

Hebrews 13:20-21.

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.

Fully equipped...

- 1. With the peace of Christ**
- 2. With knowledge of God's Holy Will**
- 3. As Christ works in us**

“Fully equipped” that is phrase that you may hear about a car or truck. Cars today come fully equipped with all sorts of impressive features such as navigation systems, a reverse camera, self-braking and self-parking features, lane departure systems, automatic high beams, and adaptive headlights that react to the steering, speed and elevation of the car. Some cars even provide onboard technology that supplies emergency roadside assistance as well as incoming and outgoing notifications that are designed to avoid emergencies all together. It's amazing to think about the technology that's packed into cars today, but it is really not that shocking to see why many of these technologies are being developed. Even the ongoing development of self-driving cars testifies to the importance of a meeting the baseline human needs of safety and security. Auto-makers have sunk a lot of research and money into new technologies that can in anyway make the driving experience safer because they know that consumers crave safety, security, and a certain peace of mind. The newest car commercials may tout the bevy of safety features to assure potential customers that this is the car that will give them the security and the peace of mind that they need to go about their day. This is the car that they need to get to where they need to be with greater confidence and ability.

No matter how things change certain things will always stay the same. No matter if we are talking life in these modern times, life in ancient times, or as we consider what kind of life the next generation may experience, we know that peace is something that human beings, in general, long for and crave. People like you and I, we crave peace, and when that need is met we have a tendency to function and carry out our daily tasks with greater confidence and ability.

The writer to the Hebrews addresses this innate and universal need of peace and he encourages his readers to take on their daily tasks with renewed confidence and ability. In addressing this need and encouraging these believers to live in confidence he points them to the source. The source of our peace and confidence as Christians is of course our God, our Lord Jesus Christ. The epistle writer packs a whole bunch into these two short verses. The author speaks of safety and security, peace and strength and power. He

speaks of the God of peace. He speaks of the covenant graciously written in the blood of Christ. He speaks of God's power over everything even death itself. He speaks of the guarantee and the power and the assurance that we are given in the resurrection of Jesus. And he speaks of how Jesus properly equips and powerfully enables us to live for God. And as he does all this he speaks in terms of security and safety that were a bit more familiar to the lives and times of his 1st century audience. He speaks in terms of Shepherd and sheep.

In these ancient times the Shepherd was this ever-present symbol of care and strength and security, and therefore it was only fitting that the author would chose this title for Jesus as we wrapped up his letter of instruction and encouragement. Especially seeing that the author, for one reason or another, was unable to be with his audience. As he longs to be with them, he does not want to see his dear Christian friends lacking in any way, just because he cannot be with them. Therefore, he instructs them to listen to those leaders who were currently with them, and then he assures them of the wonderful presence, guidance, and protection of the Risen Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the Sheep.

The Lord Jesus would guide them through the power of his word. He was there through his servants to keep them from harm, to steer them away from danger, and the LORD himself would be there to supply them with assistance as they called out to him through prayer. When the enemies of sin and temptation, Satan and his menacing demons lurk around the corner, who jump out and frighten us and attack Jesus is there. We are his. When our sins threaten our relationship with our God, when a tender conscience is twisted to think that we are too shameful for this great shepherd to care for us any more, we are blessed with this covenant cut and sealed with the blood of Jesus. Safety and security, peace of mind, is be found in Christ, that Great Shepherd of the Sheep.

We might be more in tune with illustrations of car safety and the dangers and conveniences of modern travel than we are with the inner workings of the relationship of a shepherd and his sheep and the ancient dangers that this pairing had to face. And yet despite this lack of familiarity the picture of sheep and shepherd is one that still grants us peace. It is this special relationship that has the power to span the gap of culture and time because it touches so well on these basic human needs of safety and security. As so many absolutely treasure the timeless peace that portions of Scripture like Psalm 23 and Isaiah 53 and John 10 grant to our restless souls. ***The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not be in want.... Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil... All we like sheep have gone astray and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*** Yes, Jesus says to you, ***"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.***

Our God meets those needs of safety and security through Jesus Christ. He gives us peace of mind as we are assured of his care. Despite all that threatens our life and our faith, despite the enemies lurking around the corner, the uncertainty of future needs being met, as a sheep cared for by a capable shepherd dwell in peace we are set free from the worry that surrounds us. And we know that this is not just any shepherd that watches over us, the one who cares for us is Jesus. This is the Great Shepherd of the Sheep who shed his blood to assure you of his incredible love and his intimate care. And the Father raised from the dead to assure you of his undying devotion and his abiding presence.

Jesus the Great Shepherd of the Sheep lives, he reigns, to grant me daily breath. He lives that I shall conquer even death.

