

Sermon Transcript

10.25.2026

Hebrews 13:20-21

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- Good morning! Please turn to Heb 13:20-21 for our penultimate sermon in the book.
- As you make your way there, I want to tell you a story.
- It's a story from the Bible, one with which many of you are undoubtedly familiar, a story from the book of Exodus.
- For those who may not be as familiar, I'll set the scene.
- The book of Genesis ends with Israel sojourning in the land of Egypt. In their first generation in the land, they're a favored people as one of their own, Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham, is raised to a status of second in command of the kingdom.
- But eventually, that generation passes away, as does the next and the next.
- For 400 years, Israel prospers in the land & the Egyptians become increasingly frightened until eventually Israel is enslaved as we read in the opening paragraphs of the book of Exodus.
- But even enslavement isn't enough to assuage the fears of Pharaoh, so he commands the Hebrew boys to be killed at birth. But many of the Hebrew mothers and midwives refuse the command.
- One such woman was a Levite who gives birth to a beautiful baby boy named Moses and through a series of providential events, that boy ends up growing up in the very household of Pharaoh until eventually he chooses his Hebrew identity over his Egyptian family and is forced to flee the land of his childhood.
- Decades later, Moses is commissioned by God to go back to Egypt and declare the word of the Lord to Pharaoh. He is appointed to demand that the king let the Hebrews go from their slavery.
- Well, as you might expect, the most powerful man on the earth does not appreciate being told what to do with his property and his nation.
- So he decides to take his frustration and anger out on the slaves. He commands that their daily quota of bricks increase while their supply of straw is decreased.
- As you can imagine, making more bricks with less straw is a recipe for failure.
- Imagine your boss laying off half your sales team, but requiring double your sales quota.
- Or a soccer coach taking all the air out of ball and expecting you to kick it twice as far.
- Pharaoh is capricious and calloused and cruel.
- And I think about that as I think about the nature and character of God. Pharaoh is the picture of an anti-god, an anti-Christ, a masochist who not only opposes God and His people, but who strikes a compelling contrast to the nature and character of our Lord.
- Unlike Pharaoh, God doesn't demand more bricks while rationing your straw.
- He doesn't give you 2 talents and expect 10 in return.
- Rather, He not only gives straw, but makes bricks in and thru us. He does not merely tell us to do his will; he works His will in us.
- As we often say here at Reformation, He's a good Father, who gives good gifts.
- As we'll see in our passage today, He doesn't merely issue commands, but supplies us with the energy and fuel to empower us to fulfill those commands. He doesn't only proclaim the law, but also provides the gospel to enable us to fulfill the law.

- He equips us with everything good so that we might do His will. He works in us that which is pleasing in His sight.
- And so our response is awe, worship, and gratitude as we'll see in the text.
- First, let's pray for our time.
- Self, others, me.
- By now, you shouldn't need to think about the overarching message of Hebrews. It should be instinctual or visceral. We can sum it up in three words, let's say them together: Christ is better.
- Better than sin, better than pornography or divorce or greed or bitterness or pride. But, in Hebrews, the main foil of his superiority is to the Mosaic law.
- The law was good, but insufficient, imperfect, incomplete.
- So Christ is better to all of the various elements and aspects of the Mosaic law and covenant.
- Christ is a better prophet than Moses, a better priest than Aaron, a better king than Melchizedek.
- He offered a better sacrifice than Levitical priests, spilt better blood than bulls or goats as a better mediator of a better covenant. He's spoken a better word on the basis of better promises.
- In any and all ways, Christ is better.
- Better is the thread that ties the entire book together. The supremacy and superiority of Jesus Christ is the motif, the theme, the keynote or refrain of the book. Christ is better is the banner that hangs over every page, the echo that reverberates through every chapter.
- And that phrase is the antidote to a million temptations that we face. Every day we're faced with the chance to cling to the supremacy of Christ or capitulate to an inferior happiness, as Jeremiah says, broken cisterns that can hold no water.
- For the past 18 months and 13 chapters, we've seen how the author uses the preeminence of Christ to press his readers to persevere, to resist the temptation to drift.
- And now as we come to the end of the book, we see yet again where our hope lies.
- Not in our own will or works to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. But our hope rests firmly on the sovereignty and providence of God as we'll see. To God's commitment to His own glory which thankfully is not at odds with His commitment to our good.
- Our passage this morning is in the form of a benediction or a doxology.
- What do those words mean?
- Well, a benediction is a blessing. As you may imagine, the prefix bene means good and diction means to speak. So it is to speak something good over another.
- You may be familiar with some of these. For instance, the Aaronic benediction of Num 6 says:
 - *The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.* (Numbers 6:24–26)
- Or in 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul writes:
 - *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* (2 Corinthians 13:14)
- As you can see, the benediction is a blessing. And as a blessing, there is an objective element. It is a reminder that you are in Christ, you are in covenant, you are children of the living God. Yes, trials and tribulations will come, but Christ will not abandon you because you are His.
- So a benediction is a reminder of that reality, a reminder of that blessing. An objective declaration of God's favor to help when subjective doubts assail us.
- So our passage today contains a benediction blessing.
- But not only that, it also contains a doxology. What's a doxology?

