

Jesus Brought Up From the Dead

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to Hebrews chapter 13 for a short time this evening. We're going to look at verses 20 and 21. Hebrews 13 at verse 20.

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, equip you with everything good, that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, and through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

One of the most reliable pieces of evidence that we have, that our life has been changed for the better by the grace of God, that we indeed have come to know salvation.

One of the best evidences we have for that is that we give our will over to the will of God. That we are willing to give our desires over, our inclinations over, our best judgments over to him to rule and to overrule over them.

Because when we give our will willingly to God, that really shows us that something has happened to our will, which is naturally inclined against God.

[1 : 19] And when God renews our will, as he does in our salvation, then our will is something that we are pleased, as it were, to hand over to him and say, Lord, be Lord of my will as well.

Because our will really affects everything we do. And in fact, this is a perfect example here in these two verses of the relationship between doctrine or teaching and practice.

Because doing the will of God, which is mentioned in verse 21, is indeed really the main thrust of the two verses, the way they run together. You can actually say, Now may the God of peace equip you with everything good, that you may do his will.

And all the doctrine that you have packed into these verses is really designed to flow into this doing of the will of God on our part.

And it reminds us that you cannot actually think about doing the will of God, being a Christian practically, if you leave doctrine totally behind.

[2 : 31] Some people will suggest to you that really doctrine doesn't matter all that much. that the big chunks of teaching that you have in the Bible about God, about Christ, about his person, about the atonement, about sin, that all of these things are all and good for people that have the ability or the inclination to go into them.

The Bible tells us, No, they are there for every single Christian because there is a direct connection between them and the practical things that you do as a Christian.

And in this verse, as we see these two verses together, you find, therefore, that the main emphasis there is, Now may the God of peace, and then you can jump to verse 21, equip you with everything good.

So the words in between that, who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, that's actually a parenthesis, or something that you would say, in writing, you would put into brackets.

Because he's putting it there as something he's saying, by the way, if you like, whereas his main emphasis is, may the God of peace equip you to do his will.

[3 : 48] But what a parenthesis! How much is packed into these brackets! And not only is there so much packed into these brackets, which talks about the resurrection of Jesus, and as the great shepherd of the sheep, that God has done this, it's not just packed full of references to that, and truth about that, it has a direct relation to the rest of the verse, God is the God of peace, equipping us with every good thing to do his will.

And that's how we want to really look at these two verses again. I know we've looked at them before, previously on other occasions, but such is the nature of these verses, and indeed of the

truth of God.

It doesn't matter how often you look at it, you're always going to find something new in it, and you're always going to find something in it, that's applicable to your circumstances in life. Because, as we say, it deals with doing the will of God.

So let's look at, first of all, how the writer here talks about the God who equips his people to do his will. He talks about it, first of all, as the God of peace.

May the God of peace, this is, of course, in the form of not just a desire, it's effectively a prayer. As the writer to Hebrews is coming to round off his letter, he's doing so in the form of this prayer.

[5 : 13] This is what he's praying for. This is what his earnest desire is for these people that he's writing to, that this God, the God of peace, will do this for them. And why does he call him the God of peace?

Why is he called the God of peace in this particular context? You always look at the titles that God has given in the scripture, and you look at the verses or the context in which you find them, and you ask yourself, now, why does he have that name here?

Because there must be some specific reason or meaning as to why God is giving himself these titles in these specific places. Well, it is. The God of peace is the God who created peace for us in Jesus Christ.

He is the one who created reconciliation. He's the one who created a proper state of relations between us and himself, restoring that which we had broken by our sin.

And you know very well that the Bible talks about that elsewhere. In Paul's letters, for example, as the working out of reconciliation, as a state of peace, a state in which enmity has been removed between ourselves and God.

[6 : 25] And where that enmity is removed, it's replaced by peace. It's not a vacuum. It's not leaving us with some sort of neutrality. It's God taking away the enmity and replacing it with its opposite, replacing it with peace.

