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Sermon Notes

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May God Work in You What is Pleasing to Him

Hebrews 13:20-25

Hebrews 13:20-21 **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.**

I. The Prayer's Simple Message: May God Work So You Can Work

A. Having Sought Prayer, the Author Now Offers Prayer

1. Verses 18-19: Please pray for us... specific requests

Hebrews 13:18-19 **Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. ¹⁹ I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.**

2. But now, the Author turns around and does the same for them
3. Vital lesson of ministry: no preacher of the truth, however faithfully he has presented the truth, can leave it at that; he must press on to PRAY INTO HIS PEOPLE—into their very hearts—the truths he has proclaimed

1 Samuel 12:23 **As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you.**

B. Central Concept of this Prayer:

1. May God work in you so you can work for Him

Hebrews 13:20-21 **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.**

SIMPLIFIED:

Hebrews 13:20-21 May ... God... equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him

SIMPLIFIED EVEN MORE:

May God equip us and work in us so that we can do His will and please Him.

Or, as I just said

MAY GOD WORK IN US SO WE CAN WORK FOR HIM.

2. Powerfully humbling and needful message: If God does not give us fresh grace for every good work, then nothing we do will be pleasing to Him.

3. Jesus gave it to us plainly in a parable form:

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

4. Paul gave it to us in doctrinal form

Philippians 2:12-13 continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

5. So the Author is saying this same message: Apart from God's continual working in you by grace, you can do nothing to please Him

6. Amazing!!! Even now, redeemed by the Blood of Christ, having had the heart of stone removed and the heart of flesh put in, having been completely forgiven and having had our consciences cleansed, having been adopted as Sons and Daughters, having been given the indwelling Holy Spirit and a new, clear understanding of the Bible... having been GIVEN ALL THIS in Christ, we would STILL not be able to do any good work, not be able to serve God in any way that is pleasing to Him, if He does not work that in us by His power

7. In this we can greatly lament our own weakness, and greatly exalt God's ongoing grace...

8. Do you not see the WISDOM of God in HUMBLING US even more!!

a. The topic is our good works

b. Those good works are of AWESOME DIMENSIONS... so great are those good works that they are of eternal consequence... both in the internal journey and the external journey

c. Good works of the INTERNAL JOURNEY: of making actual progress in Christlikeness... becoming more and more like Jesus... thinking like Him, loving what He loves and hating what He hates; putting sin to death by the

power of the Holy Spirit; putting on spiritual armor and fighting every temptation until it is dead on the ground under our feet; good works of humility and brokenness within, of yearning for the glory of God, of delighting in God and turning away from idols that once held us fast...
GOOD WORKS OF THE INTERNAL JOURNEY. Making us more and more like Christ, more and more glorious and pleasing to God

- d. Good works of the **EXTERNAL JOURNEY**: resulting directly in the eternal salvation of lost people, the continual upbuilding of Christ's eternal Kingdom, the sacrificial ministry to poor and needy and sick and dying people... by those good works, spiritually dead people will hear the gospel, repent, believe and live forever in heaven; by those good works, the poor will be made rich, the hungry will be fed, the thirsty refreshed, the lame made to walk, the blind made to see, the captives of Satan rescued from his dark kingdom and transferred forever into the kingdom of Light!!!
- e. So great are those works that the church will do that Jesus made this astonishing statement:

John 14:12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

- f. **GREATER WORKS THAN THESE MIRACLES OF JESUS!!!** Not greater miracles... for there is no record of any apostle or missionary or pastor or evangelist having a greater catalog of miracles than Jesus did... **CHURCH HISTORY** does not surrender to our investigation any single man or woman whose catalog of signs and wonders even comes close to those of our Savior
- g. No, the "greater works" are the works of eternal salvation for a multitude of people from every tribe and language and people and nation; servants of Christ will deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow Him; they will courageously lay down their lives for orphans, widows, poor, lost people... they will sacrifice their time, energy, money, comforts, physical health, etc. They will do it all for the love of God and the love of neighbor
- h. These good works will **SHINE FOR ETERNITY**... they are of infinite worth in the sight of God
- i. To some degree it is why God created us and redeemed us and left us in this sin-cursed present world age:

