

The Prayers of the Apostles

**Booklet Two
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.

This prayer contains a remarkable epitome of the entire epistle—an epistle to which every minister of the Gospel should devote special attention. Nothing else is so much needed today as expository sermons on the epistle to the Romans and the Hebrews: the former supplying that which is best suited to repel the Legalism and Arminianism which are now so rife; and the latter to refute the cardinal errors of Rome and expose the sacerdotal pretensions of her priests. It provides the divine antidote to the poisonous spirit of ritualism, which is now making such fatal inroads into so many sections of a decadent Protestantism. That which occupies the central portion in this vitally important and most blessed treatise is the Priesthood of Christ, which embodies the substance of what was foreshadowed both in Melchizedek and Aaron. Therein it is shown that His one perfect sacrifice has forever displaced the Levitical institutions and made an end of the whole Judaic system. That all-sufficient oblation of the Lord Jesus made complete atonement for the sins of His people, fully satisfying every legal claim which God had upon them, thereby rendering needless any efforts of theirs to placate Him. “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14), or set apart unto God in all the excellence of His finished work.

God’s acceptance of Christ’s atoning sacrifice was demonstrated by His raising Christ from the dead and setting Him at the right hand of the Majesty on high. That which characterized Judaism

was sin, death, and distance from God—the perpetual shedding of blood and the people shut out from the divine presence. But that which marks Christianity is a risen and enthroned Saviour, who has put away the sins of His people from before the face of God, and has secured for them the right of access unto Him. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness [liberty] to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb. 10:19-22); that is, with full confidence in the infinite merits of Christ’s blood, depending entirely thereon. In his prayer, the apostle makes request that the whole of what he had set before them in the doctrinal part of the epistle might be effectually applied unto their hearts. In a brief but comprehensive sentence, Paul asks that there might be wrought in the redeemed Hebrews all unto which he had exhorted them in the previous chapters. We shall consider the object, plea, request, and doxology of this benedictory invocation.

“Now the God of peace” is the One to whom this prayer is directed. As we have intimated in earlier articles, the various titles by which the apostles addressed the Deity were not used at random, but were chosen with spiritual discrimination. They were neither so poverty-stricken in language as to always supplicate God under the same name, nor so careless as to speak with Him under the one which first came to mind. Instead, in their approaches to Him, they carefully singled out that attribute of the divine nature, or that particular relationship that God sustains to His people, which most accorded with the specific blessing they sought. The same principle of discrimination appears in the Old Testament prayers. When holy men of old sought strength, they looked to the Mighty One. When they desired forgiveness, they appealed to “the multitude of [his] tender mercies” (Psa. 51:1; 69:16). When they cried for deliverance from their enemies, they pleaded His covenant faithfulness. We dwelt upon this title, “the God of peace,” in our article upon Romans 15:33 (June 1944); and in addition to our previous remarks thereon, would now point out:

First, it is a distinctively *Pauline* title, no other New Testament

writer employing the expression. Its usage here is one of the many internal proofs that he was the penman of this epistle. It occurs just seven times in his writings: in Romans 15:33, and 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:16; and here in Hebrews 13:20. It is evident therefrom that our apostle had a special delight in contemplating God in this particular character. And well he might, for it is an exceedingly blessed and comprehensive one; and for that reason, we have done our best, according to the measure of light granted us, to open its meaning. In the sequel, we shall suggest why Paul, rather than any of the other of the apostles, coined this expression.

Second, it is a *forensic* title, viewing God in His official character as Judge. It tells us that He is now reconciled to believers. It imports that the enmity and strife which formerly obtained between them is now ended. That previous hostility had been occasioned by man's apostasy from his Maker and Lord. The entrance of sin into this world disrupted the harmony between heaven and earth, severed communion between God and man, and brought in discord and strife. Sin evoked God's righteous displeasure and called for His judicial action. Mutual alienation ensued, for a holy God cannot be at peace with sin, being "angry with the wicked every day" (Psa. 7:11). But divine wisdom could devise a way whereby rebels should be restored to His favour without any reflection upon His honour, and divine grace did provide a means which put away their sins and fully satisfied His justice. Through the obedience and sufferings of Christ, full reparation was made to the Law and peace was re-established between God and sinners. By the gracious operations of God's Spirit, that enmity which was in the hearts of His people is overcome, and they are brought into loyal subjection to Him. Thereby the discord had been removed and amity created.

Third, it is a *restrictive* title. God is "the God of peace" only to those who are savingly united unto Christ, for "there is therefore now no condemnation" to them which are in him (Rom. 8:1). But far different is the case with those who refuse to bow to the sceptre of the Lord Jesus and take shelter beneath His atoning blood. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth

not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). Note, it is not that he shall yet fall beneath God’s wrath in the day of judgment, but that he is under it *now*, for he is under the curse of the divine Law. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. 1:18). Yea, more: by virtue of their federal relationship to Adam, all his descendants are “by nature the children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3), entering this world as the objects of God’s judicial displeasure. So far from being “the God of peace” to those who are out of Christ, “The LORD is a man of war” (Exod. 15:3). “He is terrible to the kings of the earth” (Psa. 76:12).

Fourth, this title “the God of peace” is therefore an *evangelical* one. The good news which His servants are commissioned to preach to every creature are designated “the gospel of peace” (Rom. 10:15). Most appropriately is it so named, for it sets forth the glorious person of the Prince of peace, and His all-sufficient work whereby He “made peace through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20). It is the business of the evangelist to explain how Christ did so, namely, by His entering the awful breach which sin had made between God and men, having transferred to Him the iniquities of all who should believe on Him, suffering the full penalty for the same. When the Sinless One was made sin for His people, He came under the curse of the Law and the wrath of God, and therefore did He give orders, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 13:7). Justice having been satisfied, God is pacified, and all who are justified by faith “have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

Fifth, it is therefore a *covenant* title, for all that was transacted between God and Christ was according to everlasting stipulation: “And the counsel of peace shall be between them both” (Zech. 6:13). It had been eternally agreed that the Good Shepherd should make complete satisfaction for the sins of His flock, reconciling God to them and them to God. That compact between God and the Surety of His elect is expressly denominated a “covenant of peace,” and the inviolability of the same appears in that blessed declaration, “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be

removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee” (Isa. 54:10). The shedding of Christ’s blood was the sealing or ratifying of that covenant, as Hebrews 13:20 goes on to intimate. In consequence thereof, the face of the Supreme Judge is wreathed in smiles of benignity as He beholds His people in His Anointed One.

