

Am I a Disciple of Jesus?

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[0 : 0 0] Hebrews chapter 13, and if we could look again at 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, 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 we glory forever and ever. Amen.

There are times that maybe we overlook the benedictions that we find in the letters, in the epistles, in the New Testament.

Sometimes we read through the letter and then we come to the benediction and maybe we don't pay too much attention to it. But that should never be the case because the benedictions are often almost summaries of what has gone in the letter beforehand and giving a very God-glorifying prayer and seeking God's blessing in a wonderful way.

And that is certainly very true with regard to this particular benediction, where the apostle is gathering many of the main themes of the epistle, about the blood and the covenant and spiritual maturity and all these things and bringing them together.

Now in the 18th verse, he asks that the church would pray for him, and in the 19th verse in particular, praying that he would be restored to them soon.

[1 : 4 3] And of course, this is one of the important things within the ministry, is that a church be praying for that ministry. At all the different levels of ministry, it's absolutely essential.

And the apostle was very, very aware of how important it was that prayer was made for him and for all the work that went on, because he saw those who were praying for him back at home or wherever it was as being co-workers.

And we've always got to take that on board. And it's an absolutely, it's a wonderful privilege to be amongst a praying people. Now, ministers really need the prayers of God's people.

You know, there are some people for some unknown reasons, somehow think that ministers don't really need prayer. Ministers need prayer probably more than anybody else, because in the work of the gospel, they are a prime target for the enemy.

Peter, who was going to be the great leader of the church in New Testament times, was number one target for Satan. And Jesus warned him, he told him, you know, Satan's deciding to have you, because Peter was going to be the number one.

[3 : 0 0] He was going to be the four, he was going to be the great leader at the forefront of the battle. So, those who are engaged in the Lord's work are prime targets for the enemy.

And we've always got to remember that, and that's why it's so important that prayer be made. But it's also important that prayer be made, so that doors will be opened, so that through the reading, especially in the preaching of the word, that the word will come with power.

It's not man's word. It's God's word. And it doesn't matter how gifted a person may be, it doesn't matter what oratorical gifts they may have, or what eloquence they have, unless the power of God's Spirit accompanies God's word, there will not come forth fruit.

That is the bottom line. And one of the old Puritans said, that next to having a part in the intercession of Christ, having a part in the prayers of the church of Jesus Christ, is one of the greatest blessings on earth.

And that is absolutely true. And I'm sure we've all at different times, because of different situations, been conscious of the church praying. And it's a wonderful thing, to know that the church is praying.

[4 : 25] And a praying church, praying church, you remember, again, you go back to Peter, digressing here a wee bit, when he was locked up in prison, he was going to be executed the next morning. What did the church do? The church prayed.

And of course, the Lord released Peter. But we find here that, in this particular benediction, that the apostle begins by saying, now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the God of peace.

And why does he term him the God of peace? Well, God is a God who is at peace with himself, always and ever. There is never a moment when God is not completely and totally at peace with himself.

You see, we, although we may enjoy peace, it's one of the blessings that God gives, there are things in our lives that cause lack of peace.

For instance, when we need something, when we need something urgently, or there's something we don't have, and we need that, that will always cause an element of disquiet, or anxiety, or lack of peace.

[5 : 41] If we lose our health, or if we're financially not able to deal with what is in front of us, or if a loved one becomes ill, there's loads of things that rob us of our peace.

But that is never so with the Lord. He is completely sufficient in himself, completely complete in himself all the time.

Again, another thing that causes lack of peace is worrying about the future. All of us are, there are always times, and there's uncertainties about what we're going to do here, or what we're going to do there, or what if this happens, we're going to try this, but not sure if it'll work.

Our lives have all, there's always an element of uncertainty, and maybe a little bit of anxiety, about the future, and the way things are going to work out. Again, that is never true with the Lord, because he knows the end from the beginning.

He is in control of everything. So he is a God who is in complete and at a control, bringing total peace to himself.

[6 : 56] And we find that this, what we have here, that he then goes on to say, 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 everlasting covenant.

And he's taking this title, almost as the God of peace, from this eternal covenant. Because, this eternal covenant, is at the very heart of the peace, which, God, gives, and brings, the condition, and the state, that, we are brought into.

Because, what we've got to remember is, that the world that God made, was a world of peace, and of harmony. Nothing like the world we're in today. Yes, geographically, much of the world would be as it is, although there may be changes.

Obviously, there's things have changed, as time has gone on. But, the world he made, was a world, that reflected himself. And, man and woman, reflected himself, made in his image, in knowledge, in righteousness, and holiness.

