



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 13:20-25

“The Great Shepherd and His Everlasting Covenant”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures. We think of so many people who do not have Scriptures; many people over the face of this globe who, until the 20th Century, have been able to look upon a Bible and even then have only parts of the Bible when faithful missionaries have worked in their tribes. And we are so blessed to have the Scriptures and have had them all of our lives; have had an opportunity to be acquainted with them. We know, Lord, if there is any justice whatsoever in the ultimate judgment of each one of us both the unbelievers and the believers there surely must be some recognition of the advantages that we have had over against the advantages of others, who have never heard of Christ or who have never had a Bible, have never had a teacher, have never known a Christian person. We thank Thee, Lord, for what Thou hast done for us and we pray that by Thy marvelous grace Thou wilt enable us to pleasingly do Thy will. We commit our meeting to Thee this evening and ask that it may contribute to some extent to that goal; for each one of us and for our family and for our friends.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for tonight is “The Great Shepherd and His Eternal or Everlasting Covenant” and we’re reading verse 20 through verse 25 of chapter 13. These are the last verses of this great epistle and it concludes with a prayer and a benediction, and some personal words.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect [or complete or equip you] in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words. Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty. [Evidently, Timothy had been in prison, perhaps, and now he was free, and now he wants to either communicate that to the readers, or remind them that they know that fact.] That he is set at liberty with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.”

That’s an interesting expression because it, of course, can mean either that the epistle was written from Italy, in which case we might think of Rome, and that, by the way, historically, the Epistle to the Hebrews is known first in the West, in Rome, for Clement of Rome cites a passage or two and phrases it in such a complete similarity to our first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews that it’s obvious that he knew it. It seems much more unlikely that our author and Clement referred to the same piece of literature, because our author refers to it as if it’s his own.

On the other hand, “They who are of Italy” may refer to Italians who are elsewhere and who are writing and our author is writing from some other place to people in Rome. Now, the latter is probably the opinion of the majority of the scholars, so that “they of Italy” represent Italians who are in other places and our author sends greetings from them to the West to the saints who are probably located in Rome and its environs.

“So Salute them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.
Grace be with you all.”

The Authorized Version has another “Amen” but it’s probably that that’s not genuine, so we’ll end with “Grace be with you all.” “The Great Shepherd and His eternal covenant.” I think we all would agree that this is one magnificent epistle. It informs us that God longs to retrieve the man that he lost in Paradise; to see him restored and enjoying the image and glory of God, which was his by creation. And, of course, it’s obviously the concern of our great high priest that the fire of desire for God should burn always within us.

One of the devotional commentators has said, “All that God has done in redemption of Christ is for the sake of what he wishes to effect in our heart. All that he makes known to us of that redemption is to bring us to trust and yield ourselves to him. To work out the inner subjective redemption, the heavenly redemption, in the same power in which the objective has been effected by the saving work of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross.”

I know that when we say something like that that Christians, all of us, at one time or another, find a great deal of difficulty because the promises that are set forth here, in the word of God, the goals that the author sets forth, “Make you perfect in every good work, to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight,” these things seem so high and so impossible, so high that there should be perfected within us the will of God in such a way that God would be well pleased with us. And then, so impossible that even the praise, which came when they thought upon which God had done passes away.

One of the men commenting upon that has said, “If we have any doubts about these promises being too high or too impossible to even think of as promises into which we can enter experientially, then we ought to take a look at the universe, and remember who has created the universe. The God who made everything, the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the ocean; all of the little things as well, for he is concerned about all of the little things in his universe just as much as he is concerned about the big things. If we think of all of those marvelous things that he has created, and actually that he continues to care for in all of the details, then surely it’s not so illogical to expect that he is able to do just precisely what the Scriptures say he would like to do in the hearts

of all of his believers.” “He wills that I should holy be,” we sometimes sing, “Who can withstand His will.” Or, “What can withstand His will. The council of His grace in me, He surely will fulfill.”