The great miracle of Easter gives us more than a day of peace and joy, a solitary festival of flowers and thanksgiving. It gives us daily peace and eternal joy. He lives! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! As sure as I know this is a historical fact and blessed truth, I am sure that Jesus now lives and guides me as my Great and wonderful Shepherd. He walks with me. He talks with me through his Word. He listens to my prayer. He knows what lurks around the corner, he knows what threatens and frightens me now. The living Lord watches over my coming and going both now and forevermore. My Savior Jesus, who died for my sins, is risen from the dead to guide me as I live a holy life of thanksgiving and praise.

He is that great shepherd of the sheep and he is with us. This good news grants us the security that enables us to live in peace and carry out our daily tasks with greater confidence and ability. Especially as we consider these words from the book of Hebrews and the particular way that the author states them. ***20 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.***

Not only do we have a Savior who lives, but he lives within us. He is the one who equips us and gives us what we need and he is the one who works within us so that we may carry out what is good and pleasing to him. The key is Christ in me. He is in you. He is at work in us. Through the gift of faith, through the gift of his word He equips and guides and leads us to that which is good.

If you think about it, where do we often go wrong in our life of faith? As we follow we might think of this as something that we must do ourselves. That we must by our own power resist evil and that we by our own wisdom and strength carry out our daily callings or resist temptation. As we strive to follow God we may forget that Christ is in us, that we are fully equipped with God, that he is on board, and dwelling within us, and forgetting Christ's presence this strips us of the incredible promise and assurance, this strength and power that God gives to us in Jesus. No wonder we become discouraged when our self-control is lacking. No wonder we become proud and wander in our own directions when we trust in ourselves and our own wisdom and understanding. We are blessed, however, when we live in this grace that the writer the Hebrews announces in the power-packed blessing. God is the source of my peace. Jesus, my loving Shepherd who laid down his life, is risen from the dead and he lives and dwells within me. Jesus enables and equips me. Christ, that Great Shepherd of the Sheep lives and he is as work within you.

Find security and safety in him. Trust in him. Rely fully on him. Know that you are fully equipped with Jesus your Risen Savior and go and live in peace and security and stability. He guides us and leads us. Let him have the wheel as he leads us through life. He lives, he lives within us. He enables us to take on the obstacles the dangers the worries of this life knowing that he is at our side, and he empowers us to do that which is pleasing to God.

Now what will that kind of life look like? In a world where right and wrong have often been flipped upside down it is useful and good for us to learn from God's Word what his good and holy will is. The book of Hebrews ends with some specific encouragements here in chapter 13. A summary of these words serve as a good start as we consider what it means to carry out good work that God has prepared for you to do. We are encouraged to: let brotherly love continue, show hospitality, remember those are suffering. Honor marriage. Pursue contentment. Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their timeless faith while you hold fast to the unchanging truths of Scripture. Be in the word, come to worship, be kind and loving, and praise your Lord in all you do. Obey your leaders, submit to their authority. Be a blessing to others, not a burden. And pray. Pray for the work of the gospel. Pray for your pastor and for those who do God's work among you. Pray for their particular needs. The Lord Jesus equips and enables us to do all of this and more. His word teaches us and fills us and guides us to do these things. The Risen Lord lives in us so that we may live for him.

And all this is based on that eternal covenant written for us in the blood of Christ. This not just a warrantee that covered a few disciples, for a limited amount of time, but this is a promise, an eternal covenant that for all his sheep, for all of his people, for all time. God covers us with the blood of Christ that brings peace with God and security in this life and the life to come. And Jesus that great shepherd who shed his blood, gave his life for us, lives as our risen Lord cares for us and lives within us and fully equips us peace and security as we travel through all the hills and valleys, the twists and turns of life.

These words are used as one of the final blessings in the committal service. I have spoken these words at a gravesite many times. I have spoken them to people who are hurting who are in need of direction and strength and encouragement. They are words that are a fitting blessing at such a time and they are wonderful words that our God gives to us in any situation of life. To hearts that crave peace, to lives that are in always in need of direction and power, safety and security, our Good Shepherd calls out through the voice of his Word and he equips us with unparalleled peace, safety and security, strength and power. For with his grace and his power and his presence he enables us to go out on the road of life and to go out fully equipped with faith; to go out each day and take on the challenges the twists and turns of life, with greater confidence and ability for we know that he is with us. With thankful hearts we trust in him, we rely in him, we listen and we follow our Good Shepherd, for we know that he lives and he lives in us. Before the Lord sends us out on our way today let us listen once more to these words of blessing: ²⁰ ***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.***