

ONE LAST THING

"GIVE THIS" HEBREWS: 13:20-21

This Week's Core Competency

Prayer – I pray to God to know him, to lay my requests before him and to find direction for my daily life. Psalm 66:16-20

16 Come and listen, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me.

17 I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.

18 If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;

19 but God has surely listened
and heard my voice in prayer.

20 Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!

The writer to the Hebrews closes his letter with a request for prayer followed by a prayer of his own. In verse 18 he writes, "Pray for us . . . I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon." And then in verses 20-21 he prays, "May the God of peace . . . equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him." His prayer concludes with the doxology, "[the God of peace] to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Commentators typically use the words *benediction*,

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

– the apostle Paul

prayer, and *doxology* when describing these verses. And since the same literary forms are found frequently throughout Paul's thirteen letters, the apostle's use of them has received the most attention. Paul regularly opens and/or closes his epistles with benedictions described by one writer as "both affirmations regarding the grace and peace of God in which they [the readers] already participate and (wish-) prayers that they may appreciate and experience these blessing more fully" (P. T. O'Brien, "Benediction, Blessing, Doxology, Thanksgiving," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 68). When these benedictions appear in closings, another commentator labels them "wish-prayer benedictions" (W. B. Hunter, "Prayer," 727). He writes: "Though wording varies considerably, all of the Pauline letters close with wish-prayer benedictions. 2 Corinthians 13:14 is a classic example, 'May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all'" (728). The benediction found in Hebrews 13:20-21 is a bit unusual. It contains both a wish-prayer (vv. 20-21a) and a doxology (v. 21b)—a short, spontaneous ascription of praise to God that frequently appears at the end of prayers, hymns, and focal sections of New Testament letters (O'Brien, 69). The epistle of Jude concludes likewise with a similar, perhaps even more familiar, benediction: "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen" (v. 24).

How are contemporary readers to respond to

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benedictions, prayers, and doxologies when we run across them in the text? When we run across stories, we respond by *identifying* with them. When we run across doctrines, we respond by *believing* them. When we run across commands, we respond by *obeying* them. When we run across warnings, we respond by *heeding* them. When we run across benedictions and prayers, I'm suggesting that we respond by recognizing that the requests contained in them express the will of God for us as believers. When the writer to the Hebrews prays that God equip his readers with "everything good for doing his will," he makes it clear that they should not only do God's will but also trust him to equip them to do so—and so should we. When he prays that God "work in us what is pleasing to him," he reiterates that they are powerless to please God apart from his equipping power at work in them through Jesus Christ—and so are we. And finally by way of inference, they might wisely pray his prayer for them for themselves individually as well as their families and corporately for their church as well as the larger body of Christ—and so should we. When we run across doxologies, I'm suggesting that we can do no better than join the writer in his spontaneous praise to God. When the writer to the Hebrews exclaims "glory be to the God of peace who by his infinite power resurrected our Lord from the grave"—so should we.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Hebrews: 13:20-21

Cf. another translation

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, 21 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 for ever and ever. Amen.

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. (NASB)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "may" in vv. 20, 21.
- * Bracket "of peace" in v. 20.
- * Circle "through" in vv. 20, 21.
- * Bracket "blood of the eternal covenant" in v. 20.
- * Underline "Lord Jesus" in v. 20.
- * Circle "great Shepherd" in v. 20.
- * Circle "equip" in v. 21.
- * Underline "everything good for doing his will" in v. 21.
- * Box "for" indicating *purpose* in v. 21.
- * Underline "what is pleasing to him" in v. 21.
- * Circle "whom" in v. 21.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. God is frequently referred to as the "God of *peace*." What do you infer about God and about the readers from the use of this expression?
2. "The *blood* of the eternal covenant"—what blood is that? (See 9:11-15.)
3. "The blood of the *eternal covenant*"—what covenant is that? (See 8:3-13.)
4. According to verse 20, "the blood of the eternal covenant" is related (i.e., "through") to the resurrection. Explain how so.
5. The *shepherd* metaphor is a rich one. What does "great Shepherd" suggest to you about Jesus?
6. Verse 21 contains the writer's twofold "wish-prayer." Identify his twofold request.
7. "Everything good" in verse 21 doesn't mean *absolutely* every good thing, does it? Explain.
8. Verse 21 refers to "his will." Whose will is the writer talking about and how does he define it?
9. To *whom* does "whom" refer in verse 21?
10. **Discussion:** Verses 20-21 contain the writer's wish-prayer for his readers. Talk about how we might respond to it.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The writer of the book of Hebrews closes his letter with a *benediction* that contains a *wish-prayer* (vv. 20-21a) and a *doxology* (v. 21b). On the significance of benedictions, one commentator writes: "In the ancient world benedictions were important to an address, and in the Jewish context specifically a benediction was an aspect of worship. They expressed a wish of well-being for the reader or hearer and often followed a general formula, such as our author's 'may the God of peace,' common in Paul's letters, and 'to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen' (13:20-21). However, a writer could craft a benediction to address specific needs of the audience or to express a summary of his main message. Thus, the author of Hebrews ends with a prayer containing the essential elements of his book. At the heart of his message is Christ's work of effecting the new covenant and God's work in us to do his will. The author wants believers to live out God's will in light of the work of Christ" (George H. Guthrie, *The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews*, 443).

He begins by invoking "the God of peace." His reference to God as the *source* and *giver* of peace suits his readers' situation well. They lived in perilous times. As Jewish Christians they had faced one form of persecution or another so much so that they were tempted to go back to the practice of Judaism to escape it. To make matters worse, in the words of one writer, "They may have had doubts about who their true leaders were" (Leon Morris, "Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12:155). The tension between the two is suggested in verse 17: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."

An unexpected allusion to the resurrection follows. Through it he makes the point that God is able to grant them peace and meet their needs. Using language reminiscent of the Exodus, he reminds them that God manifested his great power when he brought back Jesus from the dead. "While the creation of the universe stands as an example of the power of God, that power is exemplified to a greater degree in the redemption of Israel from

bondage in Egypt. But the climactic demonstration of the exceeding greatness of God's power is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead (Eph. 1:19-20)" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *A Faith that Endures*, 235-36). God did this, he says, "through the blood of the eternal covenant." In other words, when Jesus died, he ratified a new covenant that replaced the old Mosaic covenant. In Luke 22:20 regarding the significance of the cup, he tells his disciples, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you," and in Hebrews 9:12 speaking of Jesus, the writer says, "He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption." Through the offering of himself as a sacrifice for sins, one time for all time (10:12), God brought him back from the dead. He who laid down his life for his sheep (Jn 10:15) is the *great* Shepherd. "Although Moses is 'the shepherd of the sheep' whom God 'led out' from the land of Egypt, Jesus is 'the great shepherd of the sheep' whom God 'led out' from the realm of the dead. He alone is the mediator of an everlasting covenant" (William L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol.47b, *Hebrews* 9-13, 562).

From the resurrection the writer moves on to his twofold request. First, he asks God to "equip" the Hebrews with everything they need to do his will, and second, he asks him to "work" in both the readers and himself whatever is pleasing to him. Clearly, the idea of doing God's will is linked to the idea of God working in them. The writer would no doubt agree with Paul who tells the Philippians, "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (2:12b-13). Keying off of the three different nuances of the word translated "equip" (see note v. 21 *equip*) and speaking like a pastor, Warren W. Wiersbe writes: "Tenderly, he wants to set the 'broken bones' in our lives so that we might walk straight and run our life-races successfully. He wants to repair the breaks in the nets so that we might catch fish and win souls. He wants to equip us for battle and outfit us so that we will not be battered in the storms of life. In brief, He wants to

mature us so that He can work in us and through us that which pleases Him and accomplishes His will" ("Hebrews," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:330).

From his twofold request the writer's thought moves seamlessly into his closing doxology. In verse 21 "his will" is God's will and "what is

pleasing to him" is what is pleasing to God. Therefore, to him, i.e., to the God of peace who brought back Jesus from the dead, "be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