Well, when we look at our passage here, you’ll notice those two verses, verse 20 and verse 21, they strike everyone who ever reads these last verses. They are something of a succinct summary of the epistle, in this striking prayer, in the passage. “Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.” This is the invocation of the prayer and benediction. And, he begins with, “Now the God of peace.” Well, you might ask, why does he say “the God of peace”? Well, the other writers speak of the God of all comfort. The God of all consolation. He talks about the God of peace. And we might think about the fact that by virtue of what Christ has done on the cross in dying for our sins, he has made it possible for us who are rebels at enmity with God, who are his enemies, specifically, the Apostle Paul says, “can now be at peace with him.”

When we read the Bible, however, it’s always best to take a look at the immediate context, in order to answer questions like that; and, also, to understand the meaning of terms. “God of peace,” why, certainly, that made sense, just what I said before, you don’t think I would say it if it didn’t make sense, do you? It made sense. But the question is, is that the sense he intended? I’m not sure it is, because what has he been talking about?

Well, in the first place, he’s been talking about the elders of the church and has been calling upon the believers to render them submission. Verse 7: “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” Verse 17: “Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves to them.”

And even in the next to the last verse, these last verses, he says in verse 24, “Greet them that have the rule over you,” so it’s entirely possible that he means that he understands there’s been some difficulty in among the Hebrews, and some of the difficulty is the fact that they’ve not rendered the

proper submission and obedience to their officers, their elders. And so he’s reminding them that the God that he is calling upon is the “God of peace” and suggesting that if there is any kind of dissention that it should be banished; and that we should center our attention upon the God who produces peace, even in such a situation as a church struggle.

But then there’s something else and I’m rather inclined to this, myself. I, of course, cannot speak authoritatively, but what he has been talking about all through this epistle is the possibility of his readers apostatizing into Judaism, the Judaism from which they had probably come because he writes to Jewish professing believers. We tried to point that out.

And so when he says, “Now the God of peace,” I think perhaps he’s talking about the fact that the God of peace is the God who is able to bring the kind of reconciliation that ought to exist between the Christians of Gentile descent and the Christians of Jewish descent; and, also, that there should be a recognition on the part of those who’ve made profession of faith to unite with the Christians fully, and enjoy the blessings that God has given to those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Jewish God-man, incidentally.

So “Now the God of peace,” the final word to bring harmony, because he’s been talking about the possibility of apostasy. “The God of peace.”

Now, he says, in verse 20, also, these words that give the ground of the petition. He says, “The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now, you might not notice this from the Authorized Version, you might not notice just reading the New Testament, but what our author is doing is that he is referring to a passage in the Old Testament and to a great event in the Old Testament that was suggested and brought forth these words. “The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ.”

So, I’d like for you to take your Bibles and turn back to the book of Isaiah, and we’ll look at the passage that, probably, our author has in mind, when he’s thinking about the God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the one whom “The God of peace has brought again from the dead,” the great Shepherd of the sheep.

Now, we'll look at verse 11 of chapter 63 of the book of Isaiah. And the author is talking about the fact that in all their affliction, he was afflicted, the angel of his presence saved them. In verse 10, “But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.”

Now, notice these words, “Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of the his flock? Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him?”

Now, who is the shepherd? Well, the shepherd is Moses. And what is the flock? Well, the flock is the people of Israel. They have been brought out of the land of Egypt; they have been brought through the Red Sea, they have been brought out into the land. And this, as you know, was the great deliverance to which the prophets and others pointed Israel, to remind Israel of their beginnings and how God had performed that mighty miracle of the exodus, bringing them out of from bondage to the Egyptians, bringing them through in a miraculous way through the sea, out onto dry land.

Now, I'm going to read you something that Mr. Spurgeon wrote, because it's done just about as well as any I have ever seen. He said, “Here, I would have each one of you for himself read the passage of Scripture, which I think the apostle had in mind when he wrote these words. Turn to Isaiah 63, verse 11.” See, Spurgeon follows after my example.

Turn to Isaiah 63:11. “Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him?” That is, within Moses, “That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name?”

