

Here's a fun fact. A "spinning count" (It's to do with the quality of wool), is the number of hanks, each being 560 yards long, which can be spun from one pound of combed top.

I learned that in Ag College, in 1985, and for some bewildering reason, I've never forgotten it... But what use has that information been for me?

*I was **also** taught that a "spinning count" of 64's was about a 21 micron wool.*

Which means, 64 hanks, 560 yards each... One pound of combed top (wool after it's been washed and cleaned), can produce a length of yarn, more than 32km long... That's incredible....

*Even so, that bit of knowledge, without application, what good is it, sitting inside of my head for the last 40 years? Well, it was background information. The **practical** part, was classing wool and classing sheep – working out which ones you were going to keep and breed from, and which ones were going to the sale yard...*

Another fun fact: 153624 No, it's not the combination of my pistol safe.

Can anyone tell me the significance of that number?

It's the firing order of a straight 6 cylinder engine... That's another piece of information that I was taught at Ag college... I guess these days, you don't need to know stuff like that. You just Google it.

But what use is knowing that, unless it has a practical application. Well, yes, it does. Back in the day, you'd have a round distributor cap, and the spark plug leads would have to go on that in the correct order, otherwise it would be sparking at the wrong time, and causing all sorts of problems...

Now, when we read the Scriptures, and particularly books like Hebrews, are we just mining the Bible for information? And if so, what use is that information, unless it is practically applied?

During the week, I was talking to a Christian from another church, and he mentioned another person who is very knowledgeable on the Bible – I think he probably knows more than I do,,, and he said, “He knows his bible really well, but somehow there's a missing link between what he knows, and the sort of person he is...

As a Christian, are you a:

- thinker;
- knower (not Noah with the grey beard & the big timber boat) knower – you know stuff; or
- doer of God's Word – someone who lives it???

We've come to the end of the letter to the Hebrews. We began this series back in April, and 7 months and 24 messages later, we've come to the end. And you probably realised, that

Hebrews itself, comes across more like a written sermon than a letter.

And we've learned a lot of stuff about the greatness of Jesus, and how it all intertwines with the Old Testament/Old Covenant temple worship...

We've learned a lot about how the Old Covenant was all looking forward to the coming of Jesus.

- Jesus, is **greater** than the angels;
- He is the **great** High priest – He is far, far greater than the High Priest who used to serve at the altar of the temple.;
- **Jesus** serves at the heavenly altar;
- And yet, He Himself, is the sacrifice / the **perfect** sacrifice

The sacrifice that is once and for all – never needs to be repeated.

And so, we learned how the blood of Jesus, can do what the blood of bulls & goats & sheep & doves could never do. The blood of Jesus can take away sins...

Now, if we've been listening/taking note, we will have learned a lot about Jesus/salvation/the will of God,,, but for what purpose??? Well, the purpose, is the application. And the application has **also** been getting revealed all the way through.

- Has there been, a single week, where you and I have **not** been challenged???
- Have we not heard the calls to obedience?

- Have we not been reminded, of the incomparable gift of salvation through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross???
- Have we not been moved, to worship?
To worship our Saviour, Who is above all else, and absolutely worthy to be praised?

V22, highlights what this letter has been about:

²² I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.

You see, this letter, was intended to be read within the church... And he's saying, "bear with it" – do it... It might seem long, but it's not that long (I have written to you briefly.)

But what is it that he's written? It is a word of exhortation
And so, if we have read Hebrews, and not been exhorted, then we have deafened our ears toward God...

Now, exhortation's a funny thing... How we take it, depends on our inclination to begin with...

To exhort, is to urge somebody on. It is to be so insistent, that it could even be an imperative "You must do this"...

Let me give you an example:

Over the years, we've taught a lot of kids to ski. And some have their heart set on it: They're going to get it. And they try and they fail; and they try and they fail... And we come up beside them in the boat, and we give them exhortation: What you need to do is:

- *keep your arms straight;*
- *keep your knees bent, right up into your chest.*
- *don't try and pull yourself out of the water.*

You just hold on, and keep your knees scrunched up. The boat will pull you out of the water...

It is exhortation. We are telling them, what they need to do, to get up out of the water, and get going on the skis...

And those who really, really want to ski, hear the exhortation, and they apply it...

Maybe on their first attempt, they don't make it; More exhortation.

- *This is where you went wrong.*
- *You've got to stop doing that, and start doing this...*

And so, they give it another go. And after a couple of tries, they're up...

And the look of joy they have on their face: "I'm skiing"... It gives me joy...

But then another kid, receives the same exhortation, but their response is:

"I don't want to ski"...

