

THE GOD OF PEACE

Hebrews 13:20-21

Intro: Here God is called, the God of peace." But it is not the only place in Scripture where we find God referred to in this way.

In Rom. 15:33 we read this brief prayer: "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." And then in Rom. 16:20 we read these words: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen". In Phil. 4:9 we see this exhortation: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

But then we must not forget what Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 13:11: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." Finally, although this last verse that I give to you was probably written first: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23)..

As "the God of peace," God is the Author of peace, peace with Himself, peace within our own hearts, and peace in the face of all of the trying circumstances of our lives. The Apostle had written this great treatise on the work of Christ as the Great High Priest of His people, making it one of the most important epistles in the NT, and yet as wonderful as it was, the Jewish believers to whom he wrote, were having difficulty drawing from the truth that had been presented to them, the peace which rightfully was theirs. In chapter 12 it seems, from what the Apostle said, that the people of God, probably had been discouraged by the trials that they were going through. Trials often surprise us because we were not expecting them, and even after we get over that hurdle, they cause further trouble because they seem to last forever. It is not unusual for believers to be brought to such a low level in their emotions, that they begin question some truths which they had formerly accepted without difficulty. This is where many of these Hebrew Christians were. They were a people in trouble spiritually.

But we must not be too hard on them because we are liable to find ourselves in similar straits, and may already have been there. We also learn from many of the Psalms that not only King David, but others who wrote some of the Psalms, struggled with their faith as they pled with God for His help.

Bishop Westcott had this to say about the condition of the people to whom this epistle was originally addressed:

There were in a crisis of conflict within and without. They were tempted to separate themselves from those who were their true leaders under the pressure of unexpected afflictions.

Let me interrupt this quotation by reminding us all of how often this is what happened many times when Moses and Aaron were leading the children of Israel away from Egypt and toward the promised land. And David faced the same crisis when he and his men got back to Ziklag and found that their families had been carried away by the Amalekites, and their city destroyed by fire. David's people were so "greatly distressed" that they "spake of stoning him" because of their grief. So what was happening with the Hebrew believers in question was not at all unusual. But let me complete the quotation I was reading to you. What was even more serious was that

they were tempted also to question the power of Christ and the efficacy of the covenant made through Him (Westcott, B. F., *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 447).

These two verses are generally called, *a benediction*, like a prayer we might pray at the conclusion of a church service – and I often have used it. In it the Apostle was seeking the blessing of God upon the people through the truth, or truths, that he mentioned in this benediction. He knew that the people had little or no peace. But he also knew that the only way their peace could be restore was, first, to get their eyes upon God, and secondly, to remember what God had done for them in Christ.

Verse 20, the first of the two verses containing the benediction, reminds us of Who God is, and what He had already done. Verse 21, the second verse contains the prayer, mentioning what God was seeking to accomplish through the trials they were experiencing.

So let me make three points in our consideration of these two verses.

- 1) God, and Who He is.
- 2) What He had done.
- 3) What He was then in the process of doing.

I. GOD, AND WHO HE IS (Heb. 13:20a).

Here the Apostle called him, "the God of peace."

There are many titles given to God in Scripture, and always they are re-

lated to the circumstances through which the Lord's people were going through at the time. But "the God of peace" is a title that fits practically any day in our lives. We always seem to need peace, and we always seem to be facing conditions which tend to rob us of our peace. We are sometimes deceived as to how much peace we have when our circumstances are pleasant, and when we have what we want and need. But let a sudden trial come into our lives, and we suddenly are aware of how shallow our peace has been.

And so it is good to know that our God is "the God of peace." He is not *a* God of peace, as though He were just One of many, but as the original Greek of our text indicates, He is "the God of peace," *the one and only God of peace*. True peace originates in Him, and true peace comes to us from Him. As Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 5:23, He is "the very God of peace."

And this is what He always is. He doesn't suddenly become it when trials come our way, He is "the God of peace" always and forever!

How do we know this?

Well, there are many ways in which learn this. The story of creation shows us that He is "the God of peace." And the history of His dealings with His people in the past shows us this. But preeminently we know that He is "the God of peace" because of what He has done for us in Christ.

II. WHAT THE GOD OF PEACE HAS DONE (Heb. 13:20b).

Out of apparent defeat, awful defeat, when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on the Cross, God "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus." And this brings up the question, "Why did the Lord Jesus die?" Or we might ask, "Why did God allow His Son to die, and to die such a cruel and humiliating death?" If God is God, could He not have thwarted the purposes of the enemies of our Lord. For three days it seemed that wicked people and the Wicked One had won the greatest of all victories.

