

**Bethel Christian Fellowship
Fair Lawn, NJ**

**Hebrews (49): The Book Of Better Things
“Last Minute Reminders,” Part Five
Hebrews 13:18-19**

June 15, 2025

If you've ever doubted the importance of asking others to pray for you, then today's text is for you. Our author hopes to visit his readers, but somehow he's been delayed. So, he asks them to ask God to clear the way for his return: *“Pray for us . . . I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon”* (13:18, 19).

We don't know who this man was. Nor do we know where he was when he wrote this letter. Nor do we know why he's been prevented from visiting them. But we do know that he has known them for some time, and that this letter reflects his role in teaching and exhorting them as one of their leaders (13:7, 17). We also know that he strongly believed in the power of intercessory prayer. For here he tells his readers that his return may well be dependent on their prayers.

As commentators have noted, we find a similar emphasis in Paul's letters. On several occasions Paul reveals that the success of his journeys and ministry is dependent on the prayers of his people. For example, at the end of his third missionary journey, Paul writes to the Christians at Rome:

“I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favorably received by the Lord's people there, so that I may come to you with joy, by God's will, and in your company be refreshed” (Rom. 15:30-32).

In his letter to Philemon, Paul adds this postscript: *“And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers”* (v. 22). At the time, Paul was in prison, and his hope was that God would respond to the prayers of Philemon and his household to secure his release.

We find a similar scenario in Philippians 1:19. Paul is again hopeful of his release from prison – through the prayers of the Christians at Philippi: “*Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.*” Clearly, Paul firmly believed that God would deliver him from prison through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of the Philippian church. It’s not either/or; it’s both/and.

Those prayer requests were not tactical maneuvers to gain sympathy from his readers. They weren’t veiled attempts to give anyone a “progress report” on the latest events in his life. They were a genuine call for help; an “S.O.S.” Paul truly believed in the power and importance of *intercessory prayer* on his behalf. He understood that the prayers of others are the means God uses to accomplish His purposes in our lives. So did the author of Hebrews.

He too was dependent on the prayers of his readers. As someone has once said; “If we don’t ask, God doesn’t give. If God doesn’t give, people don’t receive. If people don’t receive, God won’t be thanked.” That’s the bottom line. We are priests, and one reason we assemble on Sundays is to offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, “*the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name*” (13:15, NASB). With that “bottom line” in view, there are five important things to note about this final “reminder” of Hebrews 13.

First, the exhortation to “pray for us” implies a continuous ministry, one which these readers had already begun on the author’s behalf. It could easily be translated, “*Keep praying for us,*” or “*Don’t stop praying for us.*” The notion of “pray once, then leave it with God,” may be popular in some camps; but “one and done” is not the teaching of the New Testament. It’s just the opposite. Persevering prayer is the norm, a principle taught most notably by Jesus Himself in His parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8). Further, when our author says pray for “us,” he’s using a literary device which means “me” (he previously spoke about himself in this way in 5:11; 6:9, 10-11). Thus, the force of this “reminder” is “*keep on praying for me.*” Shepherds need continual prayer, just like all the sheep!

Second, the reason our author is requesting prayer is an unusual one; “*for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things*” (v. 18b, ESV). Usually, it’s just the opposite. Most people request prayer because of the difficulties they are experiencing. They haven’t handled things all that well, so they need to get things right in order to gain a clear conscience. So why does our author have a “good conscience,” and why is *that* the basis for his prayer request?

Some have suggested the possibility that his enemies lied about him, so he affirms his honesty and integrity, asking for his readers to support him in prayer (Wiersbe). Others suggest that the readers themselves had accused him of some fault, so he protests that he has a clear conscience, and this is the reason for his prayer request (Morris).