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- j. This prayer implies this:

Ephesians 2:10 God has prepared the good works in advance for us

Hebrews 13:20-21 God must also prepare us in advance for the good works

C. Clear Implication: Without This Advance Preparation, We Will Not Do These Good Works

1. God MUST prepare us for every good work, or we will not do ANY good work
2. God MUST work in us what is pleasing to Him or we will not be pleasing to Him
3. There is no INDEPENDENT VIRTUE in the Christian life... nothing we do on our own and bring to Jesus for His pleasure

D. See The Wisdom of God in Humbling Us

1. These good works are so astoundingly awesome that, if we were able to achieve them on our own, our still fleshly hearts would **BOAST IN THEM** and **SWELL WITH PRIDE** and we would be repugnant to God
2. God must prepare us for the good works and He must work in us what is pleasing to Him so we can be truly humbled when God begins to use us... when we begin to make genuine progress in Christ and become more and more nearly perfect like Jesus, we can truly say **EVERY STEP I HAVE EVER MADE IN SANCTIFICATION—IN THE INTERNAL JOURNEY—I HAVE ONLY MADE BY THE POWER OF GOD IN ME...** to God alone be the glory; and **EVERY STEP I HAVE EVER MADE IN MINISTRY—IN THE EXTERNAL JOURNEY—I HAVE ONLY MADE BY THE POWER OF GOD IN ME...** it was God who allowed me to speak a word of wise counsel to a brother or sister; it was God who allowed me to set up a fruitful urban ministry to lead many poor people to faith in Christ and to a healthy lifestyle by which they are now providing for their own needs; it was God who prepared me and trained me and called me and supported me financially to go overseas to an unreached people group and lead eleven people to Christ and plant a church that is now flourishing and multiplying and growing
3. God prepared me for every good work; God worked in me what was pleasing to Him

Revelation 4:10-11 *the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power*

II. The Prayer's Details... Phrase by Phrase

A. A Brief Summary of the Entire Epistle!

Hebrews 13:20-21 *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.*

1. My statement: A Superior Mediator brings a Superior Covenant resulting in a Superior Life
2. God of peace vs. God of fire
3. The blood of Christ vs. the blood of bulls and goats
4. The eternal covenant vs. the temporary covenant
5. A resurrected mediator who ever lives to intercede for us vs. high priests that die and cannot continue their office
6. Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the Sheep vs. sinful men who were faulty shepherds
7. Working in us good works well-pleasing to God vs. the works of the law which lead to death
8. Now... phrase by phrase:

B. May the God of Peace

1. This is a prayer to God the Father, Almighty God, the Creator of the Ends of the Earth
2. Here He is called “the God of Peace”... a phrase we usually associate with the Apostle Paul
3. Two ways to understand it
 - a. First, the God who is characterized by peace... the God who is peaceful within Himself, and at peace with Himself... unruffled, unhastened, serene
 - b. The God who gives peace: He draws us into His peace so we experience what kind of peace characterizes His own nature
4. Theological significance
 - a. The God of Peace created the universe and declared it very good
 - b. But sin entered the world and Adam and his race fell into rebellion against the Righteous King

c. God the King is God the Lawgiver, and as a result He becomes God the Judge

d. Because of our sins, we were at war with God and God was at war with us

Isaiah 57:20-21 But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. ²¹ "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

Colossians 1:21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

e. God's righteous wrath was against all sinners... they remained under His wrath while they remained rebels

Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness

f. Through the blood of the eternal covenant shed by Jesus Christ, God is now at peace with all who are in Christ Jesus

