

40—Hebrews 13:20-25—The God Who Finishes

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I. Introduction

- A. You may have seen someone post something online that gives a picture of how it started and then a different picture of how it's going. Sometimes Instagram can portray a false reality. We can paint the picture of our lives in a way that really isn't true.
- B. If you were to say concerning your walk with Christ, "How is start; how it's going" what would you say? Some of you are persevering and some are struggling. Some have struggled for a long time. We all have have the opportunity to finish well sitting before you. But if your life ended right now, how would it end?
- C. The book of Hebrews has warned us about not ending well. We are called to persevere to the end. We do ourselves no favors when we deny that the evidence. You have drifted away but to turn back would be too embarrassing.
- D. I suggest to you that the embarrassment you think you may feel right now cannot be compared to the shame you will feel on judgment day when you recall this moment.
- E. We have such an amazing God that he has provided salvation for us himself through his Son.
- F. And God is providing everything you need to make a good ending.

II. Main Point

- A. The God of peace equips us with every good work for his glory and praise

III. Outline

- A. The God of Peace
- B. The God who Equips Us to Do His Will
- C. The Final Word of Grace

IV. Exposition

- A. These finally words are meant to be a means of giving us hope to persevere to the end. But they aren't just words, it is a prayer of benediction and blessing. They are words that come alongside us to make an appeal to bear with them all. And they are words of grace to us. Indeed, we believe these are Holy Spirit inspired words and they are sufficient to accomplish God's good purposes for us. The preacher's prayer begins with the God of peace so let's see the glory of God in this description of him.
 - 1. When Paul opens his second letter to the Corinthians, he calls God the God of all comfort.
 - a) It makes sense because he goes on to talk at length about how God comforts his people.
 - 2. When the preacher here in Hebrews 13 begins his prayer of benediction to the God of peace you kind of expect him to talk about peace. But he doesn't...or does he?
 - a) This is the third time the idea of peace has come up in Hebrews.
 - (1) Back in chapter 7, the discussion began in detail about the priesthood of Jesus according to the order of Melchizedek.
 - (a) As you recall this was a much superior order because it combined the priesthood and king.
 - i) It's like bringing the church and state together in one perfect, eternal, ruler named Jesus who will always do good.
 - ii) One of the marks of his reign as Messiah would be peace. He was to be the Prince of Peace according to Isaiah's promise.
 - (1) On that first Christmas night, the angels declared, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"
 - iii) We might the connection of this prayer to the God of peace with the King of Peace.
 - iv) If Jesus cannot bring about peace in the world, then he's not the King of Peace.
 - v) But he has and he will. Indeed, those who have been redeemed already have it!
 - b) But what kind of peace will Christ bring? He will bring about comprehensive peace!
 - (1) Working from the bottom up, we were commanded back in Hebrews 12:14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.
 - (a) This is our calling as God's people now this side of heaven.

- (2) Secondly, God's Kingdom will have perfect peace. That is a reality for which we all long for and one for which we strive to live out now as we await the return of our King.
 - (a) One day, perfect justice will be served and all evil will be no more.
 - (b) Those who have believed will forever live in peace with the God of Peace forever.
 - (3) But more basic and more important than that is peace with God. We cannot have access to God's Kingdom apart from peace between us and God.
 - (a) Sin has separated us from God. This is a basic and fundamental doctrine that can never be discarded.
 - (b) To bring about perfect peace with God requires a perfect sacrifice.
 - (c) A sacrifice that will clear our conscience and make us perfect before God though we are not.
 - i) Are you at peace with God?
 - ii) Are you at peace with yourself? Does your conscience haunt you?
 - iii) Christ will fix that and he will change you. Come to him by faith.
3. And guess what? That's exactly the direction the preacher goes with this prayer to the God of Peace.
- a) Notice there in the middle of verse 20 which further describes our amazing God—the God of peace who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus.
 - (1) I find this word—brought up—fascinating. It is the exact same word used in Lev. 11:45 where it tells us that God brought up his people out of Egypt.
 - (a) Leviticus 11:45 For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”
 - i) There he commands the people to be holy.
 - ii) And do you know how that went? They failed. Why?
 - (1) In part because the perfect sacrifice had not happened yet.
 - (2) But when it does, the Holy Spirit comes and lives inside of us and transforms.
 - (2) There's another clear connect and use of this exact word in Isaiah 63:11 — Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock?
 - (a) If you continue reading in Isaiah, which is a prayer too...
 - (b) ...you find in verse 11 in Isaiah, they were remembering what God did for them in the past.
 - (c) However, they had wandered away from God like what the book of Hebrews has warned about.
 - (d) They plead with God to restore them.
 - (e) What's amazing is that when you get to Isaiah 64, there prayer says this—Isaiah 64:1 Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.
 - i) Indeed, God answered this prayer when he rent the heavens and sent his only Son.
 - ii) The mountains did quake at his presence when Jesus was dying on the cross.
 - iii) Jesus is better than Moses. Jesus brings peace with God because Jesus was not just any shepherd but as it says there in v. 20—the great shepherd of the sheep.
 - (1) His death on the cross was the perfect sacrifice we all needed to bring about perfect peace with God.
 - (2) That's why it goes on to say there in v. 20—by the blood of the eternal covenant.
 - (a) I cannot stress enough how amazingly hopeful our God is!
 - (b) Hebrews 5:9 And being made perfect, [Jesus] became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him
 - (c) Hebrews 9:12, 14 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption...how much more will the blood of Christ, who