Now, Mr. Spurgeon says, “See how this making to himself an everlasting name tallies with the last clause of our passage,” because in verse 21, we read, “To whom be glory, forever and ever.”

“But, let us proceed,” Mr. Spurgeon says, “That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? Truly, those do not stumble whom the Lord worketh,

that which is well pleasing in His sight.” Now, we have that passage too, here in our word. “As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest:” Well, there is the God of peace that’s in the context back here in Isaiah chapter 63. We don’t have time to look at it.

And, “Having saved his people now by the blood of the covenant.” What covenant? Well, the covenant of the Passover and the shedding of the blood there, which was smeared upon their door posts. “He led them to the Red Sea, their foes pursuing them. Into the Red Sea, they descended, not to its banks alone did they go, but into its very depths they passed. And there were they buried. The sea was in the place of death to them; between its liquid walls and the clouded pillar which hung over the passage, they were baptized unto Moses.”

You may remember, that’s the expression Paul uses in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, when he talks about the Exodus there, that the children of Israel are baptized unto Moses came under his leadership and buried in baptism as in a liquid tomb. “But low they come up out of it again, led safely up from what became the grave of Pharaoh, with songs and shoutings and rejoicings. The parallel is this,” Mr. Spurgeon says, “That great shepherd, who is far greater than Moses and Aaron, must needs go down into the place of death on the behalf of His people; He must as the representative of His flock descend into the place of the supplicant. This He did for He bowed His head and died. But low, the Lord led Him up again from the deeps and He arose to life and glory, and all His people with Him. On that day, the song might have been jubilant as Miriam when she chanted, ‘Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, Thy right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power,’ but now, in this great deliverance, the blood of the everlasting covenant, the song is not to the Lord, who is the man of war, but to the God of peace.”

In other words, when they came through, you’ll remember, came out on the other side, there was the song of jubilation, which was made to the Lord, now to the God of peace. The honor is ascribed to the same Lord, but under a gentler name. “And to Him be glory forever and ever.”

And then, Mr. Spurgeon, to show that he’s not inspired says, “I have no doubt that Paul, in part, borrowed his imagery from the Red Sea.” So we know that Mr. Spurgeon thought Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. He may have; he may not have.

So, I think, you can see that what our author has done, if you go back in the original text, and you’ll see the same words are used. He’s looking at the Septuagint or the Greek translation of the Old Testament, when he says, “Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep.” In other words, just as Moses led the children of Israel out, then led them down through the sea that had been parted by the Lord God, and led them through so, our Lord Jesus, by going to Calvary’s cross, by giving up his life, by entering into the grave and coming up in resurrection, has delivered his people, his flock, and he’s delivered them as their representative. So brought again from the dead.

That’s a marvelous thing when you think about it; the resurrection of Christ and what that means. Perhaps you as you have been reading through have noticed the absence of the term “resurrection” from the Epistle to the Hebrews. This is the only time it’s mentioned. You might think a lengthy epistle like this, that’s so significant with the work of Christ, would have the resurrection mentioned. But no, it’s not mentioned. In the Epistle to the Hebrews its exaltation; it’s the ascension or the exaltation of the glory, which presupposes the resurrection. But this is the only time it’s mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Now, this particular miracle, this miracle of the resurrection, embraces all of the other miracles that are found in the word of God. Think about it for a moment. What did the Lord Jesus Christ do when he was here? He healed the deaf, so they could hear. I might have been the object of the Lord’s healing, according to Martha.

Second, he gave speech to the dumb. I don’t need that, I have a Southern accent. But he gave speech to the dumb, power to the palsied limbs and withered members. Have you ever thought in the resurrection all of those things may be considered to be involved. Our Lord Jesus is dead in the tomb, the eyes that saw were blind, the ears that were at one time were deaf, the limbs that now

do not move have received in the resurrection sight, hearing, strength, and health in one supreme and simultaneous act and forever. It was the crowning proof, the sign and seal, of our Lord’s messiahship, in which as Paul says, “He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.”

