

# The Final Words of Exhortation

Hebrews 13:18-25

*“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. 20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words. 23 Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. 24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. 25 Grace be with you all. Amen.”*

## INTRODUCTION:

**CIT: What Are the Last Words of Exhortation That Paul Leaves With His Readers?**

**I. Paul Wanted Them to Pray For Him Regarding His Ministry (vs. 18-19)**—*“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.”*

## A. Paul Begs For Their Continued Prayer Regarding His Ministry

### 1. Paul ministry away

a. Paul was first and foremost an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ

- i. After he had been saved—God set him aside to be an apostle
- ii. The word *Apostle* means *sent one*
- iii. He was commissioned with the same authority as the 12 that were with Jesus
- iv. But he was different that they were
- v. He wasn't commissioned to be part of the 12
- vi. They were set apart to be apostles to the Jewish people

- The number 12 correlates with the 12 disciples
- And in some sense, these 12 stood out as representatives of true Israel

- As opposed to apostate Israel who had rejected Christ

**b. He was an apostle to the Gentiles**

**Jesus said about him:** *“for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel”*

- i.** That Paul’s ministry would go beyond the Jews
- ii.** The main thrust of Paul’s ministry went out to the Gentiles

- Establishing Gentile churches
- All throughout gentile regions
- And that’s what we see in the book of Acts
- Ministry into Asia Minor, Galatia, Macedonia

- iii.** And that is the reason why Paul writes to them about praying for him in his ministry endeavors

- He is no longer with these Hebrews that he’s been writing to
- But he is away—and is concerned for them

- So he encourages them to pray for his ministry where he is at
- And we get a hint of where he is at in verse 24—where he says that the saints of *Italy* salute you
- His ministry had at least taken him to Italy
- So Paul tells them to pray for the success of his ministry

**2. Paul believes in the power of prayer**

- a.** There are several times in Paul’s letters that you see him asking his people to pray for him in his ministry to the regions beyond

**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**”*

- **Paul was asking them to pray that the unbelieving Jews who opposed his ministry would not hinder what he was doing**

**Colossians 4:3**—*“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:**”*

- b.** Paul believed that God hears the prayers of his people—and is moved when he sees the collectiveness of God’s people praying on the behalf of his servants
- c.** So Paul invites these Hebrews, whom he has ministered to, to join in with the rest of the saints to pray for his ministry

### 3. Reasons for Prayer toward his ministry

#### **a.** Much difficulty

- i.** Paul’ ministry has many enemies
- ii.** Both enemies of the Jews and enemies of the Gentiles

#### **b.** Godly wisdom

- i.** If you remember, in the book of Acts, Paul was literally stopped in his tracks, because he didn’t know where God would have him go in his ministry
- ii.** And after several attempts of trying to figure out what God wanted—God gave him a vision of a Macedonian, crying out for help
- iii.** So Paul needed prayer for Godly wisdom and direction

#### **c.** God’s power manifested

- i.** Paul wanted souls to be saved
- ii.** Not by cunning and crafty words that he devised
- iii.** But by the ministry of the power of God
- iv.** So Paul needed people to be praying for his ministry
- v.** Paul believed in the POWER OF PRAYER

**B. Their Obligation to Pray For Him**—“*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. His Ministry Was a Good Ministry

- a.** Paul points to his good conscience when it comes to his ministry

**NOTE:** This is something that you will see Paul do continually in his letters to the churches. When he’s brought under inspection of his ministry, he often appeals to his good conscience. And that’s what he’s doing here.

- i.** He’s telling them that when it comes to ministry—he’s got a good conscience
- ii.** The conscience is that God-given court that every person

has—that tells a person whether he is doing right or wrong

iii. And when we become Christians—that conscience becomes more keen to right and wrong

iv. And Paul says, *“When it comes to all that I do in the ministry, I have a good conscience”*

v. Paul was honestly testifying that his ministry was a God-honoring, and God-blessed ministry

vi. And because of that—they were obligated to be in prayer for his ministry

**NOTE:** We know that there are some “ministries” that are not God-honoring, and that God has no part in. And some of the leaders of these ministries are full of corruption and hypocrisy.

They don’t deserve a moment of our time in prayer.

But those ministries that do honor God, and clearly have God’s hand on them, deserve our prayers.