through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

- (d) Essentially he is saying, through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's law is eternally written on your hearts. You will eternally know God. And he will never remember your sins eternally.
- (e) That's what the eternal new covenant promises!
- (f) Do you have these promises by faith? If so, you have an amazing God and because your God is amazing you have amazing peace!

B. That is the glorious God the preacher prays to for us. Now let's see what else this prayer promises to do for us while we endure to the end because he's also the God who equips.

1. God doesn't leave us to our own devices. The one who saves also changes us.
2. Verse 20 described the God who equips. It's very important to hear exactly who it is that will be accomplishing this work in us.
3. Now here in v. 21 we hear the action the God of Peace will take as we wait for Jesus's return.
 - a) So, let's simplify this a little bit—Now may the God of Peace equip you.
 - (1) First, what does it mean to equip?
 - (a) Since I'm a welder let me explain a few things I need to do that job.
 - i) I need a welder obviously and a project to work on.
 - ii) But additionally I need a welding helmet to protect my eyes which also allows me to see what I'm doing. The light is so bright that I cannot see the joint I am trying to weld together without the helmet.
 - iii) I need gloves and long-sleeves to protect my hands and arms from the heat produced by the welder or I cannot weld for very long and may not finish the project.
 - iv) But I also need skill and experience. That's not something I was born with. I was taught and I practiced. With that, I became pretty confident in welding.
 - (1) I've been asked to weld things to which some have asked, "Will it hold?"
 - (2) On numerous occasions, I've built things like goose-neck trailers that people will be hauling things down the road. If my welds break, there's great potential for lots of damage to whatever is on the trailer but also to oncoming traffic.
 - (b) Obviously, this text is not talking about welding though not completely disconnected. Here we are being equipped for everything good that we may DO his will.
 - i) That's what this equipping is for—to do God's will.
 - (1) Not completely unrelated is the fact that God has equipped me to provide for my family through welding over the years.
 - ii) This word to equip can mean—mend like it's used in Luke of mending nets. We all need mending and equipped.
 - iii) It means to train—in this case, we are being trained as disciples of Jesus to be like Jesus.
 - iv) There's a sense of preparedness in its meaning...that preparedness to know and do God's will.
 - (c) While I mentioned earlier that God is giving us a comprehensive peace I want to now connect that to doing God's will.
 - (1) There are a number of things in our lives that likely disrupt the peace in our hearts when we do not know what to do about a particular matter.
 - (2) There are hard decisions that we have to make that have serious consequences.
 - ii) Let me show you something very unique and amazing about who the God of Peace is that prepares us to do his will for his glory.
 - (1) Near the end of Paul's letter to the Philippians he wrote—Philippians 4:9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