And that isn't a more wonderful thing to know and to experience than that peace that God has created. Because it is at least threefold.

It's peace between us and God that you can experience individually. The peace that you've come to know in your heart when you know your sin has been forgiven.

When you are assured from the Scriptures, from the Word of God, that faith in Jesus Christ secures, not for its own sake, but for Jesus' sake, that peace with God.

And of course, the Bible elsewhere talks about that peace as, secondly, a peace between God's people, the peace that belongs to the living church of God who are in communion with Him and with one another.

[7 : 29] It's a peace, in that sense, between us and Himself. That's on an individual basis. It's a peace between us and our relationship as Christians. And it's a peace, even, that extends into the world where we are to seek to live, as Jesus said, to be at peace with all men as far as is possible for you.

Live at peace, as Paul picked up that teaching of Jesus. He put it in a similar way. That's the God of peace. And the God of peace created peace, created reconciliation, brought that into being, did away with the enmity by something quite amazing.

He did it by the cross of Jesus, by the death of Jesus, but he did it also, as this passage tells us, through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

peace involves, not just the death that Jesus died, but the resurrection that followed that immediately, not in three days' time, as you know from the Gospels.

Jesus, why does it call it here, though, why does the writer say that the God of peace who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, the word that's usually used in the Bible is raised from the dead.

[8 : 50] That God the Father raised Jesus, the Son, from the dead. Whereas here, it's a different word, a less usual word, it's a word translated, they're brought again, not brought up, again, from the dead.

And one of the reasons that he uses that is that it tells us something that we kind of almost hesitate to say it, really, because when you think of God and his sovereignty, in his eternal being, in his being answerable to no one, the meaning of this term, actually, really has the idea of God being placed under obligation to raise his son from the dead.

That sounds itself quite a remarkable thing. How can God be under obligation to anyone? How can God be under obligation in any sense at all? How is he constrained to do things?

Does he not do them freely? Is he not above being persuaded to do things? Is he not above the idea of being under obligation or constraint?

Well, what this means, of course, is that when you think of the death that Jesus died, the kind of death it was, not talking just now just of his physical death on the cross.

[10:16] Remember, the death of Jesus is death not just physically, but spiritually. The death that he referred to in this great cry from the cross, Lord, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

It's that forsakenness, it's that experience of the penalty of sin, our sin, as he took it to himself. It's that hell, it's that damnation that Jesus willingly took to himself.

That is the nature of the death he died. And he died that death and he atoned for that sin and he atoned for it completely. He met all the demands of God in respect to that sin.

Therefore, in consequence of that, God is under obligation not to leave him in the grave, but to raise him from the dead.

The death that Jesus died places the Father under an obligation to raise him. That is the meaning of this term. the God of peace who brought up again.

[11:24] He brought him up under obligation to do so. The death that Jesus died, if you like, cried out to God the Father to raise him. There was no alternative.

It's impossible to think of the death that Jesus died without resurrection following it. Of course, that doesn't mean that God was in any sense reluctant to raise Jesus from the dead.

It's not being under obligation to do something he wasn't prepared to do or didn't really want to do. What it's telling us is that this death was such an amazing death.

This death was such a complete death for sin. This death really answered every single iota of what God required for us to be saved.

That if you can put it this way, he had to raise him from the dead. There was no alternative. He was under obligation from that death itself to do this.

[12:26] And isn't it a wonderful thing when you think about this peace that you enjoy in your heart tonight? Yes, we're thankful for it, but how thankful? Are we thankful with the thankfulness that really stops time and again over this great fact of what was necessary to achieve it for us?

Are we thankful for our peace with the thankfulness that actually comes and says, Lord, I can't possibly take in everything that was involved in obtaining this peace that I now enjoy because you gave your son to the death of Calvary and it placed you under obligation to raise him from the dead. Those two unfathomably great events, Christ's death and resurrection are behind the enjoyment of the peace that you enjoy.

You can think of it somewhat like this perhaps as well. When Jesus died, he took the sins of his people and their guilt and their penalty with him into the grave.

