

The Evidences Of Faith – Part 2

Hebrews 13:10-25

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We're going to have gone through all thirteen chapters of the book of Hebrews. Again, to remind you, the book of Hebrews was written to Jewish believers that had come to faith in Jesus Christ as Messiah, but they were under persecution and opposition and facing great difficulties by their brethren Jews, not believing brethren Jews but by Jews, who are actually unbelievers, so they were being tempted to go back to Judaism. It's really that simple. The whole book of Hebrews, and we get the passage tonight, is a word of exhortation to go on, to go forward, to not go back, to not be discouraged, to "...lift up the hands which hang down, and,"—to strengthen—"the feeble knees. And make straight paths for your feet," so "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." All through the book of Hebrews we find these exhortations after we find the instruction.

In Hebrews 13, the writer closes with several admonitions and words of encouragement. The first section deals with our identification with Christ. The theme revolves around, as believers in Jesus, we have an altar, and I'll explain what that means. Follow with me as we read verses 10-16. He says, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. 11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. 12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Here's the exhortation, "Let us go forth,"—because we have an altar, we have Jesus Christ who died on the cross—"Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. 14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. 15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. 16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Go back with me to verse 10, "We have an altar." Why would the writer of Hebrews tell these Jewish believers, "We have an altar," and here's the reason why. The Jews who didn't believe in Jesus actually were chiding the Jews who believed in Jesus, the Hebrews that it was written to, and actually sang to them, "You have no altar as believers in Jesus. You have no sacrifice as believers in Jesus. You have no priest. You have no way to access God." They were actually chiding, probably you would almost think that in verse 10 that the chiders, the mockers, were actually saying to these believing Jews, "You have no altar." What does the writer of Hebrews say? "We have an altar." What he's going to do is what he's done through the whole book of Hebrews, he's going to contrast that we have the cross of Jesus Christ, the better sacrifice and that we have an access to God by Him and that we go outside, "...the camp, bearing his reproach." They were being reproached. They were being put down. They were being mocked, "You don't have an altar."

Before I even get into it, let me kind of make a secondary application that's not what is in context with Hebrews but is applicable. Sometimes those who have come to Christ out of

Roman Catholicism...any time I mention Roman Catholicism somebody gets maybe a little offended or upset. I'm not attacking Roman Catholicism, but if you were somebody who becomes a believer, sometimes their fellow Roman Catholic friends will say, "Well, you don't have a priest. You don't have a Mass. You don't have the sacraments. You don't have catechism. You don't have this, you don't have that. You don't have the incense. You don't have the access to God." Sometimes as a believer in Jesus, an "ex-Roman Catholic" will start feeling maybe, "Yeah, maybe you're right. Maybe we made a mistake coming to this Protestant church or coming to Jesus or this whole born-again thing." They can be intimidated to go back to legalism or ceremonialism and forget that they have everything they need in Jesus Christ. It applies in that way.

In context, there is the Jew who has an altar and he says, verse 10, "...whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle," refers to the non-Christian Jews, those unbelieving Jews who haven't come to Christ, and they're still going to the temple, still eating the sacrifices given by the priests, and using that as access to God. He's saying they have no approach to God in reality because they haven't come to Jesus Christ, so it's the cross of Jesus Christ that is our altar. What is the altar for the believer in the new covenant, the New Testament believer? It is the cross of Jesus Christ. When he talks about the blood of Christ, he's talking about His substitutionary, sacrificial, atoning work on the cross. When you go through all the rites and the rituals and the hocus-pocus of the priest, that's something that is old covenant. It was a picture, and God has the reality now in Christ, so why would you want to go back? Why would you want to come to Christ and then leave Christ and go back to pure ceremonialism that's empty and there's no substance which is Jesus Christ so, "We have an altar."

He's trying to encourage these Jewish believers, "Don't be discouraged. Don't go back. Don't be intimidated by your Jewish people that tell you, you have no altar. We have an altar and those who are going to the tabernacle, "...whereof they have no right to eat," that's under the old covenant." "For,"—gives the rationale, verse 11—"the bodies of those beasts,"—the sacrifices, the rams, the goats, the animals they brought—"whose blood is brought into the sanctuary,"—that's the earthly sanctuary in Jerusalem—"by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp." He's instructing them that the priest brought the sacrifice, but they would actually take the sacrifice and burn him outside the camp. There's a significance there in verses 12-14, that is, that we should also "bear his reproach." In verses 10-11, we have an altar; and then in verses 12-14, we also identify with Christ not only in the altar, the cross, but we have to "bear his reproach." We also have a city, not the earthly Jerusalem but the heavenly, that we look for, "Wherefore Jesus also,"—here's the application—"that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." They would sacrifice the animal, but they would take the blood outside the camp, outside the city of Jerusalem.