And, it's hard for us to imagine, the absolute harmony, and tranquility, and peace, that existed, in this world, before the fall.

- [8 : 21] It was a world, that was beautiful, in every way. It's so beautiful, that God declared, over every different aspect, of his creation, it is good.
- And then, finally, over the creation, of man and woman, God saw that it was very good. But, as we know, the fall, changed everything.
- It changed, it broadened separation, it broadened division. It changed this world, so that even Adam and Eve, there was division there.
- Adam blames Eve. There was no blame, there was no blame before. And, we find this, even the environment, has changed. Because, God had said, that this curse, was going to come up, on the very ground.
- And, Adam was going to have to struggle, in, in, in, in, in, working the ground. And, it's going to be, by the sweat of his brow, and, things were not going to work for him.
- [9 : 21] There's going to be more, thorns, and, weeds sometimes, and, more fruit, and veg, and things like that. And, that division, has been there ever since.
- But, the greatest division, of course, is the division, between, ourselves, and God. And, that isn't simply, a division, that is caused about, brought about, and say, well, we're, we're now separated, from God.
- That separation, is so severe, than, rather being in union, and togetherness, and oneness, with God. The result, of the fall, is that it's enmity.
- The natural heart, without the Lord, is at enmity, with God. And, that's quite a fright, frightening thought. That we are, enemies of God.
- We are strangers, we are aliens, we are, there's so many, different descriptions, given to us. We are, rebels. And, as long as God, and the human race, are separated, there cannot, be peace.
- [10 : 26] When there is, division, when there is, conflict, when there is, enmity, there cannot, be peace. We know that, at a human level. Whether it is, a conflict, within the home, a conflict, within the workplace, a conflict, within the church, a conflict, within the nation, a conflict, between nations.
- The one thing, when there is conflict, when there is division, there cannot be peace. The two things, don't go together. And so, that's, where we are, by nature.
- And, it's because of that, that God, in his great love, sent his son, into this world, to deal, with that division, to deal, with the brokenness, to deal, with the rebellion, to, bring again, to heal, to bring both parties, together.
- Because, that's what, becoming a Christian is. It's where the two parties, come together again. And so, the Lord Jesus Christ, came into this world, and all the time, he was here, he was giving, perfect obedience, to his father.
- He came from his father, he went back, to his father. But all the time, he was here, he was doing, everything that the father, gave him to do, in order, to bring us, back to God.
- [11 : 51] And when we become, a Christian, God looks at us, through, Jesus Christ. And what a difference, that is. Because, if we're not, if we're not believers, God looks at us, just as we are.
- The moment, we accept Jesus, everything changes. Because, God is looking at us, through, the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, God, the moment, that we are, born again, God's peace, comes, into our life.
- In two ways. Both, with regard to, a state, and with regard to, a condition. With regard to, a state, because, now, instead of conflict, instead of division, there's now peace.
- But, it's more than that. You can have, for example, you can have, two countries at war. And, there's real hostilities, and there's, it's awful. people.

But then, people come together, and they try to negotiate, some kind of treaty. And, eventually, this treaty is signed. And, both sides, lay down, their arms.

[13 : 07] And, the war is over. But, although, now, peace has come to, reign within the land. There is, all the aftermath.

And, in many hearts, are broken. There is so much pain. There's so much resentment. There's so much bitterness. There are so many things going on.

The whole, the cities are devastated. Just the, the whole fallout, from war, continues. Although, they're no longer, the two countries, are not at war anymore.

But, when God comes, and deals with a sinner, it's not simply that, the war is over. It's not just simply that, he said, that's it. It's now peace, between you and me.

He does more than that. He imparts, his peace, into our heart. So, that there is this, this amazing moment, where the peace of God, that passes all understanding, comes in, to us.

[14 : 13] And, you know, it's one of the, one of the great, as Jesus said, when he was leaving, my peace I give you, not as the world gives, give I unto you. And, you often ask a person, when they've been converted.

People used to ask me that, what, what do you have, that you didn't have, before you were converted? And, there was lots of things, I, I wasn't very good, at explaining, but you know, the one thing, that I knew, I had a peace, that I never had, before in my life.

It was different, to anything else, that I'd ever had. Lots of things, I couldn't explain. Lots of things, I didn't understand. But, this was one thing, I knew.

I used to wake up at night, and I knew, I was wrong with God. I used to be frightened. I knew, the way that I was, that if I died, I was going to hell. I knew that. And, there was this, just, lack of peace.