- Well, it literally means a word of glory. A declaration of God's glory.
- You might be familiar with the song that we call the Doxology.
 - Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.
- But in the context of the Bible, doxologies typically arise in moments where the author has reached the pinnacle of some great truth and so he can't help but breathlessly proclaim the goodness and wonder of the glory of God.
- Imagine climbing a massive flight of stairs and then needing to catch your breath. That's a doxology. The biblical author is out of breath given the theological heights he has ascended.
- For instance, after 3 chapters on the mysteries of election and predestination, Paul declares:
 - *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* (Romans 11:33–36)
- In other words, if you read Romans 1-11 and in particular 8-11 and don't need to catch your breath, you've missed something. The air is too thin up there for our limited human capacities.
- Or in Ephesians 3 he writes:
 - *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.* (Ephesians 3:20–21)
- That's a doxology, a declaration of glory.
- So we see that in our passage this morning as well. Notice the final line: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.
- That's doxological language.
- And we've often said that our theology is the ceiling for our doxology. In other words, you can't worship a God that you don't know.
- Theology is the fuel for your worship. Its the kindling that the Spirit ignites so that our worship may burn brighter and hotter.
- Many of you have experienced or known others who experienced the phenomenon of a Christian camp high. You go off to a camp for a week and come back on fire for Jesus, only to have that fire nearly completely extinguished a few days or weeks later.
- What happened? Well, like a fire that isn't fed, our affections will eventually burn out without something to feed upon. And what God has provided for our affections is theology, deep rich thinking about who God is and what He has done. God has chosen to reveal Himself by words.
- That's why this doxology occurs at the end of a book containing rich doctrine. The expansive theology of Hebrews fuels the doxology of chapter 13. The author's worship feeds upon the truths of Christ's supremacy.
- I love what C.S. Lewis says about fueling worship:
 - "I tend to find the doctrinal books often more helpful in devotion than the devotional books, and I rather suspect that the same experience may await many others. I believe that many who find that 'nothing happens' when they sit down, or kneel down, to a book of devotion, would find that the heart sings unbidden while they are working their way through a tough bit of theology with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand." (C.S. Lewis)
- In other words, your heart and head should not be moving independently from each other. Ideally, your head is feeding the heart with truths that empower it to burn hot and bright.

- I think so much that is wrong with evangelical culture today is that we have tried to circumvent the mind. We've downplayed doctrine.
- Like living on fast food, we get a little immediate sugar rush, but not the nutrition we need for long-term health. For that we need substance, we need complexity, we need deep truth.
- So as we get into the passage this morning, don't lose sight of the context. This passage makes sense because of the overarching message of the book of Hebrews, the supremacy and superiority of Jesus Christ, who He is and what He has done in and for us.
- So with all of that in mind, let's look at vs. 20.