When Jesus died, it is important to understand this passage, He was crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem, so that's consistent with His death. He was crucified on Golgotha, also known as Calvary, and it's called the place of the skull is what the word Golgotha means, but it was outside of the city of Jerusalem, so we go outside the city to bear his reproach, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp,"—that "camp" is a little challenging sometimes to

understand what he's talking about, is the actual city of Jerusalem, "bearing his reproach. 14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." The contrast in verse 14 is between the earthly city of Jerusalem, the old covenant of law and rites and rituals and Judaism and then the cross, which is the new altar, is outside the camp, so we go forth, "bearing his reproach. 14 For here have we no continuing city,"—that is, Jerusalem would be destroyed.

It's interesting that in 70 A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish nation was dispersed. It's interesting that from 70 A.D. officially, the dispersion or the diaspora of the Jews did not actually reverse until 1948 when Jews began to turn back to Jerusalem and to Israel and were rebirthed as a nation, but Judaism was done away with in Christ, who is the substance, so why would you want to go back to the old system. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come,"—which is a reference to heaven, like Abraham, "...looked for a city...whose builder and maker is God."

In verses 15-16, we also have spiritual sacrifices. So we have an altar, for us it's the cross; we "bear his reproach" outside the city, we're not looking for an earthly city, Jerusalem, but we're looking for a heavenly city, Zion; and we also have spiritual sacrifices, so the Jews would chide the believing Jews in Jesus, "You have no sacrifices," and when we come to church, like we do tonight, we didn't bring a goat, a ram, a lamb, or an animal to sacrifice, Jesus already died on the cross, Amen?, once and for all, and we worship Him for that, so we are all priests. We sometimes think, Well, maybe we don't have a priest any longer. Well, we are priests, and we all have access to God. You don't have to go to a priest, you are a priest and you offer sacrifices to God, not an animal but you offer, "...the fruit of our lips," which is worship and praise to God. When we sing to the Lord in the context of this Hebrews passage, it speaks about our lips, so it's talking about verbally praising and singing to the Lord, is actually to be a sacrifice offered to God.

Look at verses 15-16. It's a marvelous verse. "By him,"—that's Jesus Christ—"therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God." Now, put this together. Verse 10, we have an altar; verse 13, "Let us go forth;" verse 15, "...let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such,"—here it is—"sacrifices God is well pleased." We do have sacrifices, we are priests, and we have access to God, so you don't have to feel second class or you have to be left out, we have all these things.

Go back to verse 15, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." This is a marvelous, marvelous verse where we as God's people bring, "the sacrifice of praise to God,"—and the phrase there—"continually." As believers in the new covenant, we're to actually be worshiping, glorifying, and praising God with, "the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." The praise is praising God for who He is; the "thanks," verse 15, is giving Him thanks for what He's done; and when it says, "...to his name," that's to glorify and honor His name or His character or His person. When we praise the Lord, we're saying, "Thank You, Lord, for who You are," without Him having to do anything, just for who He is. The more you know God, the better you'll praise Him.

By the way, Christianity sings. Christians sing. You might say, "Well, I don't sing very good." I didn't say you sing good. The Bible says to make a joyful—what? Noise, so make some noise. If you don't sing good, just make a soft noise. Can you imagine somebody who's not a Christian, and it happens all the time, comes into this church and all these people just start singing. Now, if you're not a Christian, that's creepy. The most they can find is maybe at a baseball game where they sing, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" or the national anthem or something like that. When they come to church, people are closing their eyes, raising their hands, smile on their face, and they're really meaning what they're saying. They're singing to the Lord. They think, This is kind of weird. And then, they come back the next week and the same people are doing the same thing. They come back a third week, same people singing again. It's like, "What's wrong with these people?" They conclude they've either got something or they've lost something.

It's kind of an oxymoron to say, "I'm a Christian, but I don't sing." When you accept Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into your heart, and when He fills your heart it says you'll be, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." The Greek phrase in Ephesians literally means that He plucks the strings of our hearts, that our hearts become a harp and He plucks the strings of our heart, and our worship begins to sing.

I know I make reference to this quite a bit, but when I became a Christian after being raised in church my whole life, born again now as a 19-year-old kid, for the first time in my life I used my lips to sing praises to God. It was amazing to me to realize He's forgiven me, changed my heart, and given me a new nature. We want to worship and praise Him.