## 2. His Ministry Affected Them

**Vs. 19**—*“But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.”*

a. Paul seems to be indicating a hang-up in his ministry—and that he longed to return back to them and minister again

b. Paul said that he needed them to pray for him and his ministry—so that he may soon return back to them

c. Another reason that they should pray for him and his ministry—was because they benefited from it

## C. The Christian’s Responsibility to Pray For Godly Ministers

1. Prayer for their Pastor
2. Prayer for their Missionaries
3. Prayer for Evangelists

**NOTE:** Godly ministers have many of the same difficulties that regular church members do. They don’t exist on a plain far-removed from everyone else. They experience the same troubles and trials that everyone else does. So pray for them and their work.

God uses your prayers to affect their ministries.

## I. Paul Wanted Them to Pray For Him Regarding His Ministry

**II. Paul Wanted Them to Lean on God’s Power For Spiritual Sanctification** (vs. 20-21)—*“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you perfect in every good*

*work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

## **A. The Purpose of Christianity**

### **1. The Salvation of Sinners**

- a.** When God saves someone—He doesn’t give them a “Get Out of Hell Free Card” so they can go and live as they want without the worry of facing God’s judgment
- b.** God saves his people so that they will be different than the world

### **2. The Purpose:**

- a.** To remove sin
  - i.** Paul said in Romans 6, that we have been made “**free from sin**”
  - ii.** And that we are to no longer live lives governed by the sinful flesh
  - iii.** But governed by the new life we have in Christ
  - iv.** The Bible says that Jesus came to save His people from their SIN
- b.** To produce Godly Works

- i.** The Bible says in Ephesians 2, that saved us to do good works
- ii.** Works that bring honor and glory to Him

### **c.** To conform us into the image of Christ

- i.** God, in eternity past, planned to save men, for the purpose of conforming them into the image of His Son—so that for eternity, they would bring glory to Him
- ii.** Believers are God’s eternal love gift to His Son

- d.** So Paul is telling them—that he doesn’t want them to forget that that is what God’s purpose in saving them is all about

### **3. The Plan**

**Philippians 1:6**—“*being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*”

- a.** God’s continued work throughout our lives
- b.** The work is finished at our death and entrance into heaven or at Christ’s coming

**1 John 3:2**—“*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*”

c. By what power does God accomplish this?

**B. The Resurrection Power of God (vs. 20-21)**—*“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

**1. God’s power to raise Christ into a new life**

a. The great resurrection power of God—that was manifested at the resurrection of Christ—is the same power that God intends to bestow upon us

- i. Accomplishing His great work of transformation into the image of Christ
- ii. Just as He raised Christ into a new life—so He intends to do with his redeemed people

**2. God’s resurrection power to raise us into a new life**

**a. Being made perfect**

- i. To complete thoroughly
- ii. God’s work will be completed as He intends it to by that same power that He raised Christ from the dead

**b. Good works (List that Paul gave all throughout chapter 13)**

- i. Brotherly love
- ii. Loving strangers
- iii. Loving the afflicted
- iv. Free from covetousness
- v. Faithfulness
- vi. Sacrificial
- vii. Submissive

**NOTE:** It’s God, through His resurrection power, that perfects those good works in this life.

c. Doing God’s will—“*every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight*”

- i. These are the works that we have been saved to do
- ii. They are God’s will for us

d. Glorifying Jesus Christ—*“through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

i. These works that are being perfected by God’s power—are meant to glorify His Son

ii. That’s what God’s eternal purpose in saving sinners it

- It’s not for our glory
- It’s for the glory and honor of his Son

### C. Don’t Forget

1. Paul wants these Hebrews to not forget what they have been saved for

2. And God will use all those difficulties that they will experience as Christians to bring about that purpose

**1 Peter 1:7**—*“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”*

### I. Paul Wanted Them to Pray For Him Regarding His Ministry

### II. Paul Wanted Them to Lean on God’s Power For Spiritual Sanctification

**III. Paul Wanted Them to Patiently Endure Exhortation (vs. 22)**—*“And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.”*

#### A. Paul’s Letter of Exhortation

##### 1. The shortness of the letter

- a. Our personal study of Hebrews
- b. But it’s a letter that can take less than an hour to read—for the average reader
- c. But compared to some of the eternal truths that are found in it—it is very short

##### 2. The Difficulty of the Letter

- a. Challenging to study
- b. Challenging to interpret

- i. It was really important for us to know OT culture and history
- ii. To understand Jewish customs and practices
- iii. And to see how Christ is the fulfillment of these things