Our Lord, it has been pointed out, was thrice dead. Dead by crucifixion, dead with the pierced hands and feet, dead by the spear thrust which cleft his heart in twain, dead by the temporary enshrouding of the grave clothes, which wrapped even his head, you’ll remember, and even excluded breath, even had he not otherwise been dead. But the resurrection, our Lord is brought by the mighty miracle of God to life and a glorified body.

It’s interesting that the author should do what he has done here, because it’s in a sense the antitype to the type. In the Old Testament, when God wanted to remind Israel of how great he was, as I mentioned, what he did was to show them what he had done for them in coming out of the land of Egypt. For example, in the book of Micah, I may have to declare an intermission for you to find it, but in Micah, chapter 7, don’t you just love how I make you feel small? Micah, chapter 7 in verse 15. I say all that because it will give me time to find it, you see. Micah, chapter 7 in verse 15, says this, “According to days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show him marvelous things.” In other words, the measure of the power of God in the Old Testament, which he often called to Israel’s attention, and the measure and encouragement of what he could do for them was what he did when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, took them through the Red Sea, brought them out on the other side of the land, delivered them from the Egyptians, not only did that but caused the death of Pharaoh and the Egyptians who were pursuing them.

So in the Old Testament God’s unit of measurement is what he did for his people in bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This deliverance, incidentally, included at least three things, all miracles of power and grace. First of all, there was the exemption from death. The blood stained houses, which they upon which they sprinkled the blood and therefore they escaped the destroying angel. And then, second, there was the defiance of the law of gravitation in making the waters as

they went through the Red Sea a wall on either side of them, as the word of God says. And, thirdly, there was the overthrow of all of their foes, Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

Now, in our Lord’s resurrection, we have something that in a marvelous ways corresponds to it, because there is exemption from wrath on the part of every blood sprinkled soul who is in our Lord as their representative. There is a defiance of gravitation in the resurrection and ascension of our Lord to the right hand of the throne of God. And there is the overthrow of all of the hostile powers of Satan and all his hosts, in Christ’s session at the right hand of the throne of God.

Remarkable these parallels that are found in the word of God; reminding us that the same God who speaks in the Old Testament, who spoke to Israel, to the psalmist, to the prophets, is the God who speaks to us today through the New Testament Scriptures in the Holy Spirit.

Now, he says, we must go on, that our Lord Jesus is “That great Shepherd of the sheep.” The Greek text says simply “The” “The great Shepherd of the sheep.” The shepherd metaphor, have you ever thought about your “sheepness”? Do you know what sheep are? They are about the dumbest animal that you could ever find. The sheep can be lost in the midst of which everybody else is found. They wander off. They don’t know where they’ve gone. They don’t know where they are. They’re just lost. That’s the way they are. What a beautiful metaphor for you and me. You didn’t think I’d say that, did you? Sheepness.

Dr. Bob Smith, who was a Christian philosopher, who was professor, who was a pastor in a Presbyterian Church and then later for many years was professor of philosophy at a Christian college in Minnesota, used to humor his students concerning this very thing by reminding us of our human estate, like sheep, and insisting that the existence of sheep is *prima facie* evidence against evolution. Sheep are so unintelligent and obtuse and defenseless that they could not possibly have evolved. [Laughter] What could they evolve from? They’re already at the beginning on everything as dumb as you can be, as stubborn as you can be, as defenseless as you can be. And that’s what they are today. They still are just like that. What a beautiful picture of you and me; stubborn, defenseless, just like those sheep, lost, apart from our Lord Jesus Christ.

“The only way,” he says, “that sheep could ever have survived is with shepherds to take care of them.” And that’s the only way that you and I can survive. We need a shepherd too. We’d never survive if we didn’t have a shepherd. But we have a shepherd. We have a “great Shepherd.” So he says, our Lord Jesus Christ. If you realize how obtuse you are, and how much like a sheep you are, how dumb you are and how ignorant you are of even where you stand, you’d flee to your great Shepherd and lean upon him all the days and moments and hours of your life. So, he’s the great Shepherd of the sheep. By the way, you’ll notice that he’s the great Shepherd of the sheep, not the wolves, nor of the goats. The great Shepherd of the sheep.

