

SESSION OBJECTIVE: HEBREWS 13:20-25
To better understand the benediction of the Book of Hebrews.

Read the Text:
Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. 22 I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. 23 You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. 24 Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. 25 Grace be with all of you. (Heb. 13:20–25, ESV)

Study the Text:

Benediction

Thirteen chapters in, the author finally concludes this powerful letter with a *benediction*. What is a benediction, one might ask? It comes from the Latin words bene, meaning "well," and the verb dicere, meaning "to speak." It's a "good word" or a "well-wishing," but in the church, it carries a bit more nuance. Modeled after the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24–26, a benediction is, as Derek Thomas puts it, a way of saying to the people of God: "You have worshiped. You're going out for the rest of the week to work and labor. Go in peace. Go with the blessing and the assurance of God's covenant promises upon you that He will never leave your or forsake you, that you are Christ's, and that you will be Christ's forever."[1] The author of Hebrews leaves us with that same sentiment: "May the God of peace… equip you with everything good that you may do his will" (Heb. 13:20). Below is a breakdown of some of the key words and phrases in this passage.

---

[1] Derek Thomas, "What Is a Benediction? Why Does It Appear in So Many Christian Worship Services?," Ligonier Ministries, accessed October 25, 2026, https://learn.ligonier.org/qas/what-is-a-benediction-why-does-it-appear-in-so-many-worship-services.

THE GREAT SHEPHERD

The benediction highlights the resurrection power of God that "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus" (Heb. 13:20). But notice how Jesus is described right after that: "the great shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20b). Shepherd language is very common as it pertains to Jesus, but bear in mind that the Book of Hebrews loves to borrow from the Old Testament. This is yet another example. As it turns out, the "shepherding" language so often applied to the Lord in the New Testament is derived from the Old Testament in two primary ways.

For one, Jesus is elsewhere described as "the son of David" (Matt. 1:1; Mark 10:47; Luke 18:38). In the prologue of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is referred to as "the son of David, the son of Abraham," indicating that he is in some significant way connected to both of them. Jesus's description as "the son of David" and as the one who would sit on David's throne forever (Luke 1:32–33) reveals that he fulfills the Davidic covenant first mentioned in 2 Samuel 7:12–16. In other words, Jesus is the final and greatest Davidic king who will reign forever. And what kind of king was David? A shepherd king. David was, after all, shepherding sheep in the field when Samuel came to Jesse's house to anoint him king (1 Sam 16:11–13).

In connection with that, and likely more pertinent to the language of Hebrews 13, is a prophecy that comes from the prophet Ezekiel against the "shepherds of Israel" (Ezek. 34:1), in which God judges the wicked rulers of Israel and promises to set up "my servant David" who will "feed them" and "be their shepherd" (Ezek. 34:23), and be "prince among them" (Ezek. 34:24). In other words, there are bad shepherds in Israel, but God will send them *a good shepherd* (John 10:11–14). Hebrews recognizes Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of these texts, and we are his sheep.

THE BLOOD OF THE ETERNAL COVENANT

The "blood of the eternal covenant" is also a phrase full of Old Testament significance. Consider, first, that God promises to set prisoners free "because of the blood of my covenant with you" (Zech. 9:11). More specifically, this passage probably has Exodus 24 in mind. In Exodus 24, God confirms the Mosaic covenant with Israel. Moses takes half of the blood from the "burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings" and "put it in basins" (Exod. 24:6–7). He then "took the blood and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold, the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you'" (Exod. 24:8). This is the only time the phrase "blood of the covenant" is found in the Old Testament. It is significant, then, that Jesus uses this exact phrase to describe the "cup" during the Lord's Supper in Matthew 26:28. Jesus used covenantal language to describe what he was enacting with his disciples. The blood of Jesus, spilled at Calvary, instituted a new covenant between God and us, in which God would equip us "with everything good," not for our own sake, but so we might "do his will" (Heb. 13:21).

WHO GETS GLORY?

Verse 21 includes the phrase, "through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever." While it may not be immediately apparent, this is a subtle way of attributing deity to Jesus Christ. Why? Because God does not permit any glory to be given to anyone but himself. In Isaiah 42:8, God says: "I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols." God does not share his glory because glory only rightfully belongs to him. Yet the Bible repeatedly attributes glory to the Son as well, indicating that Jesus Christ *is* God.