*"Well, you **are** going to learn to ski, **and** you're going to enjoy it. And there won't be any knee-boarding, until you try..."*

And we give them the same instructions – the same exhortation... But they hate it....

“I don’t want to do it...”

And so, it requires extra exhortation...

“You know you will enjoy it once you get up and going...”

And eventually, we may have to pull rank on them, and it becomes an imperative

“You must do this... And you’ll enjoy it”...

And it’s like we almost have to force them,,, But eventually they get up... And the tears are gone. And the smile is as bright and as wide as it can be... “I did it”...

How we feel about an exhortation, depends a lot on our inclination to begin with, and it says a lot about our relationship with God.

You see, when God’s Word says something like: “Make every effort to do such-&-such” or “You must do this”, for some folk, that is about as appealing as being told “*You must eat that plate full of liver and Brussel sprouts.*”

But when:

- we genuinely love Jesus;
- our hearts long to be closer to Him;
- there’s nothing that we want more, than to honour Him and to please Him,

the exhortations of Scripture, are like being coached and cheered on in what we desire – the pursuit of holiness...

And just like those kids learning to ski, biblical exhortation drags some of us kicking & screaming to obedience (or we might even rebel against God and His commands and utterly refuse Him), while others are as keen as mustard. Why is that?

It's because some are full-**on** for Jesus, while others are half-hearted.

Which are you? Are you a **disciple** of Jesus – someone who follows Jesus with every fibre of their being, and therefore exhortation is like “coaching”.

- you hear it;
 - you listen intently;
 - you receive it with joy; and
 - your life is changed because of it.
- No more pursuit of worldliness for you,
because the way of Jesus is your delight.

I think of King David who wrote a song about this:

Psalm 119:32 (NIV84)

³² I run in the path of your commands,
for you have set my heart free.

Or are you half-hearted? You may think of yourself as being saved, but your day-to-day life shows little evidence of being born again... And so “exhortation” is the last thing you want to hear... “Give me some more blessings. I don’t want this coaching in godliness. I want the blessings...”...

You know what: I don't want to be like the crowds who happily followed Jesus,,, that is, until He said a hard word, and then they deserted him. I want to be like those who, when they heard a hard/challenging word, were changed by it... And you know what? That group was very small.

Don't be surprised, that at the word of exhortation, many fall away...

Are we those who **rebel** against the exhortation? Or do we delight in it?

So, today's reading began with the benediction (prayer benediction). And to me, it comes across as one long sentence that's difficult for my simple mind to follow. But when we space it out, it makes it a whole lot easier to follow.

MAY GOD (the God who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead) (Jesus, who is the **great** shepherd of the sheep)... Alright, we've been hearing that Jesus is the Great High Priest. We are **now** hearing that He is the **great** shepherd. (and we'll come back to that shortly)

So, may **this** God

BY The blood of the eternal covenant... Alright, the Old Covenant needed sacrifices to be made, year after year after year... And the Old Covenant has become obsolete (8:13). It's grown old; ready to vanish... But the **New** Covenant – Salvation by the blood of Jesus, is eternal...

Something that really gets up my goat, is when I commit myself to a quality product, and then it becomes obsolete... Like I've got some really good quality software, but no modern computer will run it. And I've got a roof rack hanging in my shed, that doesn't fit my current car... Something which was valuable, becomes obsolete.

And maybe you might have the fear, that if I commit to something, it might go out of fashion, or become obsolete... Well let me tell you, when it comes to the forgiveness of sins/salvation in the Name of Jesus, the New Covenant will never pass away. The New Covenant is eternal... So, we can have every confidence, that we can commit to Jesus, because the way of Jesus will never become obsolete.

Alright, so **may God, by** the blood of the eternal covenant, **EQUIP** you and me with everything good...

Now, that word “equip”, the Greek word behind it means to “make fit” or to “make complete”... And we’re talking about **spiritual** things here. We’re not talking about anything as shallow as money or possessions. We’re talking about spiritual gifts and spiritual transformation... This is about being made spiritually complete. And this is his prayer for us – to be made spiritually complete.

And the purpose of this equipping, is that we **may do his will**

You see, it is pointless to be hearing exhortation, if we are not spiritually equipped to **achieve** what we are being exhorted to do.

Let me give you a **non**-spiritual example: It would be pointless for you to exhort me, “Michael you must run 100m in under 10seconds...” I cannot do it. it is impossible.

And Biblical exhortation is pointless, and downright depressing, if we are not spiritually equipped to **achieve** what we are being exhorted to do. What are we being exhorted to do? To do the will of God.

And so, the powerful, powerful message of Hebrews, is that God is **not** exhorting us to do the impossible. It might seem impossible, but God is **equipping** us to do His will, and to be the people He wants us to be.