But, you know, when you become a Christian, that changes. Jesus, it's part of, what happens, when you're justified, when you're born again. His peace comes, into your heart.

[15 : 17] And, it changes everything. And so, we, this is what we're seeing here. We have this peace. And again, it tells us, now we see, what the God of peace, has done.

He has brought again, from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd, of the sheep. And here we see, that the resurrection, here, is attributed, to the Father, the God of peace.

Although, we know that the Lord Jesus Christ, himself said, I have power, to lay down my life, and I have power, to raise, and to take it up again. And we know, in different references, if we go through the Bible, we will see that, Father, Son, and Spirit, are involved.

But here, the main, mainly attributed, to the Father. And, when he says, brought again, from the dead, our Lord Jesus, we've got to remember, that the resurrection, of Jesus, the bringing, again to life, the bringing back, from the dead, was very different, to, what we term, the resurrection, of Lazarus, or the resurrection, of Jairus' daughter, or the resurrection, of the widow's son.

They were brought, back to life, but it was different. They were brought, back to life, in exactly, the same condition, they had been in, before they died.

[16 : 40] But the resurrection, of Jesus, was different. Because, when he was raised, from the dead, he was raised, into, yes, the same body, exact same body, but operating now, on different scales, not bound, by the dimensions, not bound, by the laws, of this universe.

He could appear, and disappear. He was, it was completely different. And it had to be different. Because, the fact is this, the resurrection, of Jesus, is the guarantee, that what happened, to him, will happen, to us as well.

You see, when we are, in him, everything, that he, did for us, and became, for us, we will, be involved, in as well.

So, we will rise, from the dead, with, resurrected bodies, not, simply, the body, that went, into the grave. Yes, it is the body, that went, into the grave, but it will be, a completely different, the same body, but new dimensions, operating, in a new way.

So, Christ, is this great guarantee, of what happened, to him, will happen, to us all. And then it says, may the God of peace, who brought from the dead, our Lord Jesus, by the blood, of the eternal covenant.

[18 : 07] Now, of course, this book, the book of the, letter to the Hebrews, is a letter, that was built, on the Old Testament. And if there was, one thing, that the Old Testament church, never lost sight of, they were never, allowed to lose sight of, was, the importance, of blood.

In fact, it was something, it's something, that goes through the Bible, from the very beginning, to the end. We find, if we go back to Abel, and we find, that his offering, by blood, was the one, that was, accepted, rather than, Cain's offering.

And you go, all the way through, from Genesis, to Revelation. And we see, see there, about the blood of the Lamb. We see about the saints, whose, whose robes, have been made white, in the blood of the Lamb.

Blood runs, all the way, through the scripture. And you know, there are people, and they get quite offended, about all the blood, in the Bible. And they're saying, what's the need, of this blood?

They want a bloodless salvation. Well, there isn't. There is no such thing, as a bloodless salvation. It is by the blood. And all the old, Testament, of course, was pointing, to the Lord, Jesus Christ.

[19 : 22] But as we say, it is one of the things, the Old Testament church, could never, ever forget. It was brought, before them, on a daily basis, sacrifice, blood, without the shedding, of blood, there is no, remission, of sin.

And so, we find, it talks here, about the blood, of the eternal covenant. And again, we find, many references, in the Bible, for instance, in Zechariah, we find, where God speaks, of the blood, of my covenant.

In Ezekiel, where the God of peace, promises, I will make a covenant, of peace with them. It shall be, an everlasting covenant, with them. And so, all through the Bible, we find, that God is speaking.

But there is always, this sense, of this, this covenant, that he is making. Now, of course, we know, that this covenant, that is made, this eternal covenant, that is made, by blood, is between, father and son.

That Jesus Christ, is the basis, of that covenant. If we were, the basis of the covenant, that would be it, be gone. Because we haven't, the ability to keep.

[20 : 33] But it is a covenant, that has been made, with Jesus Christ. Christ. Now, I know, that there are, many, many different references, that we can think of, with regard to, and it may not be, this is not probably, what it is specifically, talking about.

But one of the great, I think, one of the great pictures, that we have, in the Bible, in the Old Testament, with regard to the blood, is the great day, of atonement.

And you remember, on that day, that the high priest, he had to take a bull, and he had to sacrifice, that bull, for a sin offering, and he had to take the blood, and he had to go into, the most holy place, and he had to present, the blood, before the ark, of the covenant, and the mercy seeds, sprinkling.

And he was doing that, first of all, to make, that was for himself, and for his household, because he himself, was a sinner, before he could then go, and make atonement, for the people.

