

**Benediction (Hebrews 13:20, 21)**  
**By Pastor Jeff Alexander (4/22/2018)**

**Introduction**

1. First, note the *connection* of verses 21 and 22 with the epistle, in both broad and immediate context.
  - a. In one brief sentence, the apostle summarizes the whole argument of the epistle.
    - 1) The Mosaic system was both typical and temporary, looking for the fulfillment of the “*so great salvation*” pictured and promised in the old covenant (2:1–4).
    - 2) This promised salvation involves “*entering into His rest*”—His *shalom* (peace; 4:1; Matthew 11:25–30), through the restoration of relationship.
  - b. The benediction (reflecting Numbers 6:22–27) is a *prayer* for the reader, demonstrating that the apostle practices what he preaches. He has asked his readers to pray for him (vv. 18, 19), shall he sin against them in not praying for them (1 Samuel 12:23)?
2. The theme of Hebrews, the *superiority of Christ*, is set forth in sublime simplicity in this benediction.
  - a. Here is a key which clearly points to Pauline authorship, for the phrase, “*the God of peace*” (Isaiah 54:10) is unique to Paul (*seven* references; Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:16; and Hebrews 13:20).
  - b. Here we find the Lamb of God, who gave His life for the sheep, now exalted as “*that great shepherd of the sheep*.” He is King of kings and Lord of lords before whom every knee will bow, and every tongue confess.

**I. The Pacification of God (v. 20)**

1. The office of God as *Judge* (developing the reference in 12:23)
  - a. The problem the Righteous Judge faces is that His image-bearer has sinned and breached the relationship, causing mutual alienation. Sinners are at enmity with God and He with sinners (Isaiah 63:10; Psalm 5:5; 7:11; Romans 8:7).
    - 1) God cannot be at peace with sin or sinners.

Sin has thrust mankind into an all-out war with God. Sinful humans cannot coexist with their offended Creator. Sin cost mankind both the image of God and the favor of God.
    - 2) God *drove* Adam out of the Garden (Genesis 3:23, 24; Ephesians 4:18).

It is impossible for fallen humans to rectify their wrongs and be reinstated to favor with God. However, God took the initiative. Salvation originated in God’s loving heart, not by cheap and easy means (Romans 5:10), but as the father of the prodigal, He welcomes a new creature in Christ Jesus into His new Eden, the new creation (12:22–24).
    - 3) Sinners were placed under law and subjected to divine government (Romans 3:20).

Adam hid from God in the garden, but God sought him out, not to comfort him in his condition but to confront Him in his sin (Matthew 10:28).

b. The *task* that brought Jesus to earth was the *reconciling* of sinners (Ephesians 2:16).

1) The basis of reconciliation is the blood of the *eternal* covenant.

a) It is an *eternal covenant* in contrast with the former covenant, which lasted only until Christ, the mediator of the new covenant, should come. That it is a new covenant necessarily makes the old one obsolete (8:13).

b) Through Christ, God is Himself pacified, His holiness satisfied, and His alienated state reconciled in order that He might work salvation in those whom He has chosen for Himself in eternity past (Romans 3:3–5; Ephesian 1:3–6).

2) Through God's will, Christ, in offering Himself, secured for God's people full and final reconciliation through their *purification*, enabling their full and perfect relationship with their offended God (2:10, 11; 9:11–14). This eternal covenant also secures for His people an *eternal* inheritance (9:15).

2. The office of Jesus as Shepard (Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:33).

a. Christ was not simply *raised* from the dead (an act of God's power), but He was *brought again from the dead* (due to His bearing the sins of His people). This was a *moral* act from God's judicial perspective to demonstrate that peace was now perfectly secured (Colossians 1:20). Christ had all power and ability to raise Himself, but He refrained and remained in the realm of the dead for three days and nights until the Father determined to bring Him out, showing His full satisfaction with the work of His Son.

b. The risen Savior is then commissioned as *that great shepherd of the sheep* to feed, guide, and guard all the sheep (not wolves and goats) into that which is well pleasing to their reconciled God.

## II. The Perfection of the Saints

1. Paul asks that God *equip* reconciled sinners with the restored image of God to reflect the true character of sons of God (Ephesians 4:12, 13).

a. God cannot be reconciled to sinners unless those sinners are transformed again into the *image* of His Son (Romans 8:29).

b. Note also the extent of the equipping—*for everything good*.

2. God not only equips the saints with everything good to do His will, by His Spirit, He also *works* in them to perform what is pleasing to Him (Philippians 2:12, 13).

a. God does His pleasure through His own by first securing their hearts in full and loyal submission to His Person and will (Romans 6:17; Ephesians 6:6).

b. God does all this in perfect accord with our being fully responsible to pursue every means that He has provided for our growth in grace (2 Peter 1:3–8).

c. Only those in whom this equipping and perfecting work is evident can safely assert that they are thus reconciled to God and secured through the blood of the covenant (2 Peter 1:9–11).

3. The purpose of all this perfecting work in the saints through Jesus Christ is that He may be glorified forever and ever.