A POSSIBLE AUTHOR CLUE

While we have been careful to not assign the author's identity in this study, there is good reason to think that Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews. Possible arguments against this position include a different command of

Greek than what we normally find in Paul's writings. Hebrews is written in Classical Greek rather than Koine Greek, which more closely resembles Luke's writings than Paul's. However, consider that Paul and Luke traveled together (Acts 16:10; Gal. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24), and that it is possible that Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews in Hebrew and that Luke, with Paul's help, translated it into Greek. Pauline authorship is strengthened by the mention of Timothy. Two things stand out as peculiar. One, no other name or title is given for Timothy, suggesting no other name or title was needed to identify the person the author is speaking about. This is almost certainly the same Timothy that Paul loved and mentored (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). Further, he is identified as "our brother," a way Paul prefers to refer to Timothy (2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thes. 3:2; Philemon 1). These two clues offer considerable support for Pauline authorship.

FINAL GREETINGS

The author finally ends the letter by encouraging the believers "to greet all your leaders and all the saints" on his behalf, and also extends greetings from the Christians "in Italy" (Heb. 13:24), indicating the growing global nature of the church. The letter is written to Jewish Christians, yet Italian Gentiles wish to send greetings. Finally, verse 25 is the exact benediction that ends Paul's letter to Titus (Titus 3:15), a third clue supporting Pauline authorship.

What About Now?

One takeaway is the importance of benedictions. It's easy to assume that when churches include a benediction at the end of the worship service, it's simply a religious tradition. But actually, it is rooted in both the Old and New Testaments. It was important for the writers of the New Testament, especially, to encourage the hearers of their letters to go in the power of the new covenant, promised to them in Christ. Another takeaway is the church's global nature, even as early as the New Testament age. The church is far bigger than we often remember. Believers gather to worship all over the world every single Sunday. We need to be reminded of that.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Hebrews 13:20. What has "the god of peace" done? Why is he called "the great shepherd?"

_____

_____

2. Read Hebrews 13:20. What does "the blood of the eternal covenant" refer to?

_____

_____

Day Two

1. Read Hebrews 13:21. For what purpose has God equipped us with "every good?"

_____

_____

2. Read Hebrews 13:21. What is significant about the attribution of glory to Jesus Christ?

_____

_____

Day Three

1. Read Hebrews 13:22. What does the author appeal to his readers for?

_____

_____

2. Read Hebrews 13:23. What is significant about Timothy being described as "our brother?" What does the lack of a last name or family name indicate?

_____

_____

Day Four

1. Read Hebrews 13:24. Who are the readers to greet? Who greets the readers?

_____

_____

2. Read Hebrews 13:25. What is "grace?" Where else has this benediction been seen?

_____

_____

_____

Discuss the Text!

Session 36 Discussion: Doing God's Will

The author reminds us that God has equipped us "with every good," but for the specific purpose of doing his will. God's will is the goal of the Christian life. Sometimes we talk about "finding God's will" as though everything about it is a mystery, but Scripture speaks clearly about it. Talk as a group about what the Scripture teaches about doing God's will, and what aspect of it is most challenging to you.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever tried to do a job without the right tools or instructions? What happened?
2. Read Romans 12:2. What is "the will of God" according to this passage?
3. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3. What is "the will of God" according to this passage?
4. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18. What is "the will of God" according to this passage?
5. Read 1 Peter 2:15. What is "the will of God" according to this passage?
6. The author prays that God would work "in us" so that we can do what pleases Him. How does that encourage someone who feels inadequate? How does it challenge someone who tries to obey God entirely in their own strength?
7. Kid Talk: Write a list of "chores" and give it to your child. Have them do the chores. Explain to them that the list reflects "your will" for them, and that it's meant for their good. Chores are a good thing when they are completed. Now, explain that the Bible is like a list from God for us that is for our good. When we follow the Bible, we do God's will, and it is good for us.

Takeaways:

1. Jesus is the great shepherd who fulfills Ezekiel 34.
2. Jesus's blood establishes a covenant we enter by faith.
3. The church is much bigger and wider-reaching than we often remember.