Now 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... (Hebrews 13:20)

- One thing that we've seen in Hebrews is that the indicatives precede the imperative. If you're just joining us, that might sound like jibberish so I'll explain.
- An indicative is a statement of fact; a declaration. Ch 1-11 are full of indicatives. Christ is better is an indicative. Christ died for our sins is an indicative. Christ rose from the dead is an indicative.
- An imperative is what we do based on the indicative. An imperative is a command. Love one another is an imperative. Do good works is an imperative. Believe upon Christ is an imperative.
- The imperative is always built upon the indicative. In other words, we do what God commands us to do because of what He has done.
- I mention that because we see something kinda like that here in vss. 20 and 21.
- In vs. 21, we will see what we want God to do in and for us, but first we need to know who God is and what He has done already. We see both of those in vs. 20.
- First, we see who He is. - He is described as the God of peace.
- Peace is an essential biblical concept. In the OT, the idea of shalom is more than just the cessation of war, it's a holistic sense of harmony and order. If sin is disorder, then God's kingdom is marked by peace, that is order. Everything in its place, doing its thing.
- That's what the gospel brings. But it does so in an already, but not yet manner. In some sense we have peace already, but in another sense this is a future eschatological reality. One day that shalom will be holistic. No cancer, no sadness, no divorce, no sexual perversion, no death.
- God Himself lives in perfect peace and His kingdom involves the establishment of peace.
- If you think about sin in the garden, we see a fracturing of shalom. Disorder is introduced in every relationship. Man's relationship with the Creator is disordered. Man's relationship with his wife. Man's relationship with the rest of creation. Man's relationship with his fellow man. Even man's relationship with himself. In the fall, creation is fractured and every disorder that we experience today is a symptom of that underlying cause.
- So the gospel is God's provision to make peace, to order the chaos.
- And because He is the God of peace, we can expect Him to do that which this benediction declares as we will see.
- So how has He made peace?
- By making war. That's important to recognize lest our view of God be overly pacifistic & pietistic.
- Look at Romans 16:20
 - *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. (Romans 16:20)*
- That seems inconsistent if we hold to a caricature of God whereby we reduce Him to a grandfatherly hippie or Ned Flanders. How can a God of peace crush someone?

- Or think about Jesus, the prince of peace. He makes a whip and drives people out of the temple. He mocks the scribes and Pharisees.
- And when He returns in Revelation we read this:
 - *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.* (Revelation 19:15)
- So when we understand peace, we need to know that it isn't necessarily the absence of conflict. In fact, sometimes the only way to make peace is by making war. As Ecclesiastes says, there is a time for war and a time for peace. A time to heal and a time to kill.
- In times of war, peace is sin as Abraham Kuyper said.
- I mention all of that because look at how God has made peace with us. He made peace by slaughtering His son.
- By bringing the Lord Jesus from the dead.
- This is the first explicit reference to the resurrection, but the entire book presupposes it.
- In ch 5, Christ was delivered from death. As the Melchizekian priest, He abides forever by virtue of his resurrection. He thus has an indestructible life & remains forever & always lives in chap 7.
- The entire book hinges on the fact that Christ has offered a better sacrifice and because that sacrifice is sufficient, he has therefore risen from the dead. The word resurrection may not be prominent in the book, but the concept saturates it.
- But in addition to the resurrection, the verb brought again literally means to bring up so it also suggests Christ's exaltation or ascension which is essential for the theology of Hebrews. He hasn't merely risen from the dead, but also been raised to sit at the right hand of God as our faithful high priest who intercedes for us on an eternal basis.
- BTW, just as an aside, this word to bring up, is related to the word bringing in Hebrews 2:10 where we read:
 - *For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.* (Hebrews 2:10)
- Remember what we talked about then. One of the ideas of Hebrews is that Christ didn't merely enter into the holy of holies on our behalf, but He went as a pioneer, a trailblazer. He went to clear the way that **we too** might draw near with confidence. Because Christ was raised from the dead, so we are raised from the dead. Because Christ was exalted, so we are exalted or brought up into the heavenly places.
- The word also suggests an allusion to the language of Isaiah 63:11 in the LXX, the Greek translation of the OT which says:
 - "Then he remembered the ancient days, *saying*, Where is he that brought up from the sea the shepherd of the sheep? where is he that put his Holy Spirit in them?" (Isaiah 63:11, LXX)
- There the shepherd of the sheep refers to Moses. But here in Hebrews, the shepherd is the new and better Moses, the Lord Jesus.
- The idea of Christ as shepherd is a dominant NT theme.
- Obviously the most well-known passage to that effect is John 10:11 in which Christ says:
 - *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.* (John 10:11)
- But we also see it in places like 1 Peter. For example, 2:25
 - *For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.* (1 Peter 2:25)

