WE NEED GOD!

Hebrews 13:18-25
2/16/05

**** God's people need the Lord and His blessing***

I. We Need God's Answers to <u>PRAYER</u> (v.18-20)

II. We Need God's <u>PROVISION</u> (v.20-21)

God provides what we need…

A. So we can be <u>equipped</u> for Him

B. So we can <u>do His Will</u>

C. So we can <u>please Him</u>

D. So we can <u>glorify His Son</u>

III. We Need God's <u>WORD</u> (v.22)

IV. We Need God's <u>PEOPLE</u> (v.23-24)

V. We Need God's <u>GRACE</u> (v.25)

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Hebrews 13:18-25
April 6th 1997

Last words are very important!

EX: Christ - "I am with you always..."
EX: A friend who says: "I'll be praying for you..."
EX: A mother who says: "Be careful."

*They are usually an expression of your heart.

(EX: When we write a letter, our closing remarks, promises, etc., are usually choice words and sincere words)

When we come to an end of a N.T. epistle, the tendency is to skim through the closing benediction without thinking about it. That should not be the case.

Verses 18-25 are very personal; having written some heavy doctrinal truth (demonstrating the superiority of Jesus Christ [in His person, office, and work], the writer under inspiration now gives some concluding personal requests and admonitions that are all basically centered on God. Such a benediction has tremendous application for us personally.

This conclusion sounds strikingly similar to I Thes. :25-28.

Just as we needed God to save us, we need Him to sustain us. In the same way He had to declare us righteous (through His work of justification), so He now has to enable us to live righteously (through His work of sanctification).

He is the vine, we are the branches, and without Him we can do nothing (Jn. 15).

The hymnwriter penned these words: "I need Thee every hour."

**** God's people need the Lord and His blessing***

I. We Need God's Answers to PRAYER (v.18-20)

v. 18

"Pray for us" - Even the premier "giants" of the faith need prayer.

The "us" includes the writer himself [whose concluding tone is strikingly similar to the Apostle Paul; whoever it is, it is evident that he has been in prison or at least restrained somehow (v. 18-19) as Paul was; that he was in Italy (perhaps Rome) (v. 24) as Paul was; that he was in close ministry relationship with Timothy (v. 23) as Paul was; and that he has a concluding style of writing like Paul (v. 18-25).

"We trust" - lit. we are persuaded, we are sure. The writer of this epistle requests personal intercessory prayer, but reminds the Hebrew readers that up to the present he and his co-laborers have lived the Christian life with a good conscience (can you say that?).

Don't ever violate your conscience. "If it's doubtful, it's dirty." Don't proceed if you do not have peace.

Even those who are walking in a Godly fashion (with clean, undefiled consciences) are in need of prayer.

The writer further requests prayer on the basis of a desire to conduct their lives in a good, honorable manner.

"In all things willing (desiring) to live honestly" - Do we desire to live in a way which honors God "<u>in all things</u>?"

"It is possible that some of his (the writer's) enemies had lied about him, so he affirms his honesty and integrity" (Wiersbe, p. 154).

v. 19

The particular reason the writer requests prayer is so that he might be ***"restored"*** or brought back into contact and fellowship with these Hebrew believers again.

"The sooner" - the quicker. The implication is this: "Prayer changes things!" Prayer does effect a difference; if they didn't pray, Paul (or whoever the speaker is) would <u>not</u> arrive as soon as he would if they prayed.

The only one who never needed to ask anyone to pray for Him was Jesus Christ. In the Garden, He asked Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Mt. 26:40). But note: He then said, "Watch and pray that <u>ye</u> enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (v. 41).

Years ago, I never through it was necessary for me to pray for my pastor or Sunday school teacher. After all, I had to pray for those who "really needed it": unsaved or "backslidden" relatives and acquaintances.
My thinking changed, however, when I began to understand the nature of the ministry; the importance of the pastor; the fact that even spiritual leaders at times face unpleasant experiences, internal struggles, discouragement, frustration with people, trials that test the faith, hindrances to studying the Word, etc.

