

Knowing Our God Of Peace

This morning we come the end of our journey in the Book of Hebrews that began in February of last year. The writer of Hebrews has one last jewel for us. As he has done so many times in the epistle, he is giving us one more reason to love Christ. His word picture in Hebrews of Christ is one of multi-colors and multi-facets. The glory of Christ, the writer pictures for us, is like a diamond with multi-cuts or facets that glimmer as it is examined. Each cut or facet has its own beauty and something to reveal about the whole diamond. As we look to Christ new facets and dimensions are seen and as we study the Word of God we should step back in awe as the facets reveal truth to us and reveals more of the whole of who God is.

Key Truth: God is the God of Peace to those who know Christ as Savior and the God of wrath for those who do not.

In this text of Scripture, we are not only called to stand in awe of Jesus Christ but stand in awe of God the Father, the One who sent Christ to us and the Holy Spirit sent by the Father and Son.

Our God of Peace (v. 20a)

Turn in your Bible to Hebrews chapter 13, focusing on the 1st five words of verse 20, “[Now may the God of peace](#) ...” My beloved, if we are not careful, we could shoot right past this phrase and not catch the weight of it. Because of the New Covenant, God is a God of peace to all who are in Christ. As believers we are in a peaceful relationship with God.

Paul brought this facet of peace into focus, ¹⁴“**For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility**” ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷**And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.** ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²**In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”** (Ephesians 2:14-22)

The writer is contrasting “**the God of peace**” with what he said earlier in 12:29, that for the unsaved “**God is a consuming fire**”. The question then must be asked, how is it God can be a consuming fire and a God of peace? Jesus is the difference. If you know Christ as Lord and Savior you know God the Father as the God of Peace. If, however, you do not know Christ as Lord and Savior then God is a God of wrath or as the verse says an everlasting “**consuming fire**”. Jesus makes the difference. God’s peace only comes to people through Christ and His gospel.

Our Gospel of Peace (v. 20b)

As we continue to the 2nd half of verse 20, follow me in your Bible, as the writer weaves together different facets of the gospel. The writer mentions the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the eternal covenant brought about through Christ. These facets of Christ results in understanding our salvation is only

possible by “the blood of the eternal covenant”. Again, Paul expands to clarify this facet of Christ,²⁰ “through him (*Christ*) to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, **making peace by the blood of his cross.**²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,²² **he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,**²³ **if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel** that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.” (Colossians 1:20-23)

What is amazing here is that Paul tells us that the created order has been reconciled to God. **First**, God’s elect have been brought back by Christ, “**For by a single offering he (*God*) has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**” (Hebrews 10:14) When you bring this into focus with verse 20b of Hebrews 13, “**who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant**” these verses are saying Christ is the one who leads people from spiritual death into spiritual life. Many writers, including John Owen, the 17th century church leader and theologian, believe this to be a parallel to God leading the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt. The language is unusually similar. The reason I believe they are right is because when God led the Hebrews out of Egypt, He immediately gave them the Old Covenant with the Ten Commandments and when God led Christ from the tomb of the dead to live eternal, we immediately received a ratified New Covenant through His blood. The resurrection is all the proof we need to see that everything Jesus said in God’s Word is true. His one-time sacrifice was accepted by God for the reconciliation of sinners and the proof that God accepted Christ’s work on our behalf. By the power of God the Father the

Son was raised from the death to eternal life. Christ who is eternal brings us back to and reconciles us with the Father as the God of peace.

Second, Paul says, even other created things - things like planet earth are under the curse and but are reconciled, in that, they are a facet of God's grand plan for mankind, all will receive God's wrath. As John observed in God's revelation, "Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, 'Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.'" (Revelation 16:1)

For believers the gospel brings us peace because Christ was led out of death by the Father and by that fact, Jesus is living proof that God will do the same for us through Christ. As Paul taught, ²² "That is why his faith was 'counted to him as righteousness.'" ²³ But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." (Romans 4:22-25) The resurrection is not only God's stamp of approval on the work of Christ but it also gives us confidence that He will lead us out of death and, in fact, has already done so. As believers we have passed from death to life because of the work of Jesus Christ.

Our Covenant of Peace (v. 20c)

Christ saves "by the blood of the eternal covenant". The New Covenant is not new as far as God is concerned. It has always been in God's mind and plan from eternity pass with no beginning. Before time began the plan of redemption had already been sealed. God would do all that He intended to do from eternity. Before Adam and Eve were created, God had already determined to send His Son to save a people from Adam's fallen race. Paul instructed his spiritual son, Timothy, ⁸ "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of

me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of **God,**⁹ **who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,**¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel ...” (2 Timothy 1:8-10)

Now let's take verse 20 in total. The writer brings out his last facet or characteristic of Jesus Christ, when in the middle of verse 20 he says, “**the great shepherd of the sheep**”. What is he saying?

