

A Good Word
Hebrews 13: 20 – 25
April 25, 2010

The Book of Hebrews concludes with closing comments includes a benediction. Now that was a common practice of New Testament writers, who wrote letters to an audience who would likely be known to them. Therefore, each manuscript would often begin with a salutation, or an introduction, and then wrap up their communication with a benediction and personal notes to individuals.

The word “benediction” comes from two Latin words: “Bene” means “good,” and “diction” meaning “word.” So, what the writer of Hebrews posts at the conclusion of his Book of Hebrews is, naturally, a good word.

Now I don't know about you personally, but I really need a good word right now. I suspect I'm not the only one in need of a good word today. Certainly, our congregation needs a good word; we are burdened about the struggles of many of our fellow members with health issues, financial woes, and loss of jobs and security. Tomorrow, our Stewardship Committee will meet to address the extreme state of the church's financial position; obviously, the recession and its aftermath have profoundly affected giving to the point that drastic measures must be considered.

I'm also certain many families are dealing with similar crises in their own home budgets, and financial decisions. The number one cause of conflict between married couples is financial-based. When couples feel the unrelenting pocketbook squeeze, other issues become more pronounced. So, in the midst of such heavy pressures, I have a good word for you!

Make no mistake, the Word of God can and does place expectations on Christians to live to a higher standard than the standard the world typically lives by. Sometimes, the Word makes us uncomfortable, steps on our toes, and challenges us to seek to grow beyond our comfort zone.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews has told us to live by faith – even pointed to men and women who exemplified living by faith. He has told us that we ought not forsake the assembling of ourselves together with other Believers because we have a responsibility to one another. He even exhorted us to welcome hardship, because in hardship comes growth in trusting God rather than the flesh.

Now, as he finishes his message, the author – whom I believe is the Apostle Paul – gives his readers a good word – a refreshing drink for a parched soul. I want to offer that good word to you today. Let's read Hebrews 13: 20 – 25 (read).

1. I need to understand my peace with God is dependant upon the work of Christ (Hebrews 13: 20).

A. There is no way for me to make peace with God by anything I may do.

1. I can try to live a good, moral life according to the teachings I find

in the Bible, but I can't achieve a total peace with God because even with my best efforts, I cannot live it perfectly – therefore, no peace.

B. I could try to find peace with God by being good to all people and treat them the way I would want to be treated (the golden rule).

1. But, sadly, people will still frustrate me, or take advantage of my kindness, and blunt my best intentions – therefore, no peace.

C. A lack of peace with God is connected to the causes of the alienation between myself and God, and that is the presence of sin (rebellion against God).

1. The work of Christ at the Cross bridged that chasm. Have you asked Jesus to become your go-between?

2. I need to step out of the way and let God take control (Hebrews 13: 21a).

A. In short, the writer of Hebrews is saying, “May God get done what needs to be done in your life.” What needs to get done in our life? To accomplish what is pleasing to the Father, that's what!

B. I have witnessed that reality in many lives.

1. Too many people try to break an addiction on their own, only to fail by their own efforts. Then I have witnessed those same people surrender to God, and the unbeatable addiction's stronghold is broken.

2. I have seen marriages that have no chance to survive due to the absence of God in them; but when the couple turn in desperation to God, healing takes place.

3. I know of siblings who have not spoken to one another for years – often over conflicts or disagreements – who have experienced reconciliation beginning when one of the siblings surrenders to God all the bitterness and hurt. Forgiveness becomes possible, even probable; he/she becomes willing to do whatever is necessary to restore the relationship.

C. God wants to work in your life, to accomplish a more Christ-like individual. But it means you must move out of the way and allow God to be sovereign in your life.

1. Are you willing to surrender that level of control?

D. Without question, it takes work – hard, tiring work – on my part to surrender to God.

1. My flesh wants to be in charge; it wants to protect my id and my super id anyway it can; surrendering power and control to any outside entity is a major risk. Thus the hard struggle within me is inevitable.

E. To surrender your power to God is hard work (Philippians 2: 12 – 13).

1. The bottom line is this: you cannot do what you need to do in your life without God's presence and leadership; can you admit that today?

3. I need to allow God to equip me with every good work, no matter what it takes (v. 21b).

A. At first glance, that may seem like an easy prayer to pray: “Oh, God, equip me with every good thing I need to do your will.”

1. My mind drifts to all the things lacking in my life at present to do all those things I would like to do: more money at my disposal so I can give more to the church; job security and career advancement so I focus

more on serving God and not the god of my job; a bigger house so I can entertain more Christian friends; a new car so I can bring more people to church.

B. However, these are most likely not the things God talks about when He speaks of equipping His people.

1. **With what is God equipping me? – 2 Corinthians 1: 3 – 7**

2. I dare say God's list of what you and I need to be equipped with differs from our lists, right?

C. In fact, I believe there is a principle we must adopt if we are to fully acquire the full equipment of the well-equipped Christian.

1. **Principle: As God equips you, you don't get the good without first going through the bad (and difficult).**

2. Let me give you an example: in John Chapter 15, Jesus tells us those who are bearing fruit in their life – those who are growing to be more fully equipped spiritually – He will prune their life so they will become more fruitful.

3. Pruning is painful; horticulturally speaking, it is surgery on a plant, removing limbs and even entire branches. But the goal is a more productive plant.

D. I wonder today, if knowing that praying for God to equip you with all good things means your path will be difficult, would you still pray that prayer?

So, today, I lay this challenge before you.

Your Challenge:

1. **Confess your dependance on God;**

2. **If you have peace in your heart, it is God Who will supply it;**

3. **If you am going to be equipped to live the Christian life, God will prepare you;**

4. **If you are going to live a life pleasing to God, it is God Who will live it thorough you.**

Let's pray!