

Heb. 13:20-25; Numbers 6:22-27; May the God of Peace Bless You I. God's Work Secures our Good II. God's Work Secures our Service

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, one aspect of the worship service that is usually given little thought is the benediction. Children, do you know why I raise my hands and say a few words before we are dismissed at the end of our worship service? Well, the Benediction is not just a nice tradition that we hold- it is built upon the OT Aaronic Blessing that we read in Numbers 6. The word, Benediction, simply means good word- and it functions as our parting blessing from God. In the OT, when the HP was finished sacrificing the animals on the altar, he would speak words of peace and blessing to the people of God. It was the priest's job to assure those gathered that their sacrifice had been accepted by God- and that He was now at peace with them. And the words of Numbers 6 are the words the LORD instructed Aaron the HP to say to the people- to bless them in the name of the LORD. In a similar way, in Luke 24 the Lord Jesus Christ lifted his hands up and blessed His disciples. While He ascended into heaven, He was pronouncing His benediction upon His people. And it is this benediction of Christ that we continue to hear every week as I raise my hands- and proclaim to you that as you depart- the God of peace blesses you! So today as we look at Heb. 13:20-21, we find this parting benediction at the end of this book to the Hebrew saints. But we will also find that these 2 verses nicely summarize our recent series through Heb. 12 and 13. So this morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ pronounces His benediction upon His people as He prepares them for service.

I. God's Work Secures our Good

In our first point we find that our God is continuing His work by which our good is secured. One of the worst feelings that we can have- one of the most dreadful thoughts we might endure is this- God is angry with me and He out to get me. The thinking that God is working for my harm and destruction- that God is acting with evil intent. It is that kind of thinking that leads down a dark and dreadful road. But what we find in our text is that God is working for our good- securing our blessings! V. 20 starts out

by saying that the God who speaks to us is the God of peace! He is the God of comfort as Isaiah 40 says- comfort, comfort ye my people says your God. Speak tenderly to her! I am for you- not against you! My plans are for you to prosper. I will work all things for your good! In order for our benediction to be good news, we have to know that God is a God of peace- one who is at peace with us! The one who speaks is concerned for our good! As Numbers 6:26 concludes- may God give you peace! The fact is, God has made peace with us! The payment for our sins has been made, the transgression covered, the iniquity atoned for! God is not angry with His people- He is to them- to us- a God of peace! We are not, as we saw back in ch. 12, coming to a Mountain that cannot be touched- a mountain of darkness and dread. No, we have come to Mt. Zion! To a place of blessings and peace- of union and communion with our God! God not only gives us peace- but He is the God of peace! Shalom- comfort- all is well and good with my soul! I have rest and refreshment- I am made whole! Remember this- God has made Himself be to us a God of peace! In other words, God the Father sent His Son to secure the necessary peace! The blood of the New Covenant speaks a better word! The blood of the old covenant and the blood of Abel spoke of hostility, law, condemnation, wrath and death! But the blood of Jesus speaks of peace! The gospel of grace, goodness, forgiveness and life! Added to this peace, God the Father brought back His Son from the dead. Now we know that Jesus laid down His life- and He had the power to take it back up again. But here we read that the Father brought Jesus back up from the grave. In this the Father vindicated His Son! God the Father made it known that the sacrifice of Jesus was accepted- that the blood was accepted and sufficient- making it known that no other blood was needed! The Son is no longer under curse- never more will He die! Jesus was raised- to be our eternal HP! The Son is loved- payment being made- we now are loved and enjoy His peace! To link these two points together, it is by way of the death and resurrection of Jesus that we come to know God as the God of peace and love! Blood needs to be shed before peace can be enjoyed! So the first blessings that we enjoy is that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Added to this peace, we have entered into an eternal covenant- v. 20. Again we see that we have this blessing by the blood of Jesus- and it is by way of this blood that we are ushered into this lasting testament. Now what does it mean to be a part of an eternal covenant. Well, remember what Eph. 1 says about the election of God? Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing- even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. Did you catch that- we are blessed in Him- in Christ- chosen in Him by the Father! The Father elects – the Father predestined- He chose some people to be His own- and He made these people His own through or in Christ! He did this choosing before the world was made- before time began- thus this covenant has no beginning. Also, this covenant cannot be broken or undone- it is a sure covenant made in the perfect blood of Christ! Those chosen by the Father cannot lost- thus we are members of this eternal covenant! We are citizens of a kingdom that lasts- recipients of blessings- having residence in a city that cannot be shaken as we found back in ch. 12. At every juncture- impressed on every page of Scripture- we find that all these blessings of God belong to us because we are in Christ- or these come to us through Christ! We could rightly say that God the Father blesses us with every spiritual blessing through our High Priest- Jesus Christ as Eph. 1:3 says. Or as Col. 1:20 puts it, through Christ, the Father was reconciling all things- making peace by the blood of His cross! Peace comes to us by the blood of the cross! Recipients of an eternal covenant- through our perfect mediator Jesus Christ! Made sheep of God's flock by the great shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep! I hope that this point is not missed- our identity as God's people is only possible because of what Christ has done for us! The peace we have- the fact that God is now a God of peace to us- is because the justice and wrath of God has been satisfied! The HP has offered Himself as the sacrifice! He died for us and in our place! Now having been raised, He returns to us to pronounce His benediction- May God bless you, keep you, and give you His peace! So Christ begins by assuring us- You are my people- and your God is at peace with you!