Our Shepherd of Peace (v. 20-21)

The writer affirms the Jesus is our Shepherd and will guide us through life and this will bring peace to us through the God of peace. The writer has given Jesus titles or characteristics throughout this letter to build the many faceted view of Christ and who He is. Here are a few of the facets the writer says Jesus is:

Heir of all things 1:2	Radiance of the glory of God 1:3
Image of the invisible God 1:3	Son of God 1:5 First Born 1:6
God 1:8 Lord 1:10 Jesus 2:9	Captain or founder of our salvation 2:10
High Priest 2:17	Apostle and High Priest of our faith 3:1
Christ 3:6	Word of God 4:12 Son of God 4:14
Author and finisher of our faith 5:9	Forerunner 6:20
Mediator 8:6 Minister 8:2	Testator 9:16
The Truth 10:26	The Open Veil 10:20 The Word of God 11:3
Jesus, the founder and perfecter 12:2	Our Helper 13:6

In today's passage, we see Christ as the last facet given by the writer; **Jesus as the Great Shepherd 13:20**

Many of the names given to Christ in the Book of Hebrews attest to His divinity. Just so we are very clear here and I need to say it clearly, Jesus Christ is God. He is not God the Father or God the Holy Spirit but He is God the Son. Jesus is one third of the Trinity and the Trinity is One God. Jesus was a prophet, teacher, miracle worker and good man, but He alone is God incarnate and nothing less. So, when the writer refers to Christ as the Great Shepherd, he is using a title of Deity.

The early church understood the implications of this title very well. Jesus is not just a great shepherd but He is **the** Great Shepherd of the sheep or the chosen of God. He is the New Covenant Great Shepherd. The writer ends this letter with a benediction beginning in verse 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,²¹ 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.” There is a corollary between this benediction and the Psalm 23, Jesus is the One who is the fulfillment of the words given to David when he wrote Psalm 23, ¹“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ... ³ He restores my soul. ... ⁴ ... I will fear no evil, for you are with me ... ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” (Psalm 23) Considering these words makes me wonder if the writer of Hebrews would have desired to write a whole new letter expounding on Jesus as the great shepherd of Psalm 23 and as the great shepherd of the New Covenant he fulfilled what God reveal to David. For both David and the writer of Hebrews it is all about Jesus. He is the One who saves and we are to learn all we can about Him and He is to be our first love.

The Peace Within Us (v. 21)

We often highlight the work of Christ in granting us salvation. His work is vitally important and we should focus on it all the time. Reading verse 21, “[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.](#)” God also works in us through Christ to cause us to experience peace as we live and work. Our good works never earn salvation for us, that was what Christ did when He died on the cross. Our good works are the result of Christ’s work. Our good works are the result of our love for Christ as our Savior. Once we are converted then we should be all about good works because we love God and want to live for His glory. God’s will equips His people with the necessary endowments in order to carry out His will. When we live in obedience to God and His Word out of love, our works are considered good and our lives bring Him glory.

God gives every believer the Holy Spirit who is working all the time in our hearts and minds to write God’s laws upon our hearts. He is in the process of conforming us to the image of Christ. In Ezekiel 36, God tells us, ²⁵“[I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.](#) ²⁶[And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.](#) ²⁷[And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.](#)” Does this not sound like what happens when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, receiving the Holy Spirit and then we are symbolically washed clean when we are baptized? These verses of Hebrews and Ezekiel show us that good works are a fruit of salvation and they please God. Good works based in one’s love of God are the outward evidence a heart of flesh given by God. As Paul instructed, ²²“[But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,](#) ²³[gentleness, self-](#)

control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:22-25) My beloved, a question to ponder, “Is God working within you to produce a child of God who will do the works He desires?” In Ephesians chapter 2 we read this truth of God’s children, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (v. 10)

The whole Book of Hebrews could be summed up this way, **As children of the Living God, we stay the course of the Christian faith as we look to Christ and do His will, owing everything to Him who is the author and finisher of Creation and eternity, and everything in between, to give believers peace by faith, which is given by God.**

So, I declare this truth to all of us, “May the God who brought the Great Shepherd from the grave to eternal life keep us for all eternity by His power for His glory.”

We see at the end of this book the writer’s perspective of what we are to think of Christ. He is the Great Shepherd and we are the sheep. He guides and we follow. He leads us to the green pasture of His grace and we are strengthened. He cares for us. We receive the benefit of salvation and He receives the glory.

My prayer for you is that you endure to the end looking to Christ our Great Shepherd who leads us to the God of Peace. Remembering the **key truth: God is the God of Peace to those who know Christ as Savior and the God of wrath for those who do not.**

Let me close by reading at verse 20 once again, “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,²¹ 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.”