Sixth, this title “the God of peace” is also a *dispensational* one; and as such, it had a special appeal for the one who so frequently employed the same. Though a Jew by birth, and a Hebrew of the Hebrews by training, he was called of God to “preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8). That suggests what may be the reason why this appellation of Deity is peculiar to himself, for whereas the other apostles ministered and wrote principally to the Circumcision, Paul was preeminently the apostle to the Uncircumcision; therefore, he more than any would adore God, that peace was now to be preached unto those who were afar off, as well as to them that were nigh. A special revelation was made to him concerning Christ, that “he is our peace, who hath made both [believing Jews and Gentiles] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [which under Judaism had divided them]...for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace [between them]; And that he might reconcile both unto God” (Eph. 2:14-16). Thus, there was a particular propriety in the apostle of the Gentiles addressing God by this title when making supplication for the Hebrews—as he had done when praying for the former.

Seventh, this is a *relative* title: by which we mean it is closely connected with Christian experience. The saints are not only the subjects of that judicial peace which Christ made with God on their behalf, but they are also the partakers of divine peace experientially. The measure which they enjoy the same is determined by the extent to which they are obedient to God, for piety and peace are inseparable. The intimate connection there is between the peace of God and the sanctifying of believers, which appears both from 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and here in Hebrews 13:20, 21; for in each, request is made for the promotion of

practical holiness, and in each, the “God of peace” is supplicated. When holiness reigned over the whole universe, peace prevailed also. There was no war in heaven until one of the chief of the angels became a devil, and fomented a rebellion against the thrice holy God. As sin brings strife and misery, so holiness begets peace of conscience. Holiness is well pleasing to God; and when He is well pleased, all is peace. The more this prayer be pondered in detail, and as a whole, the more the appropriateness of its address will appear.

“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” (Heb. 13:20). This reference unto the deliverance of Christ from the tomb we regard as *the plea* on which the apostle based the request that follows. Since we consider this to be one of the most important verses in the New Testament, we shall give our best attention to every word in it; that more so, as part of its wondrous contents is so little apprehended today. We should observe, first, the character in which the Saviour is here viewed. Second, the act of God in bringing Him forth from the dead. Third, the connection between the act and His office as “the God of peace.” Fourth, how that the meritorious cause of the same was “the blood of the everlasting covenant.” Fifth, the powerful motive which the same provides for the saint to “come boldly to the throne of grace,” there to “obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). May the Holy Spirit deign to be our Guide as we prayerfully ponder this portion of the truth.

“That great shepherd of the sheep.” This title was most pertinent and appropriate in an epistle to Jewish converts, for the Old Testament had taught them to look for the Messiah in that specific relation. Moses and David, eminent types of Him, were shepherds. Of the one it is said, “Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (Psa. 77:20); and under the name of the other, God promised the Messiah unto them: “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant [the antitypical] David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd” (Ezek. 34:23). That Paul here made reference to that particular prophecy is clear from what it went on to say: “And I

will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods” (Ezek. 34:25). Here in Hebrews 13:20, the same three things are brought together: the God of peace, the great Shepherd, and the everlasting covenant—and in a manner (in perfect accord with the theme of the epistle) which refuted the erroneous conception which the Jews had formed of their Messiah. They imagined He would secure for them an external deliverance as Moses had, and a prosperous national state as David set up; having no idea that He would shed His precious blood and be brought down into the grave. Yet they should have done so.

When Christ appeared in their midst, He definitely presented Himself unto the Jews in this character. He not only affirmed, “I am the good shepherd,” but added, “the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11), even that “Lamb of God” as His forerunner had hailed Him (John 1:29). In that dual character, or under that twofold revelation, the Lord Jesus had been prophesied in Isaiah 53:6: “All we like sheep have gone astray...and the LORD hath laid on him [i.e. the Shepherd, whose the sheep are!] the iniquity of us all.” Then in the next verse, it was fore-announced, “he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” Note that word, “*brought* as a lamb,” and behold the Holy Spirit guiding the apostle to say that God—not “raised,” but—“brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep.” His being brought back again from the dead necessarily imported His having first been brought into death. How minutely accurate is the language of Holy Writ and how perfect the harmony—their *verbal* harmony—of the Old and New Testaments!

Peter, in his first epistle, under the Spirit, appropriated the same wonderful prophecy to the Lord Jesus, for after terming Him the “lamb without blemish and without spot,” by whom we are redeemed (1 Pet. 1:18, 19), went on to cite some of the predictive expressions of Isaiah 53—namely, that which spoke of us “as sheep going astray,” and that which referred to Christ “by whose

stripes [we are] healed;” and that in bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, it was as “the Shepherd and Bishop of [our] souls” (1 Pet. 2:24, 25). He there transacted. Thus he was led to expound Isaiah portraying the Saviour as a Lamb in death and a Shepherd in resurrection. The excuselessness of the Jews’ ignorance of Christ in this particular office appears still further in that through yet another of their prophets, it had been announced that God would say, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd” (Zech. 13:7). There, God is viewed in His judicial character as being angry with the Shepherd for our sakes: that since He bore our sins, justice must take satisfaction from Him. Thus was “the chastisement of our peace” (Isa. 53:5) laid upon Him, and the Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep (John 10:11) as a satisfaction unto the righteous claims of God.