The Message of the Passage

Pray that the God of peace might equip you with everything you need to do his will and might work in you what is pleasing to him as you glorify him for bringing Jesus back from the dead.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following living questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 21 *may* "This prayer has the general structure of a collect in the third person, consisting of (a) the invocation ('Now the God of peace'), (b) an adjective clause setting forth the ground on which the following petition is based ('who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus'), (c) the main petition ('make you perfect in every good thing to do his will'), (d) a subsidiary petition ('working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight'), (e) a pleading of the mediatorial merit of Christ ('through Jesus Christ'), (f) a doxology ('to whom be the glory for ever and ever'), and (g) the 'Amen'" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, 410). Note: a "collect" is a short five-part prayer used in Christian liturgy.
- v. 21 *of peace* This genitive phrase "identifies God as the source and giver of peace" (Lane, 560). "The fact that God is invoked as 'the God of peace' may suggest that the community was troubled by disunity, which required to be healed if the pleasure of God was to be wrought out in their midst. It is true that in the Old Testament 'peace' has the fuller sense of well-being and salvation, but the Greek sense of the word would come more readily to our author's mind than the Hebrew sense" (Bruce, 410; cf., Lane 560).
- v. 20 *through* The Gk preposition, *en*, can have a number of different nuances; cf., "by" (ESV, NJB, NRSV); "with" (HCSB); "as a result of" (GNT). The precise nuance here is difficult to pin down. One commentator writes: "The allusion to Zech 9:11 LXX, as well as the construction of the strophe in Heb 13:20, shows that the phrase concerning the eternal covenant is to be understood causally ('because of the blood,' 'by virtue of the blood') . . . Jesus was led out from among the dead by virtue of his unique and unrepeatable pouring out of his own blood (cf. 9:18-28; 10:11-18)" (Lane, 563). Another writes: "Jesus was brought up from death 'by the blood of the eternal covenant' (AV, RSV, NEB); that is to say, His resurrection is the demonstration that His sacrifice of Himself has been accepted by God and the new covenant established on the basis of that sacrifice" (Bruce, 411).
- v. 20 *blood . . . covenant* Cf., 9:11-15; Lk 22:20. "The phrase 'blood of the covenant' alludes to Jesus' death as a covenant sacrifice (cf. Exod 24:8; Heb 9:20). The qualifying adjective [*aionios*], 'eternal,' celebrates the fact that the atoning work of Jesus has eternal validity" (Lane, 563). "The phrase 'the blood of the eternal covenant' echoes Ch. 9:20, where Moses speaks of 'the blood of the covenant' confirmed by God with Israel on the basis of the law. But now a better sacrifice has been offered, and the new covenant ratified thereby is superior to the older one in this respect among others, that it endures for ever" (Bruce, 411-12).
- v. 20 *brought back* Cf., Isa 63:11. "In this benediction he [the writer] wants to remind the readers especially of the powerful activity of God, seen supremely in the resurrection of Christ" (Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, TNTC, 278).
- v. 20 *our Lord Jesus* "Last in this verse in the Greek (and with some emphasis) come the words 'our Lord Jesus.' This expression is unusual outside of Acts, where it occurs a number of times. It combines the lordship of Christ and his real humanity, two themes of continuing importance" (Bruce, 155).
- v. 20 *great Shepherd* "It might have been expected that this writer would have preferred the high priest description, especially in view of the mention of the blood of the covenant, but his choice of the shepherd imagery contributes to the richness of his view of Jesus. There is a particular tenderness in the shepherd metaphor which has never failed to appeal strongly to people of all ages" (Guthrie, 278).
- v. 21 *equip* Cf., "provide you" (GNT); Gk. *katartidzo*. "This is an unfamiliar word to us, but it was familiar to the people who received this letter. The doctors knew it because it meant 'to set a broken bone.' To fishermen it meant 'to mend a broken net' (see Matt. 4:21). To sailors it meant 'to outfit a ship for a voyage.' To soldiers it meant 'to equip an army for battle' (Wiersbe, 2:330). "In this context perhaps the meaning is 'supply you with what you need to live the Christian life'" (Bruce, 155).
- v. 21 *to whom* To Jesus Christ or to the God of peace? Grammatically it could be either. However, it more likely refers to the invocation rather than its closest antecedent "Jesus Christ" (see Lane, 565). Nevertheless, "it seems that a good case can be made for either. I do not see how the question can be resolved. Perhaps the writer was not making a sharp distinction" (156).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Special Note to Parents: During the month of May, kids' teaching will not align with adult teaching. The *Family Scrolls* will follow the texts that kids are learning on Sunday morning. During His earthly ministry Jesus often used parables to illustrate principles. Parables are earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. Jesus used these stories to help explain spiritual truths so that His listeners would understand the things of God. Next week we will be studying Luke 15:1-7. This parable paints a beautiful picture of God's love for us. Have you ever lost something valuable? What joy when you finally find it! Plan a fun family evening to help illustrate this story to your kids. Hide a valuable object in the house and have everyone look for it. When the object is found, turn up the music and have a special dessert. It's time to celebrate! Jesus said He rejoices when a person turns to Him. This would be a great opportunity for you to share your testimony with your kids. When were you "found" by Jesus? If you have experienced it, tell you kids about your baptism. How has your life changed since trusting Christ? When they hear our stories, our children are encouraged to build faith stories of their own. What an important legacy you leave, Parent. I'm praying for you as you persevere!

What Does The Bible Say

Read: Read Luke 15:1-7

1. Who was gathering around Jesus?
2. What does the shepherd do when he finds his lost sheep?
3. When is there rejoicing in heaven?

What Do You Think

1. Why do you think the Pharisees were upset that Jesus was talking to "sinners"?
2. What do you think "repent" means? Ask your parents if you need help.
3. Have you repented of your sins?

What R U Going To Do

Play hide-and-seek with some friends this week. When you are finished playing, take the opportunity to tell your friends that Jesus looks for people to have a friendship with Him. You are being a light to your friends and leading them to the Good Shepherd.

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Salvation by Grace - I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

Memory Verse

Luke 15:7 - I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.