When the Lord calls us to submission; and obedience; and to service,,, it may seem impossible,,, but things are not as they seem. You see, without the Spirit of God, it is impossible to live up to God’s holy standard.... But, **by the blood of the eternal covenant**, he equips us, **with everything good** that [we] may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight

You see, exhortation is about being inspired to obedience, and to **commit** to obedience, in faith, knowing that He will equip us. **He** will make us spiritually fit (with spiritual gifts and with spiritual transformation), to be the people that He calls us to be.

Sadly, many are so half-hearted about their faith, they completely miss out on the blessing of spiritual completeness

... It's like sitting for an exam, and having an attitude that anything over 50% is a waste of effort...

Only it gets worse than that. Some of us may be so scared of being accused of “salvation by works”, that we never strive to a level of faithfulness that would bring us spiritual completeness (- a completeness that can only come from God)...

And the final phrase that pulls this prayer benediction together, is through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Spiritual completion, is only possible through Jesus Christ. *It amazes me, how many in our culture, **are** searching for a spiritual experience,,, But it seems they'll look everywhere but Jesus... They will travel to every corner of the globe; they will sign up for every whacky spiritual retreat; They will try drugs and hallucinogens... Anything but Jesus...*

The only way to be spiritually complete/please God, is through Jesus Christ, and through the blood of Jesus (the blood of the eternal covenant)... And this, for the glory of Jesus.

Now, let's come back to Jesus being the **great** shepherd.

As we've studied Hebrews, we've seen lots of Old Testament allusions and how Jesus gives us a more excellent example. And this is another one. In the **Old** Testament, **Moses** was seen as the shepherd who led them out of Egypt, and who led

them up from the sea... **Jesus**, has led us out of death, to life. And that, is why He is the **Great Shepherd**...

And for the sheep/flock (that's you and me), **following** the shepherd who leads us from death to life,- that didn't end at the point at which we got saved... That's when following our Shepherd really begins....

You see, “spiritual completeness” **begins** with the forgiveness of sins. It begins when we are born again. We put to death the old self, and we are raised again with Christ. That's what Baptism is about. When you go down under the water, this is your old life, dead and buried. You no longer live for the world. And when you come up out of the water, this is being raised again, to eternal life in Christ...

That's how it begins. And we continue the journey to “spiritual completeness”, as we do what Disciples do – we follow the great shepherd...

If you desire “spiritual completeness”, then hear the exhortations of God... And don't just **hear** the exhortations – listen intently, because when we **hear** the word of exhortation, this is our Lord – the one whom we have pledged full allegiance to, and He is urging us to **do** His will. **This**, is the Holy Spirit **working** in us, making us complete, and this **is** pleasing in his sight

I believe God's word to us today, is:

- “Stop messing around the edges of Christianity.”
- My Son is worth more than that.

- It's time to get real with Jesus..
- He didn't die so we can mess around the edges.
- By His blood, and through the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are spiritually equipped, to please Him...

Exhortation, demands a response. How will you respond to God today?

Will you be the one who decides,

- "I've been messing around the edges for way too long".
- I haven't been fair dinkum with Jesus;
- I've heard words of exhortation before, and I haven't responded; or
- I've stuck my fingers in my ears and treated God as if He has no right to tell me what to do; or
- I've been so half-hearted, I haven't even been listening...

Will you be the one who decides, and who prays,

Lord Jesus,

I repent.

I turn away from my selfish worldly pursuits,

And I run to You.

I now hear Your word of exhortation,

and I pray,

that You will spiritually equip me

with everything good,

that I may do Your will.

May You do your divine,

sanctifying work in me,

and may this be pleasing in Your sight.

Will you pray:

Lord, may today be a turning-point for me,
a day that I will look back on,
in years to come,
as they day I got real about my faith...

through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and
ever. Amen.

Will you be the one who prays that prayer?
If so, God is already answering that prayer.
The Spirit of God, is already doing His work in you.

Don't pray it unless you mean it.

[ask who is going to pray it? others to uphold you.]

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus,

We praise You,
for You are the Great Shepherd.
It is by Your blood,
and by Your forgiveness of sins,
that we can be received
into Your eternal covenant.

Lord,

I repent.

I turn away from my selfish worldly pursuits,
And I run to You.

I now hear Your word of exhortation,
and I pray,
that You will spiritually equip me
with everything good,
that I may do Your will.

May You do your divine,
sanctifying work in me,
and may this be pleasing in Your sight.

Lord, may today be a turning-point for me,
a day that I will look back on,
in years to come,
as the day I got real about my faith...

through Jesus Christ,
to whom be glory forever and ever.
Amen.