
Words of Truth

Hebrews 13:20-21

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“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Hebrews 13:20-21).

A wonderful truth about our God is that He is the “God of peace” (Romans 15:33, Romans 16:20, Philippians 4:9, and I Thessalonians 5:23). When addressing the chaos that had become the worship assembly in Corinth, Paul and Sosthenes wrote: *“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (I Corinthians 14:33).* The Lord is the source of peace (II Thessalonians 3:16). In fact, using the wisdom from above brings about peace rather than carnality that brings the opposite. Notice: *“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (James 3:13-18).*

The God of peace is who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus (Acts 2:22-33, Acts 3:26, and Ephesians 1:17-20). This point is more significant than just a statement of fact. For one, the Father’s resurrection of Christ speaks to the authority of Christ. Paul penned this to the saints in Corinth: *“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living” (Romans 14:9).* Secondly, the raising of Jesus speaks to our ultimate salvation. Notice: *“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power” (I Corinthians 6:14).* The resurrection of Christ and our looking forward to our resurrection at the end is paramount to our faith (I Corinthians 15:1-32).

Jesus is the great Shepherd (John 10:1-18). We, the obedient, are His sheep (John 10:27 and I Peter 2:21-25). Since we have already discussed in this study elders and their work (Hebrews 13:7; 13:17), we should have some understanding of the work of a shepherd. These points are tied together well by Peter. This is what he wrote: *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a*

partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (I Peter 5:1-4).

Jesus is known as the great Shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the everlasting covenant. This is something covered in this letter (Hebrews 8:1-10:22). When Jesus instituted the remembrance of His death, He referred to the fruit of the vine as His blood of the New Testament (Matthew 26:27-29). Those Jewish saints, as well as we, should know this well.

Through Jesus, the Shepherd, these saints were told they would be made perfect in every good work to do His will. Let's think about this. The saints in Philippi were told: *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:12-13). By looking at that, we know that the work God was going to do in them was not separate and apart from their own freewill (cf. Genesis 2:15-3:19, Deuteronomy 5:29, Deuteronomy 11:26-28, Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Joshua 24:14-16, Ecclesiastes 7:29, Isaiah 55:6-7, Matthew 7:24-29, Matthew 11:28-30, Luke 9:23-26, John 7:16-17, Acts 2:40, James 4:6-10, and Revelation 22:17). Having said that, God did work in and through saints in the first century.

Remember, the promise of the Spirit working in and through Christians was promised in the first century (Acts 2:38 and Acts 5:32). The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred twice (Acts 1:1-8; 2:1-4 and Acts 10:1-11:18). By the time the letter to Ephesus was written Holy Spirit baptism had ceased (Ephesians 4:4-6). We know that because baptism into Christ through water is the only possible baptism to remain as it pertains to salvation (I Peter 3:20-21). The only other manner in which the Spirit was given after Jesus died was through the laying on of the Apostle's hands (Acts 8:1-25 and Acts 19:1-7). There are no Apostles today. Once Christians in the first century received the Spirit, they were given gifts. Gifts such as miracles, knowledge, faith, etc. (I Corinthians 12:1-11). Those gifts have ceased (I Corinthians 12:12-13:13). Therefore, what was written to those Jewish Christians doesn't apply the same way to us as it did to them. They did not have the complete word of God as we do.

What has not ceased is that God always expects His people to do that which pleases Him. The Thessalonians were told: *“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus”* (I Thessalonians 4:1-2). God is working in us, to perfect us through His written word (II Timothy 3:15-17). This work as well as the glorification of God through Jesus all comes down to the Scriptures for us today (I Peter 4:11).