

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>Scripture Memory</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>	<b>127</b>		Gary L.W. Johnson
<b>Text:</b>	<b>Hebrews 13:20-21</b>		
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### A GREAT BENEDICTION (Part V)

Earlier in Hebrews 13 we read in verse 9: “Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.” The Apostle Paul gave a similar warning in Ephesians 4:14: “As a result, we are *no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.*” Old Bishop Ryle duly noted: “The apostle’s warning does not stand alone. Even in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount there fell from the loving lips of our Saviour a solemn caution: *Beware of false prophets, which come unto you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves* (Matt. 7:15). Even in St. Paul’s last address to the Ephesian elders, though he finds no time to speak about the sacraments, he does find time to warn his friends against false doctrine: *Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them* (Acts 20:30). What says the Second Epistle to the Corinthians? *I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ* (2 Cor. 11:3). What says the Epistle to the Galatians? *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel. Who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? How turn ye again to weak and beggarly elements? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you. Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.* (Gal. 1:6; 3:1, 3; 4:9, 10, 11; 5:1). What says the Epistle to the Ephesians? *Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine* (Eph. 4:14). What says the Epistle to the Colossians? *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men* (Col. 2:8). What says the First Epistle to Timothy? *The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith* (1 Tim. 4:1). What says the Second Epistle of Peter? *There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies* (2 Pet. 2:1). What says the First Epistle of John? *Believe not every spirit. Many false prophets are gone out into the world* (1 John 4:1). What says the Epistle of Jude? *Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares* (Jude 3, 4). Let us mark well these texts. These things were written for our learning. What shall we say to these texts? How they may strike others, I cannot say. I only know how they strike me. To tell us, as some do, in the face of these texts, that the early churches were a model of perfection and purity is absurd. Even in apostolic days, it appears there were abundant errors both in doctrine and practice. To tell us, as others do, that clergymen ought never to handle controversial subjects and never to warn their people against erroneous views is senseless and unreasonable. At this rate we might neglect not a little of the New Testament. Surely the dumb dog and the sleeping shepherd are the best allies of the wolf, the thief, and the robber. It is not for nothing that St. Paul says, *If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ* (1 Tim. 4:5).<sup>1</sup> Walter Kaiser, one of my former professors at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, pointed out that Hebrews 13:20-21, “is a veritable summary of the whole book of Hebrews. In four great summaries it outlines all that a believer needs for competing, succeeding and completing any walk, talk or ministry to the glory of God in this twenty-first century. Let us look at each of these four summaries in the order given here in this magnificent summary of the whole argument of the book of Hebrews with its case for the *Finality of Jesus Christ.*”<sup>2</sup>

I. **THE SOURCE OF OUR PEACE.** Our first summary is to be found in the expression, “God of Peace,” which is located only here and in the prayer of the apostle Paul. It is found, for example, in Romans 15:33, “Now the

God of peace be with you all, Amen.” Again, it appears in Romans 16:20, “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” And in Philippians 4:9, “Those things, which you all have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.” Finally, in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 it affirms, “And the very God of peace sanctify you totally; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The writer of Hebrews, whoever he was, used this Greek word for “peace,” with its Hebrew roots of shalom to refer to every benefit that our Lord can give: physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally – everything! The title is properly assigned to God the Father alone. Humanity has not been capable of effecting much peace. Thus, there is little or no peace left except what is to be found in the nature and will of God. He alone is the author of peace because He designed it from eternity, and because He carried it out in Jesus Christ. Now if all evil that befalls us mortals is the result of our original loss of peace with God, think what sorts of compensation can be ours when the God of peace takes over our lives! Therefore, let us fix our eyes on the God of peace, for only He is able to meet us at the level of our deepest needs. No wonder the Psalmists exclaims, “Great peace have they that love [Him].”

II. **THE PREPARATION OF OUR PEACE.** The second summary is tucked away in three clauses that describe the Father’s work of preparing our peace.

1. **Its Power.** The first one is this: “Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ.” Why was it sealed in blood you ask? The blood referred to the substitutionary sacrificial death of Christ, which satisfied the divine justice of God when we were too poor and unable to make any payments for ourselves. This blood is the great pledge and assurance of our peace with God. Moreover, since the covenant is eternal, we must not fret or worry; the means and the plan are sure. Our Lord is not about to revise or reconstruct His plan due to what some think are the unexpected movements of men and nations. No, our Lord has remained on course on the same plan since He devised it before the creation of the world in eternity past.