> The apostles "knew of no faster way to get the Gospel through enemy lines than by recruiting Christian converts into the secret service of prayer . . . He depended upon it as his basic weapon" (Cooper, cited in Hiebert, p. 256).
>
> They knew the devil as a roaring lion was prowling around seeking someone to devour (I Pet. 5:8).

The need to be sober and vigilant in prayer is therefore a necessity!

Jesus said: "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation."

II. We Need God's <u>PROVISION</u> (v.20-21)

v. 20

"The God of peace" - the God who is characterized by peace; and the One who can give peace to lives in turmoil (we need both peace <u>with</u> God and the peace <u>of</u> God).

v. 20

"That brought again" - who raised up Jesus from the dead – implied in context: "If He can do this, He can equip you to do His will" – (v. 21)

"Great shepherd" - *He is the chief Shepherd (I. Pet. 5:4), and the good shepherd (Ps. 23), who gave Himself for His sheep (Jn. 10).*

"Through the blood" - *"The Shepherd shed his blood for the sheep."*

Such blood shed provides us who believe with an "everlasting covenant" - there will never be a covenant to replace the New Covenant (the old Mosaic covenant has been fulfilled; the New Covenant has come and will continue on into the Millennial Kingdom (Jer. 31:31-34) and into the age of ages of eternity.

God will never alter His promises.

This verse seems to tie together some of the great themes of this letter (Christ's blood shed, resurrection, oversight, and covenant).

God provides what we need…

A. So we can be <u>equipped</u> for Him

The flow of thought is this: *"Now [may] the God of peace (v. 20) . . . make you perfect in every good work (v. 21)."*

The phrase ***"make you perfect"*** refers to God's work in us of <u>equipping</u> us for His service. The word "Make perfect" *(katartidzo)* refers both to <u>supplying</u> a need and <u>mending</u> that which is faulty or defective.

"This is an unfamiliar word to us, but it was familiar to the people who received this letter. The doctors knew it because it meant 'to set a broken bone.' To fishermen it meant 'to mend a broken net' (see Mt. 4:21). To sailors it meant 'to outfit a ship for a voyage.' To soldiers it meant 'to equip an army for battle'." (Wiersbe, p. 155).

The word is used of:

--<u>Mending</u> (repairing) broken fishing nets
(Mt. 4:21)

--<u>Restoring</u> an erring brother (Gal. 6:1)

--<u>Building up</u> one's faith (I Thes. 3:10)

--<u>Furnishing</u> God's people with His Word (Eph. 4:12)

We need God to enable us for good works. No man can enable himself.

(A soldier cannot be fighting and at the same time be manufacturing his weapons; such artillery must be given to him. So it is in our spiritual battle. God equips us so that we can win over evil and do good works).

The Hebrew believers had to be equipped in the sense of God mending their ways doctrinally (turning them away from Judaism to the completeness in Jesus Christ) and He would equip them spiritually (with faith and strength to serve Christ despite opposition from the world).

B. So we can <u>do His Will</u>

"To do His will" - This is God's immediate purpose for equipping us; that we might fulfill His desires and plan for our lives. He does not equip you so you can do your will, but His will.

C. So we can <u>please Him</u>

"Working in you" - It is <u>not</u> via independent self-effort that we do His will. He must work in us (motivating us, strengthening us, guiding and directing us, etc.) to *"will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13) (Col. 1:29 - *"Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."*)

Not necessarily that which is "well-pleasing" in the eyes of people, but *"in His sight."* (all that matters is that God approves of our attitudes and actions).

As He looks at your life, is He well pleased with what He sees? We must surrender to Him and let Him so enable us that we would bring as it were a smile to His dear face.

D. So we can <u>glorify His Son</u>

"Through Jesus Christ" - God enables us in the person of His Son (an implicit proof of the unity of the Father and Son).

God equips us by means of Christ's Spirit who dwells in us who believe. *"Without me, you can do nothing."*

Because Jesus does the work in us, He will receive the glory! Not just for time, but for eternity! Anything we have done for His good and glory is because Christ did it in us and through us! (Gal. 2:20 - *"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.";* II Cor. 12:9).