##### 3. The Nature of the Letter

- a. He calls it an exhortation

**i.** The word is a similar word to what the Holy Spirit is titled as—the Paraklete—the COMFORTER

- *paraklesis* (par-ak'-lay-sis)
- And it means to come along-side and challenge or implore
- To call them to do what they were supposed to do

**ii.** And as we have seen, the letter to the Hebrews was not only a great doctrinal treatise, but was a great letter of exhortation

- Some of the challenges that Paul lays out, were no doubt, very difficult to receive
- Some things requiring great humility and sacrifice in order to respond to them correctly

**b.** The major challenges of the letter

**i.** Challenging their view of who Christ is

- He is greater than the angels
- He is greater than Moses

- He is a greater priest than Aaron
- He offers a better sacrifices than all the sacrifices of the OT put together
- He is the only way a person can draw near to God

**ii.** Hebrews was a letter challenging them to turn away from the types and shadows and fully follow Christ

- These Hebrews were having great trouble with letting go of their past (OT traditions) and embracing Christ
- They were fearful of all the persecution and hardship they would face if they let go of the types and shadows
- As said previously—  
*Hebrews was a letter written to the Hebrews telling the Hebrews that they were no longer to be Hebrews*

**iii.** A letter challenging them to be real



- The letter came with several calls and invitations to embrace Christ as Savior
- And there were warnings given that that told them that they couldn't sit on the edge of unbelief forever
- Eventually they would harden their heart, become dull of hearing, and fall away from exposure to the truth—and never truly be saved
- They needed to be saved before it became impossible for them to be so

**iv.** A letter challenging them to endure hardship

- To follow Christ can be very costly
- And that's what these Hebrews would begin to go through
- Persecution from unbelieving Jews
- And soon, persecution from Rome
- But Paul told them that they need to endure the hardship that would come—by Faith

**B. Their Responsibility to Patiently Endure This Exhortation**—“*And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation*”

**1. Suffer**

- a. *anechomai*** (an-ekh'-om-ahee)
- b.** It means *to hold oneself up against*
- c.** Literally—you are to hold your life up in accountability to this exhortation that you have been given
- d.** Instead hiding from it—or being offended at it—hold yourself to it
  - i.** Examine your life through its contents
  - ii.** And make the necessary changes that you have been challenged to make

**NOTE:** It is very possible that some would have been greatly offended at the things that Paul said in the letter. After all Paul was pointing out to them that God was done with OT Judaism. It no longer had a purpose in God's plan of redemption. All it ever was to be was a type or shadow of the real thing.

But to say that Jewish people, no doubt, was very offensive.

So Paul tells them that they need to suffer this word of exhortation. They need to bear with this letter—and be real honest with themselves concerning what he told them.

## 2. The Greater Principle

- a. These Hebrews weren't to just bind themselves to this letter only—but all of God's Word
- b. They were to willingly subject themselves to the Scrutiny of the Word of God—no matter how difficult the message of Scripture is

**NOTE:** Have you noticed how often God's Word seems like it rubs us the wrong way? And it can be easy for us to dismiss it and not be really honest in our response to it.

But Paul tells these Hebrews, no matter how difficult you find the Word of God to be, you need to take it in—you need to obey it for what it is.

### C. The Christian's Responsibility to Regularly Come Under the Exhortation of the Word of God

1. Christians should be characterized as a people who love the Word of God
  - a. Whether they take it in through daily reading of the Scriptures
  - b. Or they get through preaching and teaching of it at church
  - c. They should be characterized by a constant exposure to it

2. That's one of the reasons why it's important to be at church every time the doors are open

- a. To be under that constant exposure to the Word of God
- b. A church that doesn't take the ministry of the Word of God important is not a good church

**Hebrews 10:23-25**—“*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 24 and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*”

#### I. Paul Wanted Them to Pray For Him Regarding His Ministry

#### II. Paul Wanted Them to Lean on God's Power For Spiritual Sanctification

#### III. Paul Wanted Them to Patiently Endure Exhortation

**IV. Paul Wanted Them to be Encouraged With Follow-Up (vs. 23)**—“*Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.*”

**NOTE:** This is one of those verses in Hebrews that people refer to when they talk about the authorship of Hebrews. It was Paul who had such a close connection to Timothy. He

referred to himself as being Timothy's spiritual father. And we see in the book of Acts how that Paul incorporated Timothy into his traveling ministry.

So he tells these Hebrews that their brother Timothy has been set at liberty. That word seems to refer to his being released from some kind of hold or prison. Timothy has been in prison, but he has now been set at liberty.

