**I have written to you briefly**

Hebrews 13: 20-21

Arkansas Loving Church, Pastor Sungtae Hong, 6/13/2021

[Hebrews 13: 20-21, ESV] 20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever, Amen.

Just like all the other letter-style books in the New Testament, Hebrews ends with such a blessing (in Hebrews 13: 20-21). However, this benediction does not align well with the key messages that have been given throughout the entire book of Hebrews.

"Jesus, high priest, of whom you have already taken possession, is most valuable! So, do not make any sorts of excuses like 'it's so difficult' or 'I might die'! Deeply meditate his value! Look upon him! Endure your sufferings with Jesus! Do not avoid! Do not retreat!"

These were the key messages of Hebrews. The messages included far more reprimands than consolation or encouragements. Considering the fact that the readers of Hebrews were the Jewish Christians, who endured the sufferings and persecution from their own kinship, we could think that the messages were too harsh. Then, how could the author mention the 'God of peace and joy' in his conclusion? Were they merely routine and empty words to conclude his letter?

They were not. The verse, 'God our Lord Jesus who became the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant,' showed it clearly. This was quoted from Isaiah.

[Isaiah 63: 11, ESV] Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit,

The traditional Jews considered Moses as the great shepherd whom God had appointed. However, Isaiah tells differently. The great shepherd is truly the one who gives the Holy Spirit in our hearts. That's Jesus. Jesus shed the blood of the eternal covenant to be a true shepherd. He died on the cross. Because of this, he made the Holy Spirit reside in the hearts of all believers of his.

The Christians in that era had one thing that they could not deny: The Holy Spirit resided in their hearts. None of the Christians would deny that the Holy Spirit resided in their hearts even when they lived in very difficult situations: Their reality was so hard and tough as to the brothers and sisters, with whom they had shared bread and wine, the flesh and blood of Jesus, became the betrayers, and the betrayers made some members of the church suffer martyrdom. Their reality was tough and difficult, and caused sighs. However, as they meditated the cross calmly and came to think of Jesus who had died for them, they felt the warmth of a big hug from Jesus. Such a confession was consistently made by all the Christians in that era.

Was the confession theirs only? Isn't it ours, also? Our daily lives are full of despair, anger and craziness rather than peace and joy. However, we sit quietly, and meditate the cross of Jesus and pray. Then, we experience mysterious peace and joy. The same peace and joy that the author of Hebrews mentioned. They are not given by external conditions or circumstances. The author emphasized that the overflowing peace and joy were promised by the Holy Spirit, who had been poured into our hearts by the blood of Jesus, our great shepherd. Thus, this was written not merely 'to conclude,' but 'to encourage' with more assurance.

[Hebrews 13: 22, ESV] I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.

After the few verses of epilogue in Hebrews, the author wrote, "I have written to you briefly." Thus far, the author had poured out so many messages to the readers. Then, did he say that it was brief? This shows the sense of his regret. 'I have so much more to write to you, but I'd better stop here.' Just like that, I would like to finish this series of sermons on Hebrews (today). Now, it is no longer important for me to speak more. It is no longer important for you to listen more, either. What you have heard so far from me is enough. If you can apply a half of what you have heard from me in your own daily lives, that's enough. I have delivered the messages with my whole heart to you. I would feel sorry if my sermons were not helpful in your lives. I wish that the word of God I have delivered to you for the past 10 months has become useful for you. I bless that the God of peace works in you! I bless that the joy given from Jesus makes you complete! I bless that the wondrous works of the Holy Spirit, who delivers the gift (of peace and joy), always remain in your hearts!