And then two goats, were taken, lots were cast, one goat, was going to have, this, in a very symbolic way, the sins of the people, transferred on, and sent out, into the wilderness.

[21 : 46] The other goat, was sacrificed, as a sin offering. And again, the high priest, went back in, to the most holy place, the holy of holies, and with the blood, sprinkled it again, before the mercy seat, in the ark of the covenant, there, to make, to make, atonement, for, the sins, of the people.

Now, it's very interesting, when, Aaron, would sacrifice, that goat, and he would do so, in front of all the people, and he would take the blood, and then he would disappear.

The great work, that was taking place, in the holy of holies, nobody could see. But he was in there, representing the people.

He was there, making atonement, for the people, before with God. Unseen, by any eye, until he would come back out.

And that's exactly, what Jesus Christ, was doing on the cross. There was a public part, to it, where his death, was obvious to all. He was brutally, put to death.

[23 : 01] He hung there, on the cross. His blood was shed, his body was broken. But hidden away, from every eye, unseen by any, was the sheer weight, of God's wrath, that was poured down, upon him.

And that transaction, was taking place, on the cross, between father, and son, where Jesus Christ, was making atonement, for us, for our sin.

And it's a, this is this, wonderful picture, that is given to us, of what, the Lord Jesus Christ, was doing. And so, the Lord Jesus Christ, has borne away, all our sin, all its sickness, all its guilt, all its twistedness.

You know, sometimes hard to imagine that. Sin is so, I was going to say, infectious. Sin, sin, affects every single, aspect of our being.

Jesus Christ, has dealt, with it all. Even, even the body. You know, our bodies, we're going to die, unless the Lord, Jesus Christ, comes first.

[24 : 12] And the sickness, that will take our body, or whatever it will be, and our body, will go into the dust. That's not the end. Because, he is even, he's even, not just while we're here, in this world, but he's even dealing, with that.

Because, through his resurrection, we will rise again, and we're glorious. Everything, is so wonderful. So, Jesus on the cross, made, full, sacrifice, for sin.

And he did it, once and for all. You know, on the cross, when Jesus cried out, it is finished. Various phenomenon, occurred. And you remember, one of the things, that happened, in the temple, in the place, where there was this, the holy place, the most holy place, the holy of holies.

Nobody allowed in there, but the high priest, and once a year. The big curtain, that separated, it was torn in two, from top to bottom. God tore it.

And for the first time, people could see in. And God was there, showing, this is it. There is no more need, for these daily sacrifices.

[25 : 20] No more having to go back, again and again, making sacrifice for sin. Here it is, once, and, for all. But there is one other thing, that we see here, with regard, to the blood, of the everlasting covenant.

You know, when, when the high priest, went in, to make, atonement, for the people, they would be all waiting, with bated breath.

What if, God, won't accept, the sacrifice? If he won't, Aaron is dead. He won't come back out. And so, they're waiting, and they're waiting.

And there will be, a great sense of relief, when he would come out. Because they would know, God, has accepted, the sacrifice. And you know, it's the same for ourselves.

What is, the great, assurance that we have? That God, the Father, has accepted, the sacrifice, of Jesus Christ. It's his resurrection.

[26 : 31] It's the empty tomb. He's not there. He's risen. Because it's been, a perfect work. And God, has said, it's all done. Thank you, my son.

You have done, everything for my people. And so, Jesus has, risen back again, triumphant, to sit, enthroned, on the right hand, beside his father.

So, that is our great assurance today. The great hope that we have. The great assurance of this victory. That Christ went through death, presenting his blood, and that he has risen out again, triumphant over it all.

Well, as we said, Jesus is a great covenant keeper, the basis of this covenant. And the whole scheme of salvation, has been entrusted to him.

See, this is what makes it so daft, when people think that, that they're, that they're sort of, can be in charge of their own salvation. Can you imagine, what it would be like, if you were left, in charge of your own salvation.

[27 : 44] You would have no assurance. Every day you got it wrong, you'd say, oh, that's it gone again. That's not the way it works. Jesus has done it all.

We just rest in him. Accept his finished work. It's all been done. And you know, there's no safer place, in the whole universe, than to be in the hand of Jesus, in the arms of Jesus.

And I hope all of us today, will find ourselves there. Even if you're not at the table, I believe there's some, who aren't at the table today, who could be at the table.

But I hope you're all, safe in the arms of Jesus. And if you're not, ask him, even now, to take you into his arms, and to hold you by his hand.

■■■ us prie. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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