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

g. Christ has worked reconciliation between a holy God and sinful people

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

5. Celebrate the GOD of PEACE!!

a. Delight in the fact that Christ has made God be at peace with you

b. Know that all of your sins are forgiven and God is reconciled to you

c. BUT if you are on the outside of Christ, you are still considered an enemy of God... right now, through the gospel of Jesus Christ, God is pleading with you to be reconciled to Him

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

C. Who Through the Blood

1. This returns us to the infinite worth and value of the blood of Jesus Christ

1 Peter 1:18-19 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

2. This theme we completely developed in Hebrews 9

Hebrews 9:13-14 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Hebrews 9:22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

3. It is only by the blood of Jesus that the sins of people are forgiven, the wrath of God turned away

4. Paul makes this point plainly in Romans 3, the glowing center of the gospel:

Romans 3:23-25 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.

5. It is THROUGH the blood of the eternal covenant that every good thing comes to us from the God of Peace

D. The Blood of the Eternal Covenant

1. The “eternal covenant” is a striking phrase, filled with meaning
2. The contrast is clear... an eternal covenant vs. a temporary covenant
3. The word “covenant” = a binding agreement; covenants are central to God’s dealings with the human race
4. Many covenants in the Old Testament era
 - a. The Covenant with Noah... by which God swore that He would never again destroy the world by a flood
 - b. The Covenant with Abraham... by which God promised to give to Abraham and his descendents the Promised Land and by which God promised to be God to Abraham and to his descendents forever
 - c. The Covenant with Moses... by which God gave the Jews Laws which would govern their behavior... a conditional covenant by which the Jews

could stay in the Promised Land... a covenant which promised life for obedience and death for disobedience

- d. The Covenant with David... by which God promised to raise up one of David's descendents and establish his Kingdom forever
5. This verse speaks of the "blood of the eternal covenant"
- a. This refers to the covenant of salvation in Jesus by which every sinner that has ever been saved and will be in heaven with God is saved
 - b. The "blood of the eternal covenant" is the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross in the fullness of time
 - c. It is called an "eternal covenant" because it was made between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world
 - d. The elect were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world
 - e. God also chose before the foundation of the world to atone for their sins by the blood of Christ

1 Peter 1:18-20 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

- f. Revelation 13 speaks of both election and the death of Christ as being established from the creation of the world

Revelation 13:8 names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

6. Every Old Testament saint was forgiven by the same blood... the blood of Jesus which WOULD BE SHED LATER for them

Romans 3:25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished

Romans 4:1-3 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-- but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Abraham and David were both justified by this same "eternal covenant"

7. "Covenant theology" should not require infant baptism
 - a. Presbyterians and Reformed infant baptizers look to the unity of God's world across the testaments to prove that infant circumcision in the Old Covenant should become infant baptism in the New Covenant
 - b. It is not obvious why this should be so
 - c. There is no scriptural warrant for making this connection
8. Eternal Covenant also looks AHEAD!!!
 - a. The Old Covenant was temporary... it appeared in time, ran its course, and was superseded by the New Covenant

Hebrews 8:13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

- b. This "eternal covenant" will NEVER pass away
- c. Its fruit is eternal; its blessings are eternal; its members are eternal
- d. On the basis of the BLOOD of this ETERNAL COVENANT we will live forever in heaven

Amazing Grace: "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun."

E. Brought Back from the Dead

1. Through the blood of the eternal covenant, the God of Peace BROUGHT BACK JESUS from the dead
2. This is clearly referring to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead
3. The blood having been shed for the elect of the human race, God is reconciled to humanity... it was reasonable for Jesus to take on again a human body... now glorified
4. Greek word: "led up as from a lower to a higher place"... picture like the Exodus, leading Israel UP out of bondage in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land
5. God has willed for Jesus to spend eternity in a glorified human body, and so He is human NOW and will be forever
6. Jesus bodily resurrection from the dead proves that the blood He shed for sin was acceptable and sufficient for our redemption

