

Insert Title Here
Hebrews 13:20-21

Introduction:

Christians need to be alarmed at the claim that Jesus is God. Jesus was a very real human being. It is absolutely astonishing to think that a very real human being could be 100% deity.

- Jesus grew up in a dusty village as the son of a carpenter.
- He lived during a time of political turmoil for his people.
- He experienced the full range of human emotions, from unbridled joy to deep sorrow.
- He had friends and enemies.
- He perspired and got tired; he bled and died.
- Indeed, by some measures, he was not a particularly remarkable man. He led no army, held no political office, wrote no books, had no wife or children, left no estate, and never traveled even 100 miles from home.

Yet, for more than 2000 years, we find that billions of people have worshiped him as their Lord and their God.

I love the way N.T. Wright begins the introduction to his book on worship:

How can you cope with the end a world and the beginning of another one? How can you put an earthquake into a test-tube, or the sea into a bottle? How can you live with the terrifying thought that the hurricane has become human, that the fire has become flesh, that life itself came to life and walked in our midst? Christianity either means that, or it means nothing. It is either the more devastating disclosure of the deepest reality in the world, or it's a sham, a nonsense, a bit of deceitful play-acting. Most of us, unable to cope with saying either of those things, condemn ourselves to live in the shallow world in between. We may not be content there, but we don't know how to escape.¹

The way of escape begins by setting your minds to pondering the devastating disclosures revealed in Scripture about the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is the man Christ Jesus who is the fire become flesh, life itself walking in our midst.

Let me do my best at setting your mind on some really devastating truths and pray that God will unsettle us from living in the shallow end of reality and give us eyes to see the deep realities of his existence and person.

I want our text today to be a sermon someone else preached. This sermon is an old one; it is a timeless one. It is a sermon truly inspired by God. This sermon is the book of Hebrews. Let's begin this morning with the sermon's closing prayer:

¹ N.T. Wright, *For All God's Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 1.

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

We do not know who wrote the book of Hebrews. Most of the ancients ascribed it to Paul, but we don't know. This passage, however, seems very Pauline. It is a massive run-on sentence with one simple main clause and a ton of modifying clauses added on for effect – grounding effect.

The main clause is simple: “May God equip you to do his will.” That’s it! Do you see it? All I did was strip away all of the modifiers. May God of peace equip you to do his will.

What a fitting and appropriate way to end a sermon like the book of Hebrews. For twelve chapters he trumpeted the supremacy of Christ over all things. He warned them and urged them not to turn aside from following him with utmost allegiance. In chapter 13 he gave them a list of nine exhortations as to how they could live out the supremacy of Christ over all things in areas like relationships, sexuality and marriage, leadership and submission and money. Now he parts paths with a prayer for present power – “May you be equipped by God to do his will.” His will is clear: They need to honor the supremacy of Christ over all things.

The prayer is really built in two parts: (1) the one part referring to an end (2) and the other part consisting of the means to the end.

- The end – that you may be equipped to do his will.
- The means – by God working in you that which is pleasing in his sight.

Do you see that?

So the main concern, the central request is really pretty simple: May God equip you to do his will by working in you that which is pleasing in his sight.

Do you understand the power behind that request?

Do you understand the need for that request?

THE NEED

The word for “equip” means to set something straight; to mend what has been broken; to restore to usefulness again. It means to prepare something for its proper use.

You see, we are all by nature utterly unfit to obey the will of God; we do not know it; we do not love it; we cannot do it. Only God can render us fit for doing his will. Unless God works, we cannot.

You Need Reconciliation

Now, first, the author says, God must work in order to secure peace – that is – reconciliation with Him. So he offers this request to the God of peace. In answering the

question, why address God as the “God of peace,” he also simultaneously shows us the power behind the request.

God is the God of peace because he secured our peace. How? This is very noteworthy. He did it by preparing, by fitting, by equipping another man to do his will.