### **A. Fearful Timothy**

1. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy, that Timothy often struggled with fear and shame

- a. Fear of dealing with difficulties in the church
- b. And fear of persecution outside the church

2. And Timothy had begun to neglect his spiritual responsibility to preach the Word of God

- a. He was acting timid and fearful
- b. And Paul told him that he needed to stir that gift back up

### **B. The Transformation of Timothy**

1. Timothy must have taken that exhortation seriously—because of the persecution he had faced
2. And so he had been thrown in jail

3. But Paul writes at this last part of the letter to give an update to these Hebrews—that their brother Timothy was no longer in prison

- a. He had been set at liberty
- b. And he would be soon back into the swing of ministry—just as he was before

**C. Paul's Plan to Return With Timothy(vs. 23)—**  
*“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.”*

1. Paul has plans to come back to minister to these Hebrews—but this time not without Timothy
2. Timothy, as he had in time-past, would join Paul in ministry of the saints
3. And Paul's purpose to return with Timothy—was to follow up with these Hebrews

**NOTE:** In other words, what Paul is saying, is that this letter—this short exhortation, would not be the last bit of ministry that Paul would have with them. He intended to follow up his exhortation with a visit to them again, to see how they are doing, and to minister to them in person.

### **D. The Importance of Follow-Up**

1. Paul saw the importance of follow up
  - a. You don't just exhort one time—you need to keep coming back, as often as

you can, to help people be all God expects them to be

**b.** That's one of the reasons why we try to make it important to visit everyone in the church on a regular basis

**i.** We want to let people know that we love them

**ii.** And we are concerned about their relationship with God

**iii.** And if we can help in any way

**2.** And so Paul is telling them—that I plan to come back and see you again

**a.** And this time, I'm bringing Timothy with me

### **I. Paul Wanted Them to Pray For Him Regarding His Ministry**

### **II. Paul Wanted Them to Lean on God's Power For Spiritual Sanctification**

### **III. Paul Wanted Them to Patiently Endure Exhortation**

### **IV. Paul Wanted Them to be Encouraged With Follow-Up**

**V. Paul Wanted Them to Know the Love God's People Have for Them** (vs. 24-25)—*“Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. 25 Grace be with you all. Amen.”*

## **A. Greet the Leaders and the Saint for Me**

**1.** In other words, he tells them to say “hi” to everyone for him

**a.** He has a connection to them

**i.** And that connection is greater than a connection even with blood relatives

**ii.** It is the unity that God gives to believers

**b.** He loves them

**i.** It's that brotherly love that he mentioned at the beginning of this chapter

**Hebrews 13:1**—*“Let brotherly love continue.”*

**ii.** That common bond that they all have comes from their common life in Christ

- They all have the life of Christ
- They have a common fellowship
- And so Paul—in his final words to them—is expressing such love

## B. The Saints of Italy Salute You

1. Not only does Paul have a common connection to them—but people from another part of the world do as well

- a. The Saints of Italy also
- b. These might be a reference to the church at Rome—that Paul said that he wanted to come to and minister to

2. This statement is an obvious indication of where Paul is at—or had recently been

## C. The Final Salute—“*Grace be with you all. Amen*”

1. In every letter that you see Paul write in the New Testament—he ends it with this benediction

- a. A benediction of love for those that he is writing to

2. The Grace of God be with you

## D. Paul’s Point

1. He didn’t write this letter in anger towards them

- a. Even though he gave to them some of the severest warning found in the Bible

2. It was a letter directed out of a heart of love for them

- a. If he didn’t love them, he would have never told them and given them the things (even the difficult things) that they needed to hear

**Proverbs 27:6**—“*Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*”

3. And that’s what he wanted them to know as he was closing out this letter of exhortation

- a. “*I Love You!*”

## CONCLUSION:

### I. Paul Wanted Them to Pray For Him Regarding His Ministry

➤ *Be People of Prayer*

### II. Paul Wanted Them to Lean on God’s Power For Spiritual Sanctification

➤ *Be People Who Are Focused on Spiritual Growth*

### III. Paul Wanted Them to Patiently Endure Exhortation

- *Be People Who are Faithful to the Word of God*

#### **IV. Paul Wanted Them to be Encouraged With Follow-Up**

- *Be People Who Embrace Spiritual Leadership*

#### **V. Paul Wanted Them to Know the Love of God's People for Them**

- *Be People Who Continue in their Love For the Saints*