

Lesson # 1 -- The Explanation of God's Promise

Introduction

- A. As we begin this study we must keep in mind that we are talking about the promises given by the Lord God Almighty. The validity and stability of these holy statements are beyond question. They are upheld by the One Who is the perfection of Truth, Love, and Holiness. They cannot fail!
- B. We must also remind ourselves that it is easy for us to mis-read these promises. When we attempt to claim a promise in an area of life where it does not apply -- it may appear to us as though the promise did fail. In our enthusiasm we must be careful of any misinterpretation.
- C. The Scriptural theme of these ten lessons: Hebrews 13:20,21.

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 (equipped) 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 for ever and ever. Amen.

I. The Explanatory Source of God's Promise.

- A. He is the God of Peace -- the believer's assurance.

In this beautiful benediction-prayer, the message of the book of Hebrews is summarized. The writer, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is led to state the will of God for every saint. We may, therefore, take this passage as our promise and the express will of God for our daily life.

The strength of any promise is found in its author. In these verses we are brought face to face with our Creator-Redeemer. He has given us His Word and He expects us (holds us responsible) to believe Him and to obediently translate this promise into all of its practical benefits of daily life. His infinite wisdom and power will not only maintain the promise -- but will, as the promise states, become our enablement.

The title "God of peace" points to the message of redemption that is so fully explained in this book. He has, through the Lord Jesus, not only made redemptive peace possible, but an actuality for all those who believe. Therefore, God is not against us. As the God of peace He is for us in every conceivable way. We do not, and cannot, earn His grace. He has freely given us all things. His very name leads us into spiritual assurance.

B. He resurrected the Lord Jesus -- the believer's power.

This brief statement points out the very heart of Biblical Christianity -- the person and work of Jesus Christ. God's provision for us is a person (the Lord Jesus), Who took upon Himself our penalty and redeemed us by His own sacrifice. The proof that His work was sufficient and accepted is the Resurrection.

This reference also teaches us concerning the type or kind of enablement that we need -- a spiritual power. Man's greatest need is not in the realm of health or truth but spirit. We need a spiritual, moral, and personal deliverance. Above all demands the highest are the spiritual. Forgiveness of sin, freedom from sin and Satan, reconciliation with God, with wisdom and power to live the Christian life are always number one. God has met these needs for us in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Resurrection is the evidence.

C. He has given us the Great Shepherd -- the believer's confidence.

With David the believer can say, "The LORD is my Shepherd -- I shall not want." As the true shepherd assumes responsibility for the flock -- so God has done that for us. In His title He is saying to us, "I will meet your need."

The ability of God is also emphasized here. As the human shepherd has greater resources than his flock -- so God is far beyond all humans in ability. The shepherd can plan the day, he knows the location of pasture, water, and shade. He can think, organize, establish goals, and maintain relationships. As the human shepherd can do his job because he is so much greater than the animal -- so God in His infinite wisdom and power can care for us. This truth should settle our doubts forever!

D. He has given us His covenant -- the believer's security.

These words explain the kind of promise we have received -- a covenantal promise. God has entered into a contract relationship with the believer and on that basis has given us His promise.

We must always keep in mind that this covenant was ratified by the Lord Jesus in His death and resurrection. That is why the terminology, "blood of the covenant" is used. This relates the promise of enablement to the eternal counsel of God and the work of Jesus Christ. There is no greater security.

The truth of God's covenantal promise is so important it was made a part of the Lord's table. Whenever believers gather in participation of this ordinance we hear the Lord Jesus say to us, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28).

II. The Explanatory Content of God's Promise.

A. The description of God's provision -- "equipment."

Make you perfect (equipped) . . . working in you

The word translated in the KJV "perfect" means "completed", "right ordering" or "arranged." The thought is that God desires to work in the believer in such a way that he or she may be able to live and serve. "Equipped" is a good translation (NIV). The spiritual enablement referred to in this passage relates to the gifts He gives to all believers, to the trials He permits to come into our life, the training through which He sends us, the spiritual growth He produces within us etc. All of His work is designed to produce within us the "equipment" we need to live and serve successfully.

The value of this "equipment" is beyond human measure for it includes every spiritual good. We cannot set a "price" on faith, or honesty, or goodness. Their worth is beyond even our comprehension.

B. The extent of God's provision -- "every good work"

Make you perfect (equipped) in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight

These words explain to us what God wants in your life and mine. He wants us to be able to do every good work that is His will for us -- so that we may live and serve pleasing Him.

It is necessary to note that the will of God may be different for each of us. We are not all called to serve in the same way for example. But, whatever the will of God may be, for each of us, He wants us to be able to "do the good works" and thereby be "pleasing in His sight."

We cannot read these verses without being impressed with how important this Biblical theme is to God Himself. He wants the very best for each of us. He seeks to develop within us that spiritual equipment that will enable us to be our best, to bring spiritual help to others, to glorify Him, and to receive a bountiful reward in Heaven.

C. The method of God's provision -- "through Jesus Christ."

Make you perfect (equipped) in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ

As in every area of the Gospel, or Biblical Christianity, the Lord Jesus is at the center of God's provision. In Him the believer has been given every divine blessing (Eph. 1:3; II Peter 1:3). He is our Mediator and the source of every facet of the spiritual equipment our Heavenly Father seeks to cultivate in us.

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The emphasis in the passage is not, however, on receiving the equipment, but on its development. We must learn how to use what was given to us in salvation. This learning process takes time, and involves discipline and sacrifice. It is intimately related to our daily walk of fellowship with the Savior. As we seek to do His will -- the door is opened to that wonderful ministry whereby He works within us to produce the equipment we need to live for Him and to serve Him. Every believer must accept the responsibility to learn the Scripture, learn how to say "NO" to temptation, learn how to put off the old self-centered way of living, learn how to be involved in the church, learn how to live separated from the world, and learn how to fulfill the Great Commission.

III. The Explanatory Purpose of God's Promise.

Make you perfect (equipped) 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 for ever and ever. Amen.

A. The goal in God's promise -- "to Whom be glory . . ."

Every believer is hereby invited to participate in God's plan to bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the one all-inclusive purpose behind all of creation and history. He is worthy of all the honor, glory, majesty, praise, worship, and sacrifice that could be ever be given to Him.

It is overwhelming to realize that God has given to each of us the opportunity of participating in His plan. It is a great sin to respond to this invitation by neglect. We may not allow ourselves to give a higher priority to anything in our life.

B. The testimony in God's promise -- "for ever and ever."

By these words the writer is stating how worthy the Savior is to receive glory. We understand by this how our entire life in Heaven will be dedicated to bringing honor to the Lord Jesus through all we may do. This, of course, has been the activity of the good angels from the moment of their creation. In our origin we were also designed for the same purpose. Through God's grace and promise -- we can now achieve that purpose.

C. The conviction in God's promise -- "Amen"

Throughout the Bible the word "amen" means "let it be so." It is used to state the strong conviction of truth which lies behind the subject stated. In these verses the Holy Spirit led the writer to turn God's benediction-promise into a prayer and to emphasize its importance by the affirmation "amen." We must accept this message from God and practice this truth.