II. God's Work Secures our Service

But there is more to find here- not only do we see what God has done for us in Christ, we also find what He is currently doing in us. Not only is there a new identity- there is also a calling to change and live as you are- recreated in Christ's image! So as we come to our second point we find that God's work within us secures our service! And this truth motivates us to live rightly before him. As v. 21- the God of peace equips you with everything good so that you may do His will. God has equipped us- He has given us everything we need so that we might do what we called to perform. Another word for equipped is prepared- we are enabled- made ready- perfectly ready to do the work at hand. Like a soldier fit for battle- like Christian being dressed in armor. Or like a runner who gets on his shoes- our God equips us. He gives us His grace and the Holy Spirit who enables us to do the good that He has in mind for us. Or as II Tim. 3:17 put it, that the man of may be competent, equipped for every good work. Notice the connection- we are equipped with everything good so that we can do every good. We are given what is necessary- good equipment- so that we might do what is necessary- good works. Now what kind of equipment does God give us? Well, first of all He gives us the will and way as Phil. 2 puts it. God gives us the opportunity and the desire to do good. He gives us the words to speak and the opportunity to speak them. He gives us the hands and the strength to do good- and the opportunity to use those hands. Having good equipment is very important. It is like having the correct tool for the job. If you have ever had the wrong tools for the job- you know how frustrating that can be. Have you ever tried to take off a car tire- without the proper wrench? Without an impact wrench or tire iron- how would using a screw driver- or a pipe wrench work on that kind of job? It wouldn't work! In a similar way, God gives us the good and necessary good equipment so that we can do His will! The Holy Spirit is the one who trains us- and He uses the Word as our equipment. The first set of equipment is shared by us all. As II Tim. 3 also says, all Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness! The Word is the good equipment we need- so that we can know God commands- so that we might know the good He would have us do! And the word strengthens us- so that we are mature and strong- able to

do what we are called to do! A second gift would be the gifts of the Spirit- as I Cor. 12 says, we have different gifts, opportunities of service and activities- but these each are gifts from the Spirit and we are called to use them for the common good. So the second set of equipment are the unique gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to each one of us. Jesus our chief shepherd equips us with the good things we need- so that we can do the will of His Father. Keep this fact in mind- He equips us and He is working in us v. 21 says! That is why we cannot boast- it is all of Him and for Him! And we have seen that over these past weeks- particularly looking at Heb. 13 and how it relates to our church and our families. We are to love our fellow church members and seek to show hospitality. We considered the 4th, 5th, 7th 8th and 10th commandment- dealing with the worship service on Sunday, marriage and adultery, the offices and authority within the church, and even the proper view of money and contentment. In all these areas, Jesus was teaching us to know his will for us- and by His Spirit equipping us to serve in accordance with His will. Children, do you remember what good works are- good works are those done for God glory and in accordance with His commands- works that proceed from a heart of faith.

So as v. 21 concludes we find that all these works are to be done to God's glory. We can, as we saw back in v. 15, offer up a sacrifice that is praises God- even in which God takes pleasure in! Any work that is done in accordance with His commands and is done for His glory does just that- gives Him pleasure! Is that not the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever? Or as I Cor. 10:31 puts it, whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God! We have now been enabled and equipped- we are outfitted and ready for service. And the whole direction of our being- the focus of our service is to bring glory to the one who deserves all praise! When we seek to honor Him above all- then whatever we do will be pleasing in His sight. As the commandments are summarized, love God above all and love your neighbor as yourself. This is the summary of the Law and Prophets- live a life like this- and you will bring glory to God and your life will be a pleasing sacrifice offered in His sight! We are called to work- but He is at work in us- working in us what is pleasing! The beauty of the gospel is not found in our calling alone-

but in that our God works in us enabling us to do what He calls us to do! Any work that we perform is His doing! We are as Luke 17 says unprofitable servants. We are only able to do what we are called to do- as He enables us to do! We are steward of His good gifts- called to be faithful as we use His equipment. The opportunity and the strength come from His hand! And the wonder of it all is that we have the privilege of doing work that is pleasing in His sight! As we saw last week, God enables us to offer ourselves as a sacrifice- which is in turn pleasing and acceptable in His sight!

To conclude, we have a High Priest in heaven who not only prays for us- but one who utters a benediction of blessing over us! This benediction means that God will bless us! In these two verses we have read of good words spoken over us- even to us by Jesus Christ! Having received blessings from God- we are called to live and work as He works in us! Phil. 2:13 says it like this- For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Jesus Christ pronounces His benediction upon His people as He prepares them for service. Jesus Christ continually blesses His people today- as our HP speaking words of peace over us. So let us seek to do good and bring God glory- for the He is working in us!