They disappeared there and they didn't emerge from there and when he emerged from the grave in resurrection, our peace emerged with him.

[13:57] Our peace rose as he rose. That's why in John's Gospel, when you read about him shortly after his resurrection, coming into the room where the disciples were gathered, that small group of the church of the time with the room closed and then all of a sudden Jesus, the risen Jesus, appears in the middle, what's the first thing he says to them?

Peace be unto you. As if he said, I have left your sins behind and I'm here to bestow the peace that I have achieved, that I took from the grave with me when I rose for you.

that resurrection is a resurrection where he was brought again by God from the dead.

But he doesn't leave it at that. He tells us that he was brought again from the dead by the blood of the eternal covenant. And I think these words are related to these phrases we've looked at in verse one rather than what follows in verse 21.

In verse 20 rather than in verse 21. So in other words, by the blood of the covenant fits immediately with bringing again from the dead our Lord Jesus.

[15:20] What is this covenant? What's he talking about this eternal covenant? Well it's the covenant of grace if you like, the covenant that God has made with his people for their salvation, this bond that he has pledged himself to and initiated for them in which they too are brought into this relationship with him by faith.

All of that comes into it but it's an eternal covenant. God had this in mind and God had set this and set this up from all eternity.

You and I as saved believers now were actually in this covenant that God made from all eternity as his people saved in Christ.

It doesn't mean we were saved until we came personally to Christ. It doesn't mean that we have a personal salvation in our possession until we place our faith in Christ.

But it does mean that you trace everything to do with your security not to your faith not to the things you do yourself even with the grace of God behind them but to this eternal covenant.

[16:37] And isn't it an amazing thing? Not only were you and I in that covenant as Christ's people John 17 you might say really pictures that for us as well where he talks about those that the father gave him.

That's the covenant language. They've been given by the father to Jesus the son to look after them to die for them to rise from the dead for them to be their shepherd their savior.

But what we're saying is that in that particular instance as well what you find is that the blood of the covenant this eternal covenant it's quite staggering that in that covenant the death of Jesus was set in its squarely from all eternity.

Now Jesus didn't die till that happened at Calvary in the history of this world. The actual death did not take place till then. But it was still placed in the covenant in the plan of God.

And from all eternity God had his eye on the blood of the covenant. there is no covenant without his blood. Without the shedding of blood there's no forgiveness.

[17:59] And you cannot think of a covenant that we have with God in which there is salvation for us. In which God takes us as his people and we take him as our God.

That's the root, that's the very essence, the kernel of the covenant. covenant. You cannot think of it without seeing in it absolutely foundationally the blood of Christ.

The death of Christ. Now isn't that amazing? Here's a cluster of things that are amazing to you. It's amazing that the God of peace made peace for you at all.

That he chose to do this. It's amazing the way he chose to do it in the person of his son by transferring your guilt to him and his righteousness to you.

It's amazing that he did it by placing it all within an eternal covenant. And it's amazing that in that eternal covenant he already had set before him the death that his son would die so that he would live by the blood of the eternal covenant.

[19:13] And you see that fits in with the bringing again from the dead. It's by virtue of what this blood is, what this death is, what this death achieved, that he brought this Jesus back again from the dead.

Such, if you like, is the quality of this blood of this death, this blood of the eternal covenant that the father is under obligation resurrection, to raise Jesus from the dead.

The kind of death he died secured his resurrection, which secured our peace. well, what a great set of truths within these brackets.

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant. And of course, there's one thing else, one thing yet to see within the brackets, and that's the description of Jesus himself, the great shepherd of the sheep.

To be the shepherd of his people required that the shepherd die, that the shepherd be raised from the dead. That's the whole burden, isn't it, of Christ's own discourse in John chapter 10, the famous passage about him being the good shepherd.

[20:44] I am the good shepherd. All that came before me were not good shepherds. They were not the good shepherd because the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

I know my sheep and they know me and I give myself for them. I lay down my life for their sake so that I might take it again. This command I received from my father.