F. Our Lord Jesus

1. The Author speaks Jesus' name TWICE in this prayer... we can't say the name Jesus enough
2. Jesus is the specific historical man, Jesus of Nazareth, born of a Virgin, lived in Galilee and Judea, died in Jerusalem
3. This is the name that we should not be ashamed of... at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord
4. So the Author celebrates the Lordship of Jesus here
5. The confession "Jesus is Lord" is central to the Christian faith... the Greek word "*kurios*" was usually used to speak of Yahweh, God in the Old Testament... wherever the capitalized word LORD appears in the English Bible, the word *kurios* would appear in the Greek Old Testament of their day
6. It was a clear assertion of the deity of Christ... that He is our God, before whom we worship, whom we serve
7. He is here called "OUR Lord Jesus"... He is the one we worship, the one we seek to please
8. He is also our pattern... the one to whom we are to be conformed

G. That Great Shepherd of the Sheep

1. Not just any shepherd... there were many shepherds of God's people... David was raised up to shepherd the nation of Israel

2 Samuel 5:2 the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'

2. Jesus is THAT shepherd of the sheep... the one who was prophesied

Isaiah 40:11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Micah 5:2-4 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."....⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

Ezekiel 34:15-16 I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD.¹⁶ I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will

bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

3. Jesus Himself claimed to be the Good Shepherd

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me

4. The text says Jesus is the GREAT Shepherd... it speaks of the greatness of His care for the sheep, the greatness of the price He paid in blood for their safety, the greatness of the provision He makes for them... feeding them, protecting them, leading them beside quiet waters and restoring their souls

5. He is the "Great Shepherd of THE SHEEP..."

- a. Jesus is not shepherd to every single person on the face of the earth
- b. He is shepherd to HIS SHEEP... whom He knows by name and calls out
- c. Jesus spoke to His enemies

John 10:26 you do not believe because you are not my sheep.

- d. "The sheep" were chosen before the creation of the world, and faith comes as a result of that prior election... Jesus' sheep come to believe at the right time

So... verse 20

Hebrews 13:20 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...

May the God who is the God of peace, the God who has already provided an eternal covenant, and the blood of His only begotten Son, the God who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus...

MAY THIS GOD WHO HAS PROVIDED EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR SALVATION...

H. Equip You with Everything Good

- 1. Amazing that, with all that's already been provided we still need MORE
- 2. More grace, more provision, more work in us and on us by this same sovereign God

3. There's nothing inadequate about what's already been given us... God is PERFECTLY at peace with us, the blood is PERFECTLY effective for cleansing our guilty consciences, Jesus' resurrection is PERFECTED and in Him we will live forever... Jesus' ongoing shepherding of us is PERFECT as well
4. And yet... we need STILL MORE
5. May this same God "equip you with everything good for doing His will"
6. The Greek word translated "equip" or "perfect" means to make you fit, able, suitable, capable, thoroughly outfitted
 - a. It has both a negative and a positive connotation
 - b. Negatively: may God "rectify everything wrong with us, everything deficient in our souls... everything that gets in the way of doing God's will..."
 - i) This has to do with the way our FLESH gets in the way of doing the good works God wants us to do

Romans 7:15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

For example... our flesh may hesitate to minister to a certain class of people because we have prejudices against them; perhaps someone from that group of people hurt you in some significant way in the past... perhaps you were raised to hate them or be prejudiced against them; perhaps you don't like that kind of climate or that kind of food or that kind of music... your flesh pulls hard on you NOT TO MINISTER to those people

God has to EQUIP YOU from within to overcome your natural tendencies and do His will

Perhaps you don't have a natural LOVE FOR THE LOST

The centerpiece of evangelistic fruitfulness... a genuine compassion for the lost

PRAY TO GOD for this!!!

