

Hebrews 13:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. This prayer petition requests God's sanctifying work. 'Make you perfect' (katartisai hymas, καταρτίσαι ὑμᾶς, 'equip you,' 'complete you,' or 'restore you') describes God fitting believers for service, supplying all necessary grace and ability. 'In every good work' (en panti ergō agathō) indicates comprehensive obedience across all life areas. 'To do his will' (eis to poiēsai to thelēma autou) states the goal: accomplishing God's purposes.

'Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight' (poiōn en hymin to euareston enōpion autou) emphasizes that God Himself works in believers to accomplish His will. We don't manufacture obedience independently; God enables it. This is Philippians 2:12-13 in prayer form: 'work out your salvation...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do.' 'Through Jesus Christ' specifies the mediator through whom all grace flows. The doxology 'to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen' could refer to Christ or God the Father—both deserve eternal glory.

This demonstrates the Reformed doctrine of sanctification: God works in believers to produce holiness. We cooperate but don't originate the work. Spiritual growth, good works, obedience—all flow from divine grace working through Christ. This

produces both humility (we can't boast) and confidence (God who began good work will complete it, Philippians 1:6).

Historical Context

The prayer reflects early Christian understanding that spiritual transformation comes from God's power, not human effort. Paul similarly prays for believers' sanctification (Ephesians 3:14-21; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12). Ancient pagan religions emphasized human achievement of divine favor through rituals and works. Christianity's radical claim was that God works transformation in believers who trust Christ. The emphasis on God 'working in you' would encourage readers facing persecution—their perseverance wasn't self-generated willpower but divine enablement. This prayer established pattern for Christian prayer: asking God to work what He commands, recognizing dependence on grace for obedience.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that God works in you to accomplish His will affect your approach to obedience and spiritual growth?
2. What 'good works' is God equipping you for, and how are you cooperating with His working in your life?
3. In what ways should recognition that all spiritual progress comes 'through Jesus Christ' produce both humility and confidence?

Interlinear Text

καταρτίσαι	ὑμᾶς	ἐν	παντὶ	ἔργῳ	ἀγαθῷ	εἰς	τὸ	ποιῶν
Make	you	in	every	work	good	for	G3588	do
G2675	G5209	G1722	G3956	G2041	G18	G1519		G4160
τὸ	θέλημα	αὐτοῦ	ποιῶν	ἐν	ὑμῖν	τὸ	εὐάρεστον	
G3588	will	in his	do	in	you	G3588	that which is wellpleasing	
	G2307	G846	G4160	G1722	G5213		G2101	
ἐνὼπιον	αὐτοῦ	διὰ	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ	ᾧ	ἡ	δόξα	
sight	in his	through	Jesus	Christ	to whom	G3588	be glory	
G1799	G846	G1223	G2424	G5547	G3739		G1391	
εἰς	τοὺς	αἰώνων	τῶν	αἰώνων	ἀμήν			
for	G3588	and ever	G3588	and ever	Amen			
G1519		G165		G165	G281			

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 2:13 (Good): For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

2 Thessalonians 2:17 (Good): Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Philippians 4:13 (References Christ): I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

1 Peter 2:5 (References Jesus): Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 4:18 (Kingdom): And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Philippians 1:11 (Glory): Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

2 Corinthians 9:8 (Good): And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Hebrews 10:36 (Parallel theme): For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (References Jesus): And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4:2 (Parallel theme): That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

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