And in the wonderful arrangement as you study John's gospel, as you go through the passages there, you come to chapter 10, the chapter of the great shepherd.

shepherd. And then what do you find immediately following in chapter 11? The chapter of the resurrection, the chapter of the raising of Lazarus from the dead to be itself an evidence and a proof of who Jesus is.

I am the resurrection and the life. And you take these two marvelous chapters of John's gospel and you hold them together and you say there is the great shepherd of the sheep, laying down his life for the sheep in the one chapter and then taking it again in the next chapter, raised from the dead. [21 : 58] Death and resurrection as they came to achieve our peace. And of course it's also reminding us when we read here of the great shepherd of the sheep of yet another great truth.

How many great truths are packed into these verses and even into this parenthesis in between these brackets? Because here's a reminder to us that when Jesus is called the great shepherd of the sheep, the father raising him from the dead had a specifically pastoral purpose in doing so. There isn't a more pastoral act in the whole of redemption than the father raising his son from the dead. Why?

Because he's raised as the shepherd of the sheep. He's raised in order to be the shepherd of the sheep. He's raised to be the shepherd from death so that he can minister to them the things of life. And tonight you are thankful not only to have Jesus as your shepherd but you're thankful to have the kind of shepherd who's already died. Who knows what death is.

[23 : 18] Who knows what it is to overcome death. To gain victory over death. To draw from all that he is and all that he has experienced the strength and the grace and the power to enable you to live as you do.

It's a great pastoral purpose that God has in mind. It's so that his people would have a shepherd. It's so that through this resurrection a shepherding would be achieved and set for God's people. And you know that shepherding is everlasting.

Because in Revelation chapter 7 where you have a summary there of the final state of things you remember how that chapter talks about overcoming difficulty and trial triumphantly those that had overcome those that were before the throne of God and were worshipping him there and are described as having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God. They serve him day and night in his temple. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd.

[24 : 47] Will pastor them is what he's saying literally. And he will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. You know you're going to be singing.

We're going to be singing together if God brings us as we hope he will to heaven. We're going to be singing together. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. As you're being led by the shepherd to these living fountains of water and glory.

How much, much more meaningful will these words be to us then than they are possibly now. The Lord's my shepherd. I'll not want. He makes me down to lie and past your screen.

He leads me beside the still waters. His rod and his staff, they comfort me. It's the same person, the same shepherd, the same people, but in the state of glory in heaven, where his shepherding is brought to its great height and where they experience its benefits without interruption forevermore. If there was nothing else in the Bible but these verses about Christ shepherding his people in glory, surely that would be enough for us. To know that the Lamb will lead us to living fountains of water, that he will pastor us as only he can and that he will do so as the one who died and was brought back from the dead as the great shepherd of the sheep.

[26 : 36] And that's the parenthesis, that's what's in the brackets. It's taken up most if not all of our time, but how much, how worthwhile it is to go into it. But look at what he says, Now may the God of peace, the God who did this, may he equip you with everything good or with every goodness so that you may do his will, working in us, that which is pleasing in his sight.

Just a few thoughts before we finish on that second part of the passage because it's so important to keep it together rather than stop and divide it up, although I know the time is going. Well he's talking here about equipping, God equipping us to do his will.

God equipping us with everything good to do his will. And the word equip really means bringing back together things which were broken because that's what God does by his grace.

Our sin against God has damaged us. We are damaged goods and what you do with damaged goods ordinarily is you throw them away or you can have them recycled.

You can have people, when you dump your fridge or your freezer or your television or whatever in the recycling place near Stornoway or whatever it is, you find that these bits can be taken off them, they can be stripped down and all the bits can be reused or melted or whatever.

[28 : 01] God doesn't do that. He doesn't recycle us. He renews us. He keeps all the bits together but he renews them all so they function properly.

that's the meaning of the word equip. May he equip you with everything. May he actually keep putting together, functioning properly those things that sin has broken.