People have accused me of being able to find definite atonement anywhere in the Bible. Well, I can almost do that, because it’s written almost on every page, that God’s saving work is particular for his people. So, he’s the shepherd of the sheep, not the goats, shepherd of the sheep. Don’t forget that. Not of the wolves, but of the sheep. He belongs to them, they belong to him. They go together, the Shepherd of the sheep. I must say I rejoice at that. I’m very glad for that.

Now, he says, “That great Shepherd of the sheep,” he’s been brought again “Through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” The blood. You know, there’s a marvelous statement, I don’t think I’ve read this before, I read this book, I may have read it, but I had completely forgotten it. But, there’s a marvelous statement by Franz Delitzsch, he’s written two volumes on the Epistle to the Hebrews. He was a German, Christian man, very interested incidentally, in the salvation of the Jews but an outstanding scholar. And if you’ve seen in the libraries of preachers, “Keil and Delitzsch’s Commentaries on the Old Testament,” C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch wrote a commentary through the whole of the Old Testament. Each of them wrote other books as well. Keil wrote a commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews. It’s never been translated into English. Delitzsch wrote a two-volume set and it has been translated. And talking about the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is what this godly professor, whose writings have been revered even by liberal scholars has said. “For the resurrection of Jesus, which in the first place set Him forth as the person vindicated, took place through the blood which atoned for the sins of man.” He refers to chapter 9

in verse 28, where the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes the words “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Then he goes on to say this, this is what I like, he says, “The blood which atoned for the sins of man, which burdened Him in His death.” What an interesting expression, that the sins of sinners burdened our Lord as he was hanging upon Calvary’s cross. He “bore them.” And this blood also extinguished God’s wrath. In other words, it was a propitiation, his death, extinguishing God’s wrath. God’s wrath against sin satisfied in what Christ had done. Set free God’s love. Not that God did not love, he loved in the sending of the substitute. But “free” to complete the goal of divine love in our redemption. “Set free God’s love and founded an altered relation between God and man, a different relation, a relation of eternal fellowship of love.” “And, on the other hand, in virtue of this blood, He’s the great Shepherd of the sheep, this He is because the blood is the blood of an everlasting covenant, by which He has sealed His claim to the sheep, has proved His faithfulness and acquired for them God’s eternal love.”

What a magnificent statement for a scholar. That that is what was accomplished on Calvary’s cross, by God the Father, in acquiring us, so that we belong to him. We belong to him by election; we belong to him, also, by his acquiring of us on Calvary’s cross. A theological term is “imputation.” You never hear that much anymore. But that’s what it means to acquire. So he elected us and he acquired us on Calvary’s cross. So it’s through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

Now, one would think that this term “everlasting covenant” must be a reference to the new covenant that the Epistle to the Hebrews has talked about more than once. For example, back in chapter 8, we read in verse 7, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers [the Mosaic Covenant] in the day when I

took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not. For this is the covenant that I will make with the children of Israel after those days.” And it goes on to give those great promises which are referred to in just a moment. So you would think that when he talks about the everlasting covenant here, that he’s talking about that new covenant which our Lord consummated by the blood shed on Calvary’s cross. And, I think, that’s what he is talking about.

In other words, exegetically, from the standpoint of this epistle, that must be the first reference of what he says when he mentions the term everlasting covenant, because that’s what it is; it’s an everlasting covenant. And everything about what our Lord has done in the Epistle to the Hebrews is described as being eternal. Remember? Eternal inheritance, all of those things that are stated in the epistle. It’s one of his characteristic words. The things that our Lord has accomplished are eternal. There’s never going to come anything after what he has done, because he also says it’s not only eternal, but it’s final. There can be no supplanting of the promises that God has accomplished in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I’d like to suggest something else. The Bible tells us that there was an agreement between the Father and the Son, before our Lord came. Just to give you some indication of this. The Bible doesn’t say too much about this but it’s evident that our Lord came with a command or two from the Father in heaven.

