



A HUMBLE PRAYER REQUEST FROM A HUMBLE LEADER

Recently, in one of the BibleShares that I participate in, we completed our in-depth study of the Book of Hebrews. As most of you know Hebrews is very intense and is absolutely necessary for every believer in Christ - Jewish believer or Gentile believer, to continually read through and grasp the rich truths concerning Jesus.

The author of the Book of Hebrews painstakingly lays out the richness of this New Covenant that believers now have in Jesus Christ. The author very clearly and succinctly lays the foundational truths concerning Yeshua/Jesus as the One who is so much better than the angels. The author discusses with inspired understanding that Jesus is that "Prophet like unto Moses" that was to come, however, He is greater than Moses. The author goes forth to let the Jewish believers understand that Jesus is the "Priest after the order of Melchizedek." Melchizedek was the priest that ministered directly to El Elyon, the "Most High," the Sovereign God. (Genesis 14:18-20) This "Melchizedek priesthood," or we can say the priesthood of Jesus, is so much greater and more effective than the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood in every way. The author continues to reveal that this "Melchizedek priesthood" of Jesus leads us into a greater, new covenant that has better promises. The author declares that Jesus is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. And the list goes on.

I mention all of the above, not for the purpose of entering into a discussion on the Book of Hebrews, but rather to express the wonderful spiritual insight of the author of the Book of Hebrews. It has never truly been revealed who exactly is the author of the Book of Hebrews. Some say that it could be the Apostle Paul based on some of the scriptures found at the very end of the Book of Hebrews. Some say that it may have been written by James, Jesus' half brother and the leader of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15) or Apollos or some other Jewish believer who was thought to be a leader of this fledgling sect that was becoming known to the world as "Christians." The truth is that no one is truly sure about the author of the Book of Hebrews. I believe that this may be a good thing because the only thing that we are left with is that this Book was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit given to a well respected leader within the church, whomever that may have been.

As I had mentioned, whoever the author was, they must have been one of the founding fathers and believers of the faith. The author was a "first generation" Jewish believer in Yeshua/Jesus as the Messiah. He was writing to a "second generation" of Jewish believers who were floundering and being persuaded to possibly go back to the rituals of Judaism by the persecution and taunting of the non-believing Jewish people, as well as some Jewish believers who were in error. That is why the author encourages them to "...cast not away your confidence..." in Christ (Hebrews 10:35). The author was inspired (by the Holy Spirit) to write out sound scriptural doctrine concerning the foundational truths of the superiority of Jesus to anything else that the Jewish people had held so dear to. Because of this Book of Hebrews we can most definitely say that the author was a strong leader/elder and teacher within the Body of Christ. We can safely say that the author was highly respected by the believers for being on target concerning the truths that point to Jesus as the Messiah - the One that they should place their total trust and faith in.

Having discussed the Book of Hebrews and its scriptures within their context, I find that, most remarkably at the conclusion of this well thought out book of sound Christian doctrine, the author would ask his readers the following:

Hebrews 13:18 (Amplified Version) - *Keep praying for us, for we are convinced that we have a good (clear) conscience, that **we want to walk uprightly {and} live a noble life, acting honorably {and} in complete honesty in all things.***

Did you hear what we just read in that scripture? This leader of the church asked for prayer from those he was writing to - the plain "ordinary", everyday fellow believer in Christ. His prayer request for himself and other leaders within the Body of Christ was that they would **remain walking upright and living a life that was noble, honorable and honest in all things**. WOW!!! ...what a person of pure humility and pure heart.

These days when we hear pastors or leadership ask for prayer, we many times hear them ask that God would show them the next prophetic move or reveal the end time mysteries. We hear requests from leadership to help them in their ability to grow their ministry, to know what to do next or to show them a new vision and purpose for their church or ministry. Now don't get me wrong, the things I just mentioned are all valid needs and therefore, valid prayer requests. However, we seldom hear requests by leaders such as the one issued by the author of Hebrews. The author of the Book of Hebrews, a person who would be, considered a "giant" of the faith and a person of great spiritual insight, authority and leadership within the Body of Christ, requests prayer that the leadership within the Body of Christ, including himself, remain in a lifestyle that is **"upright, noble, honorable and honest in all things."**

We would think that with the position the author already was in that he would be passed this most basic of prayer requests. Yet, here we read that the author of the major doctrinal thesis of the Christian faith known as the Book of Hebrews, asks for prayer from all those that he is writing to, that his desire is for himself and all leaders to "remain true." This is a heart of true humility and meekness. It is a heart that recognizes that no matter where you may be in leadership or position within the Body of Christ, the most important thing for any leader is the desire to "stay true" in the things of God, which is expressed through their lifestyle - both in words and actions. In asking this request, the author is also expressing that there can be a danger within leadership to slip into error.