“That great shepherd.” From what has been pointed out above, we may the better perceive why the apostle designated Him thus, rather than “*the* great shepherd.” “*That* great shepherd:” the One not only foreshadowed by Abel, by the patriarchal shepherds, by David, but also as portrayed in the Messianic predictions. We should note that both of His *natures* were contemplated under this appellation: “My shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD” (Zech. 13:7). As the profound Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) pointed out centuries ago, this title also implies all of Christ’s *offices*. His prophetic “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd” (Isa. 40:11, and compare Psa. 23:1, 2); His priestly—“the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11); His royal, for the same passage which announced that He should be Shepherd over God’s people also denominated Him a “prince” (Ezek. 34:23-25). So also in the New Testament: “When the Son of man shall...sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats” (Matt. 25:31, 32). He is indeed that “great shepherd,” all-sufficient for His flock.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep.” See there the relation

of the Redeemer to the redeemed. Shepherd and sheep are correlative terms: one cannot properly term any man a “shepherd” if he has no sheep. The idea of Christ as Shepherd necessarily implies the chosen flock. Christ is the Shepherd of the *sheep*, and not of the wolves (Luke 10:3), nor even the goats (Matt. 25:32), for He has received no charge from God to save them—how the basic truth of particular redemption stares us in the face on almost every page of Scripture! “He did not lay down His life for the whole herd of mankind, but for the flock of the elect which was given to Him by the Father as He declared: John 10:14-16, 26”—John Owen (1616-1683). Observe, too, how this title intimates His *Mediatorship*: as the Shepherd, He is not the Lord of the flock, but the Father’s Servant to take charge of and care for it: “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me” (John 17:6). Christ’s relation to us is seen again in “*our* [not *the*] Lord Jesus” (Heb. 13:20), and therefore, our Shepherd—*ours* in His pastoral office, which He is still discharging; ours, as brought from the dead, for we rose in Him (Col. 3:1).

“That great shepherd of the sheep” emphasizes His immeasurable superiority over all the typical and ministerial shepherds of Israel: just as “a great high priest” (Heb. 4:14) stresses His eminency over Aaron and the Levitical priests. In like manner, it denotes His authority over the pastor which He sets over His churches, for He is “the chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4) in relation to all the under-shepherds. He is Shepherd of souls; and one of them is worth far more than the whole world, which is the value He sets upon them by redeeming them with His own blood. This adjective also looks at the excellence of His flock: He is the great Shepherd over all—both Jews and Gentiles. As He declared, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this [Jewish] fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16)—“one flock” comprising the whole of the Old Testament and the New Testament saints. “That *great* shepherd” also respects His abilities: a particular knowledge of all His sheep, skill to heal and minister to them (Ezek. 24:16), power to effectually preserve them: “And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:28).

Then how greatly should He be loved, trusted, honoured, and magnified!

“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” (Heb. 13:20). We must now carefully consider that act of God toward the Saviour which the apostle here used as his plea for the petition that follows. In the great mystery of redemption, God the Father sustains the office of supreme Judge (Heb. 12:23). He it was who laid upon their Surety the sins of His people. He it was who called for the sword of vengeance to smite the Shepherd (Zech. 13:7). He it was who richly rewarded and highly honoured Him (Phil. 2:9). “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that *God* hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36, and compare 10:36). So it is in the verse now before us: the restoring of Christ from the grave is there viewed not as an act of divine power, but of rectoral justice. God is there seen exercising His judicial authority, as is clear from the term used. We are ever the losers if, in our carelessness, we fail to note and duly weigh every single variation in the language of Holy Writ. Our text does not say that God “raised,” but “*brought* again from the dead our Lord Jesus,” which sets before us a very different yet most blessed aspect of truth, namely, the legal discharge of our Surety from prison.

There was a formal legal process against Christ. Jehovah laid upon Him all the iniquities of His elect; and thereby He was rendered guilty in the sight of the divine Law. Therefore, He was justly condemned by divine justice. Accordingly, He was cast into prison. God was wroth with Him as the Sinbearer: “It pleased the LORD to bruise him” (Isa. 53:10) to exact full satisfaction from Him. But the debt being paid, the penalty of the Law inflicted, justice was satisfied, and God was pacified. In consequence, He became “the God of peace” both toward Christ and toward those whom He represented (Eph. 2:15-17). God’s anger being assuaged and His Law magnified and made honourable (Isa. 42:21), He then exonerated the Surety, set Him free, and justified Him (Isa. 50:8; 1 Tim. 3:16). Thus it was foretold: “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation?” (Isa. 53:8).

In his most excellent exposition of Isaiah 53 (1683)—virtually unobtainable today—James Durham (1622-1658) showed conclusively that verse 8 described Christ’s exaltation following upon His humiliation. He demonstrated that the term “generation” there has reference to His duration or continuance (as it does in Joshua 22:27): “As His humiliation was low, so His exaltation was ineffable: it cannot be declared, nor adequately conceived—the continuance of it being for ever.”

Condensing it into a few words, James Durham gave as his analysis of Isaiah 53:8: “1. Something is here asserted of Christ: ‘He was taken [or ‘lifted up’] from prison and from judgment.’ 2. Something hinted which cannot be expressed: ‘Who shall declare his generation’ [or ‘continuance’]? 3. A reason given in reference to both: ‘For he was cut off out of the land of the living.’” “He was taken from prison and from judgment” referred not only to the Saviour’s imprisonment and coming to judgment before men, but also and primarily to the straits He was brought into and arraignment before *God’s* tribunal, because His suffering “for the transgression of my people” was not the cause of His censure before men, but was the procuring cause of what He met with from and before God. The word “prison” may there be taken more largely for those straits and pressures of spirit which the Lord Jesus endured while suffering the curse of the Law, and “judgment” for the awful sentence inflicted upon Him. To the one Christ referred when He said: “But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luke 12:50); and to the other is to be attributed His agony in the Garden and His cry of anguish on the Cross. Ultimately, the “prison” has reference to the grave.

The Hebrew word for “He was *taken* [laquash] from prison” sometimes signifies “to deliver” or “to free,” as a captive is liberated—Isaiah 49:24, 25. From both prison and judgment, the Surety was taken or freed, so that “death hath no more dominion over him” (Rom. 6:9). Christ received the sentence of divine absolution, as one who has paid his debt is discharged by the court. Christ not only received absolution, but was actually delivered from prison, having paid the utmost farthing demanded of Him.

Though He was brought into prison and judgment, when the full demands of justice had been met, they could not detain Him: as the apostle declared, “Whom God hath raised up, having *loosed* the pains [or ‘cords’] of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24). As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) expressed it, “He was by an extraordinary order of heaven taken out of the prison of the grave; an angel was sent on purpose to roll away the stone and set Him at liberty, by which the judgment against Him was reversed, and taken off.” Likewise, Thomas Manton (1620-1677) insisted that the clause, “Who shall declare his generation?” (Isa. 53:8) meant “declare the glory of His resurrection, as the previous words do His humiliation, suffering, and death.”

As Thomas Manton rightly pointed out, “While Christ was in the state of death, He was in effect a prisoner, under the arrest of divine vengeance; but when He rose again, then was our Surety let out of prison.” In a most helpful way, he went on to show that the peculiar force of the term, “*brought* again from the dead” is best explained by the dignified carriage of the apostles when they were unlawfully cast into prison. The next day, the magistrates sent sergeants to the prison, bidding their keeper let them go. But Paul refused to be “thrust...out privily” and remained there until the magistrates themselves formally “*brought* them out” (Acts 16:35-39). So it was with Christ: He did not break prison. As God had “delivered him up” to death (Rom. 8:32), so He “*brought* [Him] again from the dead.” It was as it were an acquittal from those debts of ours which He undertook to pay: as Simeon was dismissed when the conditions were performed, and Joseph was satisfied with a sight of his brother, he “*brought* Simeon out unto them” (Gen. 43:23)—Thomas Manton. It was God, in His official character as “the Judge of all” (Gen. 18:25) who righteously freed our Sponsor.

Let us now briefly observe that it was *as* “the God of peace” He here acted when He “*brought* again from the dead our Lord Jesus.” The perfect obedience and atoning oblation of Christ had met every requirement of the Law, put away the iniquities of those for whom it was offered, had placated God and reconciled Him to them. While sin remained, there could be no peace, but blotted out

by the blood of the Lamb, God was propitiated, and Christ had “made peace through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20); but so long as He continued in the grave, there was no open proclamation thereof. It was by His bringing of Him forth from the dead that God made it known to the universe that His sacrifice had been accepted, and thereby, He publicly declared that enmity was at an end and peace established. *There* was the grand evidence and proof that God was pacified toward His people. Christ had made an honourable peace, so that God could be both “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). Take note also of *the relation* Christ sustained when God delivered Him from the dead: not as a private person, but as the federal Head of His people, as “that great shepherd of the sheep,” so that they were then legally delivered with Him (Eph. 2:5, 6).

It is very blessed to learn from the Psalms—where much light, not given in the New Testament, is cast upon the heart-exercises of the Mediator—that Christ supplicated God for deliverance from the tomb. In Psalm 88 (the sole subject-matter of which is the soul-suffering of the Lord Jesus), we find Him saying: “Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave” (Psa. 88:2, 3). Since the transgressions of His people had been imputed to Him, those “troubles” were the sorrows and anguish which He experienced when what was due to sin was inflicted and executed upon Him. He went on to exclaim to God: “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves” (Psa. 88:6, 7). There we are granted an insight of what the Saviour felt in His soul under the stroke of God, as He endured all that which was in His holy curse upon sin. He could not be in a lower state. He was in total darkness, the sun for a season refusing to shine upon Him, as God hid His face from Him. The sufferings of Christ’s soul were tantamount to “the second death” (Rev. 20:14). He sustained the whole of what was equivalent to the same.

The smitten Redeemer went on to say: “I am shut up, and I cannot come forth” (Psa. 88:8). None but the Judge could lawfully deliver Him. “Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead

arise and praise thee?” (Psa. 88:10). In his remarkable exposition, Samuel E. Pierce (born 1827) declared: “Those questions contain the most powerful plea Christ Himself could urge before the Father for His own emerging out of His present state of suffering and for His resurrection from the power of death. ‘Shall the dead arise and praise thee?’ (Psa. 88:10). Yet in Me Thou *wilt* show wonders in raising My body from the grave, or the salvation of Thine elect cannot be completed, nor Thy glory in the same fully shine forth. Thy wonders cannot be declared: the elect dead cannot rise again and praise Thee, as they must, but on the footing of My being raised up.” “But unto thee have I cried, O LORD” (Psa. 88:13). What light this Psalm casts on “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and *was heard*” (Heb. 5:7)! As He was required to “ask of [God]” for His inheritance (Psa. 2:8), so, first, for His deliverance from the prison of the tomb; and it was in answer thereto that God “brought him forth.”

In the last place, consider that the act of God is here said to be “through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” As to exactly what is connoted by those words, there has been no little confusion in the minds of different writers on this epistle, and while a full canvassing of this interesting question is really outside the scope of the present article, yet some of the more erudite of our readers would be displeased if we failed to make a few remarks thereon, so we will ask others kindly to bear with us while we treat of a somewhat technical detail. A careful reading through of the epistle shows that mention is made therein of “the covenant” (Heb. 10:29), “a better covenant” (Heb. 8:6), “a new covenant” (Heb. 8:8), and here to “the everlasting covenant.” Not a few able men have concluded that reference is made to the same thing throughout, but with them, we cannot agree. It is quite clear from Hebrews 8:6-13, that the “new” and “better” covenant made with the *spiritual* “Israel” and “Judah” stands in opposition to the “first” (Heb. 8:7) or “old” (Heb. 8:13) covenant, which the Lord made with the nation of Israel at Sinai—with Israel “after the flesh.” In other words, the contrast is between Judaism and

Christianity under two different covenants or economies, whereas “the everlasting covenant” is the antithesis of the covenant of works made with Adam as the federal head of his race.

Though the covenant of works was first in manifestation, the everlasting covenant or covenant of grace was first in origination. In all things, Christ must have the preeminence, and God entered into compact with Him before Adam was created. That compact has been variously designated as the “covenant of redemption” and the “covenant of grace.” In it God made full arrangements and provisions for the salvation of His elect. That everlasting covenant has been administered, under different economies, throughout human history, the blessings of the same being bestowed on favoured individuals all through the ages. During the “old covenant,” or Judaism, the requirements and provisions of the everlasting covenant were shadowed forth under the moral and ceremonial law; under the “new covenant,” or Christianity, its requirements and provisions are proclaimed by the Gospel. In every generation, repentance, faith, and obedience were required from those who should partake of its inestimable blessings (Isa. 55:3). As a renowned theologian pointed out, “The phrase ‘Mediator of the covenant’ is applied to Christ three times in the New Testament (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24), but as in each case, the term for covenant is qualified by either the adjective ‘new’ or ‘better.’ It evidently here is used to designate *not* the covenant of grace properly, but that new *dispensation* of that eternal covenant which Christ introduced in person, in contrast with the less perfect administration of it, which was instrumentally introduced by Moses”—*Outlines of Theology*, by Archibald A. Hodge (1823-1886).

Thus we take those words, “the blood of the everlasting covenant,” at their face value as referring to the eternal compact which God entered into with Christ. In the light of the preceding clauses of Hebrews 13:20, it is evident that “the blood of the everlasting covenant” has a threefold reference. First, the divine title here employed: God became “the God of peace” when Christ made propitiation and confirmed the eternal compact with His own blood (Col. 1:20). From before the foundation of the world, God

had purposed and planned that “peace” which Christ was to make: everything connected with the same had been eternally agreed upon between Them. Second, to the action there ascribed to Him: the shedding of His precious blood was the procuring cause of the restoration of our Lord Jesus from the grave by the Judge of all. Since the Surety had fully carried out His part of the contract, it behoved the Ruler of this world to deliver Him from prison as that which was righteously due to Him. Third, to Christ’s office: it was by the shedding of His blood for them, according to covenant agreement, that our Lord Jesus became “that great shepherd of the sheep”—the One who should seek out God’s elect, bring them into the fold, and there minister to, provide for, and protect them.

God’s bringing back of our Lord Jesus from the dead was not done simply by contract, but also by His merits; and therefore, it is attributed not barely to “the covenant” but to “the blood” of it. As God the Son, He merited or purchased it not, for honour and glory were His due; but as God-man Mediator, He earned His deliverance from the grave as a meet reward. Moreover, it was not as a private person, but as the Head of His people that He was delivered, and that ensured their deliverance also. If *He* was restored from the tomb “through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” equally so must *they* be. Scripture ascribes our deliverance from the grave to the death of Christ, as well as to His resurrection: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thess. 4:14). Thus, assurance is given to the Church of its full and final redemption. God expressly made promise to the Shepherd of old: “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water”—the grave (Zech. 9:11). As it was “by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place” (Heb. 9:12), so on the ground of the infinite value of the same do we (Heb. 10:19); and as He declared,” because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19).

We turn now to the petition itself: “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb. 13:21). This verse is intimately related to the whole of the preceding one, and

the blessed connection between them inculcates a lesson of great practical importance. It may be stated, simply, thus: God's wondrous working in the past should deepen our confidence in Him and make us to seek at His hand's blessings and mercies for the present. Since He so graciously provided such a Shepherd for the sheep, since He has been pacified toward us and not a frown now remains upon His face, since He has so gloriously displayed both His power and His righteousness in bringing back Christ from the dead, a continuance of His favour may be safely counted upon, and we should expectantly look to Him day by day for all needed supplies of grace. The One who raised our Saviour is well able to quicken us and make us fruitful to every good work. Eye "the God of peace" and plead "the blood of the everlasting covenant" in every approach to the mercy seat.

More specifically: God's bringing back Christ from the dead is our *security* that He will fulfil all His promises to the elect, even all the blessings of the everlasting covenant. This is clear from Acts 13:32-34: "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again... And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead...he said [by that action], I will give you the sure mercies of David." By restoring Christ from the dead, God fulfilled the grand promise made to the Old Testament saints (in which all His promises were virtually contained) and gave pledge for the performance and accomplishment of all future ones, thereby giving virtue to them. The "sure mercies of David" are the blessings which God swore to in the everlasting covenant (Isa. 55:3). The shedding of Christ's blood ratified, sealed, and established for ever every article in that covenant. By bringing Him back from the dead, God has ensured to His people that He will infallibly bestow upon them all those benefits which Christ obtained for them by His sacrifice. All those blessings of pardon, cleansing, reconciliation, sanctification, and preservation were given to Christ for His redeemed, and are safe in His hand.

By His mediatorial work, Christ has opened a way whereby God can consistently with all the glory of His perfections, bestow all the

good thereof. As His death was necessary that believers might receive those “sure mercies” (Isa. 55:3) according to the divine counsels, so His resurrection was equally indispensable, so that living in heaven He might impart them to us as the fruits of His travail and the reward of His victory. God has fulfilled to Christ every article which He engaged for in the everlasting covenant: He has brought Him from the dead, exalted Him to His own right hand, invested Him with honour and glory, seated Him upon the mediatorial throne, and given Him the name which is above every name. And what God has done for Christ, the Head is the guarantee that He *will perform* all that which He has promised to Christ’s members. It is a most glorious and blessed consideration that our all, both for time and eternity, depends wholly upon what passed between the Father and Jesus Christ: that He remembers and is faithful to His engagements to the Son, and that we are in His hand. When faith truly apprehended that grand fact, all fear and uncertainty is at an end; all legality and talking about our unworthiness silenced. “Worthy is the Lamb” (Rev. 5:12) becomes our theme and song!

It is a most tranquilizing and stabilizing subject for the minds of Christians to dwell upon: that they are personally interested in all the eternal acts which passed between God the Father and Christ on our behalf ere man was made, as well as in all those acts which were transacted between the Father and the Son in and throughout the whole of His mediatorial work which He wrought and finished here below. It is this covenant-salvation, in its full blessedness and efficacy, apprehended by faith, which alone can lift us out of ourselves, above all our spiritual enemies, enable us to triumph over our present corruptions, sins, and miseries. It is wholly a subject for *faith* to be engaged with, for feelings have no place here. It is the objective side of the truth, the divine counsels of wisdom and grace made known in the Scriptures. As faith is exercised thereon, as the record of the eternal engagements of the Father and Son are received into the spiritual mind, peace and joy will be our experience. And the more faith feeds upon objective truth, the more are we strengthened subjectively. Faith regards every path in fulfilment of God’s promises as a certain evidence of

His fulfilling all the rest of His promises to us, in His own good time and way. Especially will faith regard God's fulfilment of His promise to bring back our Lord Jesus from the grave in this light: Has the Shepherd Himself been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father? As surely will all His sheep be delivered from death in sin and quickened into newness of life.

[For the benefit of new readers, we point out that in the preceding expositions of these most important verses we dwelt upon, first, the *Object* of this prayer, namely, "the God of peace" (Heb. 13:20), which views Him in His office as Judge, pacified by satisfaction having been made to His justice, now reconciled to His people. Then we considered the particular act here predicated of Him: His restoring of our Lord Jesus from the dead. There we noted, first, the character in which Christ is portrayed: "That great shepherd of the sheep," which contemplates Him not only as the Antitype of Abel, the patriarchal shepherds, and David, but as the Fulfilment of such Messianic prophecies as Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:23, 24; 37:24; Zechariah 13:7; and also as the One to whom God has entrusted the salvation of His elect. Second, the fact that He is here said to be "*brought* again from the dead" (not "raised"): the reference being to His lawful discharge from the prison of the tomb as a thing due Him—because as their Surety, He had paid fully the debt of His people. Christ did not break prison by an act of arbitrary power, but was honourably discharged by the divine Judge (compare Acts 16:35-39) in fulfilment of Isaiah 53:8. Third, that it was "through the blood of the everlasting covenant" God became "the God of peace," that Christ was constituted "that great shepherd of the sheep," and was the meritorious ground of His being freed from death's dominion.]

"Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb. 13:21). As previously intimated, there is a very close connection between this verse and the preceding one. Here we have the *request* which the apostle preferred on behalf of the Hebrew saints; the contents of the former are to be regarded as the *plea* on which he based his request. How appropriate, powerful, and moving that plea was, will readily be seen. The appeal is made

to “the God of peace:” as the One reconciled to His people, He is besought to grant this blessing (compare Rom. 5:10). Moreover, since God had brought again our Lord Jesus from the dead, that was a most proper ground why He should quicken His dead elect by regeneration, recover them when they wander, and complete His work of grace in them. Especially so, since it was as “that great shepherd of the sheep” He had delivered Him from the prison of the grave, which would move Him to care for the flock. As the Redeemer was “perfected” on the third day (Luke 13:32), so His redeemed must be. Finally, the same everlasting covenant which promised the resurrection of Christ guaranteed the glorification of His people; therefore, says the apostle, “perfect them” according to that engagement.

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will.” Substantially, that is a request for the practical sanctification and fructification of God’s people. While the everlasting covenant has been suitably denominated, “The Covenant of Redemption,” it needs to be carefully borne in mind that it was designed to secure the holiness of its beneficiaries. It is God’s “holy covenant...That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our [spiritual] enemies might serve him without [servile] fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:72-75). And while it has also been appropriately designated “the Covenant of Grace,” yet it must ever be remembered that it is said, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men [Gentiles as well as Jews], Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2:11-13). The grand purpose of the everlasting covenant, as of all the divine works, was the glory of God and the good of His people. It was designed not only as a display of the divine munificence, but also for securing and promoting the claims of divine holiness. God did not enter into that compact with Christ in order to set aside human accountability, nor did the Son fulfil its terms so as to render unnecessary a life of obedience from His redeemed.

Christ agreed not only to propitiate God, but regenerate His elect; not only to meet all the requirements of the Law in their stead, but also to write it on their hearts and enthrone it in their affections. Christ engaged not only to take away sin from before God, but to make it hateful and heinous unto His saints. Christ undertook not only to satisfy the claims of divine justice, but to sanctify His seed, sending forth His spirit into their souls to conform them unto His image and incline them to follow the example which He has left them. It has been far too little insisted upon, in recent times, by those who wrote or preached upon the Covenant of Grace, that He engaged not only for the debt of His people, but for their *duty* too: that He should make a purchase of grace for them, and full provision to give them a new heart and a new spirit, to bring them to know the Lord, to put His fear into their hearts, and make them obedient to His will. He also engaged for their *safety*: that if they forsook His Law and walked not in His judgments, He would visit their transgressions with the rod (Psa. 89:30-34); that if they should backslide and stray from Him, He would assuredly recover them.

“Make you perfect...to do his will.” It was with the contents of the Covenant in his eye that the apostle offered up this petition. In the preceding articles, it was shown that Old Testament prophecy presented the promised Messiah as the Surety of a covenant of peace and as the “Shepherd” of His people: it now remains to point out that He was therein portrayed as *such* a Shepherd as would perfect His sheep in holiness and good works. “And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd”—there is “that great shepherd” (Heb. 13:20) even a royal one, without a rival. But more: It was at once added, “They shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them” (Ezek. 37:24). And therefore, it was that after owning God as “the God of peace” who had delivered from death’s dominion our Lord “through [or ‘by’] the blood of the everlasting covenant,” request was made that He would work in His sheep “that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb. 13:21). For though God has covenanted the same, He declares, “I will yet for this be enquired of by the [spiritual] house of Israel” (Ezek. 36:37).

Thus this most comprehensive prayer is not only an epitome of the contents of the whole epistle, but also provides a summary of the Messianic prophecies.

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will.” It must be unto “the God of peace” this prayer is made. Faith must first regard Him as reconciled to us before there will be any true desire to glorify Him. While there be any sensible horror of God—any servile fear produced at the mention of His name—we cannot serve Him nor do that which is well-pleasing in His sight. “Without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6), and faith is the very reverse of horror. We must first be assured that God is no longer an Enemy but our Friend, ere love’s gratitude will move us to run in the way of His commandments. That assurance can only come to us by realizing that Christ has put a way our sins and satisfied every legal claim of God against us: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Christ has made a perfect and eternal “peace through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20), in consequence of which God has made with those who surrender to Christ’s yoke and trust in His sacrifice “an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure” (2 Sam. 23:5). That must be apprehended by faith before there can be any serving of God acceptably, and before there will be a confident seeking from Him of the grace necessary thereunto.

From yet another angle, we may perceive the appropriateness of this request being addressed to “the God of peace,” that He would now perfect us in every good work to do His will, for that is most essential unto *our enjoyment of His peace* in a practical way. “Great peace have they which love thy law” (Psa. 119:165), for Wisdom’s “ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Prov. 3:17). Therefore, it is utterly vain to expect tranquillity of heart if we forsake her paths for those of self-pleasing. Certainly there can be no peace of conscience while any known sin is “allowed” by us. The road to peace is the way of holiness: “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them” (Gal. 6:16). Unless we genuinely resolve and strive to do those things which are pleasing in God’s sight, there will be a state of turmoil and unrest within us, instead of peace. There is another

and deeper meaning in that title, “the Prince of *Peace*” (Isa. 9:6), which pertains to the incarnate Son: He could say, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29), and therefore, an unruffled calm was His portion. What emphasis was there in those words, “Peace I leave with you, *my peace* I give unto you” (John 14:27)!

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will.” This petition sets before us, by clear implication, the human side of things. As we have repeatedly pointed out in this series: those things for which the apostle made request on behalf of the saints concern those duties which *they* were obligated to perform, but for the performing of which divine assistance is imperative. The everlasting covenant anticipated the entrance of sin and made provision not only for the putting away of it, but the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. That righteousness is the perfect obedience of Christ by which the divine Law was honoured and magnified. That perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to all who believe, but none *do* savingly believe in Him until His Spirit has implanted a principle of righteousness in their souls (Eph. 4:24), and that new nature or principle of righteousness evidences itself by the performing of good works (Eph. 2:10). We have no right to speak of “The Lord *our* righteousness” unless we be personal doers of righteousness (1 John 2:29). The everlasting covenant by no means sets aside the necessity of obedience on the part of those who partake of its benefits, but supplies the most affecting and powerful motives to move us thereunto. Saving faith worketh by love, and aims at pleasing its Object.

The more our prayers be regulated by the teaching of Holy Writ, the more will these two things mark them: the divine precepts will be turned into petitions, and the divine promises will be used as our pleas. When the Psalmist realized, “Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently,” he was at once conscious of his failure and said, “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!” (Psa. 119:4, 5). But He did more than lament the hindrances of indwelling sin: He cried, “Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes...Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight” (Psa. 119:33-35). So also

when seeking the establishment of his house before the LORD, David pleaded the divine promise: “And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and *do as thou hast said*” (2 Sam. 7:25 and see also 1 Kings 8:25, 26; 2 Chronicles 6:17). As we become more familiar with God’s Word and discover the details of the exalted standard of conduct there set before us, we should be more definite and diligent in seeking grace to perform our several duties; and as we become better acquainted with “the Father of mercies” (2 Cor. 1:3) and His “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Pet. 1:4), we shall count more confidently upon Him for those supplies.

“Make you perfect in every good work.” The original for “perfect” is not the one found in Hebrews 2:10; 10:14; 11:40, which signifies “entire” or complete, but is “*katartizo*,” which Young defines as “to fit thoroughly, adjust.” It is rendered “mend” in Matthew 4:21, and “restore” in Galatians 6:1. It was especially appropriate in connection with the Hebrews, who, after believing the Gospel, had met with such bitter and protracted opposition from the Jews at large, that they had wavered and were in real need of being warned against apostasy (see Heb. 4:1; 6:11, 12; 10:23). As stated at the beginning of our exposition, this prayer not only gathers up the whole of the doctrinal instruction, but also the exhortations of the previous chapters. The Hebrews had faltered and failed (Heb. 12:12), and the apostle here prays for their restoration. The lexicons tell us the Greek word here translated “perfect” literally has reference to the resetting of a dislocated bone. And is it not often so with the Christian: a sad fall breaks his communion with God, and none but the hand of the divine Physician can repair the damage wrought. Thus this prayer is suited to all of us: that God would rectify every faculty of our beings to do His will and right us for His service each time we need it.

Mark how comprehensive is this prayer: “Make you perfect in *every* good work.” It includes, as Thomas Gouge (1609-1681) pointed out, “All the fruits of holiness Godwards and of righteousness manwards.” No reservation is allowed us by the

extensive rule which God has set before us: we are required to love Him with all our hearts, be sanctified in our whole spirit and soul and body, and “grow up into him [Christ] in all things” (Eph. 4:15). Nothing less than perfection “in every good work” is the standard at which we must aim. Absolute perfection is not attainable here, but the perfection of sincerity *is* demanded of us—honest endeavour and genuine effort to please God. The mortification of our lusts, submission unto God under trials, the performance of impartial and universal obedience, is ever our bounden duty. Of ourselves, we are quite incapable of discharging our duties, and therefore, we must pray continually for supplies of grace to enable us thereunto. Not only are we dependent upon God for the beginning of every good work, but also for the continuance and progress of the same. Emulate Paul: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after... reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark” (Phil. 3:12-14).