Notice our praise is called, "...the fruit of our lips." It's also called a sacrifice, which means you might not feel like it, you might not want to do it, that's why it's called a sacrifice. Some people like to sing, and it's easy for them; but if you're a believer, we're to sacrifice praise and thanksgiving to God. You say, "Well, I don't feel like it." Well, do it whether you feel like it or not. Begin to set your mind and heart on God in worshiping Him. You're making the words to the song prayers. You're not just mouthing them, you're praying them as the Holy Spirit plucks the strings of your heart.

Notice it's, "...the sacrifice of praise,"—directed—"to God." When we worship God with our lips here in the congregation of the saints, God is the audience and the congregation are the performers. The angels listen silently as we worship Him. When you worship the Lord, remember you are worshiping God sacrificially for who He is and for what He has done. Meditate on who He is and what He's done—His love, His grace, His mercy, and how He's forgiven you, sent His Son to die for you. It's a sacrifice of praise. He's the audience, and we are the ones performing. The worship team is not up here to perform, the worship leaders. They're here to facilitate our worship and to lead us. It's called lead us in worship and entering into the presence of God as we sing and worship Him.

You can also do it on your own. You don't have to be gathered corporately to sing. I found that

you can sing anywhere, anytime. You can sing in the car. You can sing in the shower, the shower head makes for a nice little microphone. You can dance around in the shower when you sing, just make sure no one is watching you (you're going to freak out next time you take a shower). You can sing in the bed, He gives you songs in the night. You can sing when you're alone. I love to sing as I'm driving in my car. I can imagine what people think, What's the deal here with that guy? Puts songs in our heart, the Bible says He gives us songs in the night.

Remember when Paul and Silas were beaten and accused falsely and thrown in prison in Philippi and their feet and hands were fastened in stocks? The Bible says at midnight what'd they do? Sang praises to God. The sweetest songs are the fruit of sorrow. Some of the greatest songs ever written were born out of a broken heart, turning to God, worshiping God. It's great medicine. It is solidly a biblical truth that as kings and priests before God that we offer sacrifice to Him, "...the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

First, we use our lips to verbally sing praise and give thanks for what He's done. Notice also, verse 16, that we "...do good." The word "good" is a reference to our time. It actually conveys the idea of giving ourselves and our time to serve the Lord. We worship Him and we work or serve Him, and then also, "to communicate," so we do good deeds and we communicate. The word "communicate" literally conveys the idea of giving our substance—giving our money, giving clothes, giving food, giving material objects. Here's an interesting thing that when we worship and praise and thank the Lord, that we also worship God by doing good works and acts of service, so let's not get the idea that the only way to worship is by singing. Worship is by everything we do, and it's not to be separated from acts of service and acts of showing mercy. Someone said, "Our time and our talents and our treasures are to be devoted to God."

Never, ever, ever use worship as a substitute for Christian service. You may come and raise your hands and sing and praise the Lord, but when your hands are back down and the service is over and you walk out of the sanctuary, what do you do with your time? "It's mine, now. I'm not in church." What do you do with your treasures? You see, our whole life is to be given as a sacrifice. Read Romans 12. Paul says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,"—there's God's goodness to us—"that ye present your bodies,"—as what?—"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable...which is your reasonable service," or worship. You devote your whole life to God. When you come to church and sing, that's just the fruit or the outgrowth of a life of service. It can be on your job when you're performing your duties on the job or your career or domestically in the home or in your marriage or raising children, whatever it might be, it should all be an act of worship to God. When we preach, when we teach, when we hear the Word, all of it is to be an act of worship to God.

All believers are spiritual priests, doing good, remembering to communicate, verse 16, "...forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," notice that. God is blessed and pleased by the fruit of our lips and by our works in our life of showing mercy and compassion.

The second division is verses 17-19, and we move from our identification with Christ to our identification with spiritual leaders in the church. "Obey them that have the rule over you."

Notice, “We have an altar,” verse 10; “Let us go forth,” verse 13; “...let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God,” verse 15; and now we should, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. 18 Pray for us,”—the writer says —“for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. 19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.” I’ve taken verses 17-18 and given it the title, “Our Identification With Spiritual Leaders.”