Most likely however, this request arises from his role as one of the shepherds of this flock. As we have seen, he has rebuked them, and exhorted them to press on, and warned them of the dangers of not pressing on. In fact, he issued no less than five of the most severe warnings found anywhere in the New Testament. He addressed the danger of **(1)** *drifting* from the Word (2:1-4); which leads to the danger of **(2)** *doubting* the Word (3:7-4:13); which leads to the danger of **(3)** becoming *dull of hearing* the Word (5:11-6:8); which leads to the danger of **(4)** *despising* the Word (10:26-31); which leads to the danger of **(5)** *defying* the Word (12:25-29). Our author has been clear. There is a kind of unbelief that is irreversible. It's called apostasy, and his readers needed to hear this message, loud and clear.

It would seem, therefore, that our author has a “*clear conscience*” concerning his pastoral ministry. It's the fruit that results from knowing you've done your job well. No matter how people may respond, you know that you've fulfilled your responsibilities. Like Paul, our author could say; “*Now this is our boast: our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in this world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace*” (2 Cor. 1:12). Therefore, says our author, “*keep on praying for me!*”

Third, his prayer request is clear and direct: “*I particularly urge you to pray so that I might be able to be restored to you soon*” (v. 18). In view of what he has just said (v. 17), he calls them to “double down” in their prayers for him. He offers no details concerning the reason for his delay. He simply asks them to ask God to *clear the way* for his return. It's as simple – and direct – and easy – as that! There is a lesson here for “private people” (who don't want you to know anything), and for “verbal people” (who want you to know everything)!

Fourth, it's important to remember that our author is no spiritual slouch. Unlike the Hebrews, he's no ordinary, garden variety Christian. We don't know who he is, but like Apollos, he was “*a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures*” (Acts 18:24). As we have seen, he was well acquainted with the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which he masterfully used to support his overriding theme. Jesus is God's

full and final revelation. He is superior to the prophets, to angels, to Moses, to the Mosaic covenant, to the earthly tabernacle, and to the Levitical priesthood. Hebrews is well-crafted and powerfully delivered theological essay.

Yet our author refused to trust in his skill or eloquence or theological knowledge *alone*. He needed the prayer support of other believers. It's almost as if he's saying, "I'm helpless if you don't ask God to help me." Simply amazing! To use one of his favorite lines of argument, if that was true for him, *how much more* should it be for us? If he depended on the prayers of others, *how much more* should we?

Fifth, there's one final question that must be asked. *Why* does our author encourage the Hebrews to pray for him? Isn't it enough that he asks God himself? And if we assume that he did pray for himself, why would he think it would help his cause if *others* joined him? Does this imply that God is *more inclined* to say "yes" to our requests if *more people* are asking Him on our behalf? The answer is "no."

God does not have a stingy heart. He doesn't need to be coerced by others to give us what we are requesting of Him. This is all about *God's glory*. In 2 Corinthians 1:11 Paul wrote, "*You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*" The point, in the words of an old friend, is obvious: "God's glory is more readily seen and known and savored when many rise up in unified gratitude for what he has done than if only one or a few do. So, when we pray for one another, *we* get gladness in receiving what God gives and *God* gets glory for giving what we get" (Sam Storms, The Hope of Glory, pp. 320-321).

As Sam goes on to write, intercessory prayer is "always a win for all concerned" (A Sincere and Pure Devotion to Christ). The ones who pray (in this case, the Hebrews) experience the joy of being an instrument in the fulfillment of God's purposes. The one who is prayed for (in this case, the author) experiences the joy of being delivered from difficult circumstances. The one to whom prayer is offered (in every case, God) experiences the joy of being thanked, and thus glorified, for having intervened in a way that blesses or delivers His people.

Who among us would *not* want to be in a "win-win" situation? Who would *not* want to experience the joy of being God's instrument in fulfilling God's purposes in others' lives? Who would *not* want to experience the joy of receiving answers to the prayers of others

on our behalf? Who would *not* want to give God the joy of being thanked – and thus glorified for having intervened in others' lives – as only He can do?

If everyone truly desires to be in a “win-win” situation, then we will take this last “reminder” to heart. Why? Because we are believer-priests, and one of the reasons we assemble on Sundays is to offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name! That's the bottom line!