

# Prayer - Hebrews 13:20, 21, Part 1

by A.W. Pink

---

*A.W. Pink's sermon explores the significance of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice as articulated in Hebrews, emphasizing God's peace and the believer's access to Him through prayer.*

**Topics:** "Prayer", "The Priesthood of Christ"

---

## Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the significance of prayer in the context of the Epistle to the Hebrews, particularly focusing on the priesthood of Christ and His atoning sacrifice. He highlights that Christ's resurrection affirms God's acceptance of His work, allowing believers to approach God with confidence. Pink explains the title 'the God of peace' as a reflection of God's reconciled relationship with believers, emphasizing the importance of holiness and obedience in experiencing this peace. He also discusses the role of Christ as the 'great Shepherd of the sheep,' underscoring His unique position and care for His flock. The sermon calls for a deeper understanding of the grace and virtues that should manifest in the lives of believers as a result of Christ's finished work.

---

## Transcript

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 Epistles to the Romans and to the Hebrews: the former supplies that which is best suited to repel the legalism, antinomianism and Arminianism that are now so rife, while the latter refutes the cardinal errors of Rome and exposes the sacerdotal pretensions of her priests. It provides the Divine antidote to the poisonous spirit of ritualism that 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. In the Book of Hebrews 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 that God's Law 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). That is to say, Christ has infallibly, irrevocably set apart to the service of God those who have believed, and that by the excellence of His finished work.

The Resurrection Declares God's Acceptance of Christ's 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 Savior, who has put away the sins of His people from before the face of God and has secured for them the right of access to 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. 10:19-22a, brackets mine). Thus we are encouraged to draw nigh to God with full confidence in the infinite merits of Christ's blood and righteousness, 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 to their hearts. In a brief but comprehensive sentence, Paul prays that there might be worked out in the lives of the redeemed Hebrews every grace and virtue to which he had exhorted them in the previous chapters. We shall consider the object, plea, request, and doxology of this benedictory invocation.

#### The Divine Titles Invoked Discriminately

"The God of peace" is the One to whom this prayer is directed. As I intimated in some of the chapters of my book called Gleanings from Paul, 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 were they so careless as to speak with Him under the first one that 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." When they cried for deliverance from their enemies, they pleaded His covenant faithfulness.

#### The God of Peace

I dwelt upon this title "the God of peace" in chapter 4 of Gleanings from Paul (pp. 41-46), but would like to explicate it further with several lines of thought.

First, it is a distinctively Pauline title, since no other New Testament writer employs the expression. Its usage here is one of the many internal proofs that he was the penman of this Epistle. It occurs six times in his writings: Romans 15:33, and 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; and here in Hebrews 13:20; "the Lord of peace" is used once in 2 Thessalonians 3:16. It is therefore evident that Paul 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 I have done my best, according to the measure of light granted to me, to open its meaning. A little later I shall suggest why Paul, rather than any of the other of the apostles, coined this expression.

Secondly, it is a forensic title, viewing God in His official character as Judge. It tells us that He is now reconciled to believers. It signifies that the enmity and strife that formerly existed between God and elect sinners is now ended. The 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 ushered 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" (Ps. 7:11). But Divine wisdom had devised a way whereby rebels could be restored to His favor without the slightest diminution of His honor. Through the obedience and sufferings of Christ full reparation was made to the Law and peace was reestablished between God and sinners. By the gracious operations of God's Spirit, the enmity that was in the hearts of His people is overcome, and they are brought into loyal subjection to Him. Thereby the discord has been removed and amity created.

Thirdly, it is a restrictive title. God is "the God of peace" only to those who are savingly united to Christ, for there is now no condemnation to those who are in Him (Rom. 8:1). But the case is far different with those who refuse to bow to the scepter 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). Notice that it is not that the sinner shall yet fall beneath God's wrath of the Divine Law, but that he is already under it. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18, ital. mine). Furthermore, 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" (Ex. 15:3). "He is terrible to the kings of the earth" (Ps. 76:12).

"The God of Peace," a Gospel Title

Fourthly, this title, "the God of peace," is therefore an evangelical one. The good news that His servants are commissioned to preach to every creature is 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 into the awful breach that sin had made between God and men, and by having transferred to Himself the iniquities of all who should believe on Him, suffering the full penalty due those iniquities. When the Sinless One was made sin for His people, He came under the curse of the Law and the wrath of God. It is in accordance with His own eternal purpose of grace (Rev. 13:8) that God the Father declares, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow" (Zech. 13:7). Justice having been satisfied, God is now pacified; and all who are justified by faith "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:" (Rom. 5:1).

Fifthly, 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.

Sixthly, 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 it. Though a Jew by birth, and a Hebrew of the Hebrews by training,

Paul was called of God to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8). This fact may indicate the reason that this appellation, "the God of peace," is peculiar to Paul; 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 render adoration to God on account of the fact that peace was being preached to those who were afar off as well as to those who were nigh (Eph. 2:13-17). A special revelation was made to him concerning Christ: "For he is our peace, who hath made both [believing Jews and Gentiles] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [the ceremonial law, which under Judaism had divided them] between us; . . . 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, brackets mine). Thus, on account of his having received this special revelation, there was a particular propriety in the Apostle to the Gentiles addressing God by this title when making supplication for the Hebrews, just as there was when he employed it in prayer for the Gentiles.

Lastly, this is a relative title. By this I mean that it is closely related to 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 grace experientially. The measure of God's peace that they enjoy 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 appears both in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and here in Hebrews 13:20, 21. For in each passage 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.