I’m trying not to get bogged down. I don’t want to belabor this point, but this is an interesting verse and a little bit uncomfortable for me to talk about because I am what’s described as a spiritual leader in this church. I’m not the only pastor at this church, but I am a pastor with other pastors. When he talks about, “Obey them that have the rule over you,” he’s talking about what we would call today pastors or shepherds or elders or bishops or overseers. They’re spiritual leaders, and he tells us to obey them.

Look back with me for just a moment to Hebrews 13:7, “Remember them which have,”—notice the statement again—“the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation,”—or life. In verse 7, we have, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God,”—follow them. Then, in verse 17 we just read, “Obey them that have the rule over you,” and tonight in verse 24 we have the statement, “Salute all them that have the rule over you.” Three times in Hebrews 13 he mentions those who rule over you.

Let me just kind of mention the fact that this verse has been falsely interpreted and applied. Back in the late ‘60s early ‘70s during the Jesus Movement (and I was around then, I was just starting my pastoral ministry) there were some teachers, mostly in the east of the United States, that were promoting a doctrine known as the Shepherding doctrine that basically was teaching that a pastor, as a shepherd, had authority over the people of God, the sheep, and every facet of their lives they had to go to their shepherd for guidance and direction in every sphere of their lives—they couldn’t get married or take a job, they had to go to him to find out how many kids they should have and where they should live and what they should do. The pastors were not shepherding, they were ruling with a kind of controlling, domineering, lordship rule over them. It’s an abuse and a misinterpretation of this passage. The only authority, as I mentioned last week, that a pastor has over the congregation is in the area of function in the local church, and the authority lies not in the pastor but in the Bible, the Scriptures, the Word of God.

There are two offices in the church, that of the pastor and the deacon. The pastor’s number one job is to preach and teach the Bible, to disciple through the Word of God, to feed the sheep the Word of God. That’s where the authority lies, not in my position, not in me personally, but in the Bible. It is a God-ordained ministry, an office actually, in the church. In Ephesians 4, God has given to the church pastor-teachers, “For the perfecting of the saints,”—maturing of the saints—“for the work of the ministry...Till we all come in the unity of the faith...unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” This is an office.

As far as position goes before God, I have no different position or place than you do. God doesn't hear my prayers more readily than yours. God doesn't love me more than you. I don't have a "red phone" on my desk in my office, a hotline to heaven, "Yeah, okay. The Lord wanted me to tell you this." I don't like when preachers will say, "I have a word for you from God. God spoke to me and revealed this to me and I have a word for you," and people kind of shut their Bibles and scoot up to the edge of the pew and, "Ooooo! This is going to be hot! God speaks directly to the pastor. He has a word from God." I think that's utterly unscriptural and foolish.

I have no "word" for you other than the Word God has already given you. As a matter of fact, God has entrusted His Word to me, as a pastor, to pass on to you, the household of faith, to feed the church of God. I have nothing more, nothing less. I can't add to it. I can't subtract from it. I can't take it out of context. I can't delete it. I can't say, "Shut your Bible. Put them away. I had a vision last night. God spoke to me, and I want to reveal what God said is going to happen." Everyone is like, "Oh! This is awesome! This is awesome!" No, it's not. We're to "...earnestly contend for the faith which was once,"—and for all—"delivered unto the saints." Good preaching says what God says, nothing more, nothing less.

When Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, "Preach the word," he used the word *keryssaō*. It means to proclaim or to herald the Word, and he described how he should do that. The Bible actually dictates to pastors how the Bible should be preached, so we need to hear the Word of the Lord, that's why I pray, "God, speak through what You've spoken." But, saying all that, God does give to the church pastor-teachers for the purpose of maturing the church, and the more you submit to the teaching and the authority of God's Word. This is why, in the way I teach the Bible and I preach the Bible, I'm trying to nourish you up in the Word of God so that you know how to study it, read it, handle it, and interpret it. This is why I like you to bring your Bible, open your Bible, follow me in your Bible. In the same way I ask questions and answer questions and outline it, break it down, and look at key words, it's the same way you can study the Bible. If I've done my job correctly, it will lead you to a deeper knowledge of Christ and God in His Word, a greater love for His Word, and an appetite for His Word. That's what it's all about.

Those, "...which have the rule over you," have a responsibility not to lord over the flock, but as Peter said, to be examples to the flock so that they can follow their example and also follow the clear teaching of sound doctrine as found in the Word. Verse 17, "...and submit yourselves." The word "submit," or you might say first of all we obey them; secondly, we submit ourselves. The word "submit" is voluntary. Obey them because they have a position of functioning over you for order in the church, do it voluntarily and habitually, and the reasons for it, verse 17, why should you obey and submit to them? "...they,"—that is, the pastors, the spiritual leaders—"watch for your souls," and secondly, they "must give account,"—to God, this would be the Bema Seat when we give an account to God—"that they may do it with joy, and not with grief,"—which grieves the heart of the pastor when people rebel against the Word of God and the teachings of God—"for that is unprofitable for you,"—the people of God. He's really breaking down our relationships to spiritual leaders.