- c. Positively: this equipping comes by God training you and preparing you to do good works
 - i) This comes by good teaching... good sermons, good Christian books read, good role models, good experiences that array your mind and your soul with everything you will need to do God's will
 - ii) It comes by time spent in His word and in prayer... as God transforms your heart and gets you ready to do God's work

Remember what I said above about Ephesians 2:10 and Hebrews 13:20-21

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10 God has prepared the good works in advance for us

Hebrews 13:20-21 God must also prepare us in advance for the good works

Example: Acts 10... Peter and Cornelius... the account begins with an angel appearing to the Roman Centurion, Cornelius, and commanding him to send men to Joppa to retrieve a man named Simon Peter through whom he will hear a message he must hear. The story then cuts away to Peter in Joppa, who is hungry and praying... God shows him a vision of unclean animals and he's commanded "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" Peter says in effect, "NO WAY, Lord! I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." God tells him, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

God was clearly working both sides of the equation... Getting the Jew Peter ready to interact closely with a Roman whom he would ordinarily NEVER eat with or interact with... but who the very next day would become his brother in Christ.

God worked BOTH SIDES OF THE EQUATION

He prepares us for the good works and the good works for us

I. For Doing His Will

1. This is the definition of "good works"

John 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

John 8:29 I always do what pleases him.

2. God is not looking for innovators but obedient servants who will present themselves to God for His service and to do His will

J. And May He Work in Us

1. The work God must do starts in the HEART
2. Good works must flow from the inside
3. God is not seeking external shows of pious behaviorists

Matthew 23:27-28 Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. ²⁸ In the same way,

on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

4. God must clean us up on the INSIDE... transforming our motives so that everything we do meets the following three spiritual criteria
 - a. Done for the glory of God

1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

- b. Done by faith

Romans 14:23 everything that does not come from faith is sin

- c. Done in genuine love for others

1 Corinthians 13:3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

5. These criteria are not naturally worked in us but SUPERNATURALLY
6. God must work a passion for His glory, genuine faith in His word, and a true love for others in us
7. This WORKING by God is described also in Philippians 2:12-13

Philippians 2:12-13 continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

K. What Is Pleasing in His Sight

1. The whole press of this passage is that God must shape us and mold us and work in us to be pleasing to Him
2. To me, this is ultimately about complete conformity to Jesus Christ
3. Jesus is PERFECTLY PLEASING to God the Father

Matthew 3:17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

4. This is because Jesus is the perfect reflection of the glory of God

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being

5. The whole direction of our salvation is to take us from being dead in our transgressions and sins to being conformed to the image of Jesus

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

6. So God's ongoing work of sanctification is to make us more and more like Christ and more and more pleasing to Him by His sovereign power

L. Through Jesus Christ

1. Every good work done in us and then by us is done only by the ongoing priestly ministry of Jesus Christ
2. So it is no mere tack on to add the words "Through Jesus Christ"
3. Jesus is constantly living to intercede for us; and I believe what the Author prays for the Hebrew Christians is what Jesus is still constantly praying for us:

"O Father, would you please pour out your Spirit on _____ and work in him what is pleasing to you? Would you please strengthen him in the inner man, making him love you and live for your glory? Would you please purify him and make him holy, and give him a genuine heart of love? And would you then put him to work in _____ specific way to advance the Kingdom of Heaven?"

M. To Whom Be the Glory Forever and Ever. Amen.

1. All of this is to the glory of God forever and ever!!

III. The Author's Final Words: Bear With Exhortation

Hebrews 13:22-25 Brothers, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written you only a short letter. ²³ I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you. ²⁴ Greet all your leaders and all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings. ²⁵ Grace be with you all.