Go with me to the other place the word for “equip” is used in the sermon to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:5-10 (ESV)

⁵ Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” ⁸ When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The very God who perfectly equipped Jesus to do his will in going to the cross, thus **securing our sanctification**, our peace, is the very same God the author now prays will fit you and me to do his will. That’s one part of the answer. There is power in the request because it is the same God. But there is more.

Back in our text, the God of peace raised Jesus from the dead by the blood of the eternal covenant. Where does that come from?

Hebrews 9:11-15 (ESV)

¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. ¹⁵ Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

There are a number of important phrases here.

First, note the correlation between the blood of Jesus, the eternal inheritance, and the new covenant. The NC possesses eternal promises secured by the blood of Jesus. So in a summary statement the blood of Jesus is the blood of the eternal covenant. That is easy enough to fit together. Oh, but it’s deeper...

Look again at 9:11. But when Jesus appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent [where is that greater tent? Here comes a clue] (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by the means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus **securing an eternal redemption.**”

Answer this question: By what means did Jesus enter heaven?

Answer: by the means of his own blood.

Answer this question: When did he enter heaven? Was it when he died? Or was it when he ascended? 9:24 answers the question by telling us where he is now.

²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

There is one more link we have to make before I can make my point. Go back to 9:12. What did the blood of Jesus secure? The answer is that it secured an eternal redemption. Look at 9:15. How is Jesus the mediator of a new covenant? The answer is in the phrase, “since a death has occurred that redeems us.”

Here is the million dollar question: How do you know that the death of Jesus was sufficient for securing an eternal redemption, ratifying a new covenant, and purchasing an eternal inheritance?

Because Jesus was allowed into the presence of God himself by means of his blood (v.11-12). And the only way you and I can know that the blood, the death was sufficient is in the resurrection. “The God of peace, who brought again from the dead by the blood of the eternal covenant...” (13:20).

That which chapter 9 taught by implication – chapter 13 makes explicit. The resurrection was by means of the blood of the covenant because the blood that secured the new covenant was sufficient for gaining access into the holiest of all places – heaven itself. There Jesus still sits as the great high priest who will never die. Thus, his redemption is eternal, his covenant is eternal, his inheritance is eternal and his promises are eternal.

Look at...

Hebrews 7:23 (ESV)

²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office,²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Here is how the logic was working for the writer of Hebrews when he started 13:20

1. Jesus Christ is the great shepherd of the sheep.
2. As the great shepherd of the sheep, he laid down his life for the sheep.

3. God brought him back from the dead.
4. When God brought Jesus back from the dead, He did so by the blood of the eternal covenant.
5. In bringing Jesus back from the dead by the blood of the eternal covenant, God acted as the God of peace.
6. It is to this kind of a God – a God who makes peace with his people – that I want to make a request...

You see, the very God who equipped Jesus to do his will, can equip you and me to do his will. That is, He can work in us that which is pleasing in His sight.

In order for you and me to live out the will of God in acts of obedience, good works, sharing, etc. there must first be working within. John Brown put it this way:

“In order to external good works, there must be internal good principles. In order to conform to the will of God in life, there must be conformity to the will of God in the heart”

The very same God who raised Jesus from the dead did so by means of the very same blood that secured the New Covenant promises:

Go to...

Hebrews 10:16 (ESV)

¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,”

Folks, we had better learn these two verses by heart.

If God is not working in you to fit you with the proper heart, you will never be able to change your behavior.

This is an Inside – Out Gospel

We need to learn how to bring behavior modification by enacting heart change.

We need to learn how to address ourselves at the deepest possible level of the heart.

We had better learn how to pray this way:

“Oh God, that you might equip me to do your will with the members of my body by working in my heart that which is pleasing in your sight.”

Change me at the level of my heart!

The blood of the covenant

- sealed your pardon,
- secured your redemption,
- purchased your inheritance, and
- completes your sanctification

And the proof that it is all a reality is the resurrection of Jesus by the blood of the eternal covenant.

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