If you're going to be a healthy Christian, if you're going to be a vibrant Christian, a growing

Christian, you must be a part of a local church. You can't divorce yourself from it. This is why the Covid lockdown was such a difficult, challenging time for the church, and for me as a pastor. I preached for eight weeks on Sunday mornings to an empty sanctuary, to the camera, to just a little red light on the camera. I finished preaching, I didn't know if anyone was even listening or anyone was out there. There was no one to pray with, no one to cry with, no one to talk to, no one to hug or communicate with. It was a very difficult time because, as he says in this passage, these shepherds—these pastors, these spiritual leaders—“...watch for your souls;”—they care for your souls, like a shepherd keeping an eye over the flock by night.

A true pastor is a man who is called by God, given a pastor's heart, which means he cares for the spiritual well-being of God's people. As much as I want to see you prosper physically, and if the Lord blesses you financially, that's great, but far more important in priority is your spiritual well-being. I know that there's no substitute for that other than the Word of God and sound doctrine; but if you submit to that ministry of the Word through the pastor, then you will bring joy to the pastor. In 3 John 4 John says, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” I have no greater joy than to have someone come up to me after service and say, “Wow! God really spoke to me. Wow! I understand those verses like I never have before.” I had a woman come up to me in tears a week or so ago and say, “I had these questions,” about these issues that she mentioned, “and I sat in the sermon today and you answered every one of them and God just spoke to my heart.” What a blessing that is! Like John, I say, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

I have no greater grief and heartache and pain when people sit under sound doctrine and good teaching, but they don't listen, they don't receive it, they don't respond, and they follow the false teachers and the false doctrines and become unstable. They become like a tumbleweed rather than an oak tree founded and grounded and growing and bearing fruit in the Scriptures, the Word of God.

These spiritual leaders must give an account, they watch over your souls, “...that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” Then, in verse 18, he says, “Pray for us.” Not only should we obey those who have the rule over us, verse 17, but we should also pray for spiritual leaders. Nothing more important for God's people than to pray for God's spiritual leadership in the church. It's so very important. Whoever the writer of Hebrews was, he was humble and asked for prayer, not for himself, but, “for us,” maybe Timothy, he mentions in verse 23.

I would say that perhaps the thing that sustains and helps me and strengthens me and enables me more than anything else are the prayers of God's people. I could not do what I am doing, or any of the other pastors, without you lifting us up daily before the throne of God's grace, so pray for spiritual leaders.

He goes on to say, verse 18, “...for we trust we have a good conscience;”—you can pray for spiritual leaders to live in all good conscience before God—“in all things willing to live honestly,” so pray for their integrity. Then he says, “Pray also for a restoration of our union with each

other,” verse 19, “But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.” The writer of Hebrews evidently was separated from the people he’s writing to and praying that they get back together. Again, it reminds me of the Covid-19 lockdown and how we prayed and longed and we desired to be together face to face. Whether the writer of Hebrews is in prison, some think it’s inferred, or he’s just in a different location, we don’t know, but pray that we can be brought back together. It’s important to note that. In Philemon 1:22, Paul writing to Philemon says, “Pray for me, that I can get out of prison and we can be restored in fellowship, one with another.”

Now, closing benediction, the third section verses 20-21, “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Again, this is one of the great benedictions or blessings in the New Testament and in the whole Bible, so this is a blessing that is being pronounced by the writer of Hebrews upon the believers in Jesus there. “Now the God of peace,” he describes it. When you come to know the Lord, you have the peace of God and you have peace with God. He’s the God of peace. He gives us peace in the midst of our storms and trials.

Notice what He did, “...brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.” It’s a reference to God the Father, this is Trinitarian, raising from the dead, God the Son. Do you know the Bible actually indicates that God the Father raised God the Son, Jesus, from the dead; Jesus said that He would raise Himself from the dead; and there’s another passage that says, the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, so all three members of the Godhead. Here in this text, or this benediction, “...that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,”—and then describes Him as —“that great shepherd of the sheep,”—I love that. He had just told them to—listen to me carefully—“Obey them that have the rule over you,”—your spiritual shepherds. But guess what a shepherd in the local church is? He is an undershepherd to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Jesus is really the Shepherd of this church. He’s the pastor of this church. He’s the pastor of all churches, and the pastor is just an undershepherd doing His will and His bidding of the Great Shepherd.