The God of peace turned what at first appeared to be the worst tragedy in all of human history, into the most glorious and triumphant victory. God raised Him from the dead. But why had the Lord Jesus died? He made peace through the blood of His Cross, peace between a holy God and guilty sinners, peace between Gentile sinners and Jewish sinners, and peace in the hearts of those who are brought to God by this resurrected Savior.

— And what is our Lord called here? He is "that Great Shepherd of the sheep." His greatness cannot be measured, but when He died He was giving His life for His sheep. He did everything necessary for their salvation, and He will do everything necessary to make sure that every detail of His promise to save is fulfilled.. The death and resurrection of Christ were absolute proof that God's promise, His covenant, to redeem was fulfilled!

Our trials don't change that. The promises of God become all the more precious when our faith is tested. And our faith is tested so that it will become stronger. And this leads us to the third point.

III. WHAT IS THIS GOD OF PEACE DOING NOW? (Heb. 13:21).

Actually our verse tells us what God was doing then, but we can ask and answer the same question regarding our lives today. Our trials are often as baffling to us as the trials of those Hebrew Christians who first received this letter were baffling to them.

— Let me remind you that this verse is the prayer. The first verse of the benediction was truth to be known, and truth for us to believe. Now we are to see what God was doing through their trials, and what He is doing through our trials today, whatever those trials might be.

(Read verse 21.)

The Apostle's prayer was that this "God of peace" would make them "perfect."

This is not the usual word for perfection that we find in the NT, but it is a very interesting word. It is possible for it to mean at least three things:

- 1) It can mean *to mend* or *repair*.
- 2) It can mean *to equip* or *to arrange and put things in order*.
- 3) Finally, it means *to strengthen, to complete, and to make things the way they ought to be*.

Think of how each one of these points relates to your life, and I need to think about how they relate to my life. (Review each point.)

— Now where will these changes be seen, and what is the particular object of each change?

First, they will be seen outwardly – "in every good work." This points to

our outward behavior.

Secondly, they will be experienced inwardly – "working in you."

— But what is it that the Lord is concerned about in our outward behavior and in our inner life where we see what we really are?

The Apostle stated it twice so that we would not miss it. This "God of peace" is bringing peace into our hearts in a greater measure as He makes us concerned about His will in our outer experience, and, what is exactly the same, He works in our hearts that there we might become that which "is wellpleasing in His sight."

We are in need of mending, in need of repair, whenever we are drawn away from the will of God. And this is one reason for our trials. Our trials make us take a good look at ourselves, and it is in our trials that we see that the Lord still have a great deal to do in our lives.

But we are not through with this prayer.

— Is it possible that we see all of the needs, the spiritual needs, that we have in our lives, and then our "God of peace" leaves us to make the changes in ourselves? No! We can't do it alone. "The God of peace" is working in us "through Jesus Christ," our risen, living, glorified Savior, Who taught us that without Him we couldn't do anything!

Look at any of our lives at any given point in time, and things can look very bad, and even hopeless. But when we realize that this whole work of salvation was not our idea, but that it was planned and ordained before the foundation of the world, and that God is working through His Son, the Lord Jesus, in each of our lives, then we can have peace and hope that the work will finally be done.

— And who gets the glory? The glory all belongs to "the God of peace," and "Jesus Christ" through Whom the work is being done. And for every one of us it can be said, as Paul said it about the Philippian believers, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6) – and then the work will be completed.

Concl: Several years ago I came across this definition of peace: "Peace exists when all of the pieces are in their proper place, each work-

ing harmoniously with each other." Or, to state it another way, "Peace is when everything is the way it was intended to be."

— Sin has disrupted everything in us. There is not peace for the wicked because everything is wrong before God in their lives. There can be no peace without God, and God never bestows peace except through the Lord Jesus Christ. And the only reason that a Christian does not have peace, is because his life is not being lived to do the will of God, and because in his heart he is not seeking to be wellpleasing to God.

So the first step toward personal peace is in knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. And the second is to seek above everything else, by the grace of God, to live a life pleasing to God. This means doing His will. And where do we find His will. It is all in our Bibles, and God will enable us through Christ and through the Holy Spirit, to do what He wants us to do and to be what He wants us to be. That is where we will experience peace.

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