That's why we do evangelism. Because people's lives are broken. Because they need to be mended, because they need to be renewed, because we're burdened for them that in their state of lostness they don't realize how broken they are.

They don't realize that they're broken at all. But they're smashed up. And it's not just those who go on drinking binges or into drugs or things like that that are smashed up.

The best unsaved sinner is a smashed up sinner. Because the things inside are not functioning. sin, the will and the mind and the emotions and the conscience they're all damaged goods.

[29 : 18] And here is God, the God of peace. He raised his son from the dead so that we would be mended. So that what sin and we by sin damaged God as the God of peace would equip us, would bring together, would renew, would restore.

And doesn't that come into the Lord's my shepherd as well? The Lord's my shepherd. I'll not be in want. He restores my soul.

He builds it back properly again. And how does he do that? Well he does that by working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.

And remember this is a prayer. How do we get equipped to do the will of God? We pray for God to work in us. We don't do it ourselves.

We can't achieve it ourselves. It's God's work within us. Working in us that which is pleasing in his sight. And there are a couple of things related to that.

[30 : 29] First of all, it takes you back to the creation in the first place, doesn't it? where God having finished the creation looked over the whole of his creation and behold it was very good.

Every single thing in it and the way that it functioned, all the parts of it together, man and beast and creation around him, it was all very good. It was in perfect harmony.

It was pleasing to God. And what he's doing in redemption is exactly the same. He is going to end up with that which is well pleasing in his sight.

From the fact that he is well pleased with his son, he moves to be well pleased with us in him. So that finally again, as God's restored people, we will indeed be pleasing in his sight.

And towards that end, we pray that God will work in us and continue to work in us. And of course, that's related to also to the reference to the resurrection or to bringing Jesus from the dead.

[31 : 44] When God is working in us, where have we already seen the power by which he's working in you? Where have we already seen that?

where does he tell us elsewhere in the Bible that work of God has already been established by him? Well, it's in this, isn't it? As Paul says to the Ephesians, the power that raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

That's the power that raised you spiritually from the dead. That's the power that's sanctifying you.

That's the power that's equipping you. That's the power that's building together what sin broke.

And it doesn't matter how smashed up it is. This is a superior power. And it doesn't matter how much Satan wants to get his hands on you to damage the goods again.

This is going to absolutely guarantee that that will not take place. Because this is what God is doing working in us towards us being finally pleasing in his sight.

[32 : 53] And of course he finishes by or through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever. He finishes as he began with Jesus Christ.

It's his death, his resurrection, his being raised from the dead that is foundational to God as the God of peace working in us.

But he comes to round it off by saying through Jesus Christ. Everything is through Jesus Christ. Everything is that God does in us has Christ at the center of it.

It's for his sake, it's because of him, it's unto his glory. He is absolutely central and crucial to it all. and it does say this to us. If the ideas of liberal theologians and the ideas of secularists and the ideas of atheism, if they tonight are true, there is nothing in these two verses for us.

[34 : 13] They are absolutely empty and hopeless if they're not true. But you know they're true. You know they're true because you look into your own heart and you have the evidence there that everything in these two versions is factually correct and will be true for all eternity.

whatever the world says, tonight you're going home from this place, surely as I am, I hope, jumping for joy out that door with this confession.

I know that my Redeemer lives. And that after this body has been destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God whom I shall see for myself and he will not be a stranger to me.

He will be as he is now, my best friend, my God of peace. Let's pray. Lord, our God, we thank you for the peace that you have created for us, for the means that you have taken to achieve it.

Lord, let us never lose our sense of wonder, our sense of praise and thanksgiving as we consider these great truths.

[35 : 46] Help us to prize them in the face of an unbelieving world. Help us to hold them tenaciously against our own natural inclinations, against the workings of the flesh and the temptations of the devil.

Lord, we ask that you would continue to enable us to draw from the great truths of your word, those things that will help us be practically your people in this world.

Go before us now and accept us, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen.