

THE GOD OF PEACE AND OUR SANCTIFICATION

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A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 5, 1877,
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“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 well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”
Hebrews 13:20, 21.

THE apostle, in the eighteenth verse, had been earnestly asking for the prayers of the Lord's people. On the behalf of all his brethren he said, “Pray for us,” and for himself he added, “I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.” If the apostle needed the prayers of his brethren, how much more do we who are so greatly inferior to him in all respects? We may, indeed, even with tears appeal to you who are our brethren in Christ and entreat you to be earnest in your supplications to God on our behalf. What can we do without your prayers? They link us with the omnipotence of God. Like the lightning rod, they pierce the clouds and bring down the mighty and mysterious power from on high. But what the apostle was anxious to receive, he was careful to bestow and therefore he proceeded in the words of our text to plead for his brethren, from which we learn that if we desire others to pray for us we must set the example by praying for them. We cannot expect to be benefited by other men's prayers unless the spirit of supplication dwells in us also. In this matter the Lord will give us good measure pressed down and running over according as we give unto others. Other hearts shall be stirred up to intercede for us if we are ourselves diligent in intercession. Pray, if you would be prayed for.

The prayer before us was an exceedingly wide one, for Paul had learned to ask great things of the Lord. The Holy Spirit had filled him with much love to the Hebrews and with a strong desire for their welfare, and therefore he asks for that which is the greatest of all blessings to the people of God, that they may be fit for every good work and that God may work in them to do that which is well-pleasing in His sight. When we plead for God's own beloved people, we are safe in asking for the best of blessings. If we feel straitened in pleading for ourselves, there can be no reason in being so in reference to them, since we know that the Lord loves them and abounds towards them in grace through Christ Jesus.

It is noteworthy that this prayer or benediction comes at the close of the epistle, even as in Christian assemblies the benediction is pronounced at the end of the worship. Let the end of all our acts be a blessing to men and a doxology to God. As long as you live, dear brethren, endeavor to bless others and when you die conclude life with a blessing, even as your Lord and Master did, who as He ascended to heaven, was seen with outstretched hands blessing His people. As Jacob would not let the angel go until He blessed him, so we should not cease from preaching or writing in the name of the Lord until we have a comfortable persuasion that a blessing has come upon our brethren.

This prayerful benediction is an exceedingly instructive one. It has within itself the whole compass of the gospel, as one might show if this were our object at this season. It is condensed spiritual meat. Much in little—all things in one blessing. Every word is as a pearl for value and as the sea for depth. It is not the object of prayer to instruct our fellow men. A decided distinction ought always to be drawn between praying and preaching—and those err greatly who, under the name of prayer, not only instruct, but argue and exhort. Yet it is a remarkable fact that there is no inspired prayer in Scripture but what is full of teaching to those who are willing to study it. Take any one of the psalms—though they are addressed to God, yet within them the preacher finds a thousand texts from which to inculcate the doctrines and the precepts of the Lord. As for the prayers of our Lord Jesus, they drop fatness—that which

is commonly called, “the Lord’s Prayer,” contains a world of doctrine, and that glorious prayer in the seventeenth of John is as honey from the honeycomb. Now, since the same Spirit that worked of old works also in us, I conclude that He will lead us also to pray to the edification of those who hear us. Though the foremost object of prayer is not the instruction of our fellow men, yet prayer ought to be full of good matter and worthy of the consideration of those whom we invite to join in it! Public prayer would be a far better means of grace to the people if those who utter petitions in public would seek preparation of heart from the Lord and enter upon the exercise with careful thought. Surely it is not sufficient to repeat a round of godly expressions which have become current in the church, but we ought to speak with the Spirit and with the understanding in our approaches to God, so that the thoughts of our fellow Christians may be excited and their hearts united with us in our public devotions. He who prays in public a dull prayer, devoid of all thought and meditation, dampens the flame of devotion, whereas it was his duty to have added fuel to it. I invite those who take part in our prayer meetings to lay this matter to heart.

We must, however, further note that though the prayer of Paul for the Hebrew believers is full of doctrine, yet the whole of it tends to the end which he had in view. He did not garnish his prayer with extraneous ornament, nor drag in needless doctrinal statements, but every word was meant to support his plea for personal, practical holiness, which was the one object of his prayer. While he shows us from where holiness must come and how it must come, and how it is worked in us and what it is like when it is worked in us, he is all along bringing forth his strong arguments with the Lord that in the Hebrew believers this holiness might be worked abundantly. I am sure I shall have your earnest attention while I endeavor to weigh the very words of the text, since each one is full of meaning. I cannot hope in the short space of one sermon to bring out the whole fullness of its meaning, for who can hold the sea in the hollow of his hand, or compass the fullness of such a text in one brief address? Yet I would labor to give you sufficient insight into it to let you see that its lengths and breadths and depths and heights are not easily to be measured by mortal mind.

I. I call your attention to THE PECULIAR TITLE UNDER WHICH GOD IS ADDRESSED IN THIS PRAYER, “Now, *the God of peace.*” The names of God employed in prayer in Holy Scripture are always significant. Holy men of old were not so poverty-stricken in language as always to address God under one name, nor were they so careless as to speak with Him under such a title as might first come to hand, but in their approaches to the Most High they carefully regarded that attribute of the divine nature from which they expected the blessing which they desired. If they needed that their enemies should be overthrown, they pleaded with the arm of His strength. If they were wrongfully entreated, they prayed to the God of righteousness. If they needed pardon for their sins, they pleaded with the God of mercy, and such names as Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, are not used indiscriminately in the prayers of the saints of old, but always with selection and judgment. Why, then, did the apostle here call God, “the God of peace”? He had a reason. What was it?

It is a Pauline expression. You find that title only in the writings of Paul. It is a name of Paul’s own coinage by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. There were reasons in Paul’s experience which led him to dwell upon this peculiar trait of the divine character. Each man, seeing with his own eyes, sees something peculiar in the name of the Lord, and the apostle of the Gentiles when writing to Hebrew believers saw with special clearness, “the God of peace,” who had made both Jew and Gentile to be one in Christ, so making peace. If you look in the epistle to the Romans, the fifteenth chapter and thirty-third verse, you find him praying, “Now, the God of peace be with you all.” In the same epistle, chapter sixteen, verse twenty, he says, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Again, in the second epistle to the Corinthians, 13:11, he says, “Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” In Philippians 4:9, he thus concludes his exhortation, “Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.” But especially in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, there is a passage strikingly parallel to our text. He there prays, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.” Sanctification is the subject of the present prayer. Just as in our text he prays, “Perfect you in every good work to do His will,” so in Thessalonians he says, “And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved

blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is evident, not only that the apostle delighted in the expression peculiar to himself, but that he saw a close connection between the peace of God and the sanctifying of believers, and for this reason, both in the Thessalonians and in the Hebrews, his prayer for their sanctification is addressed to the God of peace.

The title is a gospel one. God is not spoken of as the God of peace in the Old Testament, but there He is, “a man of war, the Lord is His name.” “He shall cut off the spirit of princes; He is terrible to the kings of the earth.” He is frequently spoken of in the psalms and the prophets as, “the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle,” and it is a part of Israel’s praise of Him that He slew mighty kings, “for His mercy endures forever.” Constantly, in the older volume of inspiration, do we read of, “the Lord of hosts,” and of this title an old divine says, “It has the sound of hostility in it.” But now no longer speak we of the Lord of hosts, but of the God of peace, for, since Jesus is our peace, the enmity is slain. Messiah’s reign began with songs in heaven of, “Peace on earth, goodwill towards men.” His errand was peace. His spirit was peace. His teaching was peace. His last testament was peace and through His atonement, from the opened heavens, the God of peace and consolation looks down upon the sons of men.

The appropriateness of the title to the particular prayer will readily strike you, for *holiness is peace*. “May the God of peace make you holy,” for He Himself is peace and holiness. When holiness reigned over the whole universe, peace reigned also. There was no war in heaven till one who had been an angel became a devil and fomented a rebellion against the thrice holy God. Sin brings forth strife, but holiness is the mother of peace. In perfection there is peace and therefore Paul prays the God of peace to make His children perfect. Holiness is well-pleasing to Him and when He is pleased, all is peace, therefore Paul prays Him to work in them that which is well-pleasing in His sight.

The God of peace has also graciously restored peace and reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, but it has been by the putting away of sin, for while sin remained, peace was impossible. “The blood of the everlasting covenant,” of which the text speaks, was the sealing of a covenant of peace which God made between Himself and man, for of old were there thoughts of peace in the mind of God towards His chosen. In the fullness of time, the gift of Christ and His atoning death was the actual establishment of peace, for He has made peace by the blood of His cross. He is the ambassador of God to us and by His substitutionary sacrifice peace was effectually made, “for He is our peace.” By the blood of the everlasting covenant there was a treaty made between God and His elect which shall stand fast forever and ever. As for our Lord’s resurrection and ascension, of which the text speaks, “The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus”—that was the open proclamation of peace. So long as Jesus was in the grave, peace was not openly declared—it was assuredly established, but not publicly announced. But when the Mediator rose and especially when He ascended on high and received gifts for men and sat down at the right hand of God, even the Father, then before the whole universe it was declared that God was at peace with the sons of men. For Jesus is in all things the Adam, the model man, the representative of His people, and peace with Him means peace with all who are in Him. He died for our sins, but He rose again for our justification, which is none other than the replacing of us in a condition of reconciliation with God. He went into heaven to take possession of our inheritance and what better evidence could there be that we are reconciled to God? If our representative sits at His right hand, we may be confident that the Lord is reconciled unto us.

Beloved, if you pursue the subject, you will see more and more clearly the significance of the title, “the God of peace,” for *to make us perfect in every good work to do His will is to give us peace*. Although every Christian by faith in Christ is justified and so has a judicial peace with God, yet we never can enjoy perfect peace with our own consciences so long as any sin is committed by us or dwells in us. So long as there shall remain a solitary tendency to sin within these members, we shall be disturbed. Sin will contend with grace and newborn grace will war with inbred sin. Sin and grace can no more agree than fire and water. Even the God of peace never tries to establish a peace between good and evil, for it would be monstrous even if it were possible. The way to peace is the way of holiness. Cast out sin and you cast out contention. Subdue iniquity and peace wins the victory. Beloved, it is of no use for us to seek happiness in life except by the way of holiness of conversation. I have already declared that we

have peace with God through the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ, but for deep calm of heart and quiet of conscience, there must be a work of sanctification within us worked by the power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Sin is our enemy and the new life within us is heartily at enmity with evil and therefore peace can never be proclaimed in the triple kingdom of our nature until we always do that which is well-pleasing in the sight of the Lord, through Jesus Christ.

Nor is this all. When the apostle, praying for our sanctification, prays to the God of peace, it is as much as to say to us that *we must view God as the God of peace if we are to be led to do His will*. O man, is God your enemy? Then you will never serve Him, nor do that which is well-pleasing in His sight. Do you at this moment feel a horror of God, a dread at the mention of His name? Then you can never do that which will please Him, for without faith it is impossible to please God and faith is the reverse of horror. You must first of all know that there is peace between you and your God, and then you can please Him. This knowledge can only come to you through Christ Jesus, for peace is made only by “the blood of the everlasting covenant.” When once you know that the Lord has made with you an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, then you have leverage to work with, then are you founded upon a rock whereon you may be built up in every form of obedience, but not till then. Peace with God is the root of virtue. Reconciliation by the death of His Son is the door to conformity to the life of His Son. May we know our great Shepherd both in His dying atonement and living example as the Lord and giver of peace.

I think also that the apostle in thus praying to “the God of peace” had in His mind’s eye the entire church of the Hebrews, or if you will, any one Christian church. Brethren, it is essential that we have peace in the church. Whatever is the enmity without, we must love one another. If we do not walk in love, we certainly cannot have prosperity. God, alone can give peace to a church and He only gives it by sanctifying its members, stirring them up to good works, keeping them in sacred activity, making them fit to labor for Him, and working in them to do that which is well-pleasing in His sight. When you hear of disturbances in churches you need not so much seek to compose the differences among the members as to amend the men themselves. We would not gather so many thorns if the plants were fig trees. Wars and fights would never spring up among us if we were not carnal and unsanctified. If we were more spiritually-minded, we would be more ready to forgive and less likely to offend or to be offended. “Are you not carnal?” asks the apostle, “because one says, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Cephas,” and the like. But once let the God of peace sanctify each believer and then will every man seek his brother’s good and the things which make for peace. When you pray for the peace of Jerusalem, remember that you can promote it by laboring after holiness.

Before leaving this first head, I would call to your notice the fact that *the title, the “God of peace,” sheds a light over the whole passage* and is beautifully in harmony with every word of the prayer. Let us read it line by line. “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.” War drives men down to the dead and is the great jackal of the grave. Ah, how sadly the nations see this exemplified in the East at this moment. War brings down death, but the God of peace brings back from the dead. The restoration of the Lord Jesus from the grave was a peaceful act and was meant to be the guarantee of peace accomplished forever. “That great Shepherd of the sheep”—sheep are peaceful creatures—and a shepherd’s occupation has not to do with blood-red fields of strife. We always couple with the idea of peace the quietness and repose of the sheepfold and the simple restfulness of flocks in green pastures. Peace is the very atmosphere of pastoral scenes. “Through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” The very word, “covenant,” is also full of peace and especially is it so when we remember that it is a covenant of peace which eternal love has established between God and man. Where no covenant or league exists, war may break out at any time, but where a covenant is once established there is peace and rest. The apostle goes on to pray, “Make you perfect in every good work to do His will.” If God’s will is done by us, then there must be peace, for no ground of difference can exist. “Working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight.” Oh, the soft music of these words. When all in us is well-pleasing to God, then indeed is He the God of peace to us. The final doxology is also very significant, for in effect it proclaims the universal and eternal reign of peace, “To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” What can there be to disturb the universe when the Lord God omnipotent shall reign and all nations shall glorify

and extol the Ever Blessed, world without end? Not without reason, therefore, did our apostle select the title, “The God of peace.”

II. We have now briefly to consider THE SPECIAL ACT DWELT UPON IN THIS PRAYER. “*That brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*” Here I would have each one of you, for himself, read the passage of Scripture which I think the apostle had in mind when he wrote these words. Turn to Isaiah 63:11, “Then He remembered the days of old, Moses and His people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the Shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within them? That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make for Himself an everlasting name?” See how this making to Himself an everlasting name tallies with the last clause, “To whom be glory forever and ever”? But let us proceed, “That led them through the deep as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble.” Truly, those do not stumble in whom the Lord works “that which is well-pleasing in His sight.” “As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest”—there is the God of peace, “so did You lead Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name”—there again is the doxology, “To whom be glory forever and ever.” The historical event to which he alludes is the deliverance from Egypt and the coming up from the Red Sea. Having saved His people by the blood of the covenant, which was smeared upon their doorposts, He led them to the Red Sea, their foes pursuing them. Into the Red Sea they descended—not to its banks alone did they go, but into its very depths they passed and there were they buried—the sea was as the place of death to them. Between its liquid walls and beneath the cloudy pillar which hung over the passage, they were baptized unto Moses and buried in baptism as in a liquid tomb, but lo, they come up out of it again, led safely up from what became the grave of Pharaoh, with songs and shoutings and rejoicings. The parallel is this, “That great Shepherd,” who is far greater than Moses and Aaron, must go down into the place of death on behalf of His people. He must, as the representative of His flock, descend into the sepulcher. This He did, for He bowed His head and died, but lo, the Lord led Him up again from the deeps and He arose to life and glory and all His people with Him. On that day the song might have been jubilant as that of Miriam when she chanted, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. Your right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power.” But now in this greater deliverance by “the blood of the everlasting covenant,” the psalm is not to the Lord who is a man of war, but to “the God of peace.” The honor is ascribed to the same Lord, but under a gentler name and to Him be glory forever and ever. I have no doubt that Paul in part borrowed his imagery from the Red Sea, which is of all deliverances the most instructively typical. Is it not even in heaven the chosen type, for there they sing the song of Moses the servant of God and of the Lamb?

With that illustration to help us, we shall notice that the bringing back of the Lord Jesus from the dead was the seal of His perfected work and consequently of our peace and ultimate perfection in holiness. The Lord Jesus could no more be held by the bands of death, but might justly return to His throne. Because He had finished all His work, therefore the word of authority declared His freedom and He was brought back to His former glory. Because He had worked all righteousness therefore did He stand amongst living men and because He had merited a crown of glory therefore did He rise even to the throne of Jehovah, to sit there till His enemies are made His footstool. His work is finished and therefore God acknowledges the fact by bringing Him again from the dead. Most wisely does the apostle pray that He who thus owned Christ’s finished work would finish His Spirit’s work in us. Christ is perfected therefore O Lord, perfect Your saints. Jesus has done Your will, help us to do it. May He that brought Jesus from the dead in token of His completed righteousness bring up also His people from all relics of their death of sin and make them complete in holiness to the glory of His name.

Beloved, we go further yet. The bringing again of Christ from the dead was in effect the leading back of all His people. Not without the sheep did the Shepherd come, for that were to return defeated. He went down into the grave to seek the lost sheep and finding them, He flung them on His shoulder and as He came up from the grave, He bore upon His mighty shoulders the sheep for whom He died. The text speaks of, “*Our Lord Jesus.*” Did you notice that? *Ours* in His offices of Shepherd and Savior, altogether ours as brought again from the dead. What He did was for us. He is the great Shepherd of the

sheep and therefore what He did was for the sheep. We can give many reasons why the Lord Jesus is the Great Shepherd, because He is the Shepherd, not of one congregation, but of all the saints in all ages and because the sheep are His own and He who owns the sheep is far greater than He who only feeds the flock for another. But the reason which just now attracts my attention is this—if there is a great shepherd, there must be a great flock. You cannot truly call any man a shepherd if he has no sheep, nor call him a great shepherd if he has not a great flock. So He “that brought again from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep,” did by that act and deed bring up the *great flock* from the dead too, for so long as our Lord Jesus can truly be called a shepherd, He must have a living flock—they are inseparable from Him and essential to Him. The church is the fullness of Christ. A king is no king without subjects. A head is no head without a body and a shepherd is no shepherd without sheep. The idea of the Great Shepherd involves the chosen flock—His bringing again from the dead as a Shepherd involves their up-bringing in Him. The resurrection and the glory of Christ are thus the resurrection and the glory of all His flock, for whom He laid down His life. Glory be to His name for this. Now you see the force of the petition which may be interpreted thus—Lord, You have brought Your people up from the dead in Christ, therefore bring them up from all the death of sin. Quicken them to fullness of life. Perfect them in every good work to do Your will. Work in them that which is well-pleasing in Your sight because this is their spiritual resurrection, this is the giving to them what you did give to Christ on their behalf, therefore fulfill it unto them.

Beloved, it needs the same power to make us holy that it needed to bring our Savior from the dead. That same power which raised the dead body of Christ must raise us from our death in sin, and the same power which enabled the living Christ to climb from earth to heaven and take His throne must be exercised in living saints to make them rise from one degree of holiness to another, till they shall be presented without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, before the Father’s presence. Yes, and that power comes to us because Christ has risen. “Because I live,” says He, “you shall live also,” and because He lives to intercede, therefore His people are preserved from evil. Satan desires to have us, that he may sift us as wheat, but the great Shepherd, who was brought again from the dead, is daily watching over us and pleading for us, and the power of His life and of His kingdom and of His plea are manifested in us so that we conquer temptation and advance from strength to strength in our pilgrimage to heaven. The text is all of a piece and each word is necessary and important. We have not here pious expressions strung together without reason, but every single syllable adds to the weight of the whole.

The work described in this text must be worked in us by the Spirit of God. Jesus is the model to which we are to be conformed. Beloved, you must go down to death as Jesus did and be buried with Him that you may rise with Him. There must be in you the death of all carnal power and strength or the power of God cannot be revealed in you. You must know the depths as Moses did—even the depths wherein proud self-sufficiency is drowned. You must be baptized in the cloud and in the sea—you must have over you the sentence of condemnation. You must acknowledge in your own soul that in your flesh there dwells no good thing and that you are condemned under the law—and then there must be worked in you a quickening, a coming to life, a coming up out of the place of condemnation and death. Happy is he who has come forth from the tomb of his former vain conversation, leaving the grave clothes of worldliness and sin behind, coming up to be clothed with a heavenly mind and to lead a new life, secret and divine as that of the risen Savior. Yes, like that of the ascended Lord, “for He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.” “You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Have you realized this? You have been buried in baptism, many of you, but were you at that time partakers of your Lord’s death? You had no right to be buried if you were not dead. Did you really know that death had passed upon you before you were buried with your Savior? And now do you feel the life of God within you, quickening you to newness of life? If so, it will daily lift you to something nobler and better till you shall be ultimately raised to dwell where you shall never again be defiled by sin, where Satan shall be bruised under your feet and the God of peace shall reign. When you shall dwell in perfect holiness then shall you reign in perfect peace. May He who brought our Lord Jesus from the grave to glory, bring you also along the upward way till you are with Him and like Him forever.

III. Thirdly, let us notice THE VERY REMARKABLE MANNER IN WHICH THE HOLINESS PRAYED FOR IS DESCRIBED in the text. “*Make you perfect in every good work to do His will.*” That is the first clause, but the translation is not strictly accurate. The passage would be better rendered, “make you fit in every good work to do His will,” and the original Greek word (though I have not noticed that expositors observe it, yet anyone turning to the lexicon will see it) properly means to reset a bone that is dislocated. The meaning of the text is this—by the Fall, all our bones are out of joint for the doing of the Lord’s will and the desire of the apostle is that the Lord will set the bones in their places and thus make us able with every faculty and in every good work to do His will. If we take the arm-joint for our illustration, He would have it so well set that it may be capable of every movement for which an arm was at first constructed by infinite wisdom. A dislocated bone may be so badly set as only to be capable of a part of the motions natural to it. There may be a flaw in the surgery so that certain movements cannot be performed. There may be stiffness and awkwardness, and even a positive inability for certain movements. This may be seen in some men’s minds, but it is by no means desirable. The apostle would have every bone in us to be well set and our whole manhood fitted for performing every form of good work to do the will of the Lord thoroughly. What a blessed prayer! O Lord, You have raised Your Son up in perfection, not a bone of His was broken, and now we, who are His body, need to be set together and fixed, every joint in its own place and the whole church compactly knitted together by its bands and sinews, so that it may be in perfect order for performing Your divine will. I apprehend that our text refers not so much to any one believer as to the entire church, for the apostle speaks of the Great Shepherd *of the sheep*, by which he must mean the whole church. The apostle prays that the Lord would perfectly joint His church, put it into harmonious union, and so make it fit to do all that God meant the church to do here below. When shall we see our churches in such a case?

Alas, the disjointed members of our churches cause great pain and weakness to the body, and only holiness can put them into their proper position. If I must take the text as applying to each individual, the prayer is that you and I may be fitted to do the divine will everywhere—fitted to suffer, fitted to labor, fitted for the meanest office in the church (which requires a great deal of fitness, by the way), and fitted for the highest work in the church and fitted for anything that God wishes us to do, so that we may not be competent for one set of duties only, but may be ready for all things. We shall greatly glorify God if we have a complete character in which every grace shall be manifested and in which no single sin is seen to mar its consistency. Such is the prayer. Who can work this, good Lord? Who can work this in us? You can, O God of peace, for You did bring up Your Son from the grave to the throne and You can bring up our mangled nature and perfect it till it shall be ready to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, world without end. The first part of the prayer, then, is for fitness for holiness.

The next is for actual service, “*Working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight.*” And here I ask you to notice how all things are of God. We might have thought that the apostle would have said, “Lord, when You have made us fit to work for You, then help us to serve You,” but he does not say so. He puts his prayer into a humbler form and asks the Lord to work in us. What a heavy blow at all self-glory! How instructive to us! Dear brother, when the Lord makes you fit for every good work, you will do no good work unless He works it in you. Even he who is best adapted for the performance of virtue and holiness does not perform these things till the Lord works in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

Over and above this mode of securing all the glory to God, notice the next clause, “*through Jesus Christ.*” That which we do, even when the Lord works in us, we only do through Jesus Christ. We are nothing without our Lord and though we do what is acceptable in the Lord’s sight, it is only acceptable through Jesus Christ. What nothings and nobodies we are! Even when the Lord does the most for us that can be done, so that we dwell in His sight and our actions become well-pleasing to Him and He looks upon us with delight, yet even then we are nothing. It is the Lord that has worked all in us, even the God of peace, who is all in all. To each fruitful bough He says, “From Me is your fruit found.” When your garments sparkle like the sun, it is He that transfigures you. When your face shines like Moses’ through secret communion upon the mountain, it is God’s brightness which illuminates your brow. Our goodness

is none of ours, “for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”

IV. Our fourth point drops into its place very naturally, for we have already seen that THE WHOLE OF IT COMES TO A MOST APPROPRIATE CONCLUSION OF PRAISE. “*To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*” To glorify God is the object of it all. We too much forget this. Praise is the flower for which the stalk of prayer exists. Praise to God is the essence of all the flowers of holiness, the motto of all the roses in the garden of the church. God’s glory is the harvest for which all the plowing and sowing of ministry and evangelizing must be done. Glory to God in the highest and glory to His only begotten Son forever and ever—this is the pure gold for which we dig the mines of godly service. It would be a very difficult question to decide to whom the last clause alludes, whether to “the God of peace,” or to “our Lord Jesus” and therefore I think the safer way is to take them both together, for they are one. “To whom,” that is to God. “To whom,” that is to the Lord Jesus, “be glory forever and ever. Amen.” Let it be so. It ought to be so, it must be so, it shall be so. Amen. Amen.

Tarry just a minute while we give glory unto the Three-in-One-God. O you hearts that love Him, glorify Him first as the God of peace who had thoughts of peace and designs of peace and executed a covenant of peace on your behalf. Glorify Him who is at peace with all His believing ones today. He lays His thunder by. He hangs His bow in the cloud as the token of His love. He puts aside His javelin and His buckler—He loves, He smiles, He speaks in tenderness. He is the God of peace. Approach Him with holy delight. Adore Him. Glorify His name evermore.

Then magnify Him, next, because He found for us a Shepherd. We were as sheep going astray and He sent His Son to shepherd us. He took from His own dear bosom His equal and eternal Son and sent Him here to gather us from the wilds and save us from the wolves. Glory be to You, You Shepherd of Israel and to Your Father who sent You to this end.

Glorify Him, next, for the covenant. What mercy is this that God should enter into covenant with man! Adore Him for the blood of the covenant that He gave His only-begotten to die to make that covenant sure, that the purchased, blood-begotten possession might never be alienated from one of those for whom He laid down His glorious life. Glory be to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him, you blood-bought sons of men! Lift up your hearts with gratitude and joy, and bless the Lord who brought back the dying Shepherd to live and reign for you.

And then adore Him because the power which He exerted upon Christ He is now exerting upon you. You are not perfect yet, but still in your measure you are fitted for every good work. In many ways the Lord is qualifying you for service. In some of you He is working to do and in others to suffer the good pleasure of His will. Bless Him for every grace received, for faith, however little, for love, even though it burns not as you would desire. Bless Him for every conquered sin. Bless Him for every implanted grace. Bless Him evermore.

Bless Him that He deals with you through Jesus Christ. Through the Mediator all good has come to us and through the Mediator it will still come until that day when He shall deliver up the throne to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all. Meanwhile we will glorify the mediatorial Lord and extol the Father and the consoling Spirit. Even now we join with cherubim and seraphim and adore Him to whom all worship belongs.

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