These days we always hear pastors and leadership read, preach on, and then use (sometimes incorrectly) the verses previous to Hebrews 13:18. I am referring to Hebrews 13:7 and 17 which read as follows:

Hebrews 13:7 (Amplified Version) *"Remember your leaders {and} superiors in authority [for it was they] who brought to you the Word of God. Observe attentively {and} consider their manner of living (the outcome of their well-spent lives) and imitate their faith (their conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things, the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ, and their leaning of the entire human personality on God in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness)."*

Hebrews 13:17 (Amplified Version) *"Obey your spiritual leaders and submit to them [continually recognizing their authority over you], for they are constantly keeping watch over your souls {and} guarding your spiritual welfare, as men who will have to render an account [of their trust]. [Do your part to] let them do this with gladness and not with sighing {and} groaning, for that would not be profitable to you [either]."*

These again, within their context are all well and good and the Body of Christ should follow this wise counsel given by the Holy Spirit. However, as I mentioned they must be placed within the context of the where they are found within the scriptures and based upon the progression of thought being expressed by the author. These scriptures are actually from a section of scripture that begins in Hebrews 12:28,29 where the author is expressing that all believers, whether in leadership or not, must *"... serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."* The writer then goes forth to lay out a "short list" of examples of what it means to *"serve the Lord acceptably"* which are found in Hebrews 13:1-17.

Many times, when using the scriptures concerning submitting to leadership, there is a tendency to leave out of that discussion Hebrews 13:8,9.

Hebrews 13:8,9 (Amplified Version) ***"Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is [always] the same, yesterday, today, [yes] and forever (to the ages). Do not be carried about by different {and} varied and alien teachings; for***

it is good for the heart to be established {and} ennobled {and} strengthened by means of grace (God's favor and spiritual blessing) and not [to be devoted to] foods [rules of diet and ritualistic meals], which bring no [spiritual] benefit {or} profit to those who observe them."

This was a warning by the author to those in the Body of Christ concerning some that were in leadership. At that time there were some that were trying to usurp the spiritual authority and leadership of those that God had truly placed in leadership. There were those who were bringing "*alien teachings*" and false doctrines concerning Jesus and bringing confusion and division within the Body of believers. Hmm... Sounds familiar...

In verse 7, we read that we are to continually remember and pray for those that the Lord has placed in the function of leadership. We are to pray for these leaders to walk and live their lives nobly, honorably, and honest in all things. We are to pray that they don't get caught up in "alien teachings" nor should they bring forth those "alien teachings" into the Body of Christ. He then continues with verses 8 and 9, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever and that we are to be mindful of those in leadership that have strayed from the purity of the fact that Jesus Christ, who is the Living Word of God, **never changes**. Jesus **never changes**. Jesus is the Living Word of God and therefore, the Word of God **never changes**. It is the same yesterday today and forever!!! Unfortunately, today we are in the days where many are looking for "greater revelations" from God. There is nothing necessarily wrong with that. However, it can also be dangerous. We can find ourselves looking for things that are not there concerning God and His ways. Before you know it, we can start changing Jesus. What we really need to be seeking is a greater "illumination" of what God has already spoken. There is "nothing new under the sun." God - His ways, His precepts, His principles, His personality and character never changes!!! He is the same - yesterday, today and forever!!!

Let's face it. If you look around and listen to some that are in leadership - pastoral, apostolic or prophetic functions - we begin to find that, ever so subtly, the things of God have changed. All of a sudden, we in this generation, have become much smarter and have "greater spiritual insight" than those who were inspired by the Holy Spirit (God's Spirit) and wrote the scriptures, including the New Testament. We hear things such as "God now understands;" "God didn't mean that;" "God looks at things differently now in this day and age;" "God didn't really mean it that way;" "The scriptures need to be made relevant to our society as it is today;" etc, etc, etc. To that, I respond with a resounding, "Hogwash!!!"

Leadership today needs to return to the basic heart of humility and humbleness as expressed by the writer of Hebrews. Their prayer request should first be that they remain in a lifestyle that is "*upright, noble, honorable and honest in all things.*" Imagine if all leaders walked in this attitude of heart. These would be the kind of leaders that would truly be able to lead the Body of Christ in these last days. Maybe then the Body of Christ would truly be looked upon as peculiar and different from those of this world.

This attitude of heart should not be relegated to just the leadership within the Body of Christ. This should be the desire of every believer. Every believer in Jesus and every one who declares and professes Jesus as their Lord and Savior should have this same attitude of heart when asking for prayer from each other - that they themselves would live a lifestyle that is "*upright, noble, honorable and honest in all things.*" This is the attitude of heart of one who has a true heart of humility. It is never about position or stature. Jesus dealt with the wrong attitude of heart of the Pharisees and Religious Leaders concerning position and stature with the parable of the "Lowest Seat at the Feast" found in Luke 14:8-14. If you read that parable you will see that it obviously concerns the incorrect attitude of heart of being prideful and the correct attitude of heart of humility to leaders, as well as everyone within the Body of Christ. Jesus was teaching His disciples, both at that time, as well as today, what the correct attitude of heart should be for those who are in any leadership position. It must be that of total humility and humbleness.

As mentioned previously, the writer of Hebrews, who can certainly be considered a true leader within the Body of Christ, desired for himself as well as for all leaders to "...walk uprightly {and} live a noble life, acting honorably {and} in complete honesty in all things." May we all learn from the example of this mighty person of God and his desire to stay on course and to stay honest and true in all things. May all of our lives be such that we would truly desire to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ look so good to this world that they would want what we have. May the world see that we are truly different - that we are true disciples and representatives of the lifestyle of Christ. May our lifestyles exude humility and humbleness. May the world see that we truly "walk what we talk." May the world see that we have been transformed and that we are no longer conformed to this world because we have been renewed in and through the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ, who never changes and is "...the same yesterday, today and forever."