

**Image:** I love sport. Keeping your eye on the ball ensures clean contact and success. Hurling, golf.

**Need:** We lose sight as we're distracted by the things around us. Last week...keep centered on Jesus.

**Context:** Final words, closing benediction, and final greetings (deal with **verses 22-25**).

**Preview:** Let's look at this closing benediction and the outcome of our faith as we remind ourselves of what's been said in this wonderful sermon – it may surprise you.

- I. Benediction: a blessing that, here, serves as a reminder of what he has said.
  - A. Blessing: part of worship and had a specific form that we see here. It was designed to invoke a blessing on the hearers. “Bene” – well; “dictae” – to speak.
  - B. So it's a prayer of blessing that would remind them of what he's said. It is a blessing to live out the sermon he's just given them to a desired effect.
  
- II. Holding fast to Jesus, believing He's the best, changes the way you live in the world. Think rightly about who Jesus is and, having thought rightly, live well for Him in this life. So we...
  - A. Believe Jesus is the best and only way to God
    1. Invocation: “**God of peace**” – if we're to have peace it must come from God His way.
      - a. Jesus is God (**ch. 1**).
      - b. Better than angels (**ch. 2**).
      - c. Better than Moses because He brings better rest (**ch. 3-4**).
    2. Grounds of the blessing: God's ability, “**God who is able**” –
      - a. Resurrection demonstrated that He was better bc God accepted His sacrifice.
      - b. He is the “**great Shepherd**” who sovereignly provides for and leads His sheep.
        - i. Used of Moses in **Is. 63:11; Ps. 77:20 (Jn. 10; 1 Pet. 2:25)**
        - ii. Sheep are totally dependent – go where shepherd leads (Jesus' care and sovereignty).
  - B. Basis for blessing: Christ's blood shed for us. “**Through Christ**” –
    1. Better High Priest – Melchizedek > Abe > Aaron (**ch. 5-7**).
    2. Initiator of a better covenant (**ch. 8, Old vs. New**).
    3. By His better blood because it makes a better sacrifice (**ch. 9-10**)
      - a. **9:20** – inaugurates a better covenant (**Jer. 31; Ez. 36; Is. 55:3; Zech. 9:11**).
      - b. Complete and total forgiveness (**10:11-14**).
  - C. And through this Jesus – better in every way – we are brought to a better life.
    1. A stronger faith that is able to stand even in the face of present difficulty as it looks to our future reality (**ch. 11, esp. vs. 32-38**).
    2. A deeper hope built on the promise of ultimately unshakable kingdom to come (**ch. 12**).
    3. An abiding love built on this fundamental change that has taken place in us through Christ and that extends to every area of life (**ch. 13**).

*(And this is what he prays for them in the benediction)*

- III. That their right understanding of who Jesus is – better in every way – will lead them to maturity in order that they might live out the will of God even among those who are persecuting them.
  - A. Main petition: “**Equipping**” – maturity.
    1. That God – through Jesus and what He accomplished – would kit them out to be made spiritually complete – in order to do His will.
      - a. The call to move to maturity in **ch. 5-6 (5:11-6a – “press on to maturity”)**.
      - b. This has happened in Christ (**2 Pet. 1:2-3**).
    2. And being fitted with everything to do His will, that God might accomplish His purpose in the world through us.
      - a. Note the juxtaposition of us doing His will and Him doing His will through us (cf. **Phil. 2:13**).
      - b. We are the means by which God does what is pleasing to Himself.

- c. It's not just the glory God receives in our transformation but the glory He receives in what our transformation accomplishes for His sake outside of ourselves.
- B. So right thinking – about what Jesus has accomplished in us – leads to right living – maturity – in order that God's mission might be accomplished.
  1. Notice that the point of the petition is centered on God's purpose. It's His glory in the completion of His purpose that is of ultimate concern. Any prayer he prays for their hope or joy or benefit is ultimately centered in God's glory.
    - a. He saves us and brings us to maturity for His sake.
    - b. So that He might accomplish His mission through us.
  2. So our new position in the New Covenant in Christ is not just for our benefit but so that we might become participants with God in the accomplishment of His purpose in history.
    - a. Our salvation cannot stop with what we get out of it. Missies the point.
    - b. We are saved in order to participate with God in the redemption of all of God's creation to God's glory. We become pieces in the puzzle that looks to **Rev. 7:9** and ultimately the new creation in **ch. 22**. *Chris Wright quote...*
  3. Ends with the doxology – “**all glory to Jesus**”. This is also how he began in chapter 1...there's no one better than Jesus.
    - a. In Jesus, we realize all that it means to be human, made in the image of God. He restores to us the fullness of that image.
    - b. In Jesus we realize ultimate security and significance as we are found in God.
    - c. THERE IS NO ONE BETTER!!!

**Conc:** Restatement of the benediction. Here's what he prays for them. “May the God who makes you totally different by the blood of Jesus keep on making you totally different so He can use you as tools in His hand to accomplish His purpose in history...to His glory. Amen.”

That's quite a blessing, isn't it? If you don't pray a single prayer for me ever again, would you pray that one? That I could keep my eye on the ball in order that I might play a part in accomplishing the mission of God in history!

Heb. 13:20-25 (NIV) 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.

22 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.

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Heb. 13:20-22 (Message) May God, who puts all things together, makes all things whole, Who made a lasting mark through the sacrifice of Jesus, the sacrifice of blood that sealed the eternal covenant, Who led Jesus, our Great Shepherd, up and alive from the dead, 21 Now put you together, provide you with everything you need to please him, Make us into what gives him most pleasure, by means of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Messiah. All glory to Jesus forever and always! Oh, yes, yes, yes.

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2Pet. 1:2-3 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

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Phil. 2:12-13 (NIV) Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

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Phil. 2:12-13 (Message) What I'm getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you've done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I'm separated from you, keep it up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is *God's* energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.

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Rev. 7:9-10 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

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"The Creator God has a purpose, a goal, and it is nothing less than blessing the nations of humanity...And the concluding vision of the whole Bible signifies the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise, as people from every nation, tribe, language, and people are gathered among the redeemed in the new creation." – Chris Wright, *The Mission of God*, p. 328