In chapter 6 in the Gospel of John, he refers to it when he says in, well, let’s see, I should have looked this up so I wouldn’t waste your time but, let me just read here, beginning with verse 37. “And the Father himself?” I’m reading verse, no wonder I’m having trouble finding it, it’s in chapter 6. So he says in verse 38, “For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me.” And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. For this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up.” He talks also about a commandment that he received from the Father.

So we’re going to say then that it is likely that there was an agreement between the Father and the Son and we assume, since we have a Trinitarian God, the Holy Spirit also was involved in our Lord’s coming to do his work.

In other words, what was taking place was there was a work on the part of the Son to carry out some eternal arrangements that had been made. Now, I’m leading up to something that I love to read. I’ve read this I don’t know how many times and I love to read it because, I think, it’s one of the most magnificent things that Mr. Spurgeon ever, ever wrote. This is what he says, I hope you’ll have to stick with me just a little bit. It’s on, he’s discussing the text, Hebrews 13:20, and it’s a reference to the everlasting covenant. He has some interesting things to say about it and he then goes on to describe the eternal covenant of redemption.

Now, that term is not found in the Bible: “eternal covenant of redemption.” But it’s obvious the Father, the Son and the Spirit have duties, which they perform. It’s a reasonable deduction. I think it’s very reasonable. It’s necessary to believe that they had a plan, and that is the eternal covenant of redemption.

Now, here are his words. “My soul flies back now, winged by imagination and by faith, and looks into that mysterious council chamber, and by faith I behold the Father pledging Himself to the Son and the Son pledging Himself to the Father; while the Spirit gives His pledge to both; and thus that divine compact, long to be hidden in darkness is completed and settled. The covenant, which in these latter days has been read in the light of heaven, and has become the joy, the hope and boast of all the saints. And now, what were the stipulations of this covenant? They were somewhat in this wise: God had foreseen that man, after creation, would break the covenant of works—that is, in the Garden of Eden—that however mild and gentle the tenure upon which Adam had possession of paradise, yet that tenure would be too severe for him and he would be sure to kick against it and he would ruin himself. God had also foreseen that His elect ones, whom He had chosen out of the rest of mankind, would fall by the sin of Adam, since they as well as the rest of mankind were represented in Adam.”

The covenant had, therefore, it's in the restoration of the chosen people. He may readily understand what were the stipulations. On the Father's part, thus, ran the covenant. I cannot tell you it in glorious celestial tongue in which it was written. I am feign to bring it down to the speech which suiteth to the ear of flesh and to the heart of mortal. Thus I say, ran the covenant in lines like these.” This is the Father speaking now, Mr. Spurgeon is thinking. “I the Most High Jehovah, do hereby give unto My only begotten and well-beloved Son, a people; countless beyond the number of the stars, who shall be by Him washed from sin, by Him preserved and kept and led, and by Him at last presented before my throne without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. I covenant my oath and swear by myself because I can swear by no greater, that these whom I now give to Christ shall be forever the objects of My eternal love. Them will I forgive through the merit of the blood, to these will I give a perfect righteousness, these will I adopt and make My sons and daughters and these shall reign with Me through Christ eternally.”

“Thus, ran the glorious side of the covenant. The Holy Spirit also, as one of the high contracting parties on this side of the covenant gave His declaration. “I hereby covenant, said the Spirit, that all whom the Father giveth to the Son, I will in due time quicken, bring to life. I will show them their need of redemption. I will cut off from them all groundless hope, destroy their refuges of lies, I will bring them faith whereby this blood shall be applied to them. I will work in them every grace. I will keep their faith alive. I will cleanse them and drive out all depravity from them, and they shall be presented, at last, spotless and faultless. This was the one side of the covenant which is at this very day being fulfilled and scrupulously kept,” Mr. Spurgeon says.