- And in 5:4
 - *And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:4)*
- Now, think of these 1 Peter passages for a second. In chapter 2 he is called the shepherd and overseer. The word overseer there is episkopos, which is a word that is used for the office of elders or pastors, which is what shepherd means.
- And in chapter 5, Peter is addressing elders.
- Look at it in context
 - *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:1–4)*
- See how he is addressing elders, but also talks about exercising oversight and shepherding or pastoring. This is one of those passages that helps to understand why we believe that pastors, elders, and overseers are not three distinct offices, but three distinct roles or functions that all describe the same office.
- So elders are to pastor or shepherd the flock, but they do so as under-shepherds since Christ is the chief shepherd. We are middle managers between the flock and the upper management of Christ's authority.
- But I mention that in light of last week's text on submitting to and obeying leaders.
- One of the reasons that you can submit to imperfect church shepherds is because we have a perfect Chief Shepherd.
 - Our pastors may visit you in the hospital. He never leaves your bedside. We may make promises. He guarantees and fulfills them. We may grieve with you, He comforts you. We speak the Word, He is the word. We counsel with fallible wisdom, He is the very personification of wisdom and omniscience. We implore you to fight sin, He fights for you.
 - We will fail you...hopefully not in any scandalous or major way, but we will fail you. Christ never will.
 - Earthly shepherds come and go, but we have a heavenly shepherd who has promised to never leave us or forsake us and who is the same yesterday, today, and forever as we read earlier in chapter 13.
- So the most important thing about an earthly shepherd is that we consistently and faithfully orient you to the good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, the chief Shepherd.
- And that shepherd is the Christ, the Lord Jesus.
- And this is all in fulfillment of OT expectation in places like Ezekiel 34:23
 - *And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. (Ezekiel 34:23)*
- BTW, in the immediate context of that passage we read this in vs. 15
 - *I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 34:15)*
- Notice that God is in all caps. That means that we have the tetragrammaton, which means four letters, yod hey vav hey, or in English YHWH, the covenantal divine name of God, Yahweh.
- YHWH Himself will shepherd the sheep. But wait, didn't YHWH say that this Davidic messianic figure would shepherd the people?

- So which is it? Is YHWH the shepherd or is Jesus? Well, yes. It's a both/and because that mystery is solved by the identity of Christ. He is the Lord Jesus. Both truly God and truly man. Truly God in relation to the godhead and truly man in relation to our humanity. We've seen both emphasized in Hebrews with chapter 1 showing Christ's superiority to the angels in virtue of His deity and chapter 2 showing Christ's superiority in virtue of His humanity.
- So the Lord Jesus is the great shepherd, the chief shepherd. And as such He lays down His life for the sheep. He pours out as Hebrews says, the blood of the eternal covenant.
- Unlike the Mosaic covenant which was temporal and thus has been rendered obsolete. Unlike the blood of bulls and goats which would have to be offered repeatedly since they never were efficacious, Christ has offered a once for all sacrifice that has actually affected our redemption, has actually made peace, has actually propitiated God's wrath and forgiven our sin. Has actually perfected us for all time.
- So we've seen a consistent contrast in the book between the temporal sacrifices of temporal priests under the old covenant and the eternal salvation, eternal redemption, eternal inheritance, and eternal covenant that was affected in Christ.
- He is our great shepherd and great priest and as such, He is ultimately accountable for the eternal salvation of the flock. BTW, this is one of the reasons to reject the idea that the warnings of Hebrews mean that it is possible for a genuine believer to lose their salvation. That would be a complete denial of the sufficiency and efficacy of Christ's ministry.
- Remember the essential newness of the new covenant that we read about in chapter 8. It isn't merely a new covenant, but a better covenant and part of the supremacy of the better covenant is that God himself has taken it upon Himself to fulfill the provisions. As Jeremiah 32 promises:
 - *I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.* (Jeremiah 32:40)
- The only way that a new covenant member can ultimately turn from God is if God has turned from them and that's the one thing the new covenant promises He will never do.
- And because this is true, we can have confidence that vs. 21 will be fulfilled. Let's look at that.

equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:21)

- Now before we really work through vs. 21, we need to go back to be reminded of what a benediction is. A benediction isn't so much a prayer as a promise. It's not a request so much as an objective assurance of God's favor.
- You might think of it as a promise expressed in the language of a prayer.
- And if it's a promise we can expect God to fulfill what is requested here.
- As Philippians 1:6 says
 - *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* (Philippians 1:6)
- Because of Christ's blood, because of the promises of the new covenant, we therefore hope. And hope, as we've often seen, is not wishful thinking, but confident expectation.
- So, in view of the new covenant, in view of Christ's blood, we can confidently expect God to equip His people with everything good and necessary for doing His will and working in us that which is pleasing in His sight.
- So let's look at each of those conditions.
- First, that He might equip us with everything good that we may do His will.

- The verb equip with everything could also be translated as make you complete. It means to be prepared, to have all that is necessary.
- All that is necessary for what? To do His will.
- This relates to the idea of sufficiency that we've seen throughout Hebrews. Christ is sufficient is a big theme of the book, but as a consequence of His sufficiency, He has given us all sufficiency.
- As 2 Corinthians 9:8 says:
 - *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8)*
- This is one of the reasons that Protestants have historically upheld the doctrine of Scripture's sufficiency. As 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says:
 - *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*
- Notice that Scripture makes us complete and equips for every good work. Not some, not most, but all. By denying the sufficiency of Scripture, we deny the sufficiency of God's provision. We say that God's word and work is incomplete, imperfect.
- And in 1 Peter 1:3 we read:
 - *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence... (2 Peter 1:3)*
- All things that pertain to life and godliness.
- Everything necessary to know and do His will is provided. Provided how and where? Well, God gives us faith and gives us the Spirit and gives us the Scripture and gives us the church community. With those 4 things, we have all that is necessary to do His will.
- Remember how that was one of the distinctions of the new covenant. The Old Covenant commanded Israel to fulfill the law, but didn't empower people to do so whereas the New covenant isn't mere command, but also the provision of power to obey.
- Run John run, the law commands, but gives me neither feet nor hands. Far better news the gospel brings, it bids me fly and gives me wings.
- Yes, your obedience will always be imperfect, but it is real nonetheless. In Christ, we can obey. We can put to death the deeds of the flesh. We can walk in the Spirit. We can do good works. We can submit to authority. We can please God. We can learn to do good.
- How? Not in our own strength.
- Notice how we please God.
- In chapter 11, we read that without faith it is impossible to please God, but now we read that He works in us that which is pleasing to Him.
- We don't conjure up good works magically, God works them in us.
- This points to the reality that we call compatibilism. The fact that God accomplishes in us the very things that He commands us of.
- Back to the opening illustration, He is the anti-Pharaoh. He doesn't provide less straw and demand more bricks. He provides the straw and makes the bricks, but He does so in such a way as to use our feeble efforts. He doesn't expect us to make bricks without straw.
- He has called us to do good. But the problem is that we can no more do good than we can fly off a building or breathe underwater. As Jeremiah writes:
 - *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. (Jeremiah 13:23)*