III. We Need God's <u>WORD</u> (v.22)

"Suffer the word of exhortation" - patiently bear with or endure the Word, which encourages and commands (some of the things mentioned in this serious yet profound Epistle were either hard to understand or hard to accept).

It takes a special working of God in your heart for you to patiently listen to His Word preached and to discipline yourself to read it every day!

"A few words" - This brief epistle has only 13 chapters, contains under 10,000 words, can be read in less than one hour; yet it is packed solid with so much theological and practical truth.

In the same way a marriage will not remain stable if communication is blocked, a Christian's fellowship with God will suffer without a daily reading and meditating on the Word.

In the same way, your physical health is maintained by a daily consumption of balanced meals, your spiritual health depends on your daily intake of the Word.

Mt. 4:4 - "But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

I Pet. 2:2 - "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby"

Job. 23:12 - "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."

IV. We Need God's <u>PEOPLE</u> (v.23-24)

"Timothy is set at liberty" - Released from imprisonment.

The writer apparently needed Timothy to accompany him. If it is Paul and if his thorn was eye trouble, Timothy could help the aged Apostle make the trip to see these Hebrew believers.

The point is: We need fellow believers!

The Hebrews needed this Apostle and this Apostle needed Timothy.

"Salute" - Greet; it is encouraging to receive greetings either in the form of a letter, card, phone call, fax, or visit.

The request is that the believers greet their pastoral leadership as well as every set-apart believer is Christ.

In the N.T. there was an "absence of formality and hypocrisy, a freedom from prejudice arising from social distinctions, from discrimination against the poor, from partiality toward the well-to-do. In the churches, masters and servants would thus salute one another without any attitude of condescension on the one part of disrespect on the other" (Vine, p. 296).

"All the saints" = no one should be excluded from receiving gestures that show you care; to show your unity in Christ with them.

All would include - young, old, rich, poor, black, white, Spanish, English!

All would include even those the writer had to rebuke in this letter .

I Thess 5:26 - "Greet one another with a holy kiss"
--A kiss shows that we are family
--A kiss shows that we are friends.
--A kiss shows that we are not distant, stand-offish, as is so often the case in fundamental churches in our country.

Should we greet each other with an expression of affection? Yes. Does it have to be a kiss on the cheek? No. But nothing is wrong with this so long as it is a "holy" kiss.

V. We Need God's GRACE (v.25)

> This Epistle as in like manner as all of Paul's inspired letters did not end with a mere "Farewell" (cp. Acts 15:29) or "See you soon." They focused on God! They focused on the greatest need of man - the grace of God.

In all of Paul's epistles, he begins and ends by referring to the grace of God.

The "grace of Christ" was, you might say, the front and back cover of his books. Grace is, in a sense, the bread that surrounded the meat on the inside of the sandwich.

The grace of Christ is "the alpha and omega of Paul's letters." (Hiebert, p. 260).

NOTE: Every time Paul closes a letter by saying "Grace be with you," it is always the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.
(Exceptions: Col. 4:18, I Tim. 6:20; II Tim. 4:22 - where He just says "Grace be with you.")

NOTE: Paul is writing to believers who have already experienced the saving grace of God.

God's grace is not merely needed by the lost but by the saved.

God's grace does not come only to gain salvation, but to live out your salvation (Phil. 2:12-13).

Eternal life is not the only gift Christ gives to us who don't deserve it; but abundant life comes to His children also!

We all need His grace day by day!

As the hymn goes, "I Need Thee Every Hour"

What greater blessing could we wish on anyone than the grace of Jesus?
What greater prayer request could we pray for someone than the grace of Christ?
What greater conversation could you have with anyone, than to share how gracious our Lord Jesus is?

Conclusion:

"Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God" (II Cor. 3:5).
A church can go without bulletins on Sunday, picnics, banquets, and dinners, a library or bookstore, or even a beautiful building to meet in.

But we cannot go without
I. God's Answers to PRAYER (v.18-20)
II. God's PROVISION (v.20-21)
III. God's WORD (v.22)
IV. God's PEOPLE (v.23-24)

V. God's GRACE (v.25)