#### God's Resurrection of Christ Our Plea

"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" (v. 20). This reference to the deliverance of Christ from the tomb I regard as the plea on which the apostle bases the request that follows. Since I consider this to be one of the most important verses in the New Testament, I shall give my best attention to every word in it, the more so since part of its wondrous contents is so little comprehended today. We should observe, first, the character in which the Savior is here viewed; secondly, the act of God in bringing him forth from the dead; thirdly, the connection between that act and His office as "the God of peace"; fourthly, how that the meritorious cause of the same was "the blood of the everlasting covenant;" and fifthly, the powerful motive that the meritorious cause provides to encourage the saints to come boldly to the throne of grace where they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. 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 of Christ's 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 function. Moses and David, eminent types of Him, were shepherds. Concerning the first it is said, "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Ps. 77:20). Under the name of the second God promised the Messiah to Israel: "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, brackets mine). 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" (v. 25). Here in Hebrews 13:20, the same three things are brought together: the God of peace, the great Shepherd, the everlasting covenant, and in a manner (in perfect accord with the theme of the Epistle) that refuted the erroneous conception that the Jews had formed of their Messiah. They imagined that He would secure for them an external deliverance as Moses had done and a prosperous national state as David had set up. They had no idea that He would shed His precious blood and be brought down into the grave, though they should have known and understood it in the light of prophetic revelation.

When Christ appeared in their midst, He definitely presented Himself to the Jews in this character. He not only declared, "I am the good shepherd:" but added this: "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner, heralded His public manifestation in this wise: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In this dual character, or under this twofold revelation, the Lord Jesus had been prophesied in Isaiah 53 (as viewed against the backdrop of Ezek. 34): "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him [i.e. the Shepherd, whose the sheep are!] the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6, brackets mine; cf. Zech. 13:7). Note a wonderful congruity of expression between the next verse of Isaiah's prophecy (53:7) and the prayer we are studying. Isaiah prophesies, "he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." (ital. mine) Notice how the same Spirit who inspired Isaiah prompts Paul to say in Hebrews 13:20 that God--not "raised," but--"brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep" (ital. mine). The fact that God brought back again from the dead this great Shepherd signifies that the Father had previously brought Him into death as a Substitute, a propitiatory Lamb, for the sins of His sheep. How minutely accurate is the language of Holy Writ and how perfect the harmony--verbal harmony--of the Old and New Testaments!

Peter, in his first Epistle, under the Spirit, appropriated the same wonderful prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus. After referring to Him as the "lamb without blemish and without spot:" by Whom we are redeemed (1 Peter 1:18, 19), he goes on to cite some of the predictive expressions of Isaiah 53: that which speaks of us "as sheep going astray"; that which refers to the saving virtue of Christ's expiatory passion--"by whose stripes ye were healed"; and the general teaching of the prophecy, that in bearing our sins in His own body on the tree Christ was transacting heavenly business with the righteous Judge as "the Shepherd and Bishop of your [our] souls" (1 Peter 2:24, 25, brackets mine). Thus he was led to expound Isaiah portraying the Savior 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, 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: since He bore our sins, justice must take satisfaction from Him. Thus was "the chastisement of our peace" laid upon Him, and the good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep as a satisfaction for the righteous claims of God.

### That Great Shepherd

From what has been set forth above, we may the better perceive why it was that the Apostle Paul designated Him "that great shepherd": the One not only foreshadowed by Abel, by the patriarchal shepherds; typified by David, but also portrayed as the Shepherd of Jehovah in the Messianic predictions. We should note that both of His natures were contemplated under this appellation: "my Shepherd,. . . the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD" (Zech. 13:7). As the profound Goodwin pointed out centuries ago,

this title also implies all of Christ's offices: His prophetic office--"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd" (Isa. 40:11; cf. Ps. 23:1, 2); His priestly office--"the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11); His royal office--for the same passage that announced that He should be Shepherd over God's people also denominated Him a "prince" (Ezek. 34:23, 24). Christ Himself points out the connection between His kingly office and His being described as a Shepherd: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he 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" (Matthew 25:31, 32). He is indeed that "great Shepherd," all-sufficient for His flock.

#### A Shepherd Must Have Sheep

"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 that there is a chosen flock. Christ is the Shepherd of the sheep, and not of the wolves (Luke 10:3), nor even of the goats (Matthew 25:32, 33), for He has received no charge from God to save them. How the basic truth of particular redemption stares us in the face in innumerable passages throughout the Scriptures! "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 in John 10:14-16, 26" (John Owen).

Observe, too, how this title intimates His Mediatorship: as the Shepherd He is not the ultimate Lord of the flock, but the Father's Servant who takes charge of and cares for it: "thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (John 17:6). Christ's relation to us is further seen in the phrase "our [not the] Lord Jesus." He is 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).

#### The Superiority of Christ the Great Shepherd

The words "that great shepherd of the sheep" emphasize Christ's immeasurable superiority over all the typical and ministerial shepherds of Israel, just as the words "a great high priest" (Heb. 4:14) stress His eminency over Aaron and the Levitical priests. In like manner, it denotes His authority over the pastors He sets over His churches, for He is "the chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4) in relation to all undershepherds. He is the 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 an entire, indivisible flock composed both of Jews and Gentiles. Thus 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, brackets and ital. mine). This "one fold," a single flock, comprehends all the saints both of the Old Testament and the New Testament (see also how the Apostle Paul sets forth this unity of the people of God by his metaphor of the olive tree in Rom. 11). The phrase "that great Shepherd" also has respect to His abilities: He has a particular knowledge of each and every one of His sheep (John 10:3); He has the skill to gather, to feed, and to heal them (Ezek. 34:11-16); and He has the power to effectually preserve them. "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). Then how greatly should we trust, love, honor, worship, and obey Him!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/prayer-hebrews-1320-21-part-1/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**