- (a) There seems to be a connection with learning and receiving and seeing from Paul in his letters that brings about this assurance of God's presence being with us.
 - (b) Like the experience and skill I have in welding and I can confidently send that customer away pulling his new trailer, I can confidently know that God is with me as he equips me through learning, receiving and seeing how to live out the faith.
 - (2) Another benediction pray secures us in God's peace in 1 Thessalonians 5:23
Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus.
 - (3) This last one promises that our peace with God will result in treading on the serpent's head—Romans 16:19-20 ¹⁹For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. ²⁰The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
 - (a) Knowing God's will to obey him and do what is good brings peace for God will crush that serpent's head under our feet.
 - (d) The God of Peace is equipping you to do his will. He will finish what he began in you. He is the God who finishes us...completes us...prepares us. But why? For what purpose?
 - i) Notice there in v. 21—working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.
 - ii) God doesn't simply tell you to do what he says. He works in us to make us pleasing to him.
 - (1) A famous quote from Augustine goes like this: "Command what you will and will what you command."
 - (2) The work of the cross now allows the Holy Spirit to live in us. The old covenant kept God separated from his people. But the new covenant brings us into fellowship with God by the Spirit.
 - (3) Therefore, God is transforming us into the likeness of Jesus.
 - (4) If you do not see that happening, then get on your face before God's gracious throne and plead with him to make you pleasing to him.
 - b) That's why verse 21 ends with glory to Jesus forever and ever, amen.
 - (1) From beginning to end, it is God who saves.
 - (2) If salvation—all of it—is not by grace then we cannot say this. But it is.
 - (3) The resounding chorus of our lives should be—to the praise of his glorious grace!
- C. What a glorious God we have! We pray that the God of Peace will equip us and make us pleasing in his sight. And now the final words to the Hebrews—a picture of persevering faith in Timothy and the preacher.
 - 1. The preacher appeals to his brothers and sisters in the faith, to bear with his word of exhortation.
 - a) Appeal is a magnificent word. It has this image of walking up beside someone to call them to action.
 - (1) It's a very tender way of expressing the seriousness of what is being said.
 - (a) It's like a mom reaching down and grabbing the hands of her daughter to speak directly but compassionately.
 - (b) It's like a father grabbing his son's shoulders, bending down to his level, to look him in the eyes and with concern and kindness to instruct him.
 - (2) Those postures give us the immediate image but there's more to it. To come alongside someone like this is to also walk with them...help them...rejoice with them...weep with them.
 - (a) It's an appeal with love. With hope. With faith.
 - (b) But it's an appeal to truth...hard truths in this case.
 - (c) He has warned us repeatedly and sternly.
 - (d) But God is with us and as his prayer stated—equipping us with everything good.
 - (3) This command to bear with this word of exhortation is to receive it.

- (a) As Proverbs 2 says, treasure up my commandments. Be attentive. Hold fast.
 - (b) You've been warned. You've been taught. You have been given the resources to do this.
 - (c) Will you give up or keep fighting?
- 2. Ironically, we get a brief note about Timothy who seems to have kept trusting the Lord in a difficult ordeal.
 - a) Verse 23 tells us that he was released and we assume that means prison. That's how this word is normally used.
 - b) The one who wrote this letter has direct knowledge of this.
 - c) He shares this so that they will know.
 - d) He makes plans to return soon and if Timothy comes soon, he will also be with him.
- 3. He ends with a greeting to all the leaders and all the saints.
 - a) Those from Italy greet you.
 - b) Grace be with all of you!
 - c) We are nothing without God's ongoing work of grace in our lives!
 - d) But through his amazing grace, we press on to that upward call.
 - (1) Like John Newton wrote in that great hymn, Amazing Grace which says in that third line—3
Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come: 'tis grace has brought me
safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
 - (2) Grace be with all of you!
- 4. I want to circle back to v. 20 for a second before we go. It said that the God of Peace brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus.
 - a) We compared this to the exodus when God brought up his people from Egypt.
 - (1) In other words, he rescued them from Egypt.
 - b) But our passage ends by saying, God brought up Jesus from the dead.
 - (1) Like being enslaved in Egypt, death is the consequence of sin.
 - (2) The reality is, we all lived in death. We are dead in our trespasses and sins.
 - (3) But Jesus took that death sentence in our place.
 - (4) You cannot be rescued from eternal death unless you repent and believe in Christ.
 - c) And when you do, Jesus speaks this to you—John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.
 - d) Will you receive the gift of salvation that Christ has purchased by faith and will also change you to make you pleasing in his sight?