A. The Letter to the Hebrews: A "Brief" Word of Exhortation

1. Actually, it is one of the LONGEST epistles in the New Testament
2. So why does the Author call it only a short letter? It's because of the glorious themes that he's been discussing and how much he could have said about them
 - a. He began with a declaration of the greatness of Jesus Christ...
 - b. He unfolded that Christ is greater than all the prophets who spoke to the people in the past

- c. He displayed that Christ is the reigning Son of God, through whom God made the universe and by whom God sustains the universe
- d. He reveals that angels who brought the Old Covenant are merely servants and flames of fire, serving those people who will inherit salvation
- e. 2:1 He gave his first warning: DON'T DRIFT AWAY from Christ!!! And coupled with that, the severe punishment awaiting us if we neglect such a great salvation
- f. He then explained the incarnation... how it was necessary for Jesus Christ to become fully human, sharing our humanity in order to rescue us from the devil who held the power of death.
- g. Chapter 3: He proclaimed that Jesus is greater than Moses, who was the mediator of the Old Covenant... that though Moses was faithful as a servant in God's house, Jesus is faithful as a Son over God's house
- h. He displayed the seriousness of the danger of sinfully retreating from the Promised Land of faith in Christ... he refers back to the generation of Jews who shrank back in the time of Joshua; and through the words of Psalm 95, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."
- i. Along with that, he spoke of the need for the church to watch over one another in brotherly love... shepherding each other's hearts so that no one turns away from the living God by the gradual hardening process of sin
- j. In Hebrews 4, the author asserts that Jesus is greater than Joshua, because the Promised Land Joshua gave them was temporary, not God's final resting place... Jesus alone can bring us into our Sabbath rest
- k. In Hebrews 5, the Author introduced us to the idea of Jesus as our Great High Priest... a priest in the order of Melchizedek
- l. In Hebrews 6, the Author has to stop and warn them again of their hardness of heart and gives the most serious warning in the epistle: IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO RENEW APOSTATES TO REPENTANCE
- m. Hebrews 7 unfolds the greatness of Jesus as High Priest in the order of Melchizedek... a priest whose ministry is eternal, not based on genealogy, who can never die but who always lives to intercede for us at the right hand of God; the author also shows that the Levitical priesthood was inadequate and symbolic and obsolete
- n. Hebrews 8: The glories of the New Covenant... 1) forgiveness of sins; 2) transformed hearts; 3) eternal relationship with God; also Old Covenant is obsolete and aging and will soon pass away

- o. Hebrews 9: The symbolism of the Tabernacle unfolded... The Levitical priests served in a tent that was a copy and a shadow of the real thing; the reality is Christ... a perfect High Priest offering ONCE FOR ALL His own blood before the heavenly throne
 - p. Hebrews 10: recounts again the glorious superiority of the New Covenant and invites the Hebrews to DRAW NEAR TO GOD in full assurance of faith by a NEW AND LIVING WAY into the very throne room of God; it also gives the most dreadful warning in the Bible to apostates... saying that there is NOTHING LEFT BUT A FEARFUL EXPECTATION OF RAGING FIRE; Hebrews 10 also recounts the early days when they were courageously and joyfully willing to have their possessions confiscated and to be imprisoned for Christ
 - q. Hebrews 11: the “faith chapter” describes the life of faith by one example after another
 - r. Hebrews 12: speaks of God’s loving discipline and gives more warnings
 - s. Hebrews 13: final exhortations of godly behavior including brotherly love, hospitality, remembering the suffering, purity in sex and money, respect for leaders, willingness to suffer
3. So... the Author could CLEARLY have said a TON MORE about these things than the 303 verses he did give us...
4. He calls it a WORD OF EXHORTATION...
- a. *Paraklesis* = exhortation, counsel, instruction, comfort, consolation, even REBUKE or WARNING
 - b. the great danger of APOSTASY is always there
 - c. the Author has said some very stern things to them
 - d. He wants them not to turn away from these warnings but to face them as mature believers and live accordingly... to BEAR WITH these words
 - e. Conversely... some people like a different kind of ministry:

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

B. Final Greetings

Hebrews 13:23-25 I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you. ²⁴ Greet all your leaders and

all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings. ²⁵ Grace be with you all.

IV. Applications

- A. Come to Christ
- B. Understand the Greatness of Christ and of the New Covenant
- C. Persevere in Faith
- D. Seek God's Ongoing Work in You to Do the Good Works of Faith
- E. Seek in for Others As Well

Hebrews is finished!!!