It’s interesting in John 10:11 He’s called the Good Shepherd. In 1 Peter 5:4 He’s called the Chief Shepherd. In Psalm 23:1, it’s Jehovah-Raah, “The LORD,”—Jehovah Yahweh—“is my Shepherd.” It’s talking about His deity. He’s the Lord God. I love the picture of the fact that Jesus is the Great Chief Shepherd.

Notice it’s also, “...through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” so He brought Him back from the grave to be, “...that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,”—which is a reference to the cross of Jesus Christ in the new covenant. What does he want them to be blessed in? That they would be perfected, verse 21, which actually means brought to full maturity in the full stature of Christ. This word “perfect” was used by the Greeks for the mending of a broken bone and for the mending of a fishing net that had been torn, so our lives that have been ruined and broken are perfected in Christ. Verse 21, “Make you perfect

in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

You can take verses 20-21 and pray it for someone else and for yourself. To break down verse 21, God’s purpose for perfecting His people, let me just go through this real quick, it’s sphere is every good work. In Ephesians 2 it says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship,” verse 10. God saves us by His grace to become His “workmanship.” The Greek word is ποίησις pork of art. God saved us not by our good works but unto good works.

Secondly, notice its goal, verse 21, is to do His will. If you’re going to grow and mature and be blessed of God, the purpose or goal of your life is to do God’s will. I believe every Christian should pray, “I want to do Your will, O God.” Thirdly, its power is God working in you. Put that along Philippians 2:13, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Its means, verse 21, is, “...through Jesus Christ,” and its ultimate purpose, “to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” In a sense, this is where the epistle ends. Our purpose of God maturing us is for His glory. Again, just a reference, Ephesians 4:11-12, it says, “And he gave some...pastors and teachers,”—to the church—“For the perfecting of the saints,” so God uses pastors, and their preaching and teaching the Bible, to perform verse 21 in the lives of God’s people.

The closing section, verses 22-25, are just closing remarks. The writer of Hebrews says, “And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation.” Now, if you missed it when we started the book of Hebrews, that phrase “suffer the word of exhortation” or allow it or surrender to it, that’s an exhortation to respond obediently to the book of Hebrews. He is describing the epistle of Hebrews. It’s a word of exhortation. This is the purpose of the book. It’s a, “...word of exhortation,” or instruction and we should allow it. Then he says, “for I have written a letter unto you in few words,”—he calls thirteen chapters a “few words.”

Verse 23, “Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.” Evidently, it seems as though Timothy had been put in jail. He was incarcerated. These early Christians were always being thrown in jail, and he says he, “...is set at liberty,”—and when he comes—“I will see you. 24 Salute all them that have the rule over you,”—so the writer of Hebrews is telling the Jewish believers that he wants them to say hello to their pastors—“Salute all them...and all the saints,”—also greet the saints, referring to the believers—“They of Italy salute you.” The fact that he says, “They of Italy salute you,” some believe that Paul was in Rome, but it’s also possible that Christians from Rome or Italy were with the writer of Hebrews when he was writing to them, and they just said, “Oh, Paul,” yelled across the room, “Say, ‘Hi’ for us.” Say hello for us. “They of Italy salute you.” (A slip right there at the end of my study. We don’t know that Paul wrote Hebrews. I think he wrote Hebrews. I’ve been resisting that all night, but we don’t absolutely know. We don’t know that for sure he was in Rome or Italy when he wrote it.)

Notice how he closes, “Grace be with you all. Amen,”—so be it. What a great way to end the

book. Don't go back to legalism. Don't go back to the old covenant. May God's, "Grace be with you all." God's grace is: G-God's R-riches A-at C-Christ's E-expense. Only in Christianity do you have salvation by grace alone. Christianity is not what you do for God, it's what God has done for you. Any so-called Christianity that says you must try to earn, merit, deserve God's forgiveness and a place in heaven by baptism, by communion, by the sacraments, by works of religion, by dietary laws, whatever it might be, is not New Testament biblical Christianity. Our response to God is a response to His grace in saving us, in sustaining us, in keeping us. God saves us by His grace, He sustains us by His grace, and as John Newton wrote, And grace will lead me home. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, Amen? That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, so don't ever fall from the grace of God. Let's pray.