

# Hebrews

- I. Words of Wisdom – The Importance of Prayer in the life of the Church and the life of the Believer
  - A. **Hebrews 13:18-19** . . . Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. [19] And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner.
  - B. Prayer
  - C. If Paul is the author of Hebrews, than his request for prayer along with his claim to have a good conscience and his desire to live a God-honoring life most probably refers to the false accusations against him by the Jews in Jerusalem and his subsequent imprisonment in Rome. We see the confidence Paul puts in prayer in these words from **II Corinthians 1:8-12** . . . For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; [9] indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; [10] who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, [11] you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many. [12] For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.
  - D. If Paul is not the author of Hebrews, than it appears the author is in a situation similar to Paul's where someone is falsely accusing him and he is seeking supportive prayer from the saints that God will work it all out for good. Either way, I want to use these two verses as a basis for talking about the importance of prayer in the life of the Church and in the life of the Believer.
  - E. Examples from Scripture of Who and What to Pray For:
    - 1. Pray for your leaders – from Government to Church Leaders

- a. **I Timothy 2:1-4** . . . First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, [2] for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. [3] This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
- b. **Ephesians 6:18-20** . . . With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, [19] and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
- c. **Colossians 4:2-4** . . . Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; [3] praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; [4] that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.
- d. **Scripture Story of Answered Prayer: Acts 12:1-10** [1] Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. [2] And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. [3] When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. [4] When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. [5] So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. [6] On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. [7] And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. [8] And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak

around you and follow me." [9] And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. [10] When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

2. Pray for the spiritual growth and service of the body of Christ
  - a. **Ephesians 3:14-19** . . . For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, [15] from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, [16] that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, [17] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.
  - b. **II Thessalonians 1:11-12** . . . To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, [12] so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.
  
3. Pray in specific ways and for specific things for each other
  - a. **Colossians 1:9-12** . . . For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10] so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; [11] strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.
  - b. **James 5:13-16** . . . Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. [14] Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the

church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; [15] and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. [16] Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

- c. Pray for those among us who are serving God outside our church.
4. Pray for unbelievers and those who are making your life miserable
    - a. **Matthew 5:43-45** . . . "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [44] "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.
    - b. **Acts 7:58-60** . . . When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. [59] They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" [60] Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.
  5. Pray for yourself
    - a. Pray for wisdom: **James 1:5** . . . But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
    - b. Pray to understand and apply the Word of God:
      - (1) **II Timothy 3:16-17** . . . All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; [17] so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
      - (2) **John 16:12-15** . . . "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. [13] "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. [14] "He will glorify Me, for He will

take of Mine and will disclose it to you. [15] "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

- c. Pray to understand the mind of God:
  - (1) **Psalms 27:11** . . . Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a level path because of my foes.
  - (2) **II Corinthians 4:16-18** . . . Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. [17] For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, [18] while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- d. Pray for perseverance – both when times are hard and when times are good:
  - (1) **James 1:2-4** . . . Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, [3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. [4] And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
  - (2) **Deuteronomy 8:11-14** . . . "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; [12] otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, [13] and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, [14] then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
- e. Pray for comfort, strength, and help in times of trouble, suffering, and loss:
  - (1) **Psalms 34:17-20** . . . The righteous cry, and the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. [18] The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. [19] Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. [20] He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken.

- (2) **Lamentations 3:21-25** . . . This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. [22] The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. [23] They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. [24] "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I have hope in Him." [25] The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him.
- f. Pray for God to search your heart and show you your ways: **Psalms 139:23-24** . . . Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; [24] and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.
- g. Pray for tears – for a broken and contrite heart over sin:
  - (1) **Psalms 51:17** . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.
  - (2) **James 4:8b-10** . . . Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.
  - (3) **Matthew 5:4** . . . Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- h. Keep current in the confession of your sins: **I John 1:9** . . . If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- i. Pray for God to bring good out of your current circumstances: **Romans 8:28** . . . And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
- j. Suggestions of Scripture to Guide Your Prayers: (1) the Lord's Prayer, (2) the Beatitudes, (3) the Psalms

## II. Conclusion

- A. Pray often: **I Thessalonians 5:16-18** . . . Rejoice always; [17] **pray without ceasing**; [18] in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
- B. If these words are possible in this life, may we be people who experience that possibility.