- That's the bad news...but here's the good news. The good news is the gospel of the new covenant in which God gives us a new nature and works in us that which He has commanded of us. As Calvin writes:
 - "We hence conclude, that we are by no means fit to do good until we are made or formed for the purpose by God, and that we shall not continue long in doing good unless he strengthens us; for perseverance is his peculiar gift." (John Calvin)
- We've already read in chapter 9 how Christ's work has changed us and enabled us to live differently.
 - *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* (Hebrews 9:14)
- Before Christ, all of our works were dead, futile, vain. But in Christ, our works are energized and empowered, they come alive. We can resist temptation, we can love our wives, we can respect our husbands, we can submit to authority & grow in humility & hospitality & charity & love.
- We can work out what God has worked in us.
- One of the classic texts on this we've read a number of times is Philippians 2:12-13
 - *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* (Philippians 2:12-13)
- Much of our intellectual struggle with the sovereignty of God is due to our tendency to take a both/and and turn it into an either/or. We think that either we have to do something OR God is doing it when in reality, Philippians shows us that we have a responsibility. We have a role. We are to work out our salvation. But God is sovereign over that. He is the one who works in us both the will and the work.
- Don't miss that. The will and the work is His doing. He does everything. So I guess that means we do nothing. No, we work out our salvation with fear and trembling.
- He is the great doer under and in and through and over our doing.
- Again, we can work out only what He has worked in. We can do only what He does. That's why Christ says, apart from me you can do what? Nothing.
- Oh that we believed that. Oh that I believed that more fully. That from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.
- We see Paul say the same thing of His own apostolic efforts in 1 Corinthians 15:10
 - *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.* (1 Corinthians 15:10)
- So Paul is laboring. He's putting in the work. He's got sleepless nights and preaching sermons and planting churches and writing letters and he's getting shipwrecked and stoned and yet He says that even his work is a grace.
- This is the great mystery of sanctification. We do something. The Bible tells us to be holy, pursue holiness, work out our salvation. And yet all of our doing is God's doing.
- As Augustine of Hippo said:
 - "When God crowns your merits, he is not crowning anything but his own gifts." (Augustine)
- This is the mystery of sanctification. God at work in you, so that all your doing of the will of God, all your doing of what is pleasing in his sight is God's doing in your doing.
- And we veer off that mystery to our own shame.

- We can err by letting go of our responsibility. We let go and let God and take a real passive role in our sanctification, we simply stop trying. That's the way of antinomianism and free grace theology and guys like Tullian Tchvidjian.
- But we can also err in the other direction by downplaying or diluting or diminishing or denying the sovereign role of God in our sanctification. By adopting a pull myself up by my own bootstraps mentality. This is the way of legalism, moralism, self-righteousness.
- Neither error is right or safe or good.
- The mystery of sanctification is that we are called to pursue it, but God is working it in us and He is doing so through Jesus Christ.
- Which is why we end with the doxology.
- To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.
- Now, there's a debate as to whom the whom is referring to. Is that God the Father or the Lord Jesus Christ. Linguistically either could work and theologically either could work.
- After all, there are doxologies in the NT directed to the Son. For instance, 2 Peter 3:18
 - *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)*
- Regardless, the point is that God: Father, Son, and/or Spirit, are owed all glory because they do the stuff. They are the ones who actually accomplish the work.
- That's why this passage is more than a prayer, it is a promise. A benediction, a blessing. It is an objective statement of God's favor.
- Because of Christ's death and resurrection, we have been perfected and the effects of that will echo through eternity. We will be changed. We will be transformed. We will be equipped to do what is pleasing, to do good.
- So what is our response? Well, in short, its worship. Gratitude.
- That's why we end with a doxology. A declaration of glory.
- To God alone be glory forever and ever.
- And then we read the word Amen. A borrowed word from Hebrew that means so be it, may it be. In other words, it is our agreement. Our submission to the divine will.
- May God work out His will in us such that we do the work and He gets the glory and all God's people say Amen.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- As we prepare to partake, I want to remind you of one of the historic names for this meal.
- It was called the Table, the Catholics called it a mass, it was called the Lord's supper or communion, but one of the more historic terms was the eucharist.
- As early as the late first century, this was a name for the meal.
- It was called the eucharist because the Greek eucharisteo means to give thanks.
- For instance, in Luke 22 we read:
 - *And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks [eucharisteo] he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. (Luke 22:17)*
- So in 1 Corinthians Paul writes:
 - *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks [eucharisteo], he*

broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:23–24)

- So our role in the meal is gratitude. We receive grace, we give gratitude.
- After all, the meal is a symbol for the death of Christ, which we just read is the foundation for all of God's goodness to us.
- So this morning I just want to emphasize the grace of communion. There is a time to focus on the sadness, the bitterness of sin and so forth, but this morning, I want to commend the glories of joy.
- Joy that Christ's death and resurrection is the guarantee that God is committed to our good. Committed to equipping us with everything necessary to please Him and do good.
- So take a few minutes to express gratitude or pray for gratitude and we will partake together shortly.
- On the night...