even further back to Psalm 23.

You and I are never in the valley of the shadow of death without our God!

Here the author of Hebrews is reminding us that our great Shepherd, by virtue of His resurrection, is alive and ever lives to intercede for us.

We are not called to live the Christian life on our own.

What does Jesus the great shepherd say to us?

... “I will never leave you nor forsake you. Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age.”

God has not abandoned us any more than he abandoned Job. He never abandons anyone on whom he has set his love; nor does Christ, the good shepherd, ever lose track of his sheep. - J. I. Packer

Jesus is always with His people as the great Shepherd of the sheep watching over us as we live the Christian life.

4. We have been given total forgiveness

through the blood of the eternal covenant

We who were totally depraved are now totally forgiven!!!

Let me tell you something absolutely glorious.

After you have been in heaven for a billion years or even a trillion years, you will not be more forgiven than you are right now if you have trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior...

How do I know this?

Because the blood of Jesus Christ is the propitiation and pardon for all of your sin ... and this propitiation is an everlasting and eternal covenant!

... (ha) that is something the blood of bulls and goats could never do!

... **SO**, on those days when you are downcast and discouraged you need to remember that your sins have been **forever separated from you** as far as the east is from the west.

... and when God took away your sins ... He took them away forever!

5. We have been made HIS workmanship

equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight

The writer of Hebrews is saying that God's is work in you makes your good work possible.

Grace is not a "get out of work free" card.

God intends to save us and make us fruitful ...

... and that is good news!

The basis of our salvation is not good works **BUT** the goal of God's work in you, is your good works.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph. 2:10)

We were not saved **BY** good works **BUT** we were saved **TO** good works.

... and the Apostle Paul explains exactly how this happens.

For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13)

Now look at it ... that is almost exactly what the author of Hebrews is saying here in this benediction...

Listen.

May God ... *equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight*

I'm not saying that the author of Hebrews is plagiarizing Paul ... I'm saying the author of Hebrews might likely be Paul. (lol)

God does not save you and then say, "you're on your own. go get sanctified."

No!

... He is at work in you to accomplish His purposes and His will.

God is more committed my sanctification than I am.

That is incredibly good news!

God's good work in you makes your good work possible.

6. We have been given union with Christ

working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

Jesus not only saves us, but our union with Him is also the life force.

... every good thing that comes to us and through us... first comes THROUGH Jesus!

Everything! (our) salvation, sanctification and glorification are totally dependent upon our union with Jesus!

God, by His Holy Spirit He unites to Jesus Christ and seals us...

... this is how we are able to live the Christian life.

And why has God done this?

And it's done for His glory – “to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

In other words, as God works in us so that we live the life that He has called us to live ...

... He gets all the praise and the glory.

... We can't take any of the credit because **He's** the One at work in us.

As the old saying goes:

“Lord, everything good in me is due to you. The rest is all my fault.”

I want to leave you with one last verse which I believe gives us interesting insight into the believers who first received this letter.

But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. (Heb. 13:22)

If you took the time to read the letter to the Hebrews out loud (as it was originally) it would take you a little less than an hour.

When this letter was first received the pastor stood before the people and read this letter through from beginning to end ... and they listened.

So by the time we come to these last verses the congregation had been listening for for almost and hour.

- Some of the things he has said have been challenging.
- Some of the things that he has said have been convicting.
- Some of the things that he has said to them have been instructive.
- Some things have been a warning.
- ... and Some of the things that he has said have been glorious.

... Now, here at the end he says, “Bear with this brief letter.”

I love that!

He did not suppose the Word of God, nor the preaching of the Word of God, to be laborious.

He operated from the assumption that God's people love and hunger for God's word.

We have been given peace with God, power, the great Shepherd, total forgiveness, made his workmanship, and united with Christ. Now, let's live like it.