III. **THE PURPOSE OF OUR PEACE.** This prayer is beginning to sound like a German sentence: when will we get to the main verb? I once saw a cartoon of a German Church with two men standing in the back of the Church. One said to the other, “Shall we wait for the verb, or shall we leave?” That is because the German verb comes so late in the sentence and the sentences are so long. But our wait has been worth it. It is this: May the God of Peace, who has such great power, is such a great person, and who operates according to such a great plan – may He make you able to do what we think we cannot do.” Here is God’s answer for all who think that they cannot do what is needed to minister in the Church today. He makes us fit, capable and adequate by bringing our faculties into accord with His plan so we can do what we thought we were unable to do. Thus, the third great summary of this book and of the purpose of the writer to the Hebrews is this Purpose of God in providing for our peace. Ministers in and of themselves do not have what is needed to meet all the needs of a congregation and community of our day. But our Lord promises to put us into the proper condition so we can do great exploits for Him. But how is God going to do this? He will “work in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight” so that we accomplish every good work. The word for “working in” is the word to “energize.” Therefore, the performance of every good work is simultaneously the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder Ephesians 2:10 claimed that “We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Philippians 2:13 adds to that by noting that Christ works in us “both to will and to do” His good pleasure. Our Lord prays that God would do this working in us, not just by moral persuasion, or instruction only, but by the effectual energizing and in-working of the grace of God that results in working out the will of God. But some will complain, “I have never been able to perform in a way that I could call it all *well-pleasing* to my God.” But notice that this happens “through our Lord Jesus.” And our Lord does not do merely mediocre work, but He will do what is top-level work, what is *well-pleasing* in the eyes of God! There are no academic or practical standards that can match that high level of achievement. This is one of the most encouraging texts I know to help believers and ministers who need great encouragement as they face a waiting, but hostile, world.

IV. **THE RESULT OF OUR PEACE.** Our prayer concludes with an ascription of praise and glory to the only One who is worthy of such high acclaim – our great God! So what is the chief goal or purpose of a human being? It is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. He indeed is worthy to receive all blessing, honor, glory, dominion, and praise. Therefore, nothing we accomplish is the result of our strength, but the honor and praise of all Christian

work must be laid on the feet of our Lord. That is my prayer for each of you. This could be the finest hour for the Church if we but followed the pattern our Lord laid down for us in the grace He outlined here in this benediction. Will you this day fix your eyes on the One who alone is the source of your peace, who long ago prepared for this peace in His great power, person and plan? May we together realize the purpose of His peace by receiving that great grace by the work of God's Holy Spirit, so that great honor, glory and blessing may come to the whole Church worldwide. Amen!

**CONCLUSION:** We are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 that we are to give thanks for everything, for this is God's will. Thomas Manton (1620-1677), who I have cited repeatedly in this study, highlights this theme by saying: "What ground of thankfulness to Christ – (1) That he hath made our peace with God at so dear a rate. All your repentings, if you had wept out your eyes for sin, would not have made your peace with God, nor have satisfied his justice, nor procured pardon and life for you. Now God is appeased, Christ having *slain the enmity by his cross*, Eph. 2:16. (2) That the new covenant is procured, wherein pardon and salvation is offered to you, as sealed by the blood of Christ, who hath paid our debts: Luke 22:20, *This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you*. There had been else no place for your repentance, faith, prayer, or hopes. (3) That such free and easy conditions of mercy, with power to perform them, are propounded in the gospel: *Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us, for thou also hast wrought all our works in us*, Isa. 26:12. (4) That he should call us, and have such favourable thoughts to us, who for a long time were dead in sin, and in hostility against him: Rom. 5:10, *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*"<sup>3</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Knots Untied: Being Plain Statements on Disputed Points in Religion From The Standpoint of an Evangelical Churchman* (rpt. Charles Nolan Publishers, 2000), p. 365.

<sup>2</sup> W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Peace: Fully Equipped Christians, Hebrews 13:20-21* (<https://www.preaching.com/contributors/walter-c-kaiser-jr/>)  
The outline here is adapted from Kaiser, the substance of which I heard from his class lectures.

<sup>3</sup> *The Works of Thomas Manton XVII* (rpt. Maranatha Publications, 1972), p. 382.