

Hebrews 13:18-19

The writer of this epistle has been straightforward and hard hitting in addressing the recipients of this letter. He desires that these people follow the truth. As Paul said in Galatians 4:16, "*Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*" Although he has "stepped on the toes" of some dearly held religious beliefs and scripturally argued that their religious practices are wrong and need to be changed he does not consider himself their enemy but their friend. The writer has a clear conscience in all that he has said and admonished. He looks forward to being restored to them shortly.

18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.
19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

1) PRAY FOR OUR LEADERS

The implication of the request for prayer is that the writer is a leader in the church and asks prayer for himself and all leaders - "pray for us."

Romans 15:30 "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

2 Corinthians 1:11 "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf."

Colossians 4:2-3 "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."

In regard to our leaders We are:

1. Obey them - verse 17
2. Pray for them - verse 18

The request for prayer is that he might soon return to them.

2) A CLEAR CONSCIENCE IS A MUST FOR OUR SPIRITUAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

"...for we trust we have a good conscience..."

The writer of the epistle has a clear conscience in what he has told these Hebrews and because he lives honestly in all things.

"Conscience(s)" συνειδησις *suneidesis*, *soon-i'-day-sis* is used 30 times in the scripture. It has the meaning of moral consciousness; conscience.

2 Corinthians 1:12 "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our **conscience**, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."

1 Timothy 1:15 "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good *conscience*, and of faith unfeigned."

1 Timothy 4:2 "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their **conscience** seared with a hot iron."

"seared" means to render insensitive.

A. Salvation - A clear conscience begins with salvation

Titus 1:15 "Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and **conscience** is defiled."

Hebrews 10:1,2 "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more **conscience** of sins."

Hebrews 10:22

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil **conscience**, and our bodies washed with pure water."

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance..."

- true heart means sincere with the right attitude (as against the mere profession of some of these Hebrews)
- assurance speaks of the conviction our sins are forgiven and we have a personal relationship with God

We have sinned against God -

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Jesus paid the penalty of our sin -

Romans 5:8 "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

We can do nothing to gain salvation, it is a gift -

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

We need to believe that salvation is through Jesus and receive Him -

Romans 10:9,10,13 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"having our hearts sprinkled..."

speaks of the blood of Christ cleansing our conscience.

Hebrews 12:24 "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Hebrews 9:14 "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

"and our bodies washed with pure water"

denotes the cleansing at salvation, Titus 3:5. and the daily cleansing of the word in a believers life, Ephesians 5:26.

Titus 3:5 "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

1 Peter 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Ephesians 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"

PAST - JUSTIFICATION

5:26 "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,"

PRESENT - SANCTIFICATION

5:27 "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

FUTURE GLORIFICATION

"of faith...from an evil conscience"

B. Sanctification - A guilty conscience is produced by sin in our lives. This will result in depression and other problems

Psalm 32:1-4

- 1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
- 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.
- 3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.
- 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

Psalm 38:1-8

- 1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
- 2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.
- 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.
- 4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
- 5 My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.
- 6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.
- 7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh.
- 8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

Psalm 51:1-12 is David's confession of his sin.

"Counseling experience amply illustrates the human dynamics of depression caused by guilt. There is probably no more frequent problem met by nouthetic* counselors. God was good in providing such an explicit paradigm in the life of David - for dealing with depression." Dr. Jay E. Adams, Competent to Counsel, pg. 119

* Nouthetic confrontation, in its Biblical usage, aims at straightening out the individual by changing his patterns of behavior to conform to biblical standards.

The Bible addresses only two causes for our problems - organic and spiritual. Never does it mention mental problems.

"To put the issue simply: the Scriptures plainly speak of both organically based problems as well as those problems that stem from sinful attitudes and behavior; but where, in all of God's Word, is there so much as a trace of any third source of problems which might approximate the modern concept of 'mental illness'? Clearly the burden of proof lies with those who loudly affirm the existence of mental illness or disease but fail to demonstrate biblically that it exists. Until such a demonstration is forthcoming, the only safe course to follow is to declare with all of Scripture that the genesis of such human problems is twofold, not threefold." Dr. Jay E. Adams, Competent to Counsel, pg. 29

- We can not understand the depths of deception and wickedness of our heart. To attempt to do so through psychoanalysis is futile.

Jeremiah 17:9 - "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Psalms 139:23,24 - "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Hebrews 4:12 - "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

- The answer is confession of sin and to trust and obey God.

1 John 1:4-10 "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

Philippians 4:6,7 "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

3) HONESTY IS BETTER THAN POWER OR RICHES

"...in all things willing to live honestly..."

Proverbs 16:8 "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right."

Proverbs 19:1 "Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool."

4) THE WRITER'S DESIRE IS THAT THEY PRAY SO HE CAN RETURN TO THEM SOONER THAN LATER

"But I beseech *you* the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner."

We don't know why the writer was unable to return to them. Perhaps he was imprisoned (Paul?) Or sick. Whatever the hindrance, prayer was the need. Verse 19 once again reminds them about "praying for us."

Steven Cole writes:

"The author asks them to pray all the more, so that he may be restored to them the sooner (He 13:19). We don't know what the situation was that kept him from visiting them, but it was beyond his control. It could have been a health problem, or something else. Perhaps his critics in the Hebrew church were saying, "If he really cared about you, he would have visited here personally by now!" I find that critics often judge the pastor because he does not have the gift of omnipresence! But the author's heart was to visit them, and so he asks them to pray.

His request shows that God is bigger than any circumstance we face, and that prayer is our means of laying hold of God's power. Prayer is not just a polite gesture that shows brotherly concern. God has ordained prayer as one of the ways that He pours out His power and blessing on His people. Prayer shows us that we are not competent people who just need a little boost from God now and then. We are totally inadequate, unless He works, and He has chosen to work through our prayers. If more people prayed more regularly for their pastors, maybe there would be fewer church splits and fewer people leaving churches over petty matters. (Hebrews 13:17-19, 22-25 *Your Duties Toward Church Leaders*)