“As for the other side of the covenant, this was the part of it engaged and covenanted by Christ. He thus declared and covenanted with His Father, My Father, on My part, I covenant that in the fullness of time, I will become man. I will take upon myself the form and nature of the fallen race. I will live in their wretched world and for my people will I keep the Law perfectly and I will work out a spotless righteousness which shall be acceptable to the demands of Thy just and holy law. In due time, I will bear the sins of all my people. Thou shalt exact their debts on Me. The

chastisement of their piece I will endure and by My stripes they shall be healed. My Father, I covenant and promise that I will be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, I will magnify Thy Law; make it honorable. I will suffer all they ought to have suffered. I will endure the curse of the Law and all the vials of Thy wrath shall be emptied and spent upon My head. I will then rise again. I will ascend into Heaven. I will intercede for them at Thy right hand, and I will make Myself responsible for every one of them that not one of them whom Thou hast given me shall ever be lost. But I will bring all My sheep, of whom by Thy” well, I’ve gone ahead, “my blood,” I think is what he meant by that “Thy blood,” “Thou hast constituted Me the shepherd. I will bring everyone safe to Thee at last.” Hallelujah. What a magnificent promise promises our Lord.

By the way, you’ll notice when you read the new covenant promises in chapter 8, you’ll notice that they don’t read like promises made to individuals who of their free will are expected to respond. Notice the sovereign way in which the covenant’s promises are stated. Chapter 8, verse 10, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, will write them in their hearts: I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” Verse 12, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

No ifs, no buts, just shalls and wills. These are the lines in which the promises are written. Hath He not said? Will he not do it? So the Bible says, we expect him to do it. I could talk forever about something like that but, I want you in the few minutes that we have to notice a couple of other things before we close this great epistle. That is, my exposition of it.

You notice the aim of the prayer in verse 21, “Make you perfect” or equip you. This verb, incidentally, is the one that is used of the mending of nets by the apostles. It’s the one that is used of restoring a brother who is out of fellowship with the Lord. So when he says, “Make you perfect,” complete, restore, mend you, because we need mending from time to time. We’re outside the perfect will of God. The works which he promises to do are those that lead to our completion. “Make you perfect in every good work to do His will.”

Incidentally, you'll note that “works” are only good if they are agreeable to his will. Those are good works; the works that are harmonious with the will of God. But then you think I overemphasize the sovereign grace of God? No, I don't. I just say a lot about it because the Bible says a lot about it. Look at it. What does he say? “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will.” Working in you, working in you, well, that's what Paul said back in Philippians, isn't it? Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will, to will, and to do of his good pleasure. It's God who moves the will of man to do the will of God. It's God who does it. So when the will of God is done, who is glorified? Who deserves the glory? The Lord God in Heaven, who worked in us who are willing to do his good pleasure. That's what he means here. “Working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” Why, he's the one who has been resurrected. He's the one at the right hand of the Father, at the present time, God works in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.

Well, he's been resurrected. So what is he now? He's our great Shepherd. What's a Shepherd? He's a pastor. That's what term shepherd means. Why do we need a human pastor? We don't need any human pastor. Of course, in a sense, we need pastors, elders in the church. But the ultimate one to whom we respond and before whom we're responsible is our great pastor at the right hand of the throne of God. This great Shepherd. Called “the good Shepherd” because he gave his life for the sheep. Called “the chief Shepherd” because it's he who shall return and take us to be with himself. That's what Peter reminds us. That he's the chief Shepherd and therefore those among the elders do the work of the Lord may look forward for proper reward at our Lord's second coming. So through Jesus Christ.

And, incidentally, the only way in which we may be well pleasing to God is through the pardon that has been obtained through the Lord Jesus Christ. Calvin says, “Any kind of so called good works, if they are not ours by virtue of what Christ has done and through his pardon, they are fetted, “ I hate to say that was the best translation of that, but I'm going to say it. “They stink.”

That’s what Calvin says. The works that are not works that, ultimately, are accomplished through Jesus Christ, our resurrected great Shepherd of the sheep.

Well, he goes on to say, “To whom be glory, forever and ever.” That’s probably a reference to the God of peace, although some have said it’s a reference to Jesus Christ. But I won’t fight over that. I won’t. Giving glory to the Lord Jesus Christ, forever and ever, and to the Father, as well, and the Spirit of God, also, the whole Trinity. To whom be glory, forever and ever. That’s a reflection of that word, back in Isaiah chapter 63, of how God had made a name for himself, in the deliverance of the children of Israel.