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will:” may He who has already fully acquainted you with His mind now effectually incline you unto the performing of it, even a continuance of the same unto the end. It is not enough that we *know* His will, we must *do* it (Luke 6:46; John 13:17); and the more we do it, the better shall we understand it (John 7:17) and prove the excellency of the same (Rom. 12:1). It is His revealed or perceptive will that is here in view and which is to be the alone rule of all our actions—namely those laws and statutes to which God requires our full obedience to what God has commanded. There are many things done by professing Christians which—though admired by them and applauded by their fellows—are nothing but “will worship” and a following of the “doctrines of men” (Col. 2:20-23). The Jews added their own traditions to the divine Law and instituted fasts and feasts of their own invention. The deluded Papists, with their bodily austerities, idolatrous devotions, and impoverishing payments—are guilty of the same thing. Nor are some Protestants—with their self-devised deprivations and superstitious exercises—clear of this their evil.

“Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight.” This

confirms what was just said above: only that is acceptable unto God which conforms to the rule He has given us. The words “in his sight” show that our every action comes under His immediate notice and is weighed by Him. By comparing other Scriptures, we find that only those works are “wellpleasing” to Him which He has enjoined us, which are performed in His fear (Heb. 12:28), which proceed from love (2 Cor. 5:14), and which are done with an eye single to His glory (1 Cor. 10:31). Nothing short of that must be our constant aim and diligent endeavour: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto *all* pleasing, being fruitful in every good work” (Col. 1:10). Nevertheless, we have to be divinely enabled thereunto. What a blow to self-sufficiency and self-glory is this “working in you!” Even after regeneration, we are wholly dependent upon God. Notwithstanding the life, light, and liberty we have received from Him, we have no strength of our own to do what He requires. Each has to acknowledge “to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom. 7:18).

That is indeed a humbling truth, yet a fact it is that Christians are, in themselves, incapable of discharging their duty. Though the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts (Rom. 5:5)—a principle of holiness or “new nature” communicated to them—yet they are unable to perform the good they ardently desire to do. Not only are they still very ignorant of many of the requirements of God’s revealed will, but indwelling sin ever opposes and seeks to incline their hearts in a contrary direction. This it is which renders it imperative that they daily seek from God fresh supplies of grace. Though assured that God *will* “complete” His good work in us (Phil. 1:6), that does not render needless our crying unto Him “that performeth all things for [us]” (Psa. 57:2). Nor does the privilege of prayer release us from the obligation of obedience: rather is it a begging Him to quicken us unto the performance thereof. Prayer is not designed to discharge us from the regular and diligent use of all the means God has appointed for our practical sanctification, but is a seeking of the divine blessing on our use of them. Our duty is to ask God to work in us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13), to avoid grieving His Spirit, and to use the grace He has already given us.

“Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” There is a double reference here: to God’s working in us, and in His acceptance of our works. It is by virtue of the Saviour’s mediation that God works: there is no communication of grace unto us from the God of peace, but by and through our Redeemer. All that God does for us is for Christ’s sake. Every gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in us is the fruit of Christ’s meritorious work, for He procured and sends the Spirit to us (John 15:26). Every spiritual blessing bestowed upon us is in consequence of Christ’s intercession for us. Christ is not only our life (Col. 3:4) and our righteousness (Jer. 23:6), but also our strength (Isa. 45:24). It is “of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). The members of His mystical Body are completely dependent upon their Head (Eph. 4:15, 16). “From me is thy fruit found” (Hos. 14:8)—i.e. by fellowship with Him and abiding in Him (John 15:5). This is a most important truth to be clear upon if the Lord Jesus is to have that place in our thoughts and affections which is His due. The wisdom of God has so contrived things that each Person is exalted in the esteem of His people: the Father as the fountain of grace, the Son in His mediatorial office as the channel through which all grace flows to us, and the Spirit as the actual bestower of it.

But these words “through Jesus Christ” have also a more immediate connection with the clause, “that which is wellpleasing in his sight.” Even though our works be good and wrought in us by God, yet they are imperfect, because they are marred by the instruments by which they are done—as the purest light is dimmed by the cloudy or dusty globe through which it shines. Yet though our works be defective, they are acceptable to God when done in the name of His Son. Our best performances are faulty and fall short of that excellence which the requirements of God’s holiness demand, but their defects are covered by the merits of Christ. Our prayers are acceptable to God only because our great High Priest adds to them “much incense,” and then offers them on “the golden altar which was before the throne” (Rev. 8:3). Our spiritual sacrifices are “acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5). God can only be “glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 4:11). We owe,

then, to the Mediator not only the pardon of our sins and the sanctification of our persons, but God's acceptance of our imperfect worship and service. As Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) aptly said in his comments on this clause, "What nothings and nobodies we are! Our goodness is none of ours."

"To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." The glory of God was what the apostle eyed. And how are we to glorify Him? By an obedient walk, doing His will, performing those things which are wellpleasing in His sight. By adoring Him. The construction of the whole sentence permits us to regard this description of praise as being offered to *either* the "God of peace," to whom the prayer is addressed, or to "that great shepherd of the sheep," which is the nearest antecedent to the pronoun. Since both grammar and the analogy of Faith allow equally of Each, we include Both. Let God be praised because He is now "the God of peace," because He brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, because He is faithful to His engagements in the everlasting covenant, because all supplies of grace are from Him, and because He accepts our poor obedience "through Jesus Christ." Equally let us adore the Mediator: because He is "our Lord Jesus," who loved us and gave Himself for us; because He is "that great shepherd of the sheep"—caring for and ministering to His flock; because He ratified the covenant with His precious blood, and because by His merits and intercession, our persons and services are rendered "well pleasing" unto the Most High. "Amen:" so be it; so it shall be.

The second of seven booklets.