The doxology then in verse 21, is the praise of the God of peace, the subject of the sentence, the source of all power, and then the 7th part of the prayer. The Amen in verse 21. Prayers have “amens” don’t they?

Now, in verse 22 and 23, there are some personal notes, very brief, because of the gravity of the circumstances and the weight of the subjects handled, how long do you think it would take you to read through the Epistle to the Hebrews? Well, I didn’t time myself. I guess I should have timed myself. But it’s awfully hard for me to read through without stopping and thinking about what I’m reading. But there have been men who have read it through and have timed themselves and say that to read through the Epistle to the Hebrews, in an ordinary way, takes about one hour. So the author says, “I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation, for I have written a letter unto you in few words.” One hour. What a massive amount of divine truth in one hour.

And then, the final words in verse 24 and 25. By the way, in verse 22, when he says, “I have written a letter unto you in few words,” you might think that could the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews be a woman? It has been suggested that she was a woman. In fact, it has been suggested by a female scholar out on the coast. I must say, if her other female scholars know they had more intelligence, because back in chapter 11, the author refers to himself in the masculine gender. It’s kind of hidden, but it’s there just the same. That might be very suitable for a woman, it has been

said, to write a long letter like this and say I’ve written to you in few words. Well, I don’t follow that reasoning.

He says, “I’ve written a letter unto you in few words,” and he’s talking as a masculine. We don’t know his name, but that’s what he was. He was of masculine gender. “They of Italy,” we said was ambiguous. The majority of students think the reference is to Italians outside of Italy, so the letter was addressed back to Italy.

Well, thus we come to the end of this grand exposition of our High Priest’s eternal ministry for us, by divine sovereign covenant. His ministry is perpetual for his sheep, his brethren, his children, his people. Those which in chapter 9, he refers to as they who are called. How do we become partakers of this ministry? Well, by divine election, of course. Second, by purchase imputation, what Christ did on Calvary’s cross. And then, by the Spirit’s application as he takes the message of the gospel and applies it to us.

What does he do? The Spirit subdues our natural enmity against divine things. This, by the way, is why we don’t have religion taught in the classrooms of our schools today. It’s because there’s enmity against the truth of Christianity. In any possible way in which we can avoid bringing Christianity in, it is used.

There’s an interesting article in the *Wall Street Journal* today, by George Morris, a well-known evangelical, on the first of the editorial pages about why the conditions of things are as they are. It’s really unscientific.

Then the Spirit subdues our enmity. He bends our stubborn wills, that’s speaking to me, cause I have a stubborn will. Martha says I am still stubborn, in household matters. In household matters. Bends our stubborn wills, soften our hard hearts, overcomes our self-righteousness, forces us to sue for mercy, from the dust at the feet of our Savior. Also, some have no altar from which redemption has come. No Christ to praise. No covenant power to enable them to do his will. May the Lord enable us to trust him, enable us to fill our senses with the sweet incense of gratitude to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the remainder of our days. Beginning now.

“The Great Shepherd and His Everlasting Covenant” by S. Lewis Johnson
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If by chance we should have someone in the audience who does not know our Lord, we remind you that this great epistle has pointed him out as the shepherd, the great Shepherd of the flock of God, and poor obtuse, blind, stubborn wandering sheep may find eternal life through coming to him.

Come to him! Trust in him! And receive those eternal blessings that belong to the new covenant and the covenant of redemption that the Trinity has accomplished and will carry out in its finest details, to the end.

Let's bow in a word of prayer...

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of the study of this magnificent epistle. A high priest at the right hand of the throne of God, a high priest installed in office by the blood of atonement accomplished by the infinite eternal Son of God. What reliability! What blessing! O God, enable us to trust Him more deeply as the days go by, for the glory of the Name of our Great God